

EXISTENTIAL CRISIS AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

[This article by Walter A. Weisskopf, of Roosevelt University, will be published as part of a symposium titled *Essays towards a Humanistic Psychology*, edited by Henry Winthrop, Chairman, Social Science Interdisciplinary Program, Social Science Division, College of Liberal Arts, The University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.]

I. *The Historical Position of Psychoanalysis*

THE term psychoanalysis is used here to refer to orthodox Freudianism, the system of ideas that was developed by Freud himself and by those of his successors who consider themselves with pride as the "guardians of the pure doctrine." This system of ideas is the product of a specific historical situation. Psychoanalysis is a dialectical phenomenon. On the one hand it uses a naturalistic approach. It reduces the psyche to a derivative of the physis. On the other hand, however, psychoanalysis represents a rediscovery of the inner world of the spirit and of the psyche in the form of the unconscious mind. Perennial knowledge of the depth-dimension between body and mind, forgotten by Western civilization, was rediscovered although in a somewhat ambiguous form.

Western thought as it developed during the last four centuries consisted of a repression of certain dimensions of human existence. Everything that belongs to the inner life, the soul and the spirit, succumbed to repression. Psychoanalysis consists of a *partial* liberation of these repressed dimensions of human existence. Psychoanalysis has rediscovered its depth dimension in the form of the unconscious. It has also rediscovered its dialectical structure. In the many antinomies which psychoanalysis uses (unconscious-conscious, reality-pleasure principle, *eros-thanatos*) psychoanalysis has rediscovered antinomies of existence which the monistic bent of Western thought has neglected. Modern Western thought is one-sided. It suffers from an overemphasis on utilitarian, purposive action, which is aimed at control and change of the external world. In the West thought and action are motivated

predominantly by utilitarian egoistic motives. Life is dominated by a functionalism which evaluates everything, the self, the others and the environment, according to their technical and economic function. These attitudes stem from the fields of business, technology, and the technologically-oriented natural sciences, and have penetrated all spheres of life.

To a certain extent psychoanalysis represents a revolt against this utilitarian functionalist rationalism because it reinstated the "irrational" in its proper place. At the risk of oversimplification one can describe this historical process by saying that psychoanalysis has reversed repression by rediscovering the importance of the "irrational."

This however was a negation of an Hegelian kind; it became a reversal which led to a new ideological repression in the opposite direction. To a certain extent it led to a "repression" of the rational. In a recent reformulation of orthodox Freudianism, Norman O. Brown (*Life Against Death*) talks about "the sickness that is man." Human society is defined by Brown as "the repression of the individual"; he calls man "the animal that represses itself; who creates his culture in order to repress himself."

In this extreme but consistent formulation psychoanalysis becomes "the sickness whose therapy it thinks it is" (Karl Kraus). Basic experiences of man which characterize human existence—guilt, anxiety, suffering, culture, thought, ideals—are interpreted as the superstructure of biological drives. What used to be repressed is now considered as the main characteristic of man. What causes the repression becomes a derived, secondary epiphenomenon, something which is supposed to be eliminated by the therapeutic process. The "rational" becomes the superstructure of rationalization. Only the animalistic aspects of human existence are considered to be essential, really real and valuable; everything "higher" that distinguishes man from the rest of creation is reduced to and derived from the animalistic and thereby deprecated. In this way

psychoanalysis has contributed to the extreme alienation of man in society.

However, this is only one aspect of the situation. Psychoanalysis, comprehended in its totality, is like a neurotic symptom, a compromise formation; the repressed and the repressing factors exist in symbiosis. In psychoanalytic therapy we find remnants of eighteenth-century rationalism. Psychoanalysis wants to turn the light of consciousness onto the shadowy realm of the unconscious. Its therapeutic aim is to make man more rational. It is an error to assume that this therapy consists merely in making unconscious drives conscious. They have to be re-experienced again. In the twilight zone of the analytic studio the past has to become real again but only on a not entirely actual level; in this way it will be deprived of its unhealthy effects. Then man shall be free again; free from inner unconscious conflicts because they have no meaning any more, once they are illuminated by the light of reason. Man should become able to face himself, to accept himself as he really is. The experiential insight into one's own demonic depth is for psychoanalysis a precondition of one's cure. And cure is freedom. Through his own awareness, his own knowledge, man becomes free.

In its therapy psychoanalysis is a child of the enlightenment; but it is more than that. It is a part of the eternal striving of man to transcend himself through his reason, to liberate himself from his conditioned finitude and to become really free and autonomous. It is obvious that this is an unattainable goal. Man is finite, conditioned, tied down to his living conditions, to his society, and, as psychoanalysis has shown, to his big-psychological constitution. But, like all great movements of thought psychoanalysis has tried to show to man a way out of this predicament; a way towards a partial, imperfect liberation through his reason.

In this way psychoanalysis is in itself the product of an antinomic, ambivalent world outlook, the child of a dialectical historical situation. It is rationalistic in its therapy but it emphasizes the "irrational" in its concept of repression, and especially in its ideas about the unconscious, to which we now turn.

II. *The Concept of the Unconscious*

Psychoanalysis restricts its concept of the unconscious to a part of the phenomenon which is experienced by man as the unconscious aspect of his inner life. This reduction of the unconscious to *one* of its aspects negates to some extent the rediscovery of the inner life by psychoanalysis. The psychoanalytic unconscious consists almost exclusively of the physiological drives which are interpreted according to the pattern found in hunger and sex. These drives push towards an elimination of tension in the direction of homeostasis. The unconscious is described as a "cauldron of seething excitation"; it is assumed to be filled with a dynamic vitality without form; its exclusive aim is assumed to be the relief of tension, the satisfaction of drives. The unconscious is mainly the id, "the dark, the nocturnal, the demonic, the biologically rooted powers of the subliminal human soul" (Thomas Mann).

However, in order to understand the phenomenon which is called the unconscious by psychoanalysis, one has to examine its onto- and its phylogenesis. In its broadest sense the unconscious is the encompassing, the unknown, the mysterious. Human existence is embedded in it. As Heidegger has expressed it: existence means *ex-stare*, standing out of the unknown. Erich Neumann, a disciple of Jung, talks about the unconscious as the "uroboros," the primeval symbol of the serpent which bites its own tail (In *The Origins of Consciousness*). In this sense the unconscious is the primeval state of unity of man and world, of the I and the others. This primeval state of unity has been experienced by primitive man and is also experienced by every infant. Levy-Bruhl called it "participation mystique": the preconscious identity of the individual with group, environment and nature. In this stage the conscious self is not yet separated from the unconscious and the unknown because consciousness is still weak. In this early state the "unconscious" includes everything: the individual, the group, the world; these dimensions are not yet distinguished.

In this situation one cannot talk about the unconscious as the product of repression.

Everything is unconscious because there exists no, or only a very weak, consciousness. This unconscious should be distinguished from the unconscious of psychoanalysis. One can call it the primeval unconscious in contrast to the "repressed unconscious" that psychoanalysis has in mind. This unconscious appears long before psychoanalysis in myth and religion, in ideology and philosophy. It is the pre-conscious, paradisiac state of "dreaming innocence" (Tillich) in which man found himself before the split between the self and the world. This state is the source and the ground of the experience of being and of the experience of the unknown and the unconscious. We "remember" this state and this experience because we have participated in it collectively and individually. We remember, although only vaguely and half-consciously, that once we have been one with the universe, with the cosmos, with the others and with ourselves. Traces of this remembrance can be found in the myths of paradise and of the golden age. These traces are also discernible in the Platonic doctrine that the soul remembers the ideas which it has once perceived in their shining glory. To some extent the Freudian idea of the importance of childhood memories is a manifestation of the same experience.

In this remembrance everything is included: our previous unity with the universe, with the other human beings, with animals, with plants, with anorganic nature. This unity was once a reality. We remember it and we strive to restore it. This unity is the ground and the source of all mystical experiences. The Indian *tat tvam asi*—that art thou—the identity of Atman and Brahman, is derived from this memory. This is the great experience of the unity of all things. Being is experienced as unity and thus its power becomes alive within us.

In this sense the unconscious—the unity of being—becomes an *all-encompassing totality* in which the later antinomic human existence is embedded. This totality was not originally "unconscious" in the sense in which we are using the term today. This totality was neither entirely known nor entirely unknown. It was a totality, a unity without the separating split of consciousness;

consciousness was then present only as a seed, as a potentiality.

Psychoanalysis has reduced the "content" of this unconscious from all-encompassing unity to physiological libidinous drives. As so often happens in modern science, the totality was dissolved into segments and reduced to one of its "parts," according to the principle "*pars pro toto*." The encompassing unconscious, however, contains the totality of being, without split and separation: the good and the bad, the repressing and the repressed, the spirit and the body, the conditioned and the unconditioned, the holy and the demonic. In this original state all these antinomies are meaningless; but they become meaningful later.

Freud recognized this when he assumed that the so-called super-ego operates partly in the unconscious. The super-ego, which Freud originally called the ego-ideal, is not only the inner representative of the cultural value-systems but also of everything normative, of everything higher, of the "good"; it is the inner judge, the conscience, and the ideal, the inner voice which drives us towards the higher things, that warns us when we negate our essence and urges us on to transcend ourselves. The super-ego, as far as it is a part of the unconscious, includes in the unconscious the higher aspects of human existence.

III. Individuation

Individuation is the process which leads to the split between consciousness and the unconscious. A tendency towards individuation is at work in man, something which drives man to become aware of himself. The result is a separation of self and world. The same tendency may have created being out of non-being, life out of anorganic nature, and consciousness out of life. The source and the ground of this tendency is unknown and can only be "explained" by theology and metaphysics. Whatever its origin, it is a definite ontological datum. Consciousness, the last phenomenon in this evolution, consists in the transcending of the given situation. Man is the living being which "is" and at the same time knows that he is. Therefore he asks the ontological question (Heidegger), the question of

the meaning of his existence, of the whence and whither. The striving for a meaning is a direct consequence of transcending being through consciousness.

Conscious transcendence includes not only knowledge of what actually is but also the knowledge of alternative potentialities. However, the finite nature of man requires choices between alternative possibilities. Once a choice is made, all other alternatives have become impossible; thus man is free only to renounce possibilities. This is the meaning of the logic of choice and of economic action. Those psychologists who consider self-actualization as the goal of human life can be criticized on this ground; they overlook that complete and all-round self-actualization is neither possible nor desirable; some potentialities are always sacrificed when men choose a certain path of life. Man pursues certain goals which emerge from the totality of the conditions under which he lives. In the course of his life he has to renounce many possibilities which are incompatible with his actual mode of life. Renunciation and its inevitable consequence, suffering, are essential characteristics of human existence.

One can detect here the source of meaning of the psychoanalytic concept of repression. The finite freedom of decision combined with the awareness of potentialities requires a *restriction of reality*. Human finitude forces us to select out of the totality of reality in which we are embedded those elements which are conducive to the support of our individual existence. The total reality is like a huge unknown (unconscious) darkness; we illuminate a small segment of this hidden totality with the light of our consciousness. The choice of this illuminated segment is conditioned by our life situation. This reduction and segmentation of reality comes close to the Freudian concept of repression; but, understood in this way, repression becomes a universal phenomenon. It stops being a sickness and becomes something that is rooted in the ontological structure of human existence.

The psychoanalytic concept of repression may be only a special case of inevitable renunciation and restriction of "our" world; man does not only

"repress" socially inadmissible drives, but he has, because of his finite nature, to renounce possibilities. Thus, much of reality must remain unknown to him. Psychoanalytic therapy which tries to make some of this renunciation conscious is justified; to adjust freely and consciously to one's limitations is not sickness but greatness.

These deliberations lead to an interpretation of the unconscious which differs from the one by psychoanalysis. It is not only the result of later repressions but the residue of a primeval state in which man was in unity with the totality of being. Repression is a special form of our restrictive finitude, a necessary consequence of renunciation; the suffering connected with this finitude and this sacrifice is an ineluctable characteristic of human existence.

IV. *The Crisis of Western Civilization*

The preceding ontological and existential analysis enables us to understand the crisis of our time. At the risk of oversimplification one can interpret this crisis as an overly strong reduction of reality and as a clogging up of the channels which lead to the unconscious interpreted as the encompassing unknown reality. Culture and society help man in the choice between potential modes of life. They create a value-attitude system which is internalized and operates consciously and unconsciously in thinking, willing, feeling, and acting. Such socially determined value-attitude systems usually make a one-sided choice between the various elements of human nature; they emphasize certain traits and neglect and repress others. Modern Western society emphasizes the dissecting, measuring, weighing, and calculating analytical intellect and neglects and represses encompassing intuitive reason; it emphasizes purposive utilitarian action directed at the change and control of the external world as against expressive non-purposive behavior and artistic play. Activity directed at the external world is highly evaluated whereas silent, receptive inner listening is neglected. The ability to listen to the deep inner springs of life, of which Nietzsche spoke, has eluded us and has become atrophied. The external world is more important to us than the inner one. We strive

for change and diversion, we build our life on the vitalism of our senses and drives and neglect the stable, the eternal. Our world is dominated by a utilitarianism and functionalism in which everything, man, nature, society, is evaluated according to their economic and technical usefulness and not according to the essential qualities of their being.

This value-attitude system has led to unheard-of economic and technological successes in the control and manipulation of nature and men. At the same time it has disequibrated mankind because important elements of human existence are neglected. The crisis of our time can be traced back to this disequilibrium. The danger of atomic destruction can be understood as the result of a disequilibrium between the control of nature and self-control. The danger of population explosion is partly the consequence of our one-sided vitalism and the meaninglessness of our existence caused by our value-attitudes. The over-emphasis on external conditions of living is the cause of the unstable hypertrophism of our economy. Juvenile delinquency is the result of the destruction of moral values by our over-emphasis on the purely analytical intellect. The longing for a world outlook which gives meaning to existence is again a result of the erroneous application of the methods of the natural sciences to man who transcends nature. The natural sciences know only *cause efficientes*, not *causae finales*, only causes and not ends and goals; therefore they are not in the position to talk about ends and meaning. They cannot give meaning to our existence.

Psychoanalysis, so far as it tries to be a natural science, has contributed to this crisis. However, it has also reactivated our insight into the unconscious. Although it has, as described above, reduced the content of the unconscious to one of its parts, it has reopened doors to the unconscious which have been closed by Western civilization. Thus it has made it possible to recapture what we are lacking and what is present in the unconscious.

One can describe this process of re-establishment of a lost equilibrium by saying that the "non-rational" had to be re-discovered, but that the sphere of the "non-rational" has to be enlarged

beyond what psychoanalysis included in it. The externalization, the utilitarian activism, the quantifying functionalism of modern Western civilization have to be balanced out by some of the forces which are contained in the unconscious. Thus all behavior which is not purposive and utilitarian has to be restored as a legitimate type of behavior. This must lead to a rediscovery of *play* as a legitimate spiritual and intellectual phenomenon. Huizinga in his book *Homo Ludens* has elaborated this idea. To him play is a manifestation of human freedom; it breaks through mechanistic and biological determinism; it points to a higher sphere; and it has its roots in the unconscious. Psychoanalysis attributes great importance to childhood and to childhood memories. In childhood play is a most important manifestation of human life; childhood is also a period of low consciousness and of unity of the inner and outer world. What we need today is not a regression but a step forward towards a higher unity. Play is an important help on the path to this higher unity. It stands in utmost contrast to purposive utilitarian action which we are over-emphasizing today. All cultural manifestations, all forms of art, but also rite, cult, mythology and religion, contain elements of play. In play man relaxes tensions and harmonizes and re-establishes the unity of body, soul and spirit. This is perhaps most obvious in one of the oldest forms of art and play, in the dance. In folk dancing, in the rhythms of the primitives, but also in modern artistic dancing man attempts a reunification with men and nature. "Rock and roll," "jitterbug," and "twist" may be distorted manifestations of the longing for unity, balance and harmony.

Others have expressed the same idea in different ways. Schiller talks about the great joy which was expressed in the immortal music of Beethoven's ninth symphony. Many mystics have pointed to the interconnection of play and the mystical union. Blake calls "delight" the essence of our being. St. Francis of Assisi and Jacob Boehme see in the reunion with God the re-establishment of the playful innocence of our childhood. All this is rooted in the unconscious if one interprets it, not restrictively, but as the all-encompassing reality.

These insights have to be regained; the door which psychoanalysis set ajar has to be opened wide.

Receptivity plays an important role in this process; the receptivity we need to counterbalance the hyperactivity of life in industrial society. Western activism is not a natural way of life; its pattern has been set by production methods and by technology where human labor power is used exclusively to change the external world. Spurred on by the attitude in these fields, labor, work, busy-ness, and tension were elevated to the rank of virtues. Rest is looked at as idleness, justified only as recuperation for further productive energy. In contrast to this activistic attitude, Greek antiquity has considered the perception of eternal ideas, the "theoria," and the Middle Ages the contemplation of the divine as the highest stages of human existence. Man needs quiet, silence, contemplation; he cannot always be "busy"; he has to let things happen to him. "Leisure is a form of silence, which is the prerequisite of the apprehension of the really real . . . a receptive attitude . . . a contemplative attitude . . . the capacity of steeping oneself in the whole of creation" (J. Piper, *Leisure as a Basis of Culture*, 52). An attitude of silent, passive, receptive contemplation is also a prerequisite for the psychological equilibrium and a counterweight against the hypertension of modern life. The inability for relaxation, insomnia, the inability to endure holidays, vacations, and retirement are consequences of the activistic one-sidedness of modern life which has to be counteracted by a receptive attitude.

However, one should not look at this situation as a mere therapeutical question. These are spiritual and intellectual problems and existential needs of man. One cannot express it better than Piper has done: "When we really let our minds rest contemplatively on a rose in bud, on a child at play, on a divine mystery, we are rested and quickened as though by a dreamless sleep" (*loc. cit.* 53).

Ultimately there is much more at stake than an equilibrium as a condition for human well-being. At stake is the rediscovery of a lost reality, a reality which has been thought and talked about so far in religious, theological and metaphysical categories. Depth psychology developed from the biological

approach of Freud, through the social-psychological method of the Neo-Freudians into existential and humanistic psychology. Jung came close to what religion, metaphysics and mysticism dealt with; but he remained within the realm of the psyche. Existential and humanistic psychology has made one step forward towards the rediscovery of those dimensions of human existence which are related to religious experience. At stake is, indeed, the reconquest of the meaning of our existence, which has become meaningless. At stake is the reconstruction of an objective meaningful world in which everything, including the transcendental dimensions of human existence, find a legitimate place. The old religious concepts have to be modernized by existential psychology and philosophy and their meaning lighted by encompassing reason.

WALTER A. WEISSKOPF

Roosevelt University, Chicago

REVIEW

"FLATLAND" REVISITED

ROBERT SOMMER'S *Expertland* (Doubleday, New York: 1963) is one of the more recent additions to the swelling list of sociological popularizations which attained relevancy—and clichéhood—with William Whyte's *The Organization Man*. This is the theme which made a questionable contribution to the cause of the novel in Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*; gained academic respectability through the efforts of David Riesman, C. Wright Mills, and Paul Goodman; enlightened regions of the "dismal science" under the compelling wit of C. Northcote Parkinson, and the persistent intelligence of John Kenneth Galbraith; provided a career for Vance Packard; developed a near snobbery in Jacques Barzun's *The House of Intellect*; transcended itself in the philosophical peregrinations of Gerald Sykes' *The Hidden Remnant*; and grew large and popular enough to carry into publication personal revelations of sociological misdemeanours such as Alan Harrington's *Life in the Crystal Palace*. *Expertland* is related to those books represented here by *Life in the Crystal Palace*. It is not an "exposé," but its publishers would probably like us to think it is.

Mr. Sommer has staked out the boundaries of *Expertland* within the scientific-academic complex—a sub-species of the more familiar "military-industrial complex." In fact, many would argue that the former could not exist without the latter. But Mr. Sommer does not pursue such topics; he tends to stay within self-defined boundaries. Few will fail to recognize his aging scientist who, with a few changes, might be an admiral or a chemical engineer:

When a scientist reaches senility, he is one of two things, either a consultant or a failure. If he is a consultant then he can live on a generous per diem allowance, travel from Texas to Tahiti at someone else's expense, timing his visits to coincide with various celebrations, and be entertained at numerous parties, dinners, and university clubs. An elder statesman of science is not expected to do original research. The squire simply drops ideas or hints of ideas at various universities and graduate students will eagerly pick them up as thesis material. One

caution heeded by most consultants is never to return to a place until the current crop of graduate students has moved on. It is then possible to repeat a previous lecture and also to avoid recriminations from students who tried unsuccessfully to confirm the theories proposed in the previous lecture.

With no less verve he impales his own profession (Mr. Sommer teaches at the University of Alberta):

Classrooms are places where all the dire predictions of evolutionists come true. Everything that has been written about the herd instinct and the lowest common denominator of behavior can be seen at lectures. . . . One of the major products of a lecture is boredom, in fact most lectures are factories of boredom. Generally it is the audience who is bored although occasionally the speaker is more bored than his listeners. . . .

One would be inclined to suspect that Mr. Sommer had in mind Edwin Abbott's classic, *Flatland*, when he gave his book a title. There are other similarities. With apposite changes, the first paragraph of *Flatland* might be used to begin *Expertland*: "I call our world Flatland [*Expertland*], not because we call it so, but to make its nature clearer to you, my happy readers, who are privileged to live in Space [the "real" world]." This tone is not very far from the beginning sentences of *Expertland*: "There is a place outside of time and space, although its influence on people's lives is very great. The name of that place is *Expertland*, the residents are called *Experts*, and they speak a language known as *Expertese*. . . ."

Along with this theme of the distinction between the "real" world and *Expertland*, Mr. Sommer uses descriptions of the peculiarities and heresies of *Expertland* as a way of building interest and humor. Both devices are integral to the design of *Flatland*. For those who are not familiar with *Flatland*, it is a charming, short fantasy about a Flatlander (from the land of only two dimensions, length and width) who is imprisoned because of his heresy: a vision of three dimensions. There are so many heresies in *Expertland* as to preclude their cataloging here. A major one concerns the evaluation of an expert's performance:

Because the expert objects to being evaluated on results, the only things left to be judged are means and appearances. This produces an excessive concern with how things are done coupled with a seeming lack of interest in what has been accomplished. This describes the Method-Man who maintains that it doesn't matter so much what is done as long as it has been done correctly. It isn't important that a laboratory hasn't produced results of consequence so long as the scientists follow standard scientific procedure, hold weekly seminars, and have the right academic initials after their names. This is science, what more can be asked? This attitude can help explain the acceptance of the trappings of science for the genuine article. If evaluation of results is precluded, all that remains is evaluation of methods and appearances.

According to Mr. Sommer, the experts will not evaluate each other nor consider the evaluations of non-experts:

. . . few people will take a non-expert seriously since he is considered incompetent to understand or evaluate expert service. In many cases he is not considered sufficiently knowledgeable to judge when he has been helped or hurt. . . .

A discussion of this heresy of evaluation is one of the few "serious" threads in *Expertland*, but it is not for this that one is apt to remember the book. The best portions are those in which the domain of Expertland is being described:

Time is a meaningless abstraction in Expertland. If you ask an expert where he expects to be ten years from now, you will receive answers like "At an Ivy League university, I hope" or "in charge of a small clinic in some middle-sized city."

Vacuums are abhorred in Expertland so no area, regardless of size or location, will remain vacant for long. Space is at such a premium that individuals and departments will clash publicly over a storage closet or parking stall.

The cats of Expertland are more tragic figures than the dogs, even though both suffer from the constant moving from place to place. . . . Tropical fish are not practical either, since they are extremely difficult to move. Small dogs, the kind that fit easily into a Volkswagen between two children, make the best pets.

Someone once said that an expert is a stranger from out of town with a nervous manner and a

suitcase filled with slides. The expert, according to Mr. Sommer, is always a stranger in the "real" world.

Experts know very few people. Except for several childhood friends or close relatives, the expert does not know anyone who drives a truck, runs a grocery store, or is vice-president of the local Chamber of Commerce. . . . The expert feels completely out of place at a Lion's or Fish and Game meeting. If he is compelled to attend such gatherings, he immediately gravitates to any other citizen of Expertland who is present. If he sees no one, he acts as if he walked into the ladies' powder room by mistake.

When Mr. Sommer attempts to draw serious conclusions from such caricatures, he is usually accurate but trite. The book is enjoyable entertainment when it is not trying to be instructive. A chapter called "A Bestiary of Non-Scientists" is particularly funny:

There is a special building set aside for grant-eaters, a species for whom the quest for larger stipends is a way of life. They feed on application forms and foundation brochures and keep themselves and the other animals in a constant turmoil by their ceaseless efforts to push completed applications out of their cages and to snare any hapless philanthropoid who passes by.

Occasionally Mr. Sommer coins an aphorism:

A project is usually the child of a union between one man and a foundation, although sometimes two or more people have recognized paternity. . . . This monster has a maximum life expectancy of five years, although if it changes its coloration slightly it can exist indefinitely.

In nearly every school and in the research departments of businesses supporting such fashionable (and often tax-exempt) activities, there is at least one individual who, by defending himself with good-natured cynicism and apt debunking, manages to survive the pressures and seductions he rebukes and mildly discredits. Mr. Sommer is, apparently, one such individual who became so caught in his debunkings that he wrote a book based on them.

WILLIAM MATHES

San Francisco, California

COMMENTARY

A HIGHER GROUND

EFFORTS to grasp the meaning of the human situation, such as this week's lead article by Walter Weisskopf, often show a classic outline of the sequences which are, or are assumed to be, involved. Explicitly or by implication, there are three stages: (1) a high beginning; (2) confinement by limitation, followed by struggle toward freedom; and (3) transcendence and a high ending.

We have these assumptions by individual intuition, by the tradition of philosophical religion, and by metaphysical speculation. Our nostalgic longings bespeak our origin; our contests with circumstances and with the delusions arising from mistaken ideas about them are immediate evidence of confinement and struggle; and the concepts of value to which we gravitate in defining our goal suggest transcendence. You might call this the Gnostic hymn account of the human situation, or the Odysseus theory. In any event, we need thinking of this sort in order to plan a grand strategy for human striving.

What is Dr. Weisskopf concerned with in this discussion? He is eliciting basic assumptions about the nature of man in order to distinguish critically between competing theories of the good. Here, the choice of assumptions is crucial. You look at the field of engagement and you ask yourself, *Who* is trying to do *what*? In this case the "who" is the psychoanalyst. He stands for Man. What is he trying to do? To give an account of meaning. What does Dr. Weisskopf conclude? That man as psychoanalyst has let the sound and fury of a minor historical engagement convert him to a partial view of the human pilgrimage. The analysts, he says, being themselves subjects as well as objects for study in that particular engagement, did not go deep enough into the nature of man in order to determine what he is really after. "Modern Western society emphasizes the dissecting, measuring, weighing, and calculating analytical

intellect and neglects and represses encompassing intuitive reason." So, today, assembling the signs and symbols of the contemporary human condition, Dr. Weisskopf makes a reading of the present engagement of man from a higher ground. He leaves behind the "natural science" assumptions and adopts the larger view made possible by overtly philosophical assumptions.

By this means he obtains a normative overview of the human situation. How do we know that this view is "true"? As always, we measure truth by its capacity to illumine experience with demonstrable meaning. If a larger generalization can include and reconcile more of the contradictory phenomena of existence, and at the same time help us to untie particular knots of pain, we have no choice but to say that it is true—or truer, at least, than the generalizations we have used for guidance in the past.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

MEN AND WOMEN —CONTINUED

FROM the volume of correspondence on the subject of women's changing role in both education and family life, we judge this to be a "live" topic for many readers. Apparently, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* has not originated these concerns, but only triggered discussion of them.

Of the various ways in which women respond to the current cultural and familial situation, one grows out of the fact that women now play many of the roles once exclusively reserved for men. This results in annoyance that women are still expected to be *women*. It seems that when any human being is limited to a particular role, there is a natural desire to play some part *beyond* that role. Some women respond with complaints, charging that men are not prepared to accord them equality in choosing how they will spend their time. Others are indignant, insisting on greater freedom. And still others feel that, once one has mastered the role of being a woman and helper of the family, other opportunities "come naturally" and need not be fussed about. A reader writes:

Child rearing can and should be a fascinating occupation, perhaps more demanding of wisdom, intellect and creativity than any other activity.

A mature woman does not feel, when she is fortunate enough to be a mother, that "the world is passing her by." On the contrary, she knows that she is deeply involved in the business of improving it, an experience which is as rewarding as she makes it. She does not look upon her children as little millstones around her neck, but rather as creative individuals which she has helped to fashion.

True, she must "find herself." This is a psychic process uninvolved with the development of a saleable skill. It is the labor of a lifetime, given a good head start by the raising of children.

There is some value in historical perspective on women's role in society. Reviewing *Ascent of*

Woman, by Elisabeth Mann Borgese, in the *Autumn American Scholar*, Prof. Louise M. Young observes:

Human history up until the nineteenth century (a mere moment as we reckon biologic time) was mainly the record of the emancipation of the individual. Some of us have held with Lord Acton, that the emancipation of women was a chapter in this history of liberty, viewed as successive triumphs of "minorities." But not so, according to Elisabeth Borgese. The "ascent of woman" was a single aspect of a larger shift of emphasis from the individual to the collective. The rise of new forms of "collectivist" social organization in the last century heralded a new cultural synthesis of the natural trends of individuation and socialization, which has already changed and will change further the sex balance; will minimize sex differences by fostering new traits; and will produce superior women who will be in every respect men's equals. Therefore the changes in laws and customs designed to advance women's freedom are not mere concessions of chivalry and tolerance, are not antibiological and antilogical as the new-antifeminists believe, but are collective responses to evolutionary change.

The coincident emergence of women and the displacement of the individual by the collective is no mere accident of history, but a clearly marked phase of the new synthesis. It is witness to the deep-seated affinity between the attributes called feminine and the attributes of the group acting as a collective force. This affinity has its origins in the very wellsprings of the human consciousness, and the depth of its penetration of our subconscious is traceable in myth, in language, in art, and in man's perennial dreams of an ideal state.

This "crisis of the individual" is simply evidence of the evolutionary extension of mankind's scope. As man has expanded his reach, the individual has shrunk in importance, independence, power of control and range of knowledge. Intellectually and technologically, humanity has advanced beyond the grasp of the individual mind. The individual consciousness is less and less able to keep pace with the complexity of happenings. The "crisis of the individual," the disorientation of sex relationships, the baffling anxieties about women's role, are closely related elements of the "human condition." The reciprocal play of natural evolution and cultural evolution has produced it; and may be counted upon to lead us out of it. After "billions of years of blind

mutation, pressing against the shifting walls of their environment," the primeval organisms have emerged as man. But now we are conscious of what has happened, and how it has happened. From now on, evolution is in our hands.

Dr. Young's concluding sentence is appropriate introduction to a letter from another reader:

The current discussion in this column regarding the "feminine mystique" (a very handy, if not altogether definitive, label for the whole range of man-woman relationships, personal and social) seems to me both timely and worth while.

There is one point, however, that (so far as I know) none of the writers quoted has called specific attention to. That is, that although, as Mrs. Block says (see *MANAS* for Nov. 20), "each woman has a host of choices: education, marriage, career or any combination of the three," *once having chosen* she is no longer free in an unconditional sense, because her choice has established its own conditions. From then on, she may feel "caught" in the consequences of her choice. Yet in such an instance will all further choice actually be denied her?

If, for example, a young girl enters marriage before she has "found herself," she has by that choice established the necessity for exploring, *as a wife*, some of her potentialities as an individual. If there are children, she has become involved in further complexity, that is, the setting up of conditions wherein her purely individual, psychic drives are of necessity curtailed but in which her opportunities for character evolvment may be greatly enhanced. Thus when she finds the limiting conditions irksome—when all the forces of what Mrs. Scott-Maxwell calls "woman's undisciplined unconscious masculine tendencies" erupt—the young woman tends to "jump over the traces"; that is, to disregard the *legitimate* expectations of husband and children in order to further her own egocentric demands. This is a sloppy, emotional explosion of what may be a much-needed effort toward "individuation."

It is here that the young wife and mother needs to realize that she, herself, has definitely set *some* of the terms of the problem of individuation *within* the marital relationship, and that if it is to endure, she must accept the present challenge of fulfilling her "needs" and developing her potentialities as an individual within it—without taking from husband or children, in the urgency of her own need, what is

rightfully theirs. Otherwise, the only honest course is severance from what she feels is an "impossible situation."

There is, it seems to us, an unusual amount of good sense in this communication. So often, the person concerned with his "individuation" has a vague feeling that this kind of development requires some form of tailor-made circumstances to make it happen, when the fact is that preoccupation with "arrangements" will almost certainly prevent any real growth. People do of course get into bad situations, and have to get out of them; but by feeling "bruised" and blaming others one takes his bad situation wherever he goes.

FRONTIERS

Aspects of the Human Situation

A MAGAZINE such as MANAS, through its exchanges and other sources, is bound to receive a great deal of material concerned with human tragedy and wrong. The spectrum is incredibly wide, the volume could easily be emotionally overwhelming. Much of it presents matters which cry out for immediate action, or at least some kind of response. There is for example the report in *Iberica* for Oct. 5 on the cruel punishments inflicted by officials of the Franco regime on striking Spanish miners. There are these paragraphs:

Captain Fernando Caro, of the Civil Guard, is in charge of the arrests and torturing of striking miners in Asturias. When the wife of a worker of the town of Sama, who had been brutally beaten appeared before him to protest the treatment of her husband, she too was beaten and orders were given for her to be shorn of her hair. The woman was pregnant, so as a final gesture the Captain punched her in the abdomen, yelling, "One less communist."

In Asturias, a worker in the "Duro-Felguera" plant, Everado Lastra, had to be admitted to the "La Cadelada" insane asylum, after having been tortured by civil guards who caught him painting anti-Franco signs on the factory pipelines.

Also in Asturias, a miner of the "El Fondon" mine, Vicente Baragano, a resident of the Lada district (one kilometer from Sama) was tortured. His testicles were burned, leaving him impotent.

The foregoing is only the beginning of the roster of infamy for September. Doubtless there was one like it in August, and are or will be similar ones for October, November, December. . . . The September report is printed apropos the just-concluded five-year renewal of the Agreements of 1953 between Spain and the United States, in which "The Government of the United States affirms its recognition of Spain's importance to the security, well-being and development of the areas of the Atlantic and Mediterranean."

Then there is a mailing (with enclosures) from Barbara Reynolds, wife of Earle Reynolds, sociologist skipper of the *Phoenix*, presently of Hiroshima. Mrs. Reynolds is cochairman (with the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) of the Foreign Liaison Committee of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Peace Study Mission. The Committee hopes to raise money to put into action a plan that is intended to go "far beyond the simple and often merely emotional appeal of 'No More Hiroshimas'." The Mission's program will begin in the spring of 1964 with a tour by fifteen or twenty *hibakusha* (explosion-affected survivors of the atomic bomb) who represent all walks of Japanese life. They will visit the major countries of the world, their intent being to "make apparent the true meaning of modern warfare," not simply to inspire fear, but to show the extent of what those who prepare for war may unleash on humanity, to urge people everywhere to unite for the abolition of war, and to give what practical help they can in moving the world toward this goal. Those who want more information or wish to help this program may write the Peace Pilgrimage Committee, Box 100, Central Post Office, Hiroshima, Japan.

The war-inflicted agonies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki belong to the past. In *The Cold War and the Income Tax* (Farrar, Straus, 1963), Edmund Wilson gives some attention to future horrors potential in existing preparations for chemical and biological warfare. He quotes a U.S. Army adviser on the contemplated use of poisons that would be spread "in a biological cloud that is invisible, odorless and tasteless," which "searches out and infects all targets permeable or breathing." This weapon "establishes new foci of contagious disease in animals, insects, birds, and people, and contaminates hospitals, kitchens, restaurants, and warehouses." An entire continent, it is said, can be infected "under proper meteorological conditions." Mr. Wilson writes:

An experiment has been made by the Chemical Corps of dropping two hundred thousand mosquitos

in special containers all around a certain airbase in Florida which is usually free from mosquitoes. It was found that "within a few days, a high percentage of the people living on and around the base had been bitten many times. Had the mosquitoes been carrying a disease such as yellow fever, the Chemical Corps believes that most of the local inhabitants would have been infected." This artificial cultivation of yellow fever and cholera epidemics, after the centuries when humanity has suffered from them and when cures and controls have at last been found, must be the most macabre irony of medical history—especially when one considers that efforts are now being made to intensify the virulence of these diseases and to render them proof against antibiotics.

Mr. Wilson is not an "emotional" writer. He is a measured and penetrating observer of the contemporary scene, and this book, in which he appears as victim as well as critic of the anomalies of our civilization, shows what a little research can turn up in the way of monstrous contradictions between what modern, progressive man is supposed to believe in, and what he actually is doing, and has already done. In all such reading, however, you reach a point of saturation. The catalog of what is wrong, disgraceful, tragic, irrational, and even ridiculous goes on and on, and you begin to understand, at least in principle, the nihilist desperation of men committed to "total" revolution. But you also know that blind destruction is not the answer; the "new beginnings" are never really new, and the political managers whose authority is based on overwhelming power are unable to do anything but degrade the quality of human life.

The question that needs answering is this: Is there some *rationale* for the almost universal frustration of the social intelligence and conscience of mankind at the present juncture of history? Why are the proposed "managerial" solutions for present social or collective evils: fully as threatening as the wrongs they would correct? Is this problem a "practical" one, or is it rooted in ethical and psychological mysteries? Can some useful generalizations about "Man" be made at this point, or must we wait for "more facts"?