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THE LIBERAL DILEMMA

IT would be easy to begin the exploration of this subject by compiling a list of the moral contradictions which beset the path of the modern liberal. All you would have to do is to illustrate, one after the other, the conflicts between ends and means in the available solutions for social problems. It is difficult to do this, however, without taking note of the polemical stances involved in each case. Perhaps an undeveloped outline will do, after which we can get on to more fundamental considerations. There is, then, the war-peace complex, which seems to require military and preparedness measures which are repugnant to the liberal spirit; there is the threat of unemployment through automation, apparently presenting an unhappy choice between far-reaching statist intervention and a rugged disdain for economic trends and facts; and there is the issue of racial equality and justice, inextricably involved with economic questions, to which are added the hereditary prejudices and fears of large segments of the population, making an unholy mix of political, moral, and educational problems.

Why do these situations represent dilemmas for the liberal? Mainly or solely because the available solutions all involve ruthless treatment of some or many individuals in behalf of the presumed good of other or possibly most individuals. The concern of the liberal philosophy has two poles. The liberal is committed to the service of one *and* all. He cannot serve one and forget all without succumbing to an illiberal partisanship. He cannot serve all and forget the one without denying his first principles. But if circumstances are so arranged that, in order to act, he has to compromise somewhere, what will he do? Well, he can resort to statistics, since if he must compromise, the compromise ought to be regulated by some kind of ethical principle. So, adopting the formula of the Utilitarians, he resolves to serve the greatest good of the greatest number.

Well, what's wrong with that? Nothing, probably, if we can be sure we know what "doing good" means. From a practical point of view, however, the instruments of "doing good" have become so formidable, so unmanageable, so all-demanding of attention to their function and parts, that the "good" often seems to have dropped out of the picture. We are not of course *sure* that the good is gone, but we know it is diminished. Yet there is a strong reason for ignoring the possible or even probable loss of the good—we don't know any other way to try to get it. So, for the perceptive and honorable men among the liberal segment of the population, there tends to be a profound weakening of heart. It is this that we term, broadly, the liberal dilemma.

What, originally and in fact, is Liberalism? This question has a plain answer. Liberalism begins with a metaphysical assumption regarding the nature of man. It results in views concerning all human relationships which are believed and felt to be consistent with this assumption. The article on Liberalism in the *Encyclopædia of the Social Sciences* gives a clear statement of the position:

> Its [Liberalism's] primary postulate, the spiritual freedom of mankind, not only repudiates naturalistic or deterministic interpretations of human action but posits a free individual conscious of his capacity for unfettered development and self-expression. It follows therefore as an obvious corollary in the grammar of liberalism that any attempt on the part of the constituted authorities to exert artificial pressure or regulation on the individual, in his inner and outer adjustments, is an unjustifiable interference, a stultification of his personality and initiative. Against such coercive interference, whether in the moral, the religious, the intellectual, the social, the economic or the political sphere, liberalism has consistently arrayed its forces.

With this definition in mind, one might go immediately to the historical reasons for the qualification and redefinition of liberal principles during the comparatively recent past, even to the point of reversing some of their meanings. It is of some importance to do this, since there must be an

explanation of the fact that a great many people who are ignorant of its history are convinced that "liberalism" is a kind of half-hearted socialism or advocacy of state welfarism which fails to come out openly for revolutionary action only from timidity or a dislike of violence and unpleasantness. At the other end of the spectrum of criticism is the scornful judgment of the Marxists that liberals are wishy-washy reformists who recoil from the decisive steps that social justice demands, and who will never get anywhere with their compromises and half-measures. Such radicals are peculiarly bitter toward the liberals, whom they accuse of diluting and sapping the emotional reserves of the revolutionary spirit.

To enlarge on this analysis, however, would be to lose the thread of the present purpose, which is to examine the difficulties of Liberalism in principle, as well as its vicissitudes in history.

Let us look again at the definition taken from the *Encyclopædia of the Social Sciences.* The paragraph has the ring of truth. Its vision quickens the pulse and calls up intuitive allegiance. Yet there is something wrong; the definition is not complete. This "free individual conscious of his capacity for unfettered development and self-expression," who resists "artificial pressure or regulation" as "an unjustifiable interference, a stultification of his personality and initiative," is also a man with a lot of personal problems. He does not *always* measure up to the high account of the liberal inspiration. Is there too much of Rousseau, and not enough of Hobbes, in the manifesto?

This would be understandable. Liberalism has always had strong external foes. It was born, you could say, in a flush of Renaissance emotion which protested against the low estimate of man as a sinful, malleable creature who had better do what he was told. We know about that side of man, the champions of Liberalism might have answered; let us tell you about the *good* things man is capable of—the things that must be allowed to come out and show how wonderful they are. A man is hardly a man unless his best qualities are permitted to flower under conditions of freedom.

Liberalism, from this point of view, was part of the great swing of the historical pendulum which began during the Revival of Learning. From the claim that sin and evil all originate inside man, there finally came a dramatic change from the outside. It was not difficult to assemble an enormous amount of evidence to support the new claim. It still makes a man mad to read the evidence, and it still makes him feel good to accept the claim. For at least a century it has been regarded as a reversion to the unenlightened past to say that a man ought to give more attention to his nature and character than to the social system which shaped him. He couldn't do anything *politically* significant about his own moral character or anyone else's; meanwhile, he was supporting the forces of reaction, whose spokesmen seldom talked about anything else.

Not all men, of course, submitted to the over-simplifications of politics. Ideas of personal discipline and self-cultivation did not die out, but they certainly became background themes, and such conceptions of human improvement were not enriched with any new discoveries of either a psychological or a religious sort. Actually, this inward side of man's nature was held to be sufficiently attended to by the spread of popular education and by the ever-increasing opportunities of all men for learning, if they wanted it. It became the sole aim of the liberal movement to free men of both political and economic oppression and to press unceasingly for the conditions under which they might be deemed free to fulfill themselves as they chose.

Had we the space, we should now complete review of a long stretch of history with details of how the liberal movement became identified with various transformations in social thinking. One such cycle is brilliantly described by Herbert Spencer in a series of papers collected by Albert Jay Nock under the title, *Man Versus the State* (Caxton). While Spencer is unpalatable to most liberal readers, the change of the liberal intent, during the nineteenth century, from the will to establish the equality of all men, before the law and in respect to opportunity, to the fervid desire to *guarantee* equality by means of a legislative program, should be studied by anyone seriously

concerned with understanding the socio-political problems of the present.

What we are trying to show here is no more than the fact that, over a period of a little less than five hundred years—from the genesis of the liberal idea in the Italian Renaissance until the present—the good of man became almost wholly identified as a political issue. Increasingly, that good was defined first as a set of political conditions, and then as a set of economic conditions which were to be arrived at through political action. As a matter of course, education was spoken of as one of the instruments for the attainment of that good, but education was assumed to be a ready and available process which had only to be *given* to the people for its values to become operative and manifest.

In consequence of all these strivings involving both far-reaching political revolutions and the slower accomplishments of legislative reform, the unexamined side of the liberal postulate continued to be neglected. The main drive of liberalism was toward the establishment of the sort of society in which the oppressive restraints of tyrannical governments would not be present, and in which the deprivations of the many by the few would no longer be allowed.

In the present, liberalism is being instructed in certain facts of life—some of them unequivocal, others by no means clear. The unequivocal facts are those made plain by the Communist revolution. Communism is total politics. It is one side of the liberal philosophy carried to an absolute extreme. In the Communist ideology, which bows to no other system of political thought in its claim to be in the service of man, all significant causation is held to be the result of economic conditions. And since the Communists believe that it is possible, by means of the application of science to the structure of society, to create the best possible economic conditions, it follows that they believe they can thereby create the ideal society—a society in which all men will be free.

But since some men have other views of the good of man, the Communists found it necessary to institute a program of compulsion, and with it to establish a rigid orthodoxy of political theory; and since political theory is total theory, under Communism, it defines not only good political relationships, but good art, literature, and philosophy. Even good science, in the U.S.S.R., is commonly tinged with political rationalizations, although in the new-born "liberal" underground in Russia, this sort of ideological conformism is the subject of some pretty funny jokes.

The turning-point, in habitually accepted theory, for American liberals may be said to have been reached in the 1930's, during the Moscow Trials, when, one after the other, dozens and even hundreds of famous old Bolsheviks who had fought for the Revolution were held up to public hate for their alleged counter-revolutionary tendencies and plots against the Soviet Union. They were condemned to death and executed, basically, for the crime of daring to think freely or critically about the good of man. This kind of thought almost invariably made them deviate in some fashion from the Communist Party Line. (Arthur Koestler's novel, *Darkness at Noon*, is a classical account of this agonizing ordeal of expiring liberal intelligence in Soviet Russia, and is essential reading on the subject. Further reading to throw light on the impossibility of creating a social version of the liberal ideal by means of totalitarian power and terrorism would be the report of the Committee headed by John Dewey which investigated the charges of betrayal brought by Stalin against Leon Trotsky, who had taken refuge in Mexico. Trotsky, the colleague of Lenin and the military genius of the Russian Revolution, was later murdered by a Soviet agent.)

What had happened? A brief answer is that the Communists had taken the logic of the liberal concern with the socio-political conditions of freedom and expanded it into an uncompromising absolute. Their argument was persuasive. Nearly all political liberals watched the progress of the Revolution with profound sympathy and longings. Actually, few men of humanity and intelligence could fail to wonder if the great Soviet experiment might not prove itself out according to the dream cherished by European and American Socialists for at least seventy-five years. It was a dream which died hard. Even after the character of Stalinism

became plain, and after the radical movement in the United States had split into fragments from fighting over the question of whether or not Russia had betrayed the revolutionary cause, a considerable number of liberals gave up their liberalism in order to preserve their belief in the Russian Revolution. Civil liberties, they announced, were a luxury, a capitalist sop and a safety valve which lets radical ardor dissipate in rhetorical steam. Civil liberties are not needed in Russia, anyhow, they said, since the revolutionary struggle for freedom is over. What's to argue about? The Russians now have a country to build up with the power of industrialism. They have no time for talk. The workers need shoes, not the intellectual exercises of shallow capitalist "liberalism"! Such matters are all *settled* in the U.S.S.R.

During World War II, when Russia fought on the same side as the Western democracies, there was a general suspension of the liberal disillusionment, except among disciplined radicals who could neither forgive nor forget the long list of betrayals and crimes against many of the actual makers of the Russian Revolution; however, by 1948 holders of liberal views who had kept faith with the idea of freedom of opinion were solidly arrayed against any kind of totalitarian power. But now there were new problems. Blindly anti-Russian emotions were being generated in the United States. Liberals found themselves having to walk the razor-edge of opposition to anti-Russian hysteria in combination with uncompromising criticism of the illiberal Soviet regime. As time went on, liberals were reduced to very little more than a struggle to maintain an atmosphere of intellectual freedom in the United States, under the dark cloud of Senator McCarthy's attempt to suppress practically all impartial political discussion.

Today, the political aspect of the liberal movement—it hardly has any other—is really peripheral to the issues of the times and ineffectual by comparison to its driving activities in earlier years. Serious political thought is frozen out of public forums by the anxieties of the cold war and there now exists very little original thinking about politics, unless you count the extreme of radical pacifism—which of course should be counted, but not as an expression or even a revision of any of the familiar forms of political liberalism.

The only possible exception to this summary judgment that we can think of is the combination of views represented by the Triple Revolution. Here are joined authentic liberal reactions to the Civil Rights movement, to the antihuman implications of the nuclear weapons arms race, and to the mounting threat in automation to the social objective of full employment. Public response to the Triple Revolution manifesto has been almost entirely in terms of the proposal to solve the problem of extreme technological unemployment by providing everyone with a guaranteed income, along the lines of the indigenous American socialism of Edward Bellamy. The advocates of the Triple Revolution, however, cannot be called socialists by any traditional definition. They are American liberals who believe they are offering the only practical solution for an anticipated dislocation of the economy of the United States, which they see as inevitably on the way as a result of the cybernetic revolution. You could say that, from an economic point of view, the demand of the Negroes for jobs and equal economic opportunity is really a special case of the general need of jobs for the growing number of unemployed.

In their challenge to the follies of the nuclear arms race, the Triple Revolutionaries unite with a miscellaneous throng of people who are increasingly upset by the gross contradiction between the mechanisms of modern war and the values which those mechanisms are supposed to serve and protect. The problem of liberals, here, is the same as their problems in other sorts of confrontation. There is a breakdown, a manifest inadequacy, a monstrous disproportion in the political means—for war is the last resort of the political approach to human ends, the continuation of policy by other means, as Clausewitz said. Liberals who now recognize that their accustomed political tools are too horrible to use have little to offer as an alternative except their horror, which is hardly a substitute for a tool.

These are some of the unequivocal facts in which contemporary liberalism is being instructed. But we also spoke of other facts which are not so

clear. These latter are facts which have been gaining attention for several generations, most apparently through the work of Sigmund Freud and from the study and practice of psychotherapists until the present. Why should the findings of the psychotherapists have any bearing on the dilemma of modern liberals? For two reasons. First, because the psychotherapists are manifestly dealing with human realities which relate to the original liberal postulate of "the spiritual freedom of mankind," believed to reside in the "free individual conscious of his capacity for unfettered development and self-expression." Second, because it appears to be impossible to establish any one-to-one relationship between the equations of politics and the equations of a large and crucial area of man's potentialities for freedom. The fact of the matter is that the therapists have taken over territory to which the liberals once made nominal claim, but never gave any serious attention. You could argue that if the liberals had not been guilty of this incredible neglect of the psychological dynamics of individual freedom, it would not be an emerging specialty of *therapists*—doctors for the sick in mind—but would by now have well developed form as a special kind of education. You could even argue that the liberals are responsible for the misfortune that we now have to learn about central realities of human freedom from the pathological symptoms of its loss.

What can we say about the therapists—without getting involved in a lengthy evaluation of their theories—that we are unable to say about the liberal practitioners of politics—even the best kind of liberal politics? We can say that the therapist never loses sight of the human individual. This is a way of saying or insisting that the therapist by a kind of professional accident has come to cherish the liberal values which the political liberal habitually ignores, because he is so involved in the statistical concerns of politics. He is eternally busy with means, and never gets really involved in the ends, except as some sort of benevolent onlooker who subscribes to the liberal piety that education, poetry, literature, and possibly some philosophy are proper adornments for the "whole man." He is so busy struggling with the over-burdened means of politics—now strained to the breaking-point—and so harassed by its diminishing returns (why shouldn't they diminish, when politics is called upon to produce what is not and never has been potential in political ends?), that he has never had time to *use* his own freedom and thus find out something first-hand about "his capacity for unfettered development and self-expression."

This analysis is obviously too hard on the liberals. Yet the points have to be made, since they are, we think, on the whole accurate and true. But it needs to be noticed that among the great liberals of history have been writers and thinkers of distinguished quality and far-reaching influence. In the liberal campaigns of the past, and in the philosophical grounding of liberal contentions, they sustained the substance of a rich and imaginative humanity for Western culture. This must be freely admitted. But there was still, in *those* days, a clear legitimacy in the political struggle. Justice *was* getting done. The political means had not yet been exhausted or fulfilled. Liberal politics goes sour only when it turns back on itself and devours its own liberal ideals.

How does this take place? Well, it happens every day—to take one example—wherever "strategic analysis" is the pursuit of men who regard themselves as "liberals." What is strategic analysis? It is an intellectual discipline designed to instruct the right people in how to get the not-bright people to do what they ought to do, and how to get the bad people to outwit themselves and fail in all their projects. Of course, this definition is heavily moralistic, while strategic analysis is not supposed to be subject to moral evaluation, being a branch of science. As a recent paper says:

> There are two reasons why "strategic analysis" tends to be neutral, even cold-blooded, toward the parties in a situation. One is that the analysis is usually about the situation, not the individuals—about the structure of incentives, of information and communication, the choices available, and the tactics that can be employed. . . . Goffman has vividly described the techniques used by institutions—mental hospitals, boys' schools, military organizations and nunneries—to disrupt the internal organization of individuals, to confuse their sense of identity, to deny

> them poise, and to disrupt the signals and conventions by which inmates can establish counter-organization. Shaved heads, ugly uniforms, no pockets, no cosmetics, even nakedness or no place to sit down, destroy poise and make difficult the development of cadres, leaders, and communication systems and the development of *esprit* among subjects. The technique goes back at least to Croesus, who advised Cyrus to forgive the Lydians their revolt, "But at the same time, if you want to keep them loyal and prevent any danger from them in the future, I suggest you put a veto on their possession of arms. Make them wear tunics under their cloaks, and high boots, and tell them to teach their sons to play the zither and harp, and to start shopkeeping. If you do that, my lord, you will soon see them turn into women instead of men, and there will not be any more danger of their rebelling against you."

The primary application of strategic analysis is of course in war. You would take little risk if you wagered a large sum of money that hundreds, if not thousands, of bright young Ph.D.'s have been working up "strategic analyses" of both the Russians and the Chinese, and no doubt other peoples, for, say, the past ten years. Our point is that the bright young men see nothing wrong with this. They are good liberals practicing science on the right side. (We assume that they are liberals, or that they think of themselves as liberals, mainly because they are very smart, and it is quite hard for a really smart man who has any decency in him to avoid being some kind of a liberal.) The puzzling thing about such liberals is that they all say they want peace—are even working for it, in their fashion—yet they are willing to regard many millions of other people as mere counters in political situations, and to plan ways of manipulating them as if they were not human at all. A centuries-old neglect of the inner side of freedom has allowed liberals to feel quite comfortable while using political techniques which are obviously anti-human.

If only ten per cent of the time spent in analysis of people as objects were turned to study of them as *subjects*—as human beings like ourselves—we would probably get to understand them, and then they probably would not want to fight with us at all. People who are understood seldom pick quarrels with the people who understand them.

But we have this terrible habit of relying upon and believing in the political means, and we have this great big apparatus built up over hundreds of years to make the political means work and keep all the other distracting factors out of the picture. There really is a liberal dilemma.

REVIEW
STRANGER PASSING THROUGH

MANY years ago, in one of his books, Samuel Slavson pointed out that when little children are deprived of the traditional lore of fantasy and fairy tale, they invariably make up their own. There is something in children which refuses to take seriously the confinements of the one-dimensional world of their parents. Grown-ups, too, have their longings for magical possibilities, but they are usually obliged to accept fictional substitutes in the form of sentimental distortions of the narrow, humdrum world they know. Even when they break away from the boundaries of what the scientific humanists call "reliable knowledge," adults seldom give their hungry imaginings the free rein possible to childish wondering; instead they embrace some conventional heterodoxy, such as, say, astrology, which has some ancient rules to give its believers a sense of "reality."

Contrary to popular impression, fantasy—"reliable" fantasy, at any rate—always develops according to some set of rules. Actually, as many people are beginning to suspect, the dynamics of the psychological relationships of people to the rules they accept is a more important field of study than the attempt to find out and tabulate for all time the "laws of nature," or the One True Set of Rules. Somehow, the laws of nature have a way of coming and going in importance. A heart-broken girl or a youth who has just lost his job couldn't care less about whether the planets go round the sun, or vice versa. And when they come for you because you've been drinking too much, or when you get a pink slip because you were late four times in a row, or when the mill moves down South to exploit cheap labor, making an economic ghost town out of the place where you've bought a home, you get no comfort from the recent progress in electronics. And if they *don't* come for you, you might even feel neglected. After all, would Kafka's "K" have led a pleasant, satisfied life if the bureaucracy had mislaid his file and never begun those incomprehensible proceedings against him? Either way, "K" was a lost soul. Either way, he had no real rules to go by.

These reflections come from trying to figure out the rules behind an exceptionally good murder mystery by Joan Fleming—*The Man from Nowhere* (Lancer paperback, so cents). The situation is this: A mysterious stranger—big, strong, handsome, but with features flawed by a red birthmark covering half his face shows up in a sleepy English town and asks around for work. He puzzles the townfolk because they can't understand why he came *there,* when there are plenty of good jobs in other places. They like him well enough, but they can't help but feel suspicious of him. He doesn't seem to care about money. While he is a hard worker, he is oddly unambitious. Children and old ladies grow fond of him, and the man who runs the sawmill is delighted to have a workman who quickly learns the business and ends his employer's practical anxieties. As soon as the stranger accumulates a little money he gives it away. He can sing, too. On Saturday nights he makes the town a minor tourist attraction by performing in the local tavern. People tell him he could gain a fortune as a professional singer, but he just laughs and will take nothing for his songs.

Well, there you have it—all the ingredients for imposing the action made possible by a new, other-worldly set of rules on the complacent, conventional people of a small country town. A "wild" factor has been introduced. The stranger is not like them; he practices virtues none of them possess, but these qualities don't quite offend anybody because he's just doing what he wants to, not "setting an example." What will happen? You know some kind of crisis is coming, and not only because the book is a murder mystery. A housewife's casual remark that the stranger has the "mark of Cain" on him—his *nævus,* the bright red stain on his face—makes you wonder if everyone will turn against him. There's a girl, of course—an attractive spinster in her thirties—who has a

slow-moving romance going with the pastor of the church, and the stranger, as her helpful, friendly lodger, is probably going to upset the even course of the pastor's expectations.

Who *is* the stranger, really? The Pied Piper come back for a second round? Well, you can't tell who he is; and you aren't meant to know. But you know what his role is going to be. He is the catalyst who is going to make things happen—dreadful things, perhaps; and the people of the town are all going to have a shocking and possibly transforming look at themselves. Maybe it will be something like what happens at the end of *The Oxbow Incident,* and you wonder what sort of "wisdom" can emerge. Will the town be sadder and wiser when the stranger goes away—for of course he *will* go away. He can't marry the girl. You don't care about the preacher—he's stuffy and probably deserves to be disappointed in love; and anyway it isn't really love but a response to convention; but the real reason the stranger can't marry the girl is the rule that a man from the other world can't ever stay in this one without spoiling everything he has done. But could he take the girl away with him? You wonder about that.

The interesting thing about Miss Fleming's book is that it makes you study the rules—not just the rules of this story, but all those other-worldly rules which give fantasy its undying presence in human longing. You have to check the rules to see if the author is playing fair; and if she is, why you don't quite see how. You naturally want to be *sure* the stranger can't marry the girl. Why not? Is this rule merely a puritan twist?

The story is about very ordinary people, but it has great gentility and taste. The puritan question goes away when the girl bears the stranger's child, complete with *nævus* and bright blue eyes. But he goes away, too—obviously because the townspeople can't really stand to have him around. His leaving seems to become an act of compassion.

At the end the reader is left wondering, not about the story, which has been undeniably delightful, despite its sudden deaths, but in general about sets of countervailing rules. How do such rules exercise their influence? Manifestly, they can't get into our world at all without a man to bring and demonstrate them. And the stranger doesn't ever really change anything, himself. He is only a kind of "presence." It is as though he goes through certain exercises, and while he seems for a while to be really in this world, he never quite makes contact. He is some kind of animated three-dimensional mirror of a Platonic Idea. If he should make any binding contracts involving him in earthly affairs, the Idea will take wings and leave behind only its shell—an empty chrysalis. And the stranger, in this case, would not be even a fallen angel, like us.

Miss Fleming's book is a strong conjuration of such thoughts, and it is better by far to have to have them thus provoked than handed to you complete with metaphysical diagrams and timetables of millennial events. Of course, there are occasions when you feel the need of a course in sound metaphysics, and would even not be averse to a systematic list of magical possibilities, but the difficulty with all such curricula is that they need to be carefully marked "unfinished," or "unverified as yet," or "needs confirmation by private investigation of the reader." Too often people suppose that because a book of this sort contains obvious lacunae, the author was not a full professor or was somehow unsure of his facts. And so, like the townfolk of Miss Fleming's story, they turn away and go back to the ignoble but carefully compiled certainties of their everyday lives.

Well, this is enough to extract from a murder mystery; we have probably exceeded good critical manners by turning it into some kind of tract.

COMMENTARY
TO RENEW ACQUAINTANCE

Two quotations are in unequal competition for this space. One is further material from "the young Emerson" which was crowded out of the "Children" article. In it, Emerson speaks of what Viktor Frankl as well as Plato calls "noëtic man"—the higher aspect of the individual mind or soul:

> Is it not true that men do not think highly, reverently of their own nature? To some persons it may sound strange that we say people do not think enough of themselves.
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> There are two ways of speaking of self; one, when we speak of a man's low and partial self, as when he is said to be selfish; and the other when we speak of the whole self, that which comprehends a man's whole being, of that self of which Jesus said, What can a man give in exchange for his soul? And in that sense, when you say of a man that he thinks too much of himself, I say, No, the fault is that he does not think of himself at all. He has not got so far as to know himself. He thinks of his dress, he thinks of his money, he thinks of his comely person, and pleasant voice, he thinks of the pretty things he has got to say and do, but the eternal reason which shines within him, the immortal life that dwells at the bottom of his heart he knows not. He is not great enough—not good enough—not man enough to go in and converse with that celestial scene. Very likely he is so utterly unacquainted with himself, has lived so on the outside of his world, that he does not yet believe in its existence.
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> It seems to me, brethren, as if we wanted nothing so much as a habit of steadily fixing the eye upon this higher self, the habit of distinguishing between our circumstances and ourselves; the practice of rigorous scrutiny into our own daily life to learn how much there is of our own action and how much is not genuine but imitated or mercenary; the advantage of arriving at a precise notion of a genuine man. . . .

It hardly needs pointing out that this "genuine man" to whose interests Emerson was so devoted is also the "free individual" whose unfettered development the founders of Liberalism sought to assure. But for modern Liberalism, he is very nearly a forgotten man. In the *New Leader* for Sept. 14, Irving Kristol characterizes the present-day liberal in a way that is even more discouraging than the portrait in our lead article:

> The Liberal is pleased with the increasing concentration of power in the national government, because he sees in it an opportunity to translate his ideals into reality. These ideals are, in themselves, unexceptionable for the most part. But in his eagerness to see them realized, the Liberal is almost always managerial in his approach to power, sometimes downright technocratic. He is convinced—not always by evidence, often by self-righteousness—that he knows how to plan our economy, design our cities, defeat our enemies, assuage our allies, uplift our poor, and, all in all, insure the greatest happiness for the greatest number. And for this knowledge to be effectual, he needs more power over the citizen than Americans have traditionally thought it desirable for a government to have. This is but another way of saying that, as between individual freedom and his plans for the common good, the Liberal will automatically opt for the latter.

This is the other quotation which, because of Mr. Kristol's brevity, we managed to get in. Alas for Children of Light who have inherited more of righteousness than of wisdom from their Fathers, and who see little fault in choosing means which, in other hands, would almost certainly be called the Powers of Darkness.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
EDUCATION AND RELIGION

FAILURE IN TEACHING VIRTUE, by John Morris, in the July-August issue of the *Humanist*, has in it passages which seem crucial in respect to all forms of education of the young, and particularly for those who talk (as we often do here) about "teaching values." Mr. Morris assembles evidence to show that "moral training" has a "curiously self defeating quality." In his words, "the harder adults try to *make* children good, the less successful they are." He continues:

> Hugh Hartshorne and Mark May, in their classic *Studies in Deceit*, reported some of the strange results of moral indoctrination in the classroom. In conducting their studies, they invented a number of methods to detect cheating on tests. For example, the children would be given a test to which they were to write the answers in pencil. The tests were collected in the evening, and the children's answers were secretly recorded. Then, the next day, the tests were returned and were marked by the children themselves. Some of the children, of course, cheated in marking their tests, by erasing the incorrect answer and inserting the correct one. These deceptions were noted and recorded by the experimenters.
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> Some children cheated often, some occasionally, some not at all. Hartshorne and May found that a number of factors produced significant correlations when compared with children's records of cheating on tests. The children's intelligence, their parents' social levels, and their emotional stability were related to their tendency toward honesty or dishonesty on tests.
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> More striking, however, was the failure of all organized attempts to teach the children to be honest. Moral instruction in Sunday Schools showed a dismal record. To be sure, children who *enrolled* in Sunday Schools appeared to be more honest than the average. But children who actually *attended* Sunday Schools tended to be *less* honest than the average. If the church was teaching the children anything on Sunday morning, it seemed to be teaching them to cheat. (There was a single exception to this pattern. When the teacher wrote "God loves an honest man" on the blackboard, one group of religiously trained children cheated less. But when the motto was not on the board, this same group tended to cheat more than the average.)
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> A course of instruction for one group of junior-high children from a text with the delightful title *The Honesty Book* (published by the "National Honesty Bureau") produced no effect whatever, when these children were compared with children in an untutored group.
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> And, most striking of all, a club in the school (called by the authors "System X"), strongly supported by some school authorities and dedicated to rewarding the "good citizens" among the children, did nothing to increase the children's honesty. On the contrary, the higher the child's rank in the club, the *more* likely he was to cheat on the school's tests.
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> One conclusion of the authors would apply to parents as well as to teachers: ". . . the mere urging of honest behavior by teachers or the discussion of standards and ideals of honesty, no matter how much such general ideas may be 'emotionalized,' has no necessary relation to the control of conduct. The extent to which individuals may be affected, either for better or for worse, is not known, but there seems to be evidence that such effects as may result are not generally good and are sometimes unwholesome. . . ."
>
> Apparently moral instruction is different from instruction in other subjects, like mathematics. A text in mathematics, even an extraordinarily poor one, could be expected to produce some knowledge of its subject. But *The Honesty Book* was not merely a poor text. It was a total failure.

Mr. Morris' recital gives obvious point to the fact that a growing number of church people, as well as "agnostics," are now coming to appreciate the fact that last year's Supreme Court decision against religious indoctrination in the public schools invites a depth study into the supposed benefits of an early sectarian conditioning. While the Court dealt only with the constitutional implications of the case on appeal, the decision declares that every child should be taught genuine *respect* for religious ideals, observing: "It might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of religion." Here the emphasis is quite properly on *study*—so that the minds of the young, not being pushed to believe any particular doctrine, but induced to respect the earnest beliefs

of all, will be encouraged to begin the long and necessary process of building their own faith.

It is certain that Emerson would have approved the Court's decision—even when, as a young man, he was delivering sermons in New England. For the philosopher in Emerson saw that a "parroted" belief has no value at all. A small volume, *The Young Emerson Speaks,* has a passage on the failure of group beliefs to stimulate devotion to high ideals. "If each soul had been instructed that its first duty as a moral being was to reflect," said Emerson, "to go alone before God with its prayer and its obedience, no errors would have been transmitted with authority." What this young churchman was getting at was that, since no authority can be infallible, it is extremely dangerous ever to let true ethics or morality rest *upon* authority:

> Men allow the Church to regulate their faith. . . . Calvin thinks for thousands; and Wesley for thousands. . . . Every falsehood which one of these leaders received is transmitted from church to church for ages. And see the consequences in the distracted, bleeding, I had almost said,—the hating church of Christ; the church of Christ where only the *name* is found, and *he* is much a stranger. . . .

This is not of course, an attack upon every congregation of religious-minded people. It is Emerson's uncompromising point, however, that the beginning of man's relationship to a higher order of values must be self-originated:

> I am not so unreasonable as to undervalue the privilege of truly social worship. I know that our religious feelings are wonderfully assisted by our love for each other; that among friends we worship more joyfully than among strangers; and that all strong affection leads as it were directly to religion. All I urge upon you from the text, is, that your faith must have an independent connexion with God in the first instance. Else it is not faith but a parrot's talk. But once having that union formed, all your friendships, all your affections for your brethren will increase it and be increased themselves.

These remarks come from a discourse titled "Independence in Faith." Other passages from an early sermon, "The Genuine Man," indicate Emerson's strong identification with Socrates and Platonic philosophy. The failure of the young in honesty and integrity which educators and society alike bemoan may be due to a certain kind of ignorance—it might be called "soul blindness." And what is the principal cause? Certainly not, in Emerson's terms, a lack of vigilance on the part of those custodians of morality who attend upon the indoctrination of the young. It is simply that men, young or old, clerics or laity, have not been encouraged to use the higher potentialities of their own being.

FRONTIERS

Death and Transcendence

OUR recent review of *Counseling the Dying* characterized this book as a transition from the approach of purely physiological psychology to that of philosophical psychology. The lead article in *Psychiatry* for August, we now note, provides some correlative dimensions.

This article, by Robert Lifton, reports on a six-months study of attitudes toward death, and was conducted in Hiroshima. It is titled "On Death and Death Symbolism: The Hiroshima Disaster." An early paragraph says:

> There are many reasons why the study of death and death symbolism has been relatively neglected in psychiatry and psychoanalysis: Not only does it arouse emotional resistance in the investigator—all too familiar, though extraordinarily persistent nonetheless—but it confronts him with an issue of a magnitude far beyond his empathic and intellectual capacities. Yet whatever the difficulties, the nuclear age provides both urgent cause and vivid stimulus for new efforts to enhance our understanding of what has always been man's most ineradicable problem. Certainly no study of an event like the Hiroshima disaster can be undertaken without some exploration of that problem.

Dr. Lifton's concluding remarks range widely over a philosophical terrain:

> Considering the destructive power of present nuclear weapons (which is more than a thousandfold that of the Hiroshima bomb), and considering the impossibility of a meaningful nuclear death, is not life itself deprived of much of its meaning? Does not nuclear death threaten the deep significance of all our lives? Indeed, the attraction some feel toward the use of nuclear weapons might be partly a function of this meaninglessness, so that in a paradoxical way they want to "end it all" (and perhaps realize their own end-of-the-world fantasies) as a means of denying the very emptiness of the nuclear death toward which they press. Here the principle of individual suicide as an attempt to deny the reality of death is carried further to encompass nuclear suicide-murder as an attempt to deny the threat to meaningful human existence posed by these weapons.
>
> Finally, in relationship to the proposition of death as a test of life's sense of movement, I think the matter is more ambiguous, though hardly encouraging. There is a sense in all of us, in greater or lesser degree, that nuclear weapons might terminate all of life's movement. Yet there is also, at least in some, a strange intensity and excitement in relationship to the confrontation with danger which nuclear weapons provide. There is in our world an extraordinary combination of potential for continuously-enriching movement and development of self-process, side by side with the potential for sudden and absolute termination. This latter possibility, which I have called the *potentially terminal revolution*, has not yet been evaluated in its full psychological consequences; and whatever its apparent stimulus to a sense of movement, one may well suspect that it also contributes to a profound listlessness and inertia that lurk beneath.

These reflections were matured in the life-and-death laboratory of the maimed city of Hiroshima, and flowed from interviews with two different groups of A-bomb survivors. Dr. Lifton chose at random thirty-three persons from the 90,000 *hibakusha* ("explosion-affected persons"). During the same six-month period, at the Hiroshima University Research Institute for Nuclear Medicine and Biology, long discussions were held with "an additional group of 42 survivors specially selected because of their prominence in dealing with atomic bomb problems or their capacity to articulate their experiences—including physicians, university professors, city officials, politicians, writers and poets, and leaders of survivor organizations and peace movements." Few men or women of either group were isolated from that sense of "immersion in death" of which Dr. Lifton later speaks, but it is precisely because of this juxtaposition of death and life that the Lifton study becomes so suggestive for both philosophy and psychology.

Finally, Dr. Lifton recurs to the philosophical conclusion that "death is a test of life movement." His closing words return him to his title and its significance:

> I am aware that I have painted something less than an optimistic picture, both concerning the

> Hiroshima disaster and our present relationship to the nuclear world. Indeed it would seem that we are caught in a vicious psychological and historical circle, in which the existence of nuclear weapons impairs our relationship to death and immortality, and this impairment to our symbolic processes in turn interferes with our ability to deal with these same nuclear weapons. But one way of breaking out of such a pattern is by gaining at least a dim understanding of our own involvement in it. And in studying the Hiroshima experience and other extreme situations, I have found that man's capacity for elaborating and enclosing himself in this kind of ring of destructiveness is matched only by his equal capacity for renewal. Surely the mythological theme of death and rebirth takes on particular pertinence for us now, and every constructive effort we can make to grasp something more of our relationship to death becomes, in its own way, a small stimulus to rebirth.

It is this Platonic dimension of thought which appears so strongly, yet unobtrusively, in *Counseling the Dying.* The psychologists who pooled experiences of sharing the oncoming of death with patients observe:

> There may be a growing awareness of the fact that death is not merely a biological event but may also have psychological, spiritual, and social meanings that cannot be ignored. Eissler writes that the patient knows unconsciously that death is impending; somewhere within him there is such knowledge. Herman Feifel supports the theory that death is so much more than a biological event that many other factors have to be considered, and these may be beyond the scope of the medical practitioner. Then too, there may be a changing attitude that the basic human orientation to the truth {in approaching death} is more therapeutically sound than an orientation toward illusion or denial, and that sound procedure takes this emotional predisposition for the truth into account.

The "stimulus to shift" of which Lifton speaks (a knowledge that a whole new range of perceptiveness may suddenly manifest) is, on the view expressed in *Counseling the Dying,* present until the very moment when breath and heart fail. Even after that, in the words of the *Upanishads,* "who knows truly"?

There are these verses:

> The knower is never born nor dies, nor is it from anywhere, nor did it become anything. Unborn, eternal, immemorial, this ancient is not slain when the body is slain.
>
> If the slayer thinks to slay it, if the slain thinks it is slain, neither of them understand; this slays not nor is slain.
>
> Smaller than small, greater than great, this Self is hidden in the heart of man. . . . Though seated, it travels far; though at rest, it goes everywhere; who but me is worthy to know this bright one who is joy without rejoicing?