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WHAT IS MATERIALISM?

IN any society in which ideological doctrines play a large part in shaping popular opinion, slogans and epithets get a lot of uncritical use. The result is that polemical or partisan expression is permeated with the feeling-tones of competing abstractions and the argument proceeds in the terms of setting one cultural delusion against another. Seldom is there any real intellectual or moral encounter. People bludgeon one another with clubs of self-righteousness and angry condemnation, without questioning either the intellectual honesty or the moral integrity of their weapons. Nothing perturbs the combatants more than to invite them to examine their own claims in a non-ideological framework of meaning.

Try, for example, to get an emotionally aroused opponent of the Cuban revolution to discuss calmly and apolitically the fact that for the first time in history, millions of Cubans are beginning to get well-built homes instead of shacks, sanitary conditions for the preparation of food, and are now on the way to literacy and basic education. Ask him whether or not it makes him feel *good* to know that these people are having a better life and a better chance, and see if he can answer you without either hedging or pained reluctance. Usually, such a man is so committed, ideologically, that he fears a normal, decent response will expose him to dangerous admissions, amounting to endorsement of "socialism," or something worse. He is not relieved of his anxiety by the fact that societies where the institution of private property prevails have in many areas set an example to which the socialist countries try to measure up. He imagines that his ideological brand of "truth" is total and indivisible. Nothing good can be conceded of a competing system. If, in the interval since the Revolution, the Cuban common people, and especially the *campesino* (peasant or agricultural worker) group, have been able to live under conditions of self-respect and hope, he prefers not to know it. He would rather that the island simply disappear, if it should seem to threaten the logic of his ideological opposition to Castro's regime. It is a characteristic of ideology that eventually it becomes more important than humanity.

The purpose of an epithet in ideological argument is usually to push the one to whom it is applied outside the pale of rational or dispassionate consideration. Take the word "materialist." A materialist is a man with bad motives. He is a self-seeker, a hedonist in philosophy, a man devoid of spiritual vision. Why should any good person listen to the arguments of a materialist? There are exceptions, of course, but in most cases "materialist," in Western discourse, is a final, side-taking word. Prove that a man is a materialist and you have done him in.

This brings us to a letter from a reader, who says:

> I wish that you would soon come again to the question of "materialism," as discussed in your Jan. 17 issue, in "Education for Tomorrow." I suppose "materialism" is at its worst when it is currently assumed that the primary purpose of man is to increase his material possessions. As to Gandhi, he was so "materialistic" that he said that many Indians were so poor that "God" could only come to some in the first instance in the form of food. Yet the same Gandhi believed and lived by the rule that after you have the material possessions you really need (not the same for all men), any further acquisitiveness is a form of theft. How is education to proceed so that children will learn what is essential or healthy materialism, and what is theft?

What, first of all, does Materialism mean? The intellectual differentiations of materialism are too numerous and finely drawn to discuss here. We have *feeling* reactions only to moral meanings, so that our look at this word will be mostly in a

moral focus. But first we need generalized technical definition, which we take from Chapman Cohen's *Materialism Re-Stated* (London: Secular Society, 1927):

> The one thing that would be fatal to materialism would be the necessity for assuming a controlling and directing intelligence at any part of the cosmic process. . . . The essential issue is whether it is possible, or is ever likely to be possible, to account for the whole range of natural phenomena in terms of the composition of forces. That is the principle for which Materialism has always stood. By that principle it stands or falls.

This is the basic viewpoint of many of those who believe themselves to embody the scientific outlook in philosophy and politics. We are not saying that this is the scientific outlook, since science is supposed to be neutral on questions of philosophy and religion, and to concern itself only with demonstrable facts, but this version of materialism has been loudly claimed by many men who felt that they were interpreting correctly the implications of the scientific position.

Now *why* would anybody cleave to this position? Why should the idea that a mechanistic principle controls "the whole range of natural phenomena" be insisted upon? Why, when men normally long for an environment which has larger meanings than their immediate personal values, should they in this instance make the assertion that no such meanings exist in the world of nature?

We can obtain the answer to this question by examining the alternatives to the materialistic view that have been available in Western thought. We soon see that Materialism, and its companion doctrine Atheism, became popular mainly because of the role of religion and God. To get the feeling of the first materialist thinkers, we have only to quote Lamettrie's passionate declaration: "If Atheism were universally disseminated, all the branches of religion would be torn up by the roots. Then there would be no more theological wars; there would no longer be soldiers of religion, that terrible kind of soldier." In other words, the cardinal doctrine of materialism was not a doctrine for, but a doctrine *against,* a common belief of mankind. The founders of modern materialism were determined to uproot the system of belief which, in their eyes, was responsible for immeasurable iniquity and human suffering. They were fighters for the dignity and the freedom of man. They believed in justice and human purposes, not theological injustice and priestly purposes. They wanted for the universe a controlling principle which could not become a tool in the hands of an exploiting and Machiavellian few. The mechanistic laws of the Newtonian scheme seemed a proper substitute for the will of God, since these, it was assumed, could not be bent to the special purposes of a ruling clique. The earliest advocates of Newton's World Machine were not ideologists, but more like libertarians, and they could hardly have been expected to see far enough into the future to anticipate the use that would be made of their scientific ideas by the champions of Dialectical Materialism.

What we are saying, in substance, is that the motivation of the first materialists in Western thought was moral and humanitarian in origin. They wanted to do good and justice for their fellows, and the materialistic scheme promised a theoretical framework in which these ideals could be realized. From that day to this, practically every revolution that has taken place in the West has been either anti-religious or anti-theological and anti-clerical. This kind of materialism, then, arose, developed, and in some cases gained power in the pursuit of high humanitarian ends. The corruption and the decay (in terms of the full meaning of "humanitarian") of the political systems founded on materialistic assumptions is another chapter of modern history, needing the sort of extensive discussion it receives from political analysts such as Dwight Macdonald. (The inconsistency of the ends of the revolution sponsored by the dialectical materialists with the means they used to achieve power is one of the themes of his volume, *The Root Is Man*.)

Today, except in the societies where materialism is a foundation-stone of the going ideology, doctrinaire materialism has given way to agnosticism and skepticism. The materialism of the nineteenth century was a weapon in the polemics of social reform and revolution, but now that belief in dogma is pretty well discredited, and unbelief is no longer ground for persecution and ostracism, the value of materialism in polemics has greatly diminished. A new freedom of thought, independent of the pressures of past controversies, is evident in scientific circles. You could even say that some scientists exhibit a curious "softness" in regard to old theological assumptions, while others are simply open-minded concerning religious or metaphysical ideas. There is no longer any hard-core body of philosophical assumptions in our society—no firm foundation upon which men might be able to build a new kind of society. The present is a period of indecision, waiting, and flux.

Well, is there a way in which the meaning of the word "materialism" ought to be restricted in order to avoid misunderstanding? It seems appropriate to use "materialism" or "materialist" in three ways. First, there is Chapman Cohen's use. He defines materialism as that philosophy which will admit only mechanistic (which means deterministic) forces as operating in the universe. So far as we can see, this definition bears little relation to "matter," but turns on what you think causes or controls the motions of matter. If you think that there is a mind at work—a mind which has some kind of independence of the deterministic chain of mechanistic causation—then you are not a materialist in the sense of Chapman Cohen's definition.

It has always been a puzzle to us to understand how the Dialectical Materialists account for or justify the moral emotions which from the beginning have been the animating principle of the revolutionary movement. There is nothing in the mechanistic scheme of things to produce a moral emotion or a sense of justice. Yet there it is, rising in the works of some of the avowed materialists of the past, with an almost luminous beauty. Clarence Darrow, who was no socialist, is another illustration of this anomaly. An outspoken mechanist in philosophy, and, like Lombroso, an absolute determinist in relation to behavior, Darrow was one of the truly great humanitarians of his time. One can only conclude that his materialism was no more than a handy peg on which to hang his opposition to conventional hypocrisy and the apathy of the respectable and the well-to-do toward the suffering of the poor, the unfortunate, and the criminal. It is as though he said to his orthodox contemporaries: "If you can have your God and your religious beliefs and still live as you do, then I will have none!" Given the setting and the alternatives as they confronted Darrow, it is difficult not to decide as he did. (See Irving Stone's *Clarence Darrow for the Defense*—Bantam, 50 cents.)

The second appropriate use of materialism is as a word to describe the value system of people whose major ends are inseparably connected with material things or acquisitions. We say "connected," since it is well known in this age of psychology that it is not the "thing" itself which the man wants, but the feeling he gets from possessing it. Men who commit suicide because they lose their wealth are materialists. Men whose delights are in the pleasures of acquisition and possession, whether of things or of other persons, are materialists. Men who reveal by their behavior that their idea of reality is limited to sensation are materialists.

The third proper use of materialism (according to this series of suggestions) is mainly as an extension and a clarification of what might seem a confusing aspect of the second use. For example, it is quite possible for one who declares himself a believer in spiritual doctrines to have a materialist's understanding of the meaning of his beliefs. People who instinctively define the good in terms of political power, material security, physical sensation, or sensuous enjoyment, are

materialists, and they are completely materialists when these values amount to ends instead of means. On this definition, many of the pillars of orthodox society are materialists. Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* is a minor classic which might illustrate this account of materialism.

Accordingly, with these conceptions of the meaning of materialism established, we might argue that Julien de Lamettrie was a philosophical materialist but a spiritual human being, in that while he declared his unbelief in transcendental doctrines—those known to Europe in the eighteenth century—his intentions and moral attitude revealed an intense love of freedom and justice, which are the primary moral ideas of any spiritual philosophy. This is not to say that in either case he had adopted a mature position. At the time, he could not see (as is plain, if you read him) the oppressive and even tyrannical implications of "scientific" materialism, nor did he look far beyond the problems of immediate material welfare in his reflections on the good of man. Maturity, we are arguing, would have obliged him to eliminate the potential schism in his thought—the implicit conflict between his materialism and his love of freedom and justice, made explicit by subsequent history.

Gandhi, to turn to our correspondent's letter; does not seem to us to qualify as a materialist under any of the headings we have made. The only shred of justification we can think of for calling Gandhi a materialist lies in the claim that he had a tendency to tell other people where their duty lay—a manifest departure from the law of human freedom, and therefore a way of manipulating people as though they were "things" and not essentially moral agents. We don't know how much actual support there is for this claim and are indisposed to argue the point, since the major emphasis of Gandhi's life was so evidently and gloriously on the side of freedom. But if it be conceded that he did allow himself to be the rector of some of the moral decisions of other men, we can only say it was probably natural that, working with people as he found them, he allowed some of the common weaknesses of the theocratic society in which he was born to affect his behavior. This tendency might even have contributed something to his extraordinary power of communication to the Indian people—a compromise, perhaps, in the service of those who needed the help of a mildly dictatorial father image.

We come now to the problem set by our correspondent: "How is education to proceed so that children will learn what is essential or healthy materialism, and what is theft?"

Two things need to be said about this question. First, it manifestly adopts Proudhon's proposition, "Property is theft," adding only the Gandhian qualification—what you really need to maintain the essentials of a decent life (a variable quantity) is not theft. There is probably a further qualification to be drawn from Gandhi's idea of the stewardship of wealth, but the rejoinder to this would be that in a society of mature human beings the function of stewardship would be better performed by the government; that only so long as a wise and incorruptible government seems unobtainable is private stewardship to be preferred to an impersonal guardianship of common resources. Given maturity, however, this distinction would be a detail.

The other necessary comment about the question is that it asks for something which cannot be given—a formula for educational wisdom. Now our correspondent is too wise a man to expect anything like that; he is interested in exploration, not presumptuous conclusions; but so many educational ideas appear to be based upon a fixed estimate of human nature, instead of a recognition of the infinite variousness—intellectually and morally—of human beings, that the comment seemed important to make.

There are four elements in any educational situation. There is the child and his dual nature; and there is society and its dual nature. By the child and his dual nature we mean the child as he hypothetically *is*, and the child as he hypothetically

may *become.* Nobody knows exactly what the child is, but experience gives educators the ability to form some general conclusions. (See Gesell, Spock, and the others.) We know less about what a particular child may become, but again, practical experience in teaching brings the capacity for an educated guess. Now and then an educational experiment is so successful that it breaks a lot of old rules and establishes a new level of norms, helping educators to remain flexible in their thinking. These questions have two dimensions: the intellectual and the moral. The relation between the two may be great or small. It depends upon the child.

Society and its dual nature might be expressed as the contrast between the status quo in education (conventional ideas, the public schools, the notions of lay school boards and the notions of "educationists"), and the potential for better education in unusual teachers and unusual schools. There are as many variables in these relationships as there are in children or the child.

Well, if you determine to be an unusual teacher or to create an unusual school, with what do you start? Proudhon's doctrine that property is theft as an underlying theme? Maybe. The only guide of a good teacher is his conscience. But his conscience or rather his good sense may prevent him from using a great idealist's compact socio-moral judgment, while at the same time presenting human relationships to the child in a framework of meaning such that, if the child were to grow up with others similarly educated, no one would ever need to say to them reproachfully that *property is theft.*

But the world is not like that. It is not a harmonious organism of cooperative intelligence, but is filled with evil, along with other things. The good teacher would probably introduce men's thinking about evil in a rhythm timed with the child's recognition of it in experience. Basically—to attempt to answer the question of our correspondent directly—the idea would be to teach that things, whatever they are, are means, not ends. The intelligence of this doctrine would depend upon the intelligence of the ends which the child adopts, with the teacher's help.

The role of means is always distorted when it has to compensate for indistinct, unworthy, or impoverished ends. This is the problem of philosophy. There is no solution for the problem of education unless there is a working (not a final) solution for the problems of philosophy.

If the teacher wants to go faster than his pupils can progress toward a desirable goal, he is not a teacher but a fanatic. The goal is in the pupils' seeing the values and working toward them, not in their "getting there." Deciding upon the optimum rate of progress may also be a way of defining both the means and the ends.

REVIEW
THE PARABLE OF EXECUTION

OF all forms of agony, that of a small child is the most difficult for the human heart to bear, perhaps because the cause of pain and terror is unknown to the little one. There is no conscious participation in causation, no context in which the suffering can find meaning. The most tragic of war casualties are like this, as are those who are daily executed in those countries of the world which still punish with death. The helpless and the hopeless cannot escape through "due process" because they have neither the intelligence nor the means for averting execution, and also, characteristically, our penologists tell us, the helpless and hopeless of the condemned simply do not comprehend what is happening to them. Nuclear explosives, of course, make this sort of unbearable fate the lot of most of us in degree; we are planning each other's executions as well as before-death torture for the children of the world.

The Canadian novel, *Execution*, by Colin McDougall (Crest Reprint, 1961), is something of a parable as well as a "good story." At the outset we encounter a young hero-to-be whose first response in battle is one of exhilaration, but who later discovers that he is to be an executioner—not only of the helpless among the "enemy," but also of the helpless among his comrades.

Here is McDougall's first portrait of his "Lt. Adam" at war:

> Adam stared at that village with its hidden horde of enemy and he felt a slow pulse of anticipation begin to beat inside him. He was angry and eager. He burned with impatience to try himself against this enemy; and it was the same, he knew, for every other Canadian soldier on the hillside. They were sick of marching and skirmishing; they wanted to get at the Germans and fight. That was why they had come here after all.
>
> Ever since the landing Adam had been swept away on a flooding tide of exhilaration. He had never felt more alive; until now he had never known his senses fully engaged by life. There had been that cup of wine back in the captured castle, the first Sicilian dawn, strange fruits and purple mountain tops, the reek of high explosive, smashed towns at midnight, the cheering populace—all these things, and the hard competence of his manhood proved each day. And always there was the possibility of death lurking round each corner, close enough to make doubly precious each moment of living.
>
> Adam looked the red-eyed lizard in the face. He felt almost drunk with the day's bright sunshine. "Bring on the Germans," he wanted to yell at his lizard. "Bring them on—that's what we're here for!"
>
> But then he laughed at his intensity and shook his head to clear it. He picked up the binoculars again. Each little cemetery vault was painted in dazzling designs and colours, resembling bathing-huts gaily clustered on a beach of green. He watched as the 25-pound shells went marching in among the vaults, blowing graves and bones into the wind no doubt, but still adding a gay, Saturday-afternoon-at-the-fair appearance to the scene. He drank deeply from his freshly-filled water-bottle. If this is war, Adam thought, then maybe the Germans have, something, maybe the Germans are right. Maybe it is good to be young and to be at war. . . .

Among the captured Italians are two innocent deserters from a remote village, who are pressed into mess service and who become pets of the company. But the order comes through to shoot all enemy deserters, and Adam is not only unable to circumvent the order but must fire the final bullets himself to stop the last moments of torture in already mangled bodies. So Adam loses a part of his sanity or perhaps gains another kind of sanity he never had before, somehow realizing that an expiation in kind will someday be required. But before this comes to pass, with the politically motivated execution of a loved child-soldier of his own ranks, he tries to understand the paradoxes of impersonal killing—the same paradoxes thrown into such sharp relief today by the anticipation of a potential 50-megaton flash. Major Bazin becomes one of Adam's instructors-during the groping pilgrimage for meaning, as in this conversation during a lull on the same Italian front:

> "Amo," said Major Bunny Bazin, snapping the bolt of his rifle closed. "I love."

He squinted through the peep-sight, steadied the barrel on its sand-bag. "Amas," said Major Bazin. "He loves. Christ, we *all* love—but I missed. Pass me up the rum."

Adam stared gloomily at the square of sky framed in the broken window. Any moment now an A.P. or H.E. shell might come screaming through. "What the hell are you doing up there?" he demanded.

On the mattress Major Bazin considered the question carefully. "Tell me," he asked, "do you know any better way of passing the afternoon than lie at ease sniping the enemy while conjugating the verb 'to love,' and drinking the best issue Egyptian rum? Hell, it's the vocation I've been searching for all my life."

Adam turned his head and looked at the other: his friend, his former Company Commander, a man whose sense he may have doubted, but never his wisdom. He looked Bazin in the face. "Bunny," he said. "What's it all about, and where is it going to end?"

For a moment Bazin's long face looked sad, then he smiled.: "Johnny," he said, "I don't know where it's going to end because you and I, after all, live each day fairly close to the brink of eternity. . . . Not that that's such a bad thing—" he added quickly. "In compensation we are granted increased aliveness of our senses. We think and see and feel more keenly—".

Adam regarded him, frowning.

"As to what it's all about—" Bazin's face had become sombre. "That's obvious, if you dare look at the thing—instead of building up and hiding behind a shield of competence. . . . What it's about, of course, is execution. It started in that Sicilian barn-yard, with your two Italians—big and little Joe did you call them?—when you stood by and acquiesced in their execution—"

"Acquiesced? said Adam, in a voice of fury. "Hell, I *killed* them!"

"No," Bazin said sharply. "That part was a mere act of mercy. It was the acquiescing that mattered."

Adam's look was sullen. "All right," he said, after a moment. "All right. On that basis, you were much more to blame than I was."

"True," said Bazin, with no change of tone. "But then I've already participated in enough of the world's injustices so that one more has little effect. But for you it was the first time; and remember—execution is the ultimate injustice, the ultimate degradation of man. Look what it's done to the Padre, that poor bastard Philip Doorn. . . ."

"Don't ask me what the answer is," said Bazin. "Perhaps it is man's plight to acquiesce. On the other hand, even recognizing execution as the evil may be victory of sorts; struggling against it may be the closest man ever comes to victory."

Well, we are still capable, it appears, of doing these things to one another—while still professing to know how to conjugate the verb "amo."

COMMENTARY
HIROSHIMA PEACE PILGRIMS

THE Hiroshima Peace Pilgrims (see Frontiers) are two Japanese young people who last month toured the United States, carrying their message of disaster, agony, and hope to American audiences. One of the Pilgrims is Miyoko Matsubara, a young woman who was thirteen years old at the time of the bomb. With 320 other school girls, she was a mile from the blast on Aug. 6, 1945, and is one of the fifty-five survivors in that group. She bears scars on her arms and face, even after much plastic surgery. She teaches blind children in a Japanese orphanage.

The other Pilgrim is Hiromasa Hanabusa, nineteen-year-old boy who lost both his parents in the explosion.

The active organizer of the pilgrimage is Mrs. Earle (Barbara) Reynolds, who with her family sailed into the United States testing zone in the Pacific in 1958. Last fall the Reynolds family sailed to a Soviet port, bent on a similar protest, but was turned away. The Peace Pilgrimage of two survivors of the Hiroshima destruction is another effort to impress the import of that horror on the Western world.

The two "pilgrims" were chosen from many applicants by a panel of prominent citizens of Hiroshima. The Fellowship of Reconciliation sponsored the tour in the United States, with practical help in arrangements provided by the various offices of the American Friends Service Committee. Supplied with documents and films, the pilgrims hoped to spread more widely the story of the victims of Hiroshima. The Reynolds family (headquarters aboard the *Phoenix,* Eba, Hiroshima, Japan) reports encouragingly friendly receptions of the Japanese young people in the United States, with good stories in the press. The Berkeley *Daily Gazette* (March 20) ran pictures of the Pilgrims and of Mayor Hutchinson reading a message from the Mayor of Hiroshima. The story in this paper said:

> In troubled tones of pitched urgency, two representatives of Hiroshima have visited Berkeley and told the story of war's destruction that is propelling them on a pilgrimage from their reconstructed homeland to the seat of world disarmament talks—Geneva.
>
> Miyoko Matsubara and Hiromasa Hanabusa are still living with the Hiroshima atomic bombing etched on their souls and their sober faces. They tell their story with unabashed emotionalism. . . .
>
> Soberly, almost prayerfully, Miss Matsubara tells of the patients still in the hospital in Hiroshima with injuries from the atomic attack and of the death rate of about 50 a year. . . .
>
> A handsome and lean youth with troubled eyes, Hanabusa is worried that the world may forget "the horrors of war." . . . He talked with Berkeley students about disarmament and nuclear testing, looking hard and long when a youth commented, "We're not really of one world. You've known war and we've known peace."

Reporting on the tour, the Reynolds family says that the mission of these two "seems to have caught the imaginations of many people," and that the documentary film "has the impact of a bedside interview with an A-bomb victim." The Pilgrimage has been called "a deeply moving testament to the impossibility of contemplating war as a solution to the world's problems."

Funds are needed to help defray the cost of the Pilgrimage ($6,000). Checks (marked "Peace Pilgrimage") may be sent to George Willoughby, 2006 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa., or direct to the Reynolds family at Hiroshima.

PEACE NEWS

Notice of a small increase in overseas subscription rates to *Peace News,* international pacifist weekly newspaper published in London, makes an occasion for speaking of the broad coverage of peace events in this paper. *Peace News* is an exciting achievement in vigorous journalism in behalf of peace—professional in quality, amateur in spirit. No other publication comes close to creating the sense of the world

community of workers for peace that is found in *Peace News.* In recent months, the paper has been presenting mature reviews of films and books, and general cultural material with peace orientation. *Peace News* is one of the very few international publications which labor uncompromisingly and without sectarianism for the cause of peace. People in the United States may receive a post-free trial subscription of thirteen weeks for $1.00. The money should be sent to *Peace News* at 5 Caledonian Road, London, N. 1, England, or to the paper's U.S. office, c/o American Friends Service Committee, 160 North 15th St., Philadelphia, Pa.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
HANNAH ARENDT ON EDUCATION

WHATEVER the topic, one can be sure that the writings of Hannah Arendt will be challenging. A recent collection of her papers published under the title, *Between Past and Future* (Viking), has the following paragraphs:

> That modern education, insofar as it attempts to establish a world of children, destroys the necessary conditions for vital development and growth seems obvious. But that harm to the developing child should be the result of modern education strikes one as strange indeed, for this education maintained that its exclusive aim was to serve the child and rebelled against the methods of the past because these had not sufficiently taken into account the child's inner nature and his needs. "The Century of the Child," as we may recall, was going to emancipate the child and free him from the standards derived from the adult world. Then how could it happen that the most elementary conditions of life necessary for growth and development of the child were overlooked or simply not recognized? How could it happen that the child was exposed to what more than anything else characterized the adult world, its public aspect, after the decision had just been reached that the mistakes in all past education had been to see the child as nothing but an undersized grown-up?
>
> The reason for this strange state of affairs has nothing directly to do with education; it is rather to be found in the judgments and prejudices about the nature of private life and public world and their relation to each other which have been characteristic of modern society since the beginning of modern times and which educators, when they finally began, relatively late, to modernize education, accepted as self-evident assumptions without being aware of the consequences they must necessarily have for the life of the child. It is the peculiarity of modern society, and by no other means a matter of course, that it regards life, that is, the earthly life of the individual as well as the family, as the highest good; and for this reason, in contrast to all previous centuries, emancipated this life and all the activities that have to do with its preservation and enrichment from the concealment of privacy and exposed them to the light of the public world.

Miss Arendt's work requires some sorting over by the reader—not because of obscurity but because of depth. Commenting on Miss Arendt some six months ago (in the *New Republic)*, Irving Kristol suggests a reason why anything on politics, culture, or education written by Miss Arendt is worth attention. What he calls "her marvelous insights into education" may, Mr. Kristol suggests, be partially attributable to "her appreciation of the Græco-Roman point of view, which in turn enables her to discern what it is in modernity that is specifically modern as against generically human." He continues:

> Her essays, at their best, liberate us from prejudices and preconceptions that we are not even aware we possess. One is not accustomed to discovering that an essay on "What is Freedom?" will say something new on the subject; Miss Arendt's essay of that title is spectacularly original and provocative. This is because, instead of taking our modern liberal notion of liberty as given, and reading the human record in its light, she recaptures the Greek notion as the Greeks understood it, reestablishes it as a compelling human alternative and then shows how the peculiar and parochial modern idea evolved. Nor is this an academic exercise (though I should say one needs some academic training in order to follow her argument). For Miss Arendt is convinced that liberty, in the modern sense, is a dying ideal, and her purpose is to remind US that the death of the liberal idea of liberty need not signify the death of liberty itself—if only we instruct ourselves, in time, of the varieties of liberty that are (in principle, at least) open to us. Indeed, Miss Arendt is convinced that modernity itself is a dying theme, that our century is more apocalyptic than "progressive" in character.

Turning to Miss Arendt's paper, "The Crisis in Education," we find an example of the "insights" Mr. Kristol has in mind.

> The real difficulty in modern education lies in the fact that, despite all the fashionable talk about a new conservatism. even that minimum of conservation and the conserving attitude without which education is simply not possible is in our time extraordinarily hard to achieve. There are very good reasons for this. The crisis of authority in education is most closely connected with the crisis of tradition, that is with the crisis in our attitude toward the realm

> of the past. This aspect of the modern crisis is especially hard for the educator to bear, because it is his task to mediate between the old and the new, so that his very profession requires of him an extraordinary respect for the past. Through long centuries, i.e., throughout the combined period of Roman-Christian civilization, there was no need for him to become aware of this special quality in himself because reverence for the past was an essential part of the Roman frame of mind, and this was not altered or ended by Christianity, but simply shifted onto different foundations.

Here, of course, we run into a problem, because "reverence for the past" can become sterile or even a basis for reaction. There must be something more important than the "cultural heritage" to transmit from one generation to another, and it may be that the simple phrase *"a sense of continuity"* describes it.

Our past is like the present, full of ignorant partisanship, marked by misunderstood symbols for religious and political truth, but at the same time host to certain hopes and aspirations. Perhaps what we need more than reverence for any phase of the past is a reverence for the ability in man to regenerate for the present creative elements out of the past. This is not easy for educators because it involves a clear understanding of philosophy and of the relationship between philosophy and ethics. Yet unless this view is taken, even the best of ideas may be transformed into mere ideology, and ideologies are the manipulative agencies by which creative thought is subdued. The priests and kings—or the politicians—who follow the time when great thoughts abound, reduce the ideas to a system, and emasculate their inspiration by devising rituals which are used to cajole and control. If an idea ceases to be the living experience of a man, it becomes simply what Erich Fromm calls "an idol outside of him which he worships, to which he submits, and which he also uses to cover up and rationalize his most irrational and immoral acts."

Because we have been habitually and legitimately wary of ideologies in the American tradition, we have put our teachers, as Miss Arendt suggests, in a very difficult situation—not because systematized ideologies are good, which they are not, but for two other reasons. First, we have no gods and very few heroes, and even if the ideologies which often exploit the gods and heroes are inadequate, the gods and heroes themselves are legitimate projections of ideas and ideals in the direction of the future. Second, we have deluded ourselves into believing that we *are* actually free of ideologies, when the fact is that mediocre goals have supplanted both the high and the mighty as well as the tragically mistaken ideas of the past. A passage from Paul Herr's *Journey Not To End*, applies here:

> He asked me what I thought of America. I told him that while I had read much about America, met many Americans in other countries and discussed their culture with them, I had not seen enough of the country yet to form any over-all impression, save that everything was very expensive.
>
> Hamilton laughed. "You have discovered the secret of our much vaunted high standard of living: high prices! Yes, we have the highest standard of living the world has ever known." He walked to the window and waved his pipe at the eternal lights of Manhattan. "But the average man must work so hard to maintain this standard of living that in his leisure all he wants to do is to escape." He turned from the window and looked at me. "And do you know what he wishes to escape from? I'll tell you. From this ugly and pointless 'highest standard of living'."
>
> I said that the Americans I had met more or less confirmed the European criticism that as a culture America lacked any central and uniting ideas.
>
> He shook his head violently. "Oh, no, my friend. Quite the opposite. The unity of our so-called ideas amounts to a religion. Let me tell you of our new Trinity. God the Father is Money, Science is the Savior, and Mediocrity the Holy Ghost."

FRONTIERS

Geneva Journey

I WOULD like to add a few links to the peace chain story. Nine days before I left for Geneva I was called by the Women's Strike for Peace in New York City and asked if I could go to an international meeting of women in the city where the disarmament conference was going on. They wanted a rural woman and one of a low income—I fitted both categories. I had $5.75 precisely at that moment, but I said I would go and would try to raise the fare. I wrote seventeen letters asking for help. Fourteen sent me money. As soon as I sent off the letters I applied for a passport. I wasn't sure I would use it, but I wanted to be ready. I was not disappointed.

I knew a few of the women going to Geneva, but only one of them well; two others I had briefly met while picketing in front of the White House on Jan. 15. In other words not only did I not know most of the women going to Geneva, but they also did not know one another. From the moment we met in New York for the first time, all our thoughts were on the task of what we could accomplish in Geneva. It was not until our return trip that I got to know some of the personal things about some of the women—how many children they had, etc.

When we landed in Geneva there wasn't much of a welcome. (One little lady from the WILPF [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom].) We did not know that women were not allowed to vote in Switzerland and that Swiss women in general did not make public spectacles of themselves.

We had left International Airport in New York about 8:30 p.m. on April 1. About 9 a.m. on Monday, after a sleepless night of trying at least thirty-five different ways to sleep, all of them unsuccessful, we arrived anything but rested in Geneva.

On the first afternoon I was one of the team which went to see the Canadian mission. There we were told that the only thing that could change the climate of the U.S. was just what we were doing.

By the second day women from different European countries began to converge on Geneva. The first group included ten from the British Isles. They joined our discussions. Four Norwegian women came that afternoon; they had much to offer as they had written up a proposal for international cooperation of all women.

We had brought from the United States 55,000 signatures collected in only two weeks. As time went by we found they were not the important factor of our trip. Much more important was a joint statement written by the women from the ten nations represented. This was not come by easily. Sadly enough, it was the American women who could not see that to succeed we must be one and all. They thought that our petitions were more important. They did not want any demonstration when the petitions were presented. With great patience, the European women sat through all the many, many discussions needed to talk out this vital issue.

At one point an English woman got up and, with much emotion and finally tears, said that we must agree or what was the use of her having come so far—that we did not understand what some of them had gone through to get there. She had stood on a crossroads with a small sign and shilling by shilling had waited until she had enough to come. A shilling is about 14 cents. Along with the shillings she took encouragement and insults.

A Swedish woman finally told us that all her life she had saved her money for a small house, but when she heard we were coming, she took all that money and paid the fare for five German women to come to Geneva. These declarations came only when the Europeans saw that the doubts of some American women seemed to be overbalancing the whole group's action. Many women grew up in the four brief days we were in

Geneva. This was a short time in which to throw off attitudes which had accumulated over a lifetime.

A trait that I am sorry to say existed unbeknown to the people showing it was one of aloofness on a very basic level. At some of the missions we were wined and dined to excess, with the most unusual food and liquor and cigarettes. Yet with all this in front of us, some women pulled out their lousy American cigarettes and refused what was offered. They ate little and in general did not accept the hospitality with any graciousness. They did not sense the importance of these small kindnesses. We were always in a rush. Dinner usually took an hour—many tried to hurry the overworked waiter in our hotel to get moving, instead of coming earlier and adjusting to this tempo of life.

All was not negative in our approach. The European women were excited by all the various ideas and our outspoken manner in dealing with everything. Our problem basically was that from disuse, or rather non-use, we no longer had that keen acuteness needed to hear the small voices of others. We did need to tune in, at Geneva.

The problem that we had to face in Geneva was not one of politics, but one of humanity and of an appeal to humanity to survive. We went as the conscience that had long been lost by the men in important positions. We could appeal to them only as person to person.

The day before we left Geneva the fifty American women and fifty-one European women we had collected made a joint demonstration. We walked from the center of Geneva silently two by two, the two or three miles to the Palais de Nations, with our joint statement and the signatures. The line was not broken at street corners and was continuous to the Palais. We then stood silently on the grass in front of the Palais for fifteen minutes. Afterward we went to the gate and asked admittance. Three times the guard suggested we take a tour of the grounds, but we said we would wait for word from Mr. Arthur Dean and Mr. Valerian Zorin. Finally we were ushered into a meeting chamber and told they would come later. In dead silence we waited one and a half hours. The doors into the chamber were intermittently opened and people stuck their head in—wondering about the silence! There was a great contrast between the side we were on and the noisy hall outside. Finally the two men came in. They were introduced to the mothers, and in turn we were introduced to Father Zorin and Father Dean. The joint statement was read by one of the Norwegian women. Dagmar Wilson made a statement, then the petitions were given to the two men. No applause or word was spoken in all this time by the 101 women. We just sat in judgment of what power these two men had to destroy our planet and our children. This was a religious meeting of tremendous force which none of us had ever before experienced.

The following evening the Indian delegate said we had no idea of the magnitude of our actions.

We made, I think, only a small dent in this enormous crust that has to be broken, but somehow I am sure it had significance. It certainly changed 101 people in that hall. As I sat in the huge room in silence waiting for the two men, a flea dropped on the paper pad in front of me. I wondered what he was doing so out of place there—but then what were we 101 women doing in this enormous area of world politics?

Upon return to America those of us that could remain in the east went to Washington, D.C., and began a silent vigil in front of the White House, continuous twenty-four hours a day. We carried only one sign. It said that seventeen nations met and spoke with us in Geneva, and that we now wait to report to President Kennedy. The two days I was there it poured down rain the whole time. We weren't many—sometimes only one carrying the sign and one giving leaflets—but it had an impact. One night when I was carrying the sign alone, I saw many people turn their heads in shame when they came close to me.

The first time I ever carried a sign in my life was last November I when someone pushed one into my hand; and a few months later, there I was alone in front of the White House, carrying a sign that connected directly to the thread of existence that must not be broken.

This was one of the times when a hidden ability that had never been put to use was brought out and given small wings to take off with.

It is not hopeless. These tiny voices are making themselves heard and will gather force along the way. The net we are weaving will gather strength as time goes on. The first stamp you lick on a letter to oppose the national madness enables you to lick a few more, and pretty soon you think of other things to do. Never forget that there are many who are waiting to communicate to you and give support in unknown ways.

On the White House vigil, when only four of us were walking (not in front of the White House, but on the other side of Lafayette Park, because the Shah of Iran was going to lunch at the White House that day), a woman came up to us. She said she had seen some of the women on TV and she wanted to talk to us. She stayed about an hour and went away saying that she was going to start a group in her town in Pennsylvania, and would we all send her information and materials we had gathered.

About two months ago a notice in one of the peace journals said that the Hiroshima Peace Pilgrims would come to this country in April, and people could write for information. I hesitated for a while to write. I didn't think I could get enough support to bring them here, and our area seemed too small for such an undertaking, but I did write. I heard from them immediately. I began to speak to people in nearby communities about doing something. I sent releases I received to different people to get them used to the idea. I heard finally that it was not possible for the Pilgrims to come to any but large cities. I wrote to ask if we might have one of the Hiroshima people in May, if another plane-load were sent over. I got hold of Japanese in three areas: could they interpret? What did they think of the idea? I wrote a letter to our local newspaper editor about the Pilgrims. Then the day before I left for Geneva I was called and asked if we really wanted the Pilgrims. I left the names of two Dartmouth professors to contact. On my return I was told that the Peace Pilgrims would be at Dartmouth on a Friday night.

All this came about from my writing one letter and inquiring—I had no motive except a personal feeling that we must respond to those we had hurt so badly in 1945. I had plenty of qualms and misgivings about the outcome along the way, but somehow, by someone taking the initiative, others joined to help.

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