

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC THINKING

IT has long been customary in Western thought to dismiss moral or ethical ideas which lack a *social* dimension as shallow escapism or "ivory tower" philosophizing. With hardly any exceptions, thinking about human good has been directly connected with thinking about political power—how to get it, and how to use it in behalf of the common welfare. Failure to think politically was equated with failure to think seriously. Justification for this view was found in the endless catalog of continuing inequalities to be found everywhere in the world, and a natural ardor for social action, progress, or revolution grew out of the fact—plain to all since the eighteenth century—that men are able to plan, establish, and administer political and economic relationships which put an end to ancient abuses and replace centuries-old mechanisms of injustice.

Today, while the dominant current of socio-political thinking has by no means died out—after all, new sections are always being added to the catalog of wrongs to be righted, and only small minorities have become persuaded that the good of man must be sought by means other than overwhelming political power—another theme is slowly modifying opinions long held to be beyond criticism. We are beginning to realize that while power may be acquired for righteous purposes, there is no built-in guarantee in any power structure that it will be used for righteous purposes. The bureaucratic machine, we discover, is as morally neutral as any other machine. Its wheels grind up good people as efficiently as they grind up bad people. But since the labels on the wheels and other parts declare that socially necessary processes are being fulfilled, there is the tendency to conclude that the "good people" caught in the works were probably not so good as we thought. We assume, for example, that the people who are in prison deserve to be there; that

individuals harassed by legislative investigating committees have probably done things they oughtn't to have done; that other countries whose bureaucratic machinery has another line of labels on its parts represent people who are ignorant of true righteousness and need vigorous instruction from those with better ideas and more experience—namely, ourselves.

Now what is frightening about this situation is not simply the fact that well-intentioned citizens are making moral judgments about other people on the basis of insufficient information, or from egocentric or ethnocentric or "nationalist" prejudice; the really appalling thing is that they have *no other basis* of judgment at all, save the most rudimentary human feelings. It was not, for example, until a trained police dog was made to attack a woman in the streets of a Southern city that the great mass of people in the United States began to wonder if there might not be something evil about the mechanisms of law and order in the South. We need, in short, the drama of extreme situations to recall us to the fact that there are non-political standards of morality. It was just about impossible to explain away that incident as a harsh but necessary exercise of legal authority. Yet the prevailing view is that quite terrible things may be tolerated so long as a political justification can be found. The claim of spokesmen for the (since fallen) South Vietnam Government that the Buddhists in that country are crypto-communists was a way of attempting to reduce the spontaneous horror of the world at the self-immolation of protesting monks. Presumably, if a *communist* burns himself to death, it doesn't matter so much.

Yet contemporary social thinking can hardly ignore the fact that ideology displaces humanity. On the whole, ideological thinking is stronger than humanistic thinking because ideological thinking is

systematic thinking which starts from righteous political premises, proposes desirable social ends, and points to effective political means to reach them. Ideological thinking commands serious attention because it seems to be able to make "real things" happen. It operates in the real world and uses means that change the foci of power. You can criticize ideological thinking, as we have been doing here, and up to a point many people will agree with you; but eventually they will ask, *What will you put in its place?*

It is necessary to admit that nobody will ever be able to "put" something in the place of ideology. On the other hand, it might be possible to *grow* another or complementary and qualifying view of life. A letter from a reader may help us to enlarge on this possibility:

Now that we have developed the custom of having various international "years"—there is the International Geophysical Year, and the International Development Year—why not have an International "Truce on Ideologies" Year? A truce on ideologies and labels.

Looking at both the past and the present, it appears to me that one factor disruptive of peace and brotherhood is the perpetual creation of ideological "curtains" between man and man. Protestants and Catholics, Guelphs and Ghibellines, Puritans and Quakers, Girondists and Jacobins, etc.

Stripped of their Nazi ideology, the German people as encountered by the Americans were people, not monsters. And I have rarely heard more enthusiasm about a country and a people than that expressed about Japan and the Japanese by an American woman who had gone over with the occupation forces. I have also learned from those who have penetrated the various "curtains" created by our labels and stereotypes—Jew, Negro, Yankee (damyankee), rich girls' private school, country "hick," etc. They found the "natives" behind those veils or curtains not at all what they had thought. There were of course bad traits traits that we find also in ourselves when we look with sufficient honesty.

When they act under the influence of an ideology, men can be monstrous to their fellow men—as shown by the Inquisition, Calvin's burning of Servetus, the New England witch trials, the Moscow Purge trials, and the Nazi gas chambers.

Often, these things are done for reasons that, years or centuries later, are looked back upon as ridiculous—in any event, not worth the brutal sacrifice of life and lives.

It is true that my proposal sounds several miles from possible. Ideas are closely intertwined in our ways of life and thinking. But it would be an enlightening exercise for all of us, in every country, to do some mental disentangling from our ideological attitudes and seek to discover at what points our attitudes have made distorted images of others.

Does the omnipresent "man in the street," struggling to make ends meet, living through personal joys and sorrows feel like an "imperialist"? Maybe Ivan, going through the same experiences, doesn't feel like a "communist." Men, it seems, are the only creatures who kill each other in the name of ideas.

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Well, what, precisely, would we have a holiday from? The applicable definition of ideology is as follows:

IDEOLOGY: The intellectual pattern of any widespread culture or movement; as, exposure to Anglo-Saxon *ideology*; specifically, the integrated assertions, theories, and aims constituting a politico-social program, often with an implication of factitious propagandizing; as, Fascism was altered in Germany to fit the Nazi ideology.

The point of this reader's suggestion, as we understand it, is to make a holiday from the sort of ideological thinking which has the effect of giving the presumed political character of the people of other nations (ideologies) more importance than their human qualities. Now if we are to take this idea seriously, we may see three possibilities for the suspension of ideological condemnation of others. The first possibility—over which we have no control—is the accident of history. It occasionally happens that a people of whom we are suspicious on ideological grounds will suffer a great catastrophe—say, an earthquake or a volcanic eruption. There is then a tendency to think only of their suffering and human need. We have an illustration of this in the recent disaster to Cuba caused by the hurricane

Flora. Following their long-established policy of giving succor to people in need, without judgment or blame, the Quakers of the United States attempted without success to get State Department approval for a shipment of food and medicines to Cuba. But after the hurricane struck our island neighbor, permission was granted, and a plane bearing many thousand dollars' worth of food and drugs was despatched to Cuba by the American Friends Service Committee. (It is a principle of the Quakers to ignore ideological differences in their work of relieving human suffering.)

A second possibility for the holiday might emerge from a deliberate emphasis on international relationships which involve no political or ideological issues—if such can be found. And if, for a year, there could be close associations of this sort among people of opposed or conflicting ideological traditions, the holiday might extend itself indefinitely. It is obvious, however, that the new relationships would have to be based upon a sharing of values which become more important than divisive political ideas. For some readers, this condition may make the "possibility" quite fanciful.

Finally, we might, in a year's time, be able to drain away the emotional content of ideological controversy by learning to understand how the issues and points of contention have grown up, historically. This would make it clear that even fanatical ideologists are behaving like human beings. We would see the springs of understandable human conduct behind the rigid façades of ideological delusion.

The first step, of course, in any such undertaking, would be to *want* to understand our ideological opponents. This is probably the most difficult step of all. There is no formula for learning how to take it, since the desire or will to understand is a primary human quality, *sui generis*. You either have it or you don't. Normal, undistorted human beings have it naturally, but people whose cultural life has been shaped by

ideological assumptions and partisanship are often atrophied in their desire to understand others. This is one of the anti-human crimes of the ideological way of life. The ideologically motivated individual knows in his unconscious that if he lets himself be affected by human sympathy for his "enemy," he may not be able to control the consequences. The premises of his own system might have to be questioned, and this could cast him into a non-ideological no-man's land, bringing terrifying breaks with all familiar relationships, and ultimately, loss of identity. So, on this initial question, we have no easy answer. We are obliged to fall back on the proposition that men want to understand because it is human to want to understand, and go on to the next step.

This would be to find non-political mechanisms of cultural interchange and to improve their function and influence. One such mechanism is Science. But why science? Why not religion? Mainly for the reason that, in our culture, religion does not involve *thinking*. It might, and doubtless some day it will, but at present religion in the West is little more than motive without mechanism or discipline. It ought to be a displacing competitor of ideology, but ideology has both emotional drive and a theory of progress which relates to the hard facts of human existence, while religion adds only sentiment to its primary motive. As a result, in the world of action ideology is taken seriously, while religion is not.

So science, or rather scientists, who have a high reputation for coping with fact and reality, are a practicable means to non-political understanding of the peoples of other cultures. A good illustration of a scientist in this role is provided by an article in the weekly, *Science*, for Sept. 20. Under the title, "Oriental Renaissance in Education and Medicine," Dr. Wilder Penfield, a Canadian neurological surgeon, reports on the progress of medicine, particularly in medical education, in Communist China. Late in 1962 Dr. and Mrs. Penfield were for a month guests of the

Chinese Medical Association. "The fact that we are not Communists," Dr. Penfield wrote, "was taken for granted, and we heard no political discussion except when we asked to have broadcasts or speeches translated." They visited colleges and hospitals in many of the larger cities of China. To introduce his article, which is an illuminating discussion of the practice of medicine in China, Dr. Penfield says:

This is a new China, after thousands of years as an empire—a new nation. Politically the Republic of 700 million people is young, but it is conscious of new power and ambition. . . . To understand what is happening in the People's Republic of China one must realize that there are practically no foreigners there now, except from the Orient. But in spite of that, a remarkable renaissance of Western learning is going on. This is important to us as well as to the Chinese. There is a general expectation among them that science and higher education will solve the unsolved problems, that mechanization will banish hunger and bring plenty, that afforestation and the construction of more dams will control the floods and the droughts of the past. The people are temperate, frugal, puritanical, and remarkably law-abiding. It is the nature of these people, as I discovered in 1943 on a visit to western China, then under Chiang Kai-shek, to be fastidiously clean, to work hard, and to find something to laugh about.

The more you read of this article, the less you think about the spectre of Chinese "Communism," and the more you realize that the Chinese are human beings who are working strenuously to overcome enormous practical problems. But you need the particulars in order to feel this fact and to absorb its meaning. Generalizations don't help much. There is, however, the following, which is part of a statement by the Chinese Vice Minister of Health, who is in charge of medical education:

"In Old China, there were medical colleges and universities in large centers such as Shanghai, Tientsin, and Peking. It was now considered that the country would be best served if medical colleges were more widely distributed. Today, except for Tibet, every province in China has its medical college."

Next he gave some surprising statistics, which I also heard from other educators. "During the 40 to 50 years before 1949 (that means the whole history of

modern Chinese medicine!), only 18,000 qualified doctors had been trained in China. During the past 13 years, 102,000 additional physicians have been graduated from modern schools (not including the traditional herb doctors of whom there are 500,000 in active practice today). In addition to the senior-grade, modern medical men," he pointed out, "there are the middle-grade personnel to be considered. We have qualified 450,000 nurses, technicians, midwives, pharmacists, and others during the same period."

There is no contempt in modern China for traditional herbal medicine. The new doctors test the old methods and adopt whatever they find of value. Dr. Penfield makes this comment:

. . . vast numbers of patients, outside teaching hospitals, are being treated in China today in this manner, and the best approach to balanced control is an unprejudiced scientific evaluation. . . . If the procedure has no value, a clear statement to that effect will then carry weight among medical men, ancient and modern. The so-called traditional doctors are physicians of an ancient school. They are not witch doctors, nor are they charlatans. They have textbooks and records of experience. They do not operate, unless penetrating the skin with a needle may be called that. They do administer herbs. They counsel and reassure, and they are remarkably skilled in the treatment of fractures.

After much detail concerning Chinese medical practice and education, Dr. Penfield concludes:

In a physical sense, the people of the People's Republic of China are isolated from the rest of the world. No doubt that isolation serves various purposes. In spite of it (or is it perhaps because of it?), a remarkable renaissance of Western learning is going on. It has been said that, at the beginning of this Communist regime, pressure was brought to bear on scientists to accept certain ideas and principles in the field of science, with a disappointing result. Whether or not that is true, it is obvious that in the broad field of science and medicine today, and in most of the "arts and sciences," there is no isolation. There is freedom of thought and debate in those fields—freedom to seek the truth independently. . . .

In 1943 I visited the U.S.S.R. for the first time. The isolation of the Russian people was similarly complete. As in mainland China today, the inflow of scientific information was never cut off. We in other countries have watched the remarkable evolution of Soviet education since that time. Even though the

historical background of the two peoples is not the same, it is still reasonable to predict that the development of higher education in China will be no less brilliant in a relatively short time.

The isolation of the people of mainland China is disappearing on the scientific and intellectual level. We can now make contact with our colleagues in the East. They use the language of our professions, and they are beginning to make their own contributions. Perhaps it is in science that the brotherhood of man is most clearly established. Scientists have always preferred to take the view that there are no national boundaries.

There is so much simple common sense in Dr. Penfield's article that it is a real menace to ideological passion. It makes the reader feel that only sheer stupidity can stand in the way of an understanding of these people. This is not to say that there are no real problems, nor that the Chinese are blameless. If you read the Dalai Lama's book (*My Land, My People*, McGraw-Hill, 1962), you are appalled by the rigid self-justifications of the Chinese conquerors and their extraordinary capacity to insist with a straight face that black is white. These Chinese, you say to yourself, are shameless liars. We have no wish to excuse or "explain away" this depressing phenomenon, but recently we came across a discussion which may help to account for it. J. Danremount, writing in *Eastern World* for October, examines at some length the influence of the Confucian tradition in Chinese education. He says:

Confucius founded his school upon the Prince's virtue—benevolence—and thus inspired the respect of "the Superior Man"—Prince—as opposed to the Commoner. We all know that Confucius and his followers, although heretical, gave to their social and civic morale the value of ethics. . . . Confucians . . . had to teach the kings how to improve the material life of their subjects, how to distribute lands to the lords, how to reduce the tenants' taxes, how to promote the fair exchange of goods and further the benefit of education. No doubt they meant well, but the system of teaching they used might not have been influenced by the respect for truth and accuracy which typifies the modern scientists and historians in the West. In that remote time, when priority ought to

have been laid on fair ruling, they served their purpose splendidly. But it seems to some scholars of Chinese philosophy, now, that they may have given, ever since, and perhaps because of their very success with the country's rulers a definite trend to the Chinese mind. And that trend is still noticeable—to the extent of stopping all possible progress of the historic mind in China—so much so that Chinese leaders look naturally upon history as a mere adjustment of the past to the present—an accommodation deemed necessary for organizing efficiently in the present. This trend to distort history has been accepted almost as a dogma of home policy.

...

[The Confucian] system of thinking has indeed insured the succession of powers not through blood but through exams. It has even sanctioned the most typical concept of Chinese history, that of withdrawing the "decree of Heaven" from the fallen sovereigns. While, on the other hand, it has not only inspired the literate class with a certain arrogance, the snobbery of culture—as the gate to all power and riches—and to a half-learned kind of priggishness, it has also developed a peculiar mentality which leads officials to defend almost every social action—including the lowest—with a morale-inspired principle, which at most times is a mere pretext.

The final point of this writer is that the Chinese are still climbing out of the force relationships of their feudal period of history. They suffered three hundred years of occupation and control by the Manchus, and this was followed by a century of domination by European nations, which bore heavily on their pride. Then came fifty years of internal conflict, sometimes no more than a feudal struggle for power. We should not, Mr. Danremount says, forget this history, but take the Chinese as they are, and help them in their effort to climb to a higher level. Would our past failures to get along with the Chinese, he asks, "be mostly due to the fact that we did not bother to understand them?"

This is a way of saying that there are "ugly Chinese" as well as "ugly Americans," both having explanation in the cultural backgrounds to which they were exposed, which shaped their attitudes of mind.

Dr. Penfield has a "scientific" approach to the question, Mr. Danremount a historical-humanist approach. The Humanist stance is more universal in its appeal, but the scientific view, in our culture, has more strength. In other words, the scientists have a better chance than the Humanists of getting a new "open door" policy going toward China. The scientists have the prestige of their physical and technological achievements to hold their audience and win respect for what they say.

Another way of putting this conclusion would be to propose that in a civilization in which the moral strength of the "generalist" is at low ebb, hope lies, initially, with the best of the specialists—in this case the scientists. The generalist will not get serious attention in our world and culture until there has been a far-reaching restoration of private, non-institutional philosophy, such that people become able to *hear* the truth in what a man says, regardless of his "politics" or his supposed ideological background. There will have to be an enormous growth in human respect for nonpolitical reality, and non-political identity, before the devastating partisanship of ideology can be eliminated from our decisions.

It is obvious, of course, that the contribution of scientists in this direction is not in terms of scientific content. There is a strong humanist current in the thinking of practically all serious scientists, and the scientists have more chance than any other group of getting their humanist thinking out into the open where it can be heard and felt. Of all the institutional groups in Western civilization, only the scientists are likely to be believed when they say that they seek and report on impartial truth. When Dr. Penfield says he is "not a communist," this statement has some hope of being accepted. When the skeptic who wants to know what this Canadian doctor was doing in China, anyway, is told that he went there as a scientist, serving the international cause of medical progress, this is recognized as an *answer* and not a prevaricating excuse. His report, moreover, was

published in *Science*, weekly organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. This helps the general reader to say to himself, "Well, if a scientist can use common sense about such matters, why can't I do it, too?"

The basic problem is to encourage thinking which starts out from human instead of ideological assumptions, and to give that kind of thinking a strength that can withstand the sniping and attacks of ideological partisans. This is not a suggestion that we become sentimentalists who ignore the reality of political conflict and the evil in ideological power drives, but a proposal that we set out systematically to eliminate the factor of cultural delusion from this "reality" and this "evil." In order to do this, it is necessary to think as human beings, in terms of human values, setting aside the big abstractions of Ideology.

It is for this reason—among of course others—that private thinking and philosophizing are so important. If you have no practice in thinking as a human being, you won't be able to take a holiday from ideology. And because of this failure, an entire civilization is in danger of being swept into the dust-heaps of history.

REVIEW

A PSYCHO-PHILOSOPHICAL DIARY

THROUGH the years, we have received quite a "passel" of layman's volumes which attempt to combine current psychological insights with affirmative faith—either religious or philosophical. One such book we have for review is Claire Myers Owens' *Awakening to the Good—Psychological or Religious?* (Christopher, 1958, \$3.75).

This book deserves attention. In the first place, Mrs. Owens does not argue from any established religious position. Second, while writing at length of her own moods and experiences, the author avoids most of the vanities of the egocentric predicament. Third, a number of contemporary psychologists have indicated their respect for Mrs. Owens' quest, among them Gordon Allport and Abraham Maslow. Aldous Huxley, Edmund Sinnott, and Hadley Cantril have also said good things about it, and Ruth Nanda Anshen, who edits the World Perspectives Series for Harpers, speaks of the book as a contribution to "the unity of man and nature . . . for which science, philosophy, religion—indeed all men—seek."

Awakening to the Good begins:

Is there no dormant good or love of others inherent in all men waiting to be awakened?

On the answer to this question may depend the survival of the human race. If the answer is no, mankind seems doomed to self-destruction—atomic—ethical—or worse.

Or are there ways to arouse man's deeper better self—if any?

This awakening to the good in himself, in his fellow men and the universe, can be *induced* by any of the six higher religions—especially if revived by modern psychologies. Or it can be *induced* by psychology—usually Jungian but sometimes Freudian.

Or it can be *spontaneous*—as in the case of poets (Whitman, Millay, Emerson, and Dante) and saints and some of us who are neither—like me.

Methods may vary but results are remarkably alike. A joyous release of the person's ethical, loving, intuitive, spiritual self, of the latent love for his fellow men, desire to serve them, and a feeling of communication with the creative principle of the universe. If the process is complete, his Reason unites with his Feeling and Intuition to create the whole man. Only the whole man can create the good life for the individual and the good society for all in this age of Science and Materialism. If this renaissance of the deeper part of man's personality became sufficiently prevalent, might it not bring permanent peace to a disastrously warring world? Everything else has failed.

This book might be called one woman's quest for a "living ontology," and indeed, for anyone who cannot accept the theological conception of man's innate sinfulness, or the "scientific" account of man's "soul" as a complex of conditioned responses to environment, the quest is necessary. A key, for Mrs. Owens, was supplied by William James's idea of "psychological death and rebirth." In a period of psychological despair, Mrs. Owens came close to an understanding of the need for an entire transformation of perspective:

Month after month I had sat in this room playing hungrily with typewriter keys, struggling desperately, hopelessly, to *think* my way out of my despair. This was the age of Reason, wasn't it? If rational thought could not solve our problems—universal and personal—what could, in heaven's name?

Men's behavior all over the world in the last ten years had proved *men did not want freedom*. They wanted security even at the price of submission under Fascist or Communist dictatorships. The shock of this discovery stunned me. I had been brought up under the precepts of Thomas Jefferson. My father had quoted him to me constantly. And I too had sworn "eternal vigilance against tyranny over the minds of men." Freedom, Jefferson said, was man's most precious possession. But how could you fight to give men something they did not even want?

All my life I had fought for freedom for myself and others—freedom from the pressures of the home, the school, the church, society, custom, tradition, and conventions. Was everything I had ever done now valueless?

I had no idea of what was happening to me. I never had heard at this time of William James' theory of psychological death, "the dying to be truly born."

All my life, however, I had heard the old Biblical cliché "He that loses his life shall find it." I did not believe a word of it. I did not understand it might be a profound psychological truth.

There are, in Mrs. Owens' view, five stages of alternating despair and enlightenment—accompaniments of growth:

Whatever the method—religious, psychological, or spontaneous—mature perception of the nature of man, this universe, and his relation to it usually is precipitated, paradoxically enough, by suffering—if deep enough. In fact, to develop his highest potentialities, man apparently must obey certain mysterious laws of the human psyche and climb five difficult psychological steps: Despair, "Death," Rebirth, Reason, and Wholeness.

Among the books Mrs. Owens found helpful is Ira Progoff's *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology* and it seems that in her search for orientation, the authors who contributed most are similarly disposed to use the "death and rebirth" idea. As a whole, Mrs. Owens' book is an attempt to synthesize basic meanings. If she is sometimes careless and effusive, her extravagances have an agreeably Whitmanesque garb. Her affirmations are "big," but why shouldn't they be?

For her conclusion, Mrs. Owens appends some verse in which she speaks of the "inevitable search that comes when the world's maladies are at their worst, as they are today; when the individual's despair is at its deepest, as it is today":

The search for what the philosophers call
Ultimate Reality
And the religious call
God
And the Jungian psychologists term
Self-realization and individuation
Leading to a spiritual experience.

Perhaps the man of tomorrow
Will demand a synthesis
Comprehensive enough to embrace

Philosophy and religion,
Psychology and aesthetics

For if we draw the lines long enough
From these four disciplines
Ultimately they meet in space,
At the point of the eternal mystery
Producing—perhaps in a foreseeable future
A cosmic psychology
Or a psychological religion.

COMMENTARY

THE MEANING OF "SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM"

IN MANAS for Oct. 2, Review summarized a survey of European Humanism presented by E. C. Vanderlaan in the July-August *Humanist*. The concluding paragraph of our report said:

. . . among the magazines devoted to free thought Dr. Vanderlaan lists *La Ragiorze*, organ of the Italian Giordano Bruno Society. We do not know what sort of material appears in this paper, but Bruno, it is certain, went far beyond the limits of what is now "acceptable" as an expression of scientific Humanism. In philosophy and cosmology, he was an enthusiastic Pythagorean and Platonist; his thought was indeed "free," and one wonders whether the idealisms and daring metaphysical conceptions of the ancient mystery religions, which Bruno sought to revive, can be assimilated to contemporary "rationalist" inquiry.

These observations brought a vigorous protest from Oliver Reiser, professor of philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Reiser points out that his own championing of Scientific Humanism—which has been extensive, throughout the period of at least a generation—draws directly on the pantheist tradition of Pythagoras and Bruno. There can be no doubt of the justice of this comment. In Dr. Reiser's book, *Man's New Image of Man* (Boxwood Press, Pittsburgh, Pa., 1961), he says:

. . . there is a cosmology available which meets the needs of science and man's deepest impulses. This is the cosmology of pantheism, a world-view introduced by the Pythagoreans and continued by the Stoics, Giordano Bruno, Spinoza, poets like Shelley, Keats and Emerson, and today has affinities with the views of Albert Einstein, Albert Schweitzer, and other thoughtful individuals.

In the earlier centuries of our Western culture man felt at home in the universe. Today man suffers from what the Existentialists describe as "forlornness"—he feels cut off from the cosmos. Now Cosmic Humanism corrects this man-centered isolationism by restoring some sense of cosmic kinship. . . . According to Cosmic Humanism, the immense reaches of time and space and matter are the

measure of the infinite and eternal cosmos of Giordano Bruno, a world in which God and Nature are welded together in a unity. While there may be no cosmic response to human aspirations in terms of emotional rapport (this is controversial), man and nature do have a common denominator of rationality, a harmony of logico-mathematical structure such as Pythagoras of old dreamed of.

There is a sense in which Dr. Reiser performed for philosophy the same service that William McDougall, some few years earlier, performed for psychology. Both refused to capitulate to the blighting assumptions of Materialism. McDougall kept alive (in his *Body and Mind* and other books) the idea of soul-intelligence as a substantial reality to be reckoned by psychology, and Reiser, while no friend of the theological deity, maintained the spirit of ancient pantheism throughout what was philosophically the most desolate period of modern thought—the early decades of the twentieth century.

It remains true, however, that agnostic caution rather than pantheistic enthusiasm is characteristic of most of the public expressions of what passes today as Scientific Humanism. Contemporary Humanists do not interest themselves very much in cosmological speculations. Not the implications of the Copernican Revolution, but the ramifications of the Freudian Revolution, are being worked out, today, by Humanist writers.

The majestic inspiration of Copernicus made Bruno say:

By this knowledge we are loosened from the chains of a most narrow dungeon, and set at liberty to rove in a most august empire; we are removed from presumptuous boundaries and poverty to the innumerable riches of an infinite space, of so worthy a field, and of such beautiful worlds. . . . It is not reasonable to believe that any part of the world is without a soul life, sensation, and organic structure. From this infinite All, full of beauty and splendor, from the vast worlds which circle above us, to the sparkling dust of stars beyond, the conclusion is drawn that there are an infinity of creatures, a vast multitude, which, each in its degree, mirrors forth the

splendor, wisdom, and excellence of the divine beauty.

You do not get this movement of the imagination from *Civilization and its Discontents*, nor, as yet, from any of Freud's successors or revisers. Modern Humanism awaits the impact of some kind of lifting and transforming experience—some *direct* impact which will justify declarations concerning the nature of man comparable to the affirmations of Pico and Bruno. The desperate circumstances of the modern world may turn out to be the stage-setting for an experience of this sort.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

LAST night, on Allhallows Eve—perhaps the most objectionable of all such traditional occasions—our four-year-old was introduced to the trick-or-treat racket. Dressed as a small devil, which might possibly be regarded as an appropriate costume, he declined to wear the mask. A product of the dime store, it simply didn't look good either on or off, or perhaps he felt that Satan is best represented anyway by blond ringlets, instead of a black Vandyke. Well, he got his loot and is probably, even now, still wriggling around in gastro-intestinal discomfort. He was but one of the hordes in our respectable community to say "trick-or-treat" some 15,000 times per Halloween; they have forgotten, happily, the implied threat, perhaps because for years no one has failed to provide hastily purchased goodies.

The Halloween ritual is largely a pain in the neck to adults, even though they might reflect resignedly upon the physical benefits of rising and trotting to the door interminably. But it is a ritual, and the youngsters seem content to follow the unwritten rules of the community.

Halloween can easily become something else again for older children. Perhaps they have heard tales about how grandfather once participated in boarding up old man Schultz's outhouse, or tying Morrisey's pig in the front seat of his model-T. They have graduated from the costume parade and feel that they should do something more creative—like squirting shaving soap throughout the interior of lush-looking parked cars. More hostile teen-agers seek to confirm their manhood by ripping convertible tops with knives, gouging metal strips off automobiles, etc.

These teen-age pranksters are unimaginatively destructive, made mobile by cars they usually should not be driving and do not drive for any useful purpose. All this comes back to the deplorable affluence of a well-to-do

community where everyone has more than he needs of everything, and where teen-agers neither need to work nor assist their parents in the maintenance of home or property. In his column, "Strictly Personal" (*Chicago Daily News*, July 30), Sidney Harris writes on this aspect of the American teen-ager situation:

It was 1:30 in the morning, and I was parked in my car near the main intersection of the little town in which I spend my summers. I was waiting for a passenger due to arrive on an out-of-town bus.

During the half-hour I sat there, dozens of automobiles whizzed by me. Almost all of them were filled with teen-age boys, circling the town noisily, cutting corners sharply, and pretending to themselves they were having a wild time.

It called to mind what an American anthropologist said recently about the "rites of passage." In older times, young men were given opportunities to prove their manhood, their courage or skill, by performing certain difficult rituals that the elders of the tribe had prepared for them. If they "passed," they were declared to be men.

We have no such line of demarcation in our modern industrial society—and so the automobile has become, in its synthetic way, the symbol of the rites of passage. The boys whizzing around the corners, brakes screeching and rubber burning, were (in a wistful and unsatisfying way) trying to demonstrate their manhood.

As the anthropologist remarked, a good deal of what passes for "delinquency" in contemporary life is an ineffectual effort to create some rites of passage by the boys themselves. Society sets no tasks for them, so they try to make their own standards of virility.

But this does not, and cannot, gratify them in any deep, lasting and confirmatory way. It does not receive the approval of the "tribe," and, more important, it actually proves nothing—for any idiot can drive a car with reckless abandon. In trying to prove their manhood in this false way, they actually become more juvenile than ever in the eyes of society.

The puberty rites and the rites of passage that obtained in less sophisticated societies served a very real purpose, both socially and psychologically. The boys had something to look forward to, and the tests were actually meaningful, for it took dexterity and courage and endurance to qualify. Most of all, it bound the youths to the manhood of the tribe.

Juvenile delinquency, in various forms, is spreading throughout the civilized world—even in countries which had no such phenomenon until the present generation. There is a vast resentment and rebellion against the canons of the adult world, and the teen-ager forms a sub-culture that is often threatening to the continuity and stability of the social order.

We are not tackling this problem in any sensible way; indeed, we do not even understand its dynamics. As Paul Goodman points out in his book, *Growing Up Absurd*, unless we give youngsters something meaningful to do, they will find a meaning in violence itself.

We have often paid tribute to Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd*. Here, a fresh slant on Mr. Goodman's analysis of teen-age psychology results from relating it to ideas in Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell shows that we offer youth no organic system of progressive initiations into manhood mainly because our conceptions of manhood are both impoverished and confused. The "rites of passage" spoken of by Harris served, as Campbell said, "to explain the symbols that carry the human spirit forward." Campbell continues:

When we turn to consider the numerous strange rituals that have been reported from the primitive tribes and great civilizations of the past, it becomes apparent that the purpose and actual effect of these was to conduct people across these difficult thresholds of transformation that demand a change in the patterns not only of conscious but also of unconscious life. . . The tribal ceremonies of birth, initiation, marriage, burial, installation, and so forth, serve to translate the individual's life-crises and life-deeds into classic, impersonal forms. They disclose him to himself, not as this personality or that, but as the warrior, the bride, the widow, the priest, the chieftain; at the same time rehearsing for the rest of the community the old lesson of the archetypal stages. All participate in the ceremonial according to rank and function. The whole society becomes visible to itself as an imperishable living unity. Generations of individuals pass, like anonymous cells from a living body; but the sustaining, timeless form remains. By an enlargement of vision to embrace this super-individual, each discovers himself enhanced, enriched, supported, and magnified. His role, however unimpressive, is seen to be intrinsic to the

beautiful festival-image man—the image, potential yet necessarily inhibited, within himself.

The man or woman who can honestly say that he or she has lived the role—whether that of priest, harlot, queen, or slave—is something in the full sense of the verb *to be*.

Everyone responds in some measure to the image of the hero, and Mr. Campbell shows that the modern "hero task" is a very difficult one, precisely because "it is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse." But those rituals and ceremonies of our tribe which no longer have anything to do with the identification of the individual as a part of his social unit are worse than nothing, because they demonstrate this basic lack.

Onward, then, to Allhallows Eve, 1964—with the determination to wheel your house away into the desert in the hope that total withdrawal will stimulate other stalwart rebels. Either that, or organize a seance and activate some real ghosts and witches, so that *something* makes sense.

FRONTIERS

Human Welfare: Two Communications

[In MANAS for June 5, Richard Groff compared some of the features of the civilization of classical Greece with the culture of the present, noting that the Greeks "exposed" defective infants. He did not endorse this practice, but used it to illustrate a difference between ancient and modern conceptions of human good. Disturbed by the comparison, one reader asked for further discussion by Mr. Groff. The following correspondence was the result.—Editors.]

Editors, MANAS: If you would print Mr. Groff's reply along with this letter, I'd be most interested to know the reaction of your readers. If they agree with Mr. Groff's terrifying views, God help us!

Lest I be accused of lack of respect for the arts, let me add that I am an artist, born of artists, and that my husband is a pianist and composer. My father, in addition to his own work, is an art therapist in a school for disturbed children. My husband also brings music into the lives of problem children.

A life itself, at least as much as any tangible product, can be a work of art. Such lives could never take shape in a world in which everyone believed the relief of human suffering to be "one of the humbler roles in the life of man."

KARIN MARCUS

Brooklyn, New York

Dear Mrs. Marcus: The editors of MANAS have passed along to me the recent communication in which you express your continuing doubts about some of the points I tried to make in "The Tyranny of Equality."

MANAS was correct in judging that when referring to the ancient Greek practice of "exposing" defective infants to the elements I intended a comparison of mood between their age and ours, rather than an endorsement of infanticide—anywhere. Granted that the custom may seem cruel to us now, still we should try to

understand the motivation behind it rather than condemn it out of hand. Also, how genuine is this apparent "progress" we have made in respect for human life in light of our willingness to engage in nuclear warfare? So we and the Greeks might well throw up our hands in mutual horror at each other's depravity!

The idea behind the infanticide reference was that Classical Greece, with its passion for beauty and perfection, has contributed more to the enrichment of human life than any other culture; while the equalitarian values of our own age do not foster such contributions. Greek genius created Athenian democracy, philosophy, tragedy. The modern world, geared to mediocrity rather than excellence, labors and gives birth to—the Welfare State! Creature comforts and security. From the sublime to the nearly ridiculous.

You say: "From a *humanitarian* standpoint (which I think should be of *primary* concern to us all) what was excellent about the 'mood' of *any* past age?"

First of all I think we must beware the tendency to sell short the wisdom and hard-won achievements of previous ages, casually tossing them into the wastebasket of history. The present has its roots in the past. We cannot know where we are without understanding how we got here.

Further, it is by no means clear that "the humanitarian standpoint"—which I take to mean *a tender concern to relieve the immediate suffering of others*—"should be of primary concern to us all." Much worth-while human endeavor has nothing to do with that. Who would have written Shakespeare's plays, composed Mozart's music or invented Edison's electric light if these men had spent their time helping crippled children? On the other hand, it's fine that some people have a talent for this and exercise it conscientiously. But surely this must be counted among the humbler roles in the life of man. We lesser beings may mistake our own *sentimentality* for that which in great souls has ripened into *compassion*.

Whatever may have been the "mood" of the times in which they flourished, surely Jesus and the Buddha were two of the most compassionate men who ever lived. And yet had they concluded to spend their lives relieving human suffering in a literal way, nursing the sick and feeding the hungry, who today would know of them? Instead, each came to grips with suffering on a higher plane. Today's world confronts suffering armed with tranquilizers, aspirin, and the shallow psychiatry of adjustment to society. The ancient world yielded three deeper, more imaginative approaches: The Buddha taught the cause of suffering (selfish desire) and how to conquer it. Æschylus created tragedy with its strange power to present human suffering and death in such a way as to exalt and not depress. And Jesus found that suffering was an inescapable part of the spiritual life: "Take up thy cross. . . ."

Do not such fruits as these count for more than bandages and bread?

RICHARD GROFF

Boyertown, Pennsylvania

Since Mr. Groff clearly disavows any approval of "infanticide," then or now, this point needs no further emphasis. Infanticide was the Greek form of belief in Euthanasia, to be distinguished from modern advocacy of this ruthless solution for human failure in that it was applied early in life rather than late. What bothers us in present attitudes toward such matters is the general disregard of the larger deformities in our culture. Standards and concepts of value (as Karen Horney shows in *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*) are in such blatant contradiction that it might be said that we have perfected a formula for eroding away the truly human qualities of both children and adults. It is this "exposure" that Mr. Groff attacks, contrasting its hypocrisy with the honest if barbarous policy of the Greeks. His point, it seems to us, would have been accepted without question if he had not used the "infanticide" illustration. Perhaps we should take

his point and let the illustration go. These "lesser of two evils" arguments always produce polemical difficulties, and polemics solve no problems, bring no light.