

## PSYCHOLOGICAL TRENDS

THE attempt of men to look at themselves is pursued in various ways. There are those who "look within" according to the instructions of some mystical tradition, following the charts of a particular literature, and often making reports of their subjective experience which confirm the findings of those who have preceded them in the same tradition. Of greater interest, usually, are the discoveries of individuals whose intensity of being makes them unable to "follow" anyone, and whose communications bear the strength of independent vision. The reason for undertaking the search also plays a part in the quality of the report. Prince Siddhartha began in his youth the series of investigations which ended years later in his enlightenment as the Buddha under the Bo Tree, because he could not accept any of the traditional explanations of human experience. He felt that he had to know first hand about matters of which the theologians and moralists of his time gave inadequate accounts. It was *his own* hunger to know that he sought to satisfy. He did not begin to look for the truth about life because of the "ought" of social pressure or moral tradition. In his case, the directives of his culture gave opposite counsels, urging him to be content with the status quo and his role as a hereditary prince and king-to-be.

The impulsion which moved Leo Tolstoy to self-search had much in common with the longings felt by the Buddha early in his life, although the provocations of his environment came in another way. Tolstoy was already a successful writer and a prosperous country "squire" when he began to feel the emptiness of his existence. He tells of the decline in his opinion of himself in *My Confession*:

Although I regarded authorship as a waste of time, I continued to write during those fifteen years. I had tasted of the seduction of authorship, of the seduction of enormous monetary remunerations and applause for my insignificant labour, and so I

submitted to it, as being a means for improving my material condition and for stifling in my soul all questions about the meaning of my life and life in general. . . . Thus I proceeded to live, but five years ago something very strange happened to me: I was overcome by minutes at first of perplexity and then of an arrest of life, as though I did not know how to live or what to do, and I lost myself and was dejected. But that passed, and I continued to live as before. Then those minutes of perplexity were repeated oftener and oftener, and always in one and the same form. These arrests of life found their expression in ever the same questions: "Why? Well, and then?"

Finally, Tolstoy found his internal being absorbed in a climax of negation:

My life came to a standstill. I could breathe, eat, drink, and sleep, and could not help breathing, eating, drinking, and sleeping, but there was no life, because there were no desires the gratification of which I might find reasonable. If I wished for anything, I knew in advance that, whether I gratified my desire or not, nothing would come of it. If a fairy had come and offered to carry out my wish, I should not have known what to say. If in moments of intoxication I had, not wishes, but habits of former desires, I knew in sober moments that that was a deception, that there was nothing to wish for. I could not even wish to find out the truth, because I guessed what it consisted in. The truth was that life was meaningless. It was as though I had just been living and walking along, and had come to an abyss, where I saw clearly that there was nothing ahead but perdition. And it was impossible to stop and go back, and impossible to shut my eyes, in order that I might not see that there was nothing ahead but suffering and imminent death,—complete annihilation.

The point, here, is not how Tolstoy resolved his difficulty, but the conspiracy of psychological influences which drove him to the brink of despair. To find a conception of self and of existence that had meaning became a matter of life or death for Tolstoy. Yet no such crisis overtook his contemporaries in nineteenth-century Europe. Tolstoy's problem was distinctively his own.

Sixty years later, the culture of Europe had radically changed. Or perhaps there is reason to say that the atmosphere and values which Tolstoy found so intolerable had come to the surface of ordinary life in their ugliest forms. The materialism of the nineteenth century and the wars of the twentieth had by 1940 created those open cancerous sores of social life we named concentration camps and death camps. The sensitive European of this period had no need to exercise his imagination to experience the shame and worthlessness of conventional existence: these qualities were now heaped up and pressed upon him by the institutions of totalitarian power and war. This was the hideous face of the "civilized" world in the 1940's, turning ordinary life into the ordeal of an extreme situation. Now men were *driven*, not led, to search for a sense of meaning; now not a few rare individuals, but groups and cultures found themselves in the grip of a destiny that seemed to shut out even the possibility of rational explanation.

You might say that a death camp is not the best place to make ontological or self-realizing discoveries. Yet the experience of life in these camps accomplished for some individuals what less external forms of dislocation had achieved for others in the past. In his preface to Viktor Frankl's *From Death-Camp to Existentialism* (Beacon.), Dr. Gordon Allport tells in a few words how the reduction of a human being almost to nonentity produced an unexpected result. Dr. Frankl, a Viennese psychiatrist, spent three years in the German camps, witness and victim of all the dehumanizing processes their Nazi administrators could devise. From his book, as Dr. Allport says,

The reader learns what a human being does when he suddenly realizes he has "nothing to lose except his so ridiculously naked life." Frankl's description of the mixed flow of emotion and apathy is arresting. First to the rescue comes a cold detached curiosity concerning one's fate. Swiftly, too, come strategies to preserve the remnants of one's life, though the chances of surviving are slight. Hunger, humiliation, fear and deep anger at injustice are rendered tolerable by closely guarded images of

beloved persons, by religion, by a grim sense of humor, and even by glimpses of the healing beauties of nature—a tree or a sunset.

But these moments of comfort do not establish the will to live unless they help the prisoner make larger sense out of his apparently senseless suffering. It is here that we encounter the central theme of existentialism: to live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering. If there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and dying. But no man can tell another what his purpose is. Each must find out for himself, and must accept the responsibility that his answer prescribes. If he succeeds he will continue to grow in spite of all indignities. Frankl is fond of quoting Nietzsche, "He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*."

The thing that seems of the most importance to note here is the decisive intensity of this psychological experience, which has the effect of shaping all other attitudes and beliefs. In the camp Dr. Frankl found within himself resources that depended upon nothing outside, and convictions so founded are not easily shaken or set aside. Some passages from his book will convey something of the mood of Frankl's discovery:

I knew only one thing—which I have learned by now: Love goes very far beyond the physical person of the beloved. It finds its deepest meaning in his spiritual being, his inner self. Whether or not he is actually present, whether or not he is still alive at all, ceases somehow to be of importance. . . .

This intensification of inner life helped the prisoner find a refuge from emptiness, desolation and spiritual poverty of his existence. . . . As the inner life of the prisoner tended to become more intense, he also experienced the beauty of art and nature as never before. Under their influence he sometimes even forgot his own frightful circumstances.

Out of the raw material of such reflections Dr. Frankl developed a conception of the human being that is the foundation of his practice of psychotherapy: "In my opinion," he says, "man is neither dominated by the will-to-pleasure nor by the will-to-power, but by what I should like to call man's will-to-meaning; that is to say, his deep-seated striving and struggling for a higher and ultimate meaning to his existence." He continues:

Modern man needs to consider himself as more than a mere psycho-physical being. He is more than a mere organism. He is a person. His noetic existence must not be neglected any longer. In his noetic existence lies an unconditional meaning—his personality *owns* an unconditional dignity—and psychotherapy needs an unconditional belief in this meaning and dignity.

This is neither idealism nor materialism—it is simply realism. I am the sort of realist that Goethe was when he said:

"When we take man as he is, we make him worse; but when we take man as if he were already what he should be, we promote him to what he can be." . . . if psychotherapy and education aim to cope with existential frustration—this worldwide collective neurosis—they must free themselves from any nihilistic philosophy of man and focus their attention upon man's longing and groping for a higher meaning in life.

If our purpose here were simply to build a platform of confirming testimony under what Dr. Frankl declares, we would go on and quote some other distinguished witnesses—Whitman, Wordsworth, Bellamy, and Hearn from the nineteenth century, and several of the modern self psychologists to represent the present—but the intent is not so much to drive home a conclusion as it is to show that today the motivation lying behind the study of man's nature has become urgent, even radical, in its demands. There is, in short, an enormous difference between Dr. Frankl's researches and conclusions and those, say, of David Hume in the eighteenth century.

Hume's view reigned supreme in both psychology and philosophy until only ten or twenty years ago. By reading a passage from Hume on the "self," we soon see the difference between speculative, almost casual "arm-chair" philosophizing and the desperate striving toward the stuff of inward being which characterized Tolstoy and Frankl. In his *Treatise of Human Nature*, I, Part IV, Hume wrote:

If any impression gives rise to the self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no

impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any idea of these impressions or from any other, that the idea of the self is derived. For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other: of heat or cold, or light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself without perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long am I insensible of *myself*, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death, and I could neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is further needed to make me a nonentity. If anyone, upon serious and unprejudiced reflection, thinks he has a different notion of himself, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. . . . But I venture to affirm of the rest of mankind that they are nothing but a bundle of perceptions which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and which are in a perpetual flux and movement.

What is at issue here is not merely the conflict between opposing reports on what is to be found out by introspection, but the question of an entire world view. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, opinions such as Hume's gave plain support to the idea that the "real" world is the physical world. Throughout this period, the engagement of men's energies was with the physical world, and it was also a time when the rising intellectuality of the scientific movement was eager to destroy as much as possible of the foundations of religious authority. Thus both the "action" of the age and the argument for freedom of mind lay in the assumption that the external world and its rich resources and wonderful natural phenomena were enough to engross all the energies of man, and to satisfy also his philosophical inclinations.

In the twentieth century, however, and especially since World War II, the focus of thinking about "reality" has been rapidly changing. Today you seldom hear any energetic arguments about "cosmology." The debate about "evolution"

has become a dead issue and so has Vitalist-Mechanist controversy in biological thought. Psychology, long the most dogmatic of the sciences in its insistence on working from physical and other mechanistic assumptions, has been thoroughly shaken up, and loose from its past, by the successive impacts of psychoanalysis and the new self psychology. The day of firm foundations for psychology in the physical universe is just about over, as a rich variety of evidence will show.

It is well known that the practice of science develops around human needs, and in the present the sense of human need is altering rapidly. The sudden hospitality of Western thought to the unmethodical methodology of Zen philosophy is an instance. The barriers of scientific skepticism to this kind of introspective search for a stable center in life came down so quickly that it seemed as though they had never existed. The fact is that their practical function in serving a moral need of Western intellectuality had quietly dissolved, and new needs were pressing Western man. A curious alliance of currents of thought in neo-Freudian psychotherapy, Existential philosophy, and Zen Buddhism has already set the level of advance guard philosophizing and intellectual discourse. While there is no metaphysical structure overtly expressed in Existential thinking, none in psychoanalysis, and only hints of the Buddhist inheritance of Indian metaphysics and cosmology in imported versions of Zen philosophy, it seems practically certain that within a generation Western thinkers will openly recognize that they are working with ethical conclusions and embodying attitudes that imply, if they do not depend upon, certain transcendentalist assumptions. When this happens, the history of Rationalism may begin a new phase, for it seems most unlikely that the Western mind will abandon itself to uncritical extravagance in metaphysics. Our centuries of scientific training will not go for naught, and we ought to be able to turn the skills so acquired to the service of our humanity, just as, in the field of the applied sciences, we shall have

to learn how to control and direct our technology to the same ends.

Meanwhile, the late Carl Jung, who throughout much of his lifetime gave expression to the hidden longings felt by many individuals, has bequeathed to the age to come a clear admission of his tempered belief in the immortality of the soul, adding: "Any man should be able to say he has done his best to form a conception of life after death, or to create some image of it—even if he must confess his failure." "Not to have done so," he explains, "is a vital loss. For the question that is posed to him is the age-old heritage of humanity: an archetype, rich in secret life, which seeks to add itself to our own individual life in order to make it whole."

It is not so much Jung's personal conclusions that are encouraging as his freedom in expressing them, and his advocacy of this *kind* of thinking. His aim is the achievement of a quality of life, not any specific belief. As he puts it:

If we understand and feel that here in this life we have a link with the infinite, desires and attitudes change. In the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted. . . . As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.

The impressive thing about this declaration of Jung's is its generality. For long ages, men have supposed that religious ideas must be held in the form of specific theological beliefs. But in Jung's thought there is a complete release from any obligation to insist upon creedal certainty, although he opens up full opportunity to investigate those inspiring and liberating visions that men associate with religion—especially the philosophical religions of antiquity. Jung, of course, has not "done anything" for us except to set an example. The peculiar nature of this enterprise is that each man must pursue it for himself. Yet there remains the fact that one of the best minds among us, at the end of a long and enormously fruitful life, has not hesitated to strike out on his own in the direction of philosophical

religion. And his comment on the social effects of failing in this endeavor is one that the planners of the "good society" of the future need to take as seriously as they are able. He said:

Our age has shifted all emphasis to the here and now, and thus brought about a dæmonization of man and his world. The phenomenon of dictators and all the misery they have wrought springs from the fact that man has been robbed of transcendence by the shortsightedness of the super-intellectuals.

The last thing in his life that Jung did was to make himself free of this influence and to let his adventurous and practiced mind range according to its natural inclinations.

It is more than coincidence that Dr. Robert Jungk, author of *Brighter than a Thousand Suns*, calls for the same kind of release of the "social imagination" in the Winter/Spring issue of *Our Generation against Nuclear War*. He is convinced that daring thinking in behalf of social reconstruction has been discouraged by misapplication of the criteria of scientific method. In Western history, he says, the rise and flowering of social imagination "coincided with the rise and development of the so-called 'scientific' way of thinking which made truth dependent on scientific proof." He continues:

The proof, however, could be furnished by natural science alone, for scientific experiments can be conducted within an area of reality strictly limited to the specific bearing of a particular field of research. It follows that if the social imagination was to obtain such experimental proofs, it could do so only at the price of resorting to a one-sided interpretation of social reality, which "pre-arranges" and so restricts its astonishingly rich and many-sided nature. Thus, instead of becoming an agent of liberation from narrowmindedness, want and misery, the social imagination developed into a rigid self-righteous tyrant.

However, the social imagination in its pure disinterested state should devote itself to investigating the potentialities of fantasy and show no concern for planning or for experimental proofs of what can be done. Its source is not the existing, not even the possible, but the yet impossible reality. Its aim should be to reach out beyond the present boundaries, and

give name to what as yet cannot be clearly apprehended, for, being a faculty which of all creatures only man possesses, imagination is the wild and bold vanguard of the critical mind, which can give shape to the visionary anticipations of a waking dream. The outline of the new as yet unborn reality, which it can always create ahead of the last scientifically verifiable knowledge, will probably never correspond to the reality that in due course will actually come into being. Yet it would be then a pioneer of tomorrow's concrete present, for it would not have outlined the single road supposedly determined by "historical necessity," but charted out hundreds of possible courses between which responsible leaders would then choose, weighing and testing their decisions, which they would then be able continually to correct, instead of living from hand to mouth as they do now—spiritually blind, without any imaginative concept of what lies ahead, stumbling from shock to shock, from crisis to crisis, even girding themselves to meet the unexpected with the single weapon of "experience" which, in most cases, is no longer of any use anyway.

It seems at least possible that, if Dr. Jung's vision of free men thinking of themselves as minds and souls can in some measure be realized, Dr. Jungk's parallel hope of a social imagination restored to wholeness and independent function may also come true. What ought to be evident, now, is the accuracy of their common diagnosis, and the urgent need of what they propose.

## REVIEW

### "PSYCHOTHERAPY EAST AND WEST"

ALAN WATT'S book of this title, now offered in a Mentor edition, has been available for critical comment since 1961. The present reviewer, however, has been reluctant to attempt anything which might be taken as a responsible evaluation in the face of so much contradictory testimony concerning Mr. Watt's "popularization" of Zen, Vedanta, etc. Yet it happens that the preface to this present printing helps a bit, and provides an excellent introduction to the first chapter, "Psychotherapy and Liberation"—which is peculiarly inviting to discussion from a philosophical point of view. (Incidentally, during the interval from 1958 to the present, we have grown tired of some of the critiques of Erich Fromm on the basis of his being too much of a "popularizer," and are now inclined on general principles to defend Watts' efforts.) Mr. Watts begins:

The subject of this book has been "in the air" for at least thirty years, and during this time there has been an ever-growing discussion of this or that parallel between Western psychotherapy and Eastern philosophy.

My purpose in writing this book is not, however, to sum up or review the development of this discussion. It is rather to give it a new turn. Before the writing began, I saw that there were two main ways of handling the subject. Since I have read almost everything that has been written about it, I saw that I could weave all this material into a kind of critical history of psychiatric interest in Eastern thought, combined with a point-by-point comparison of all the major forms of psychotherapy and all the principal techniques of the Eastern disciplines. But this would have produced an unwieldy volume of rather academic interest; furthermore, such formal studies are not my forte, and I leave them very gladly to those who have the necessary patience and industry. The other way was to describe what I feel to be the most fruitful way in which Eastern and Western psychotherapies can fertilize one another. For not only have they much to learn from each other, but also it seems to me that the comparison brings out hidden and highly important aspects of both. I

decided, therefore, to write not a compendium of sober conclusions, but a provocative essay which may jolt both parties to the discussion.

*Psychotherapy East and West*, then, in its author's terms, is to be regarded as a "provocative essay." We may, therefore, pursue some of the questions raised by the author without adopting his particular answers or accepting his manner of setting certain psycho-philosophical problems. Here is a focus for further discussions, rephrasing a traditional issue which might be called "Duty versus Eros." In a chapter, "Invitation to the Dance," Mr. Watts writes:

If there is anything to be learned from history, it is that scoldings, warnings, and preachings are a complete ethical failure. They may serve as part of the mummery with which children are hurried into learning adult conventions, but as the general means of inducing social change they only confirm and ingrain the attitudes which keep us at war. Psychoanalysis in the West and the ways of liberation in the East should enable us to see that the only effective way is to appeal to Eros, without which Logos—the sense of duty and reason—has no life. The problem is that civilized man has learned to be so deeply afraid of Eros that he scorns any suggestion that social love must be erotic; it conjures images of something slimy, lustful, fawning, and obscene which he wants to crush like a loathsome insect. As we have seen, this is in part because the erotic as he knows it is restricted to the genital and does not irradiate the whole sensory field, and thus he imagines that erotic fellowship with others would be a collective sexual orgy. At a deeper level, the fear of the erotic is the dissociated soul's resentment of its mortal body—failing to see that death is a problem not for the organism, but for the soul. It is thus that so much of the organism's spontaneous behavior is shameful: it denies the ego's claim to be master.

The idealisms which civilization produces are strivings of the alienated soul against death, and because their appeal is to hostility, to fear, to pity (which is also fear), or to duty, they can never arouse the energy of life itself—Eros—which alone has the power to put reason into practice.

Mr. Watts skillfully draws together quotations from widely separate sources. He takes the following from Jacob Boehme: "No people understands any more the sensual

language, and the birds in the air and the beasts in the forest do understand it according to their species. Therefore man may reflect what he has been robbed of, and what he is to recover in the second birth. For in the sensual language all spirits speak with each other, they need no other language, for it is the language of nature." The percipience of this mystical view is confirmed by two sentences by Lewis Mumford: "Beauty has played as large a part in evolution as use and cannot be explained, as Darwin sought to, merely as a practical device for courtship or fertilization. In short, it is just as permissible to conceive nature, mythologically, as a poet, working in metaphors and rhythms, as to think of nature as a cunning mechanic, trying to save material, make both ends meet, do the job efficiently and cheaply."

Mr. Watts is saying, in as many different ways as he can manage, and throughout his book, that "liberation" can never be achieved by repression—either as demanded by traditional religion or as conceived by psychoanalysis. But what, then, of the "moral struggle"? The ancient *Upanishads* take it for granted that the disciple must continually join issue with the problem of choosing between "the better and the dearer," and Emerson tells us that "an inevitable dualism bisects nature," so that the sensually "sweet" and the ethically "sweet" are to be found in opposition.

Mr. Watts' confident negations respecting any philosophical validity in the "notion" of immortality through rebirth will bear examination. In his chapter, "The Ways of Liberation," he writes:

All the ways of liberation offered release from the endless cycle of reincarnation—Vedanta and Yoga through the awakening of the true Self, and Buddhism through the realization that the process of life is not happening to any subject, so that there no longer remains anyone to be reincarnated. They agreed, in other words, that the individual soul with its continued reincarnation from life to life and even from moment to moment is *maya*, a playful illusion. Yet all popular accounts of these doctrines, both Western and Asian, state that so long as the

individual remains unliberated he will in fact continue to be reincarnated. Despite the Buddhist *anatman* doctrine of the unreality of the substantial ego, the *Milindapanha* records Nagasena's complex efforts to convince the Greek king Menander that reincarnation can occur, without any actual soul, until at last *Nirvana* is attained. The vast majority of Asian Hindus and Buddhists continue to believe that reincarnation is a fact, and most Westerners adopting Vedanta or Buddhism adopt belief in reincarnation at the same time. Western Buddhists even find this belief consoling, in flat contradiction to the avowed objective of attaining release from rebirth.

This interpretation, it seems to us, neglects two considerations. First, in what are presumed to be Buddha's own words in the *Dhammapada*, there is the following:

Him I call a Brahamana who knows the mystery of death and rebirth of all beings, who is free from attachment, who is happy within himself and enlightened.

Him I call a Brahamana who knows his former lives, who knows heaven and hell.

Second, one can hardly refute an idea, philosophically, simply by noting the confusion which attends one or more of its countless expressions. In a lecture delivered at the University of California at Berkeley, Professor C. J. Ducasse suggested—convincingly, it seems to us—that the theory of reincarnation cannot be so easily set aside:

Whether or not survival as plurality of lives on earth is a fact, it is at least coherently thinkable and not incompatible with any facts empirically known to us today. In one form or another it has been the conception of survival probably most widespread among the peoples of the earth.

To the present writer, as to McTaggart, it does seem that if survival is a fact, then the most plausible form it might take would be rebirth on earth, perhaps after an interval occupied by the individual in distilling out of the memories of a life just ended such wisdom as his reflective powers enabled him to extract. And this conception of survival also seems to be the one which puts man's present life on earth in the most significant perspective.

## *COMMENTARY* "ANATOMY" OF THE SELF

DAVID HUME was such a clever man, and his account of his inability to find "himself" so superficially plausible (see lead article), that something further ought to be said on this question. One obvious comment is to ask who or what is the Hume who made these observations? Had the identity which pursued the search, noted the flitting sense perceptions as they went by, and generalized about their meaning, no reality?

For many, however, this answer will not do, simply because it is an expression of common sense. Our difficulty, perhaps, is that we want to perceive the self as object, when the self is by definition always the subject of any possible object. It follows from this that however subtle the object becomes, there is always the subtler subject who eludes observation. But is there a special kind of observation, during which the subject encounters the subject?

This is the quest of mysticism, entered upon through the disciplines of meditative concentration. Mr. Hume manifestly had no time for such pursuits.

However, there is a somewhat, but not altogether, different approach. A reading of the middle chapters of A. H. Maslow's *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Insight paperback, Van Nostrand, \$1.95) is extremely suggestive of the idea that some kind of "inner being" in all men leaves its track in the formation of character and in all qualities we prize among human beings. For the most part, this "track" does not appear upon the surface of one's life, but in self-actualizing persons, and in the peak-experiences of others, the symmetry of the self-being gains varying degrees of manifestation. Reading Dr. Maslow, one is reminded of Walt Whitman's rhapsodic announcements, for while the psychologist writes dispassionately as a scientist, his subject-matter requires the words of high and thrilling passages in consciousness. His nouns and adjectives would

easily make a rhapsody. Some new song of the Self.

Hume stared at his own perceptive processes to find a being at rest, and found—nothing. Other men have searched for man—ego, soul—in motion, and found categories of being ranging from clods to Bodhisattvas.

Perhaps Leibniz was right. What if the self were a naked monad, an abstract sphere of pure reflecting capacity, and to look for or at the self should be never to see anything but what it reflects?

But the "habits" of the self, its characteristic modes of reflection—these are not neutral, imageless glass. They are the dynamics of the soul's most constant longings and consistent acts. From these habits come dignity, nobility, and all the marks of human greatness. The self is that to which these qualities are somehow attached. Yet the self, as pure identity, must also be beyond any attribute, bodiless and free.

Hume never got beyond the barriers of the external "empirical" self for a very good reason—he did not want to. Tolstoy and Frankl had deeper motives and stronger purposes.

# CHILDREN

## . . . and Ourselves

### NOTES AND QUOTES

A CONDENSATION of Jason Epstein's February *Commentary* article, "Books for American Children," comes to us by way of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* in a column headed, "The Tragedy of Children's Books." Several of the selected paragraphs are arresting. Mr. Epstein holds that since the production of stories for young people has become extremely lucrative, the resulting mass-appeal approach tends to "betray" childhood. Why? Because there is so little talent, and so much of a tendency within the publishing business itself to select books by formula, shoddiness in mass production becomes inevitable. In discussing one of the four chief "prize-winning" books of 1961, Mr. Epstein writes:

One of the prize winners represents the preoccupation these writers have with the idea that the young had better subdue, for the sake of avoiding a disturbance within the community, whatever tendencies they may have toward rebelliousness and originality. It is thickly pious and its factitious historical setting is presented in language so drab and abstract and even, occasionally, illiterate, that it is impossible to adjust one's ear to it.

One need only recall the tactics of literature that children have always found interesting to see how far off the mark this sort of product is.

In *Gulliver's Travels* the hero, bored with his wife, sets out on a series of journeys in the course of which the absurdity of human society is variously illustrated.

Robinson Crusoe discovers that he can live successfully with an absolute minimum of human society.

Alice, tired of her book, escapes the every-day world and encounters a parody of it in which the logical categories that adults claim to think in are, if carried a few steps further, seen to be absurd.

The children in E. Nesbit's novels are invariably wiser and enjoy themselves more than their elders, from whom they are forever escaping.

Huckleberry Finn's only friend is an outcast, a fugitive slave, and the world from which they jointly flee is filled with sanctimonious frauds, false friends, and parvenus.

Nor has this theme been limited to children's literature. That organized society is hostile to growth and freedom is a dominant idea in the literary tradition, especially for those modern writers who have deliberately concerned themselves with questions of rebellion, privacy and their own authenticity. Until recently the typical literary hero was himself, so to speak, a child growing up and testing his mettle against the world. And if one thinks of that long line of literary adolescents from Don Quixote and Hamlet to Stephen Daedalus, then the idea of childhood and the problem of growing up will appear to be representative, for many of our great writers at least since Shakespeare and Milton, of the human condition itself.

In proposing a closer affiliation between childhood and the "civilized world" in which the President addresses 10-year-olds, then, the experts have undertaken to alienate children from their own nature. Given the refractory nature of childhood, it is not surprising that the children increasingly refuse to take part in the world that the experts are trying to sell them.

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Everyone of course *knows* that impressive size and appearance are not supposed to have much to do with education, but when systems of teaching become heavily laden with devices that accommodate to existing societal or population problems, the opportunity for originality in teaching is seriously diminished. For this reason, *An Experiment in Education*, a little volume published by the Cambridge University Press, may appeal to many. This is the story of Sybil Marshall. Prevented from pursuing a university career by the depression of the 1930's, Mrs. Marshall had to settle for becoming an "uncertified teacher." Since there weren't too many administrators around to care what she did in the classroom, she began on her first day to build an approach which was representative of what *she* had to give. And so, as sometimes happens between teachers and pupils, the children began to give what *they* had in enthusiasm and

inspiration. A *Peace News* (April 5) reviewer says of Mrs. Marshall's work, described in her book, *Adventure in Learning*: "Little by little the regimented children relaxed and began to trust their own values, always previously condemned as silly or naughty. Teacher and children began to learn together, looking at their little village with new perception and working from the clouds and storms, cows and dogs and swans of Kingston towards a wonderfully free flow of painting and writing and an intimate easiness in history and literature which few which few children ever glimpse." The reviewer comments:

The small country school is an irreplaceable gem in our educational system and admittedly it would be a hardened progress-lover indeed who could deny a pang of sadness at the end of the book when the little school is abruptly sentenced to extinction. Nevertheless, the size of the school is not quite the essential point. A brilliant teacher like Mrs. Marshall can make an inspired oasis in the dullest large school even though her influence must be limited by rigid timetabling and indeed the very presence of other teachers. There is a tremendous attraction about the idea of taking a whole school out for a day by the brook to dabble fingers and see kingfishers, recording it all later in vivid writing and pictures. "When I put my hand in, the water goes over my fingers and looks like a lot of small waterfalls together."

Mrs. Marshall is now a lecturer in education at Sheffield University, after eighteen years of teaching. She began—or rather, fortunate circumstances allowed her to begin—with absolutely no training. But in this instance the result was simply one of "stimulus to courage and unorthodoxy."

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Writing in the April *Encounter* on the reform of the universities, Noel Annan comments on Herbert Butterfield's Lindsay Memorial Lectures of 1962. Remarking that "Butterfield is nowhere more telling than when he points out the failings of the administrative mind which thinks in terms of teaching load, professorial spread, bench space and building use and which forgets the focus of all

education—the personal impact of the teacher upon his students," Mr. Annan continues:

He [Butterfield] is very right. All discussion of education focuses here. How can pupils be taught to use their own minds and develop originality? How can they be persuaded to renounce cramming and question-spotting? How can all those who govern schools, colleges, and universities be made to acknowledge that examination results are not an end but a comparatively unimportant by-product of education? How can students be persuaded to love learning for its own sake and not for the job that getting a degree may obtain for them. In the most important sense discussion of education is fruitless: fruitless because all the arrangements (that are the subject-matter of such discussion) are so often nullified at the one point to which the arrangements are directed—that is, the meeting of the minds of pupil and teacher where the intellect is trained.

Another note on the importance of teacher-pupil rapport is found in the British journal, *Anarchist* (November, 1962), in an article titled "A Charter for the Unfree Child."

Mr. Martin Daniel writes:

It is one of the commonest results of our present educational system that children are repelled from culture and all that smacks of the highbrow. This is not so much the teachers' fault as the fault of the situation, which implies that most of what the children like is worthless, whereas what the teacher likes is superior. In the necessarily rigid atmosphere of the classroom, culture tends to appear rather drearily solemn.

Perhaps an inspired teacher may be able to do better than this, given time and freedom. Any cultural influence, in fact, depends on the man who gives it. Do we have such men? Some, no doubt.

## *FRONTIERS*

### The State of the Nation

FRED J. COOK'S article, "The Corrupt Society—a Journalist's Guide to the Profit Ethic," in the *Nation* for June 1-8, presents nothing startlingly new to readers of the daily newspapers. His collection of horrible examples is of incidents which were chosen because they had already made "headline" scandals. They include, for example, the price-fixing conspiracy of the big electrical companies, packaging frauds, contractors' payoffs, embezzlements from banks, burglaries by policemen, and industrial spying. Attention is given to the enormous sums spent on business "entertainment," which were then deducted from taxable corporate income, and to the use of prostitutes by sales organizations. Looking at cheating in examinations by schoolchildren, Mr. Cook found a revealing reply among the returns of a poll of student opinion: "One ninth-grader practically parroted the words of James C. Haggerty in the U-2 incident. 'I think that anyone given a chance to cheat and not get caught would take it.'" Of the students examined in the poll, 41 per cent agreed with this view. After a similar revelation concerning the undergraduates of a New Jersey business college, the Dean of Students commented: "The thing that alarmed me was the complete absence of the feeling in some cases that they had done anything wrong." The "fixed" television quiz shows are recalled, and there is a long section on Billie Sol Estes.

In his conclusion, Mr. Cook says:

The preceding pages [42 of them] present an appalling picture of a society operating, not in a sea of ethics, but in the morass of the jungle. The blindness to ethical standards is found at every level—in the proprietor, manager and working classes alike. Does this blindness rise from the bottom or percolate downward from the top? One could argue plausibly for the latter. It is, after all, the proprietor and manager classes that form the power elite of our society and the conduct of the powerful sets its own pervasive standards.

Yet this is too facile an explanation. The truth perhaps lies not in any one segment of our social structure, but in the nature of our society as a whole and in the ethic on which it is based. . . . Polybius, the Greek historian, once summarized a nation's decline in a single sentence: "At Carthage, nothing which results in a profit is regarded as disgraceful." We are approaching the ethics of a Carthage. We have forgotten that the ultimate purpose of a social order is fulfillment of the individual.

Mr. Cook is an old-fashioned muckraker intent on the corruption of the modern technological society, but he distinguishes himself from the great muckrakers of fifty years ago—such as Ida Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens—by generalizing the responsibility for what he finds. Not "malefactors of great wealth," but "the nature of our society as a whole and . . . the ethic on which it is based," is his diagnosis.

The popular moralists of our age will probably show no interest in either Mr. Cook's facts or his explanation of them, since they tarnish considerably both the ends and the means of our grossly acquisitive culture, and open discussion of such problems has little in common with the proud and determined righteousness of the Cold War mood of the United States. It is here that we fail so badly in our intention to "negotiate from strength." A strong civilization is always willing to face its inner ills.

In another region, but equally important, are the matters discussed by Brock Chisholm in a talk recently broadcast over a West Coast radio station. (Copies of this talk, "Mental Health and Survival," are available at 15 cents each from the World Peace Broadcasting Foundation, 3005 High Street, Des Moines, Iowa. An internationally known Canadian psychiatrist, Dr. Chisholm was formerly director-general of the World Health Organization.) In this talk he stresses two major hazards to the survival of the human race. First is the fact that most of the people in the world are convinced that they and their nation or race have a much larger share of virtue than others who live elsewhere under other governments. This attitude of isolated peoples toward themselves, he points

out, has for centuries been the basis of national loyalty and of action for the survival of the group. Dr. Chisholm summarizes this widely-held view as an article of faith:

The welfare and the prosperity and the enjoyment of life and the prestige and so on of the members of the group into which I happen to be born are more important than the welfare, prosperity, prestige, etc., even including the lives of all the rest of the people in the world all put together. It can be expressed as "my country right or wrong," or it can be expressed as "charity begins at home." And that is especially used by people for whom charity also ends at home. Right up to the present time, this has been our concept of survival, the survival of our survival group, independently of and unrelated to anybody else's welfare or survival. Because that is irrelevant to our necessary ends, the survival of our own group.

"That," Dr. Chisholm comments, "has been the system by which our ancestors have survived throughout all our previous generations." It was a mode of survival, he points out, that "depended on the group being defensible; or, on the other hand, the group being able to successfully attack other groups."

In the present, however, that method will no longer work:

Quite suddenly, about fifteen years ago, the system became obsolete because no longer was any group on earth defensible and no longer could any group successfully attack another group without damage to themselves. The system broke down and is simply no longer available, because the conditions have changed utterly. The survival group is no longer the nation in its latest stage, but has become the human race. And we of the human race will survive as members of the human race from now on or not at all. The era, the long centuries during which we could survive at the expense of the death of other groups is finished. It finished about fifteen years ago. Many of us have not yet discovered that fact. We are still feeling thinking, acting as though we had not developed nuclear warfare, or chemical warfare. And this simply because we have tended to continue to be controlled by our consciences the attitudes we learned early in childhood and have not thought out for ourselves because we just accepted them.

The reader will have no difficulty in understanding what Dr. Chisholm is saying so long as he realizes that "conscience," in this context, means little more than moral prejudices formed by cultural conditioning. This becomes clear from the following:

Most of us, or many of us at least were taught in childhood to depend upon conscience. The attitudes we found around us expressed in very many ways, generally added up to the belief that conscience was something like a still, small voice that always speaks to truth, which is completely reliable, which one should always obey. It was not brought to our attention that different people's consciences told them entirely different things, quite opposed things, quite frequently and normally. We were not shown that nobody ever found a Presbyterian conscience in an Eskimo, for instance. Unless a Presbyterian had caught a little Eskimo practically at birth and brought him up as a Presbyterian, in which case you have a perfectly good Presbyterian conscience, not an Eskimo conscience, and they are very, very different kinds of things. . . .

To some extent we all share that type of disability. We have attitudes we have adopted in infancy and childhood simply because we grew up into them, and they were part of our environment that may or may not still be appropriate, if they ever were. . . . They may distort the picture, they may prevent our seeing things from other people's points of view, and so understanding their motivations, and may prevent our taking the next appropriate step in the use of intellect, the considering of all the factors involved in any threat. . . .

The next step in a process of effective use of intelligence, we may see as a step of making rational decisions, having taken into account all the contributory factors to the situation. . . . A decision, however, based on the total situation, not just the welfare of our own little group and at whatever cost to anybody else. Because never again will we insure survival by that method. This has become a suicidal method, and so we must take into account the welfare not of this group or that, but the welfare of the human species. Again, we have no tradition for that. We have no early-learned concern for it, because the occasion has not arisen until recently.

We have had no institutions developed by our ancestors for doing just that, or making the kinds of decisions that would be appropriate in new situations.

Because old rules designed for getting along in old situations by definition may be inadequate to new situations. We have had no institutions developed by our ancestors for living effectively in a kind of world where the conditions of survival have become quite different—the ability to live harmoniously in a changing total environment. And if we can overcome all those barriers and many others which all of you can think of just as well as I can, there is the question of carrying out the decisions we have made, considering at each step the effect of what we do on our own patterns in the development of our children, on the points of view of everyone else, and the effects, now and in the future, as far as we can see.

This is enough to quote from Dr. Chisholm to show that he is getting at the problem of "national defense" or "survival" by going to the roots of human attitudes in the education of our children, and in relation to basic moral conceptions. Mr. Cook traced the issues of domestic corruption to exactly the same source "the nature of our society as a whole and the ethic on which it is based." No other approach, it seems to us, can offer much hope of accomplishing the kind of changes that need to take place.