

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST PREMATURETY

THE struggle against prematurity—call it an instinctive philosophical respect for the truth that is still beyond words—finds expression in every thoughtful man who has some kind of grip on the feeling of maturity. It is, you could say, the angelic element which fears to tread where fools rush in. It has imitators in mere timidity or lack of imagination, which brings much confusion to the understanding of honest reticence or authentic philosophic doubt. Its strength is in its admission of man's incompleteness, its weakness in the tendency for it to stop being a struggle and become a fixed position of denial.

The struggle against prematurity differs from the longing for metaphysical certainty in that it is the psychological opposite of this longing. It is that in man which refuses any easy escape from paradox, which turns away from any of the simple "yes" or "no" answers. It is paralogical, in that it uses logic as a tool of justification, not as a means of investigation.

We need illustrations. The most notable opponent of prematurity in modern times was Sigmund Freud. This becomes evident in an article by Philip Rieff in the June *Encounter*. Mr. Rieff says:

The religious question can be asked in various ways: in terms of the good, true, and beautiful (Socrates); by reference to how, and by whom, we are to be saved (Christ) through tracing a line of historical development towards justice (Marx). Because, as a therapist, he refused to ask the religious question, or announce a characterological ideal, Freud earned the polemical hatred of Lawrence, Jung's schism, Reich's progressively more radical revisions. Try as he might, Reich could not avoid funding a theology at the end of his therapy, an ideal character at the end of his analytic theory. Reich's pathetic struggle to frame the great question in a scientific way illustrates how powerfully psychotherapy is tempted beyond the grim safety of

diagnostic analysis into the creative danger of doctrinal synthesis.

Freud never felt tempted. His genius was analytical, not creative. At its best, psychoanalytical therapy is devoted to the long and dubious task of rubbing a touch of that analytic genius into less powerful minds. Here is no large new cosset of an idea, within which Western men can comfort themselves for the inherent difficulties of living. Freud's was a severe and chill anti-doctrine, in which the final dichotomy to which men are prey—that between an ultimately meaningful and meaningless life—must also be abandoned. Thus, Freud prescribed specially to his patients, but really to men in general, the "analytic attitude." . . . Psychoanalysis supplied an individual and secular substitute for communal and religious vocation. Where nothing can be taken for granted, and the stupidity of social life no longer saves, every man must become something of a genius about himself.

Why was Freud anti-doctrine? Apart from temperamental or intuitive reasons, there were overwhelming historical reasons. Freud saw the messes people made of their lives from believing straight-line religious doctrines concerning the nature of things. A cloistered philosopher might be able to avoid reacting against cultural pressures, but a doctor, one who has to deal with the pain of human beings, could hardly enjoy this immunity. Freud became an aggressor against belief. As Rieff puts it:

Admittedly, thus to compel his [Freud's] imagination to stay put, short of synthesis, put a severe limitation upon it. But the absurdity of this world could not be balanced, in his opinion, by absurd ideas. To be religious was to be sick, by definition: it is the effort to find a cure where none can possibly exist. For Freud, religion could only be a symptom of what it seeks to cure. . . . In a sense we can now better understand, there is something to the gross charge that psychoanalysis is the perfect profession for neurotics—but only for extremely intelligent neurotics, those who can learn to inhibit successfully their religious impulse.

The most familiar—and probably the most valid—criticism of Freud was that he provided no "positive" solution for man's psychic ills. The criticism arises from man's hunger for answers, or for surrogate answers in the form of doctrine. We can accept this criticism as individual thinkers, but hardly as social historians. Freud was really prescribing a corrective for his age, and the ills of the age were too massive to be dealt with in terms of philosophic paradox. The treatment for undisciplined belief, as he saw it, is disciplined unbelief, and he would have no compromises with the virus of final explanation. The religious hunger to know he recognized and understood but he disposed of its importance in *The Future of an Illusion*.

But a generation later, we may argue, the historical situation was changing, or had changed. So Jung, if we think of him as a figure in history, saw a different need. Rieff takes Jung's text from his *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (how different this title from Freud's *Future of an Illusion!*):

Jung has discovered a fresh source for the familiar mood of discontent among the civilized. That discontent is no longer with rigid and outworn meanings, still clamped down tightly upon our vital impulses. Not the repressions, but the permissions trouble us now. It is "the meaninglessness of life that causes the disturbance in the unconscious." As for Jung's patients over the age of thirty-five, so for mature civilization the "problem" is "in the last resort" finding "a religious outlook on life." This is no doctrine of maturity, like Freud's, with its acceptance of meaninglessness as the final product of analytic wisdom. As a protestant against the severity of the analytic attitude, Jung has taken a dangerous road, . . . The normality of disillusion, a controlled sense of resignation, which was the most for which Freud hoped, appears to Jung the beginning rather than the end of therapy. . . .

But Jung had his own instinct against prematurity. Publicly, at any rate, he opposed metaphysical solutions. He was unable to deny what he felt to be the therapeutic efficacy of religious or philosophical belief, but he was careful not to endorse any particular *form* of

belief. If it worked, he said, it was good. He named this the psychological theory of truth—a kind of therapeutic pragmatism. Rieff calls Jung "the most subtle of the modern conservatives, trying not to save this tradition or that, but the very notion of tradition, which can be defined, in Jungian terms, as shared archetypes internalized." Speaking of the impoverishment of Western religion, Rieff adds: "What the religious feelings needed was a psychological reviviscence that was not specifically Christian but broad enough to permit a fresh Christian apologetic to be read into it. Jung has supplied that psychology; there remains only for apologists to use it for their own purposes." This is a sagacious comment, surprising only in that Mr. Rieff seems not to have noticed that various modern sectaries have been using Jung's psychology for years.

We might identify the struggle against prematurity as the genius of the agnostic outlook. But when does agnosticism cease to be a useful attitude and turn into a stubborn resistance to a realizable aspect of truth? If we could answer this question with exactitude—with, that is, historical reference-points, instead of with generalities—we should know all about man and his problems, and very nearly all about everything else. We can say, however, that in some epochs the best qualities of human beings seem to find expression in agnosticism, while in other periods the forthright quest for positive answers gains our wholehearted approval. Today, for example, men like Erich Fromm, Viktor Frankl, and A. H. Maslow speak to our condition because they do, however warily, "announce a characterological ideal."

We must qualify. Agnosticism, we ought to say, is not simply an attitude of rejection of unknown or unknowable matters. Basically it is the resolve to know only what it is possible to know, without being deceived by others or by oneself. In a world which has long been under the domination of enthroned ignorance, the "rejecting" aspect of agnosticism gets the greatest play, sometimes to the point where many people

come to believe that the act of rejection embodies all intellectual virtue. And this, in terms of the historical scene, eventually generates its shallow opposite number—emotional acceptance of *any* apparently "positive" doctrine which happens to suit.

Rapid alternations between attitudes of belief and unbelief have the effect of vulgarizing thought to the point where it tends to have no meaning at all, delivering the culture into the hands of politics as the only area where "reality" exists. The man who wants to remain in the difficult region of *human* existence must learn to deal with the protean paradox produced in him by the interplay of his will-to-know and his will-not-to-believe. The culture which embraces politics as the sole ground of reality forces all truly human beings to become anarchists. No more is there any cultural room for the free exercise of the will to believe, nor for the struggle against prematurity—nor for, most important of all, reflective examination of the paradox of balance between these principles.

Now and then men who would normally prefer to remain philosophical thinkers feel obliged by desperate circumstances to politicalize their views into dogmas. They should not do this, but they do, because they are human and want to help other men find the truth, or the way to truth. Bertrand Russell called attention to this tendency in his introduction to Frederick Lange's *History of Materialism*:

Historically, we may regard materialism as a system of dogma set up to combat orthodox dogma. As a rule, the materialistic dogma has not been set up by men who loved dogma, but by men who felt that nothing less definite would enable them to fight the dogmas they disliked. They were in the position of men who raise an army to enforce peace. Accordingly we find that, as ancient orthodoxies disintegrate, materialism more and more gives way to skepticism.

It is interesting that here, by implication, the polarities of good and bad are set up in terms of dogma and skepticism, which are contrasting psychological attitudes rather than competing

doctrines of "truth." Not the content of a man's ideas, but the way he holds them—this is the criterion of good thinking. It is also the contribution to truth-seeking of the twentieth century . . . thus far.

The "materialism" of which Russell speaks became one of the *status quos* of the agnostic outlook which, because of the social struggle, got frozen into a dogma and made into the ground of a political system—Communism. The harm done to the human mind and the human psyche by this politicalization of thought is at once evident when you read some Russian who is trying to write seriously on some subject but feels he has to make whatever he says sound like a wholesome echo of Dialectical Materialism. The institutional rigidities are as bad, or worse. The Russians are not, of course, the only offenders, but what happened to Marxism under the pressures of political expediency is a handy illustration of the point.

So now we have a new ideal of man—not a man who believes the correct doctrine, but one who is trying to find out the difference between what he knows and what he believes and is looking for a direction of growth in understanding.

The question arises: Is there any point in examining "doctrines" at all? The virtues of maturity all have "action" definitions, these days, and we know why. But what about conceptual versions of the good, the true, and the actual? Are these always traps, as the Zen people say? Does the struggle against prematurity call for absolute suppression of all ideas of substantive reality? Will it ever make legitimate sense to speak of man as being or having a soul? Are there, in other words, metaphysical "things"?

As background for considering these questions, we might look at some of the action definitions of human achievement that are provided in the last chapter of A. H. Maslow's book, *Toward a Psychology of Being*:

At the level of self-actualizing, many dichotomies become resolved, opposites are seen to be unities and the whole dichotomous way of thinking is recognized to be immature. For self-actualizing people, there is a strong tendency for selfishness and unselfishness to fuse into a higher, superordinate unity. Work tends to be the same thing as play; vocation and avocation become the same thing. When duty is pleasant and pleasure is fulfillment of duty, then they lost their separateness and oppositeness. The highest maturity is discovered to include a childlike quality, and we discover healthy children to have some of the qualities of mature self-actualization. The inner-outer split, between self and all else, gets fuzzy and much less sharp, and they are seen to be permeable to each other at the highest levels of personality development. . . .What such a person wants and enjoys is apt to be just what is good for him. His spontaneous reactions are as capable, efficient and right as if they had been thought out in advance. . . . This development toward the concept of a healthy unconscious, and of a healthy irrationality, sharpens our awareness of the limitations of purely abstract thinking. If our hope is to describe the world fully, a place is necessary for preverbal, ineffable, metaphorical, primary process, concrete-experience, intuitive and esthetic types of cognition, for there are certain aspects of reality which can be cognized in no other way. Even in science this is true, now that we know (1) that creativity has its roots in the non-rational, (2) that language is and must be always inadequate to describe total reality, (3) that any abstract concept leaves out much of reality, and (4) that what we call "knowledge" (which is usually highly abstract and verbal and sharply defined) often serves to blind us to those portions of reality not covered by the abstraction. That is, it makes us more able to see some things, but *less* able to see other things.

An essential part of Dr. Maslow's thought is the idea of the peak experience. Along with the maturity he calls self-actualization come what he calls "peak experiences," which are, so to say, climactic fruitions of the growth-process in human beings. In the chapter, "Peak-Experiences as Identity-Experiences," Dr. Maslow says:

The person in the peak-experiences feels more integrated (unified, whole, all-of-a-piece), than at other times. . . . As he gets to be more purely and singly himself he is more able to fuse with the world, with what was formerly not-self, e.g., the lovers come

closer to forming a unit rather than two people, the I-Thou monism becomes more possible, the creator becomes one with his work being created, the mother feels one with her child, the appreciator *becomes* the music (and it becomes him), or the painting, or the dance, the astronomer is "out there" with the stars (rather than a separateness peering across an abyss at another separateness through a telescope keyhole) .

That is, the greatest attainment of identity, autonomy, or selfhood is itself simultaneously transcending itself, a going beyond and above selfhood. The person can then become relatively egoless. . . . In the peak-experience, the individual is most here-now, most free of the past and of the future in various senses, most "all there" in the experience. . . . The person now becomes more a pure psychic and less a thing-of-the-world living under the laws of the world. That is, he becomes more determined by intra-psychic laws rather than by the laws of the non-psychic reality insofar as they are different. This sounds like a contradiction or a paradox but it is not, and even if it were, would have to be accepted anyway as having a certain kind of meaning.

As you read along in Dr. Maslow's book, you are increasingly impressed by his extraordinary skill in giving behavioral definition to aspects of man which once had abstract conceptual titles. The correspondences seem endless. He is doing the kind of thinking which, if it had been practiced in India in the sixth century B.C., might have made needless many aspects of the Buddhist reform. He doesn't seem to have much of a problem in avoiding prematurity in the direction of metaphysical abstraction.

It seems at least possible, however, that the time will come when the functional accounts of maturity will reach a completeness that will permit the bare outline of a new metaphysic without the hazard of creating new dogmas and forms of sectarian belief. This would be when form and function are seen to be the two sides of the same expression of reality. One way of speaking of the present would be as an interlude in history when human beings find themselves beginning to be able to imagine the closing of the abyss between doctrine and working knowledge in the area of what might be termed self-knowledge, which is a humanist designation for religion. The high

religions of the past always took cognizance of this gap, and the problems it creates, warning the devotee that there is a difference between doctrinal conformity or belief and what may be termed spiritual knowledge. A clear indication of this awareness is found in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the second chapter, where the teacher, Krishna, says to Arjuna, the disciple:

"When thy heart shall have worked through all the snares of delusion, then thou wilt attain to high indifference as to those doctrines which are already taught or which are yet to be taught. When thy mind once liberated from the Vedas shall be fixed immovably in contemplation, then shalt thou attain to devotion."

It is of considerable interest that while the Vedas are the prime source of religious teachings or doctrines for the Hindu religion, here, in the *Gita*, the Hindu Avatar of knowledge, or the Logos, asserts that these doctrines are bonds from which the mind must be "liberated"! This is the form which the struggle against prematurity took in past ages of hierarchical religion. Conformity to hallowed custom and established authority was recommended for those who were not prepared for the trials of individuality, but in the case of one ready to break through to self-actualization of his full egoic nature, the advice was very different. On this basis, the *Gita* is a treatise on the necessity for nonconformity, although in a gnostic rather than an agnostic framework of meaning.

Just conceivably, Sigmund Freud began a process of emancipation of the mind which will one day bring to an end the long age of the supremacy of doctrine in the intellectual life of mankind. The scientific revolution, it might be said, terminated the age of allegory and personification in religion, substituting the language of physical abstraction. This left a great emptiness in the psychic region of human existence. But once the process of introspection was resumed in the form of a secular instead of a religious discipline, there began a fresh enterprise in human self-discovery that has its roots in nature, while its vision may eventually reach the

stars. This is a movement which is not a "movement" in the old political or organizational sense, but the stirring, it may be, of an authentic evolutionary impulse. While religious groups of various sorts were able to borrow support from the psychological theories of Carl Jung—just as the scholarly theologians of the 1930's felt that Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy was a "scientific" endorsement of the free will that religion had lost to nineteenth century mechanists—no theologian, however clever, can make much capital out of the ideas of either Fromm, Frankl, or Maslow. There is a purity about the thinking of these men which does not lend itself to the purposes of theology—not, at least, to the theology of any orthodox religion.

REVIEW

"ARTICLES OF DISSENT"

ONE paperback which we are sure MANAS readers will want to know about is *The Nonconformers*, a collection of the work of various writers, edited by David Evanier and Stanley Silverzweig. The editors provide in their introduction this explanation for bringing out such a book:

Young people trying to find out exactly what is going on in the world, find that the most serious obstacle in their path is the American press. There is such a mass of trivia being published today that a serious student has to search hard to find information that is honest, insightful and valid.

Today, writers of the highest caliber are being published who deal with subjects of vital interest and importance. The ironic situation that exists, however, is that the more serious the writer, the less likely it is that he can be published in a magazine or newspaper with large circulation. There are exceptions, of course: *The New York Times*, *New York Post*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *Washington Post*, *St. Louis Dispatch*, *York (Pa.) Gazette* and *Daily* have the best news coverage. *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *Esquire*, and *Commentary* publish some writers dealing with controversial matters but only if the writers are well-known and command a wide audience. Most journalists, if they tackle subjects of real importance, are likely to find that they are writing for *The Nation*, *The Progressive*, or any one of the other highly stimulating journals having limited circulation.

That is the problem that writers are confronted with. The problem readers are confronted with is to *find* the periodicals that count, that really have something to offer. From the courageous little newsletter run by one man in Washington, *I. F. Stone's Weekly*, to the beautifully written, highly lucid *New Statesman* of London, from the iconoclastic monthly founded by Robert La Follette still going strong from Wisconsin, *The Progressive*, to the urbane and sophisticated *Manchester Guardian* in England, sources of information are available which are mature and exciting.

There are writers who have the courage and the guts to say what they think, in the way they feel like saying it. That's what counts, in our estimation: to say what you think and feel, not to conceal it.

The Nonconformers is divided into four parts: the first part, headed "The American Scene," includes Martin Luther King, Jr., Barbara Deming, an excellent reporter of the Peace Movement, and Murray Kempton; the next section, titled "The Crisis in Europe," presents, among others, Geoffrey Barraclough and Bruno Bettelheim; the third section, "Culture: The Frightened Fifties," brings us Arthur Miller and James Baldwin; the last section, called "Peace or War?", provides I. F. Stone and Carey McWilliams.

Such an "anthology" as *The Nonconformers* helps us to see someone like Arthur Miller—for example—as a man who is far more interesting than the much-publicized playwright or the also much-publicized former husband of a motion picture actress. His contribution, "The Role of Men of the Mind in the World Today," contains some lucid critical material. Miller points out that the first indication of a true "man of the mind" is a readiness to project his own powers of perception as sympathetically as possible, whatever the confines of the characteristic prejudices or preconceptions of others. The first thing, he says, is to "strive for an awareness of one's own prejudices." He continues:

All of which should indicate that my opinion of intellectuality is not confined to people who simply read a lot of books and do not work with their hands. I have met workers whom I regard as intellectuals, and I have met intellectuals who are drowning in illusions. On the whole, however, the disciplines of study and the practice of an art tend to press a man toward the habit of seeking insight into himself. And if as a nation we have failed in anything over the past years, it is in our inability and sometimes our unwillingness to ask ourselves what we are doing, really doing, as opposed to what we hope we are doing.

There is no doubt that Mr. Miller is right in another of his contentions:

Still another misconception about intellectuals is that, at least in the sciences, they are pre-eminently the people who know the facts. Indeed, the commonest idea of education among us is that it teaches you the facts, the facts about history, or psychology, or economics or whatever. I hope that the new administration, if it is indeed new in anything but name will not make this mistake as it summons American intellectuals to its aid.

Giving intellectuality a respectable status in society is a fine thing in principle, but along with the gratification to many which it may entail there ought to go a reasonable amount of guardedness. Despite everything, the State Department has been sending foreign writers to see me every few months over the past years, and recently a group of Russian writers stopped by during their tour of the country. We had an interesting time and then I asked whether America was very much different from the idea they had had of it before coming here. There was a long silence. One gentleman finally said, "It's a great country." I nodded, and waited. At last a novelist said, "Frankly, we have not had time to meet and discuss the subject, and have come to no decision yet." Now I had asked the question of a particular man among them, but it seemed to them perfectly normal that no individual had an opinion until they had all sat down and decided what it should be. This is also a species of recognition of intellectuality by government.

Returning to the problems considered in the editors' introduction to *The Nonconformers*, we recall a preface to a "little magazine" collection of stories issued in 1961 by the Universal Library of New York—*The Quixote Anthology* edited by Jean Rikhoff. Here, again, one encounters the predicaments of those who wish to write or publish for reasons other than saleability. Yet there are compensations.

This is how Rikhoff describes six years of publishing which ended with financial failure but also with a wealth of experience and a notable store of perseverance:

We could never pay. We always hoped we could, we always expected we would, but we never did. (As it was, I figure the magazine took between fifteen hundred to two thousand of my own money each year.)

But the thing was, we printed. We made a story or poem a fact; it existed between binding in some

kind of quasi-permanent form, and in the end that was the consolation I had to offer the writers and myself. Give us your stuff, was all I could say, and we will print it—and generously they gave even when most of them needed money and some were desperate for it.

The printed word: that is what a magazine like QUIXOTE offers: the printed word set down in painful honesty, sometimes awkward, always honest, a revelation of the inner life that compels its owner to objectify it. . . . Honest writing is seldom "pleasant." It will never be marketable, thus, in any financially proportionate relationship to its inherent value.

But you have got, I believe, to have it. I believed it six years ago and I believe it even more now. . . . Print the best you can, and keep printing as long as you can hold out.

COMMENTARY

EDUCATION IN LIMBO

DOUBTLESS many readers, along with the MANAS editors, shivered a bit at the prospect of what may result from Prof. Hayakawa's proposal of how to teach "writing" to college freshmen. Have the students, he says, write continuously for fifteen or twenty minutes "without pausing, without taking thought, without revising, without taking pen from paper."

We have always been of the shy opinion that no one should ever write without having something to say. So, in reaction to Prof. Hayakawa's exercise, we recalled the modest note by Lafcadio Hearn on his own writing:

The only application I have is that of persistence in a small way. I write a rough sketch and labour it over and over again for half a year, at intervals of ten minutes' leisure—sometimes I get a day or two. The work each time is small. But with the passing of the seasons the mass becomes noticeable—perhaps creditable.

Hearn elsewhere remarked that poor writing is most commonly the result of the writer having failed to *digest* his material. He writes too soon.

Hearn, of course, was a practicing artist, not a college freshman, and there are doubtless different rules—serious rules—for such men. But we wanted to set out the strongest contrast we could find before attempting to justify in some respects Prof. Hayakawa's "favorite exercise."

This is not the nineteenth century. Great blocks of the past have fallen into the dust-heaps of history. The separation of form and content in the arts is no longer an obvious distinction. Creative expression is more spontaneous, today, less confined by convention, less hedged by elaborate disciplines. This makes for some confusion and some nonsense in the arts, but it also is enormously liberating to the creative spirit.

Freer art forms are not necessarily inferior. They may serve far better the intuitive floodings of the creative spirit than the old, identifiable

forms known to past generations. The fact is that most people have been prone to call "art" whatever is put into a familiar form, so that an imitative technician could with some hard work attain status as an "artist."

It is time to acknowledge openly, candidly, happily, that we live in a period when the familiar labels can no longer be trusted. The authority of the organized social community is now often a false authority. The authority of the school and the university is increasingly questionable. The conventions of the good, the true, and the beautiful will have to go. The problem is to maintain some kind of independent respect for the good, the true, and the beautiful while overturning the conventions.

This is of course a frightening situation. We are all potential Holden Caulfields, these days, with an enormous quantity of psychological baggage to get rid of, or to refuse to take on. The present multiplication of cults, fads, and coteries is a symptom of the longing for new conventions—to be a rebel *and* to have certainty in one's opinions: *that* is the desirable thing. It is also impossible.

One of the interesting things about present-day artists is the way they make up their own techniques. First comes the impulse to make a statement, then comes the search for vocabulary. It was always this way with the great artists, but now this order of activity is beginning to pervade the entire artistic community. History of the arts and civilization is a display of the past vocabularies of all the arts of human expression. The *academy* is indoctrination in the most recent of those vocabularies. To use the history without submitting to the imprint of the academy—this is how art becomes free.

So, perhaps Prof. Hayakawa's device will work to the benefit of all those who, when they set out to write, ask themselves, "How is a writer *supposed* to write?" instead of wondering, "What do I want to say?" He is trying to get them into the current of spontaneous expression before the

manners and conventions of the past—which they don't understand, have never mastered, and probably never will—have time to block what little they *can* do.

This may be a good method for the young of an age that is in limbo. At any rate, it puts them on their own, which is the first lesson to be learned by a generation that will have to live through what will probably be the most far-reaching revolution in human history.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

HIGH SCHOOL READING AND ENGLISH TEACHING

LAST week's discussion began with an English teacher's criticism of the conventional insistence on exposing students to nineteenth-century "classics" and the five-pound anthology of "English Literature." Prof. Ward suggested that these alienating studies be replaced by teacher-student participation in the works of such contemporary writers as John Hersey, Alan Paton, John Steinbeck, Erich Remarque, and J. D. Salinger. While giving thought to Prof. Ward's suggested revolution in approach, we also became involved in quotation from an excellent article in *ETC.* (February, 1969) by S. I. Hayakawa, who concerns himself with the psychological needs of young people who are "learning to think and to write." Interestingly enough, Hayakawa also names Salinger as a writer students ought to read.

From all indications, the English teacher who is really interested in what his students *think* should devote a great deal of attention to J. D. Salinger. First taken up by the bright young men and women of the Ivy League, Salinger has become the chosen author of youth throughout the world and, according to a recent report, young Russians who don't know Salinger are not regarded as "hip" in their own circles. What is the significance of this identification, particularly with Holden Caulfield (of *The Catcher in the Rye*)? Holden, as one reviewer put it, is the symbol of the "wise child." He is wise because he refuses to accept the intellectual or psychological baggage of past eras no longer clearly relevant to his life. He is wise partly because he recognizes his innocence in respect to the hostile universe around him.

This is not to say that Salinger is a great writer or a profound thinker, but there is no doubt that his readers are touched by him—and that he seems somehow to be one of his own characters. Salinger, of course, provides no "answers" and,

right now, this is the kind of writer the young student trusts, because it seems to him more honest to be in limbo than out on any particular limb. In any case, if one understands the popularity of Salinger, he realizes that this sort of reading is not so much a fad as a door to self-evaluation. And it is the books written about our time which may open this door more widely, gaining the interest and respect of the student. So the English teacher, if he is to reach his students, might do well to interest himself more with philosophy and psychology than with matters of style and technique. Ideas and perspectives, not form, capture the imagination today. Even though Salinger is said to have worked on *The Catcher in the Rye* for nearly ten years, one gets the feeling that it is the perspective and not the form that required all that time.

There can be no doubt that the points of view given life by Salinger are in the nature of anarchistic protests against a stupid and tiresome status quo. His characters, though, are amusing and consciously wry rather than morbid, and while they sometimes become more impassioned about what is wrong "with everything" than many of the "beats," they are also of the nature and of the generation which seeks detachment as a possible forerunner of understanding. A few sentences from Maxwell Geismar's commentary on Salinger will give the reader unfamiliar with *The Catcher in the Rye* a brief picture of the mood and the style of this book:

The Catcher in the Rye protests against both the academic and social conformity of its period. But what does it argue *for*? When Holden mopes about the New York museum which is almost the true home of his discredited childhood, he remembers the Indian war-canoes "about as long as three goddam Cadillacs in a row." He refuses any longer to participate in the wealthy private boys' schools where "you have to keep making believe you give a damn if the football team loses, and all you do is talk about girls and liquor and sex all day, and everybody sticks together in these dirty little goddam cliques." He also rejects the notion of a conventional future in which he would work in an office, make a lot of dough, ride in cabs, play bridge, or go to the movies. But in his own

private vision of a better life, this little catcher in the rye sees only those "thousands of little children" all playing near the dangerous cliff, "and nobody's around—nobody big, I mean—except me" to rescue them from their morbid fate.

Coming back to Hayakawa's piece, we note that he begins by saying that college freshmen need an English course not so much for learning the mechanics of writing as in order to learn how to talk and think in some fashion about the psychological transition through which they are passing. As a semanticist, Hayakawa feels that the youngsters have been unwisely "protected" against serious self-evaluation:

I believe there is a good reason they were not taught semantics (or any other form of propaganda analysis) earlier. It is that we, as parents or teachers or both, rely profoundly on word-magic, the confusion of inferences and judgments with reports, and the authority of lofty and unexplained abstractions in our attempts to control our children. Until the anxious years of high school are over for our children, most of us would rather not put into their hands such critical instruments as would enable them to expose as nonsense much of what we say to them.

Prof. Hayakawa has a suggestion on the subject of writing—a kind of "creative" equivalent to passing out miscellaneous paperbacks in the classroom:

How, then, shall writing be taught? I am just about coming to the conclusion that it should not be taught at all. I believe that instruction in grammar, spelling, sentence structure, paragraphing and such should be abandoned in Freshman English. The students should be told that the lid is off, that they can write and spell and punctuate any damn way they please—but that they must write daily and copiously.

A favorite exercise of mine (the idea comes from Paul Eluard and the surrealist poets) is to give students a specified period—say fifteen or twenty minutes—and tell them to write rapidly and continuously for that length of time, without pausing, without taking thought, without revising, without taking pen from paper. If the student runs out of things to say, he is to write the last words he wrote over and over again over and over again until he can find other things to say. The papers are to be turned in unsigned—unless the student feels like signing it.

We are admittedly stumbling around this subject. Some of our readers, we know, are teachers of English, and many others observe with either wonder or misgiving the curious "taste" of their progeny. With a little help, this discussion can be continued for some time. At any rate, we think it should be.

FRONTIERS

A Voice of Europe in America

THE attitude toward the American continent of a European intellectual is always of interest, especially when he is a writer and thinker of such intellectual and moral authority as Eugene Relgis. The author of some fifty-four books which have been translated into fourteen languages, Relgis is, nevertheless, very little known in the United States. It is to be hoped that this situation will be remedied, and there are signs of growing interest here in his writings.¹ It would be a great shame if more attention were not dedicated to this poet, novelist and philosopher, whose works have enjoyed consideration and respect for years in Europe, and are now becoming known in Latin America through Spanish translations.

Relgis was born in Yassy, Rumania, on March 2, 1895. He appeared in the literary world of his country in 1913 with a volume of literary fantasies, *The Triumph of Non-Being*, written when he was seventeen years old, followed in 1914 by *Madness* and in 1919 by *Muted Voices*, a novel with a prologue by Stefan Zweig.² From 1915 to 1917 he wrote a trilogy entitled *Petru Arbore*, published in Rumanian in 1924 and in a revised edition in 1946. However, his most characteristic works are the descriptions of his travels through Europe, such as *Twelve Capitals*, and especially the essays in which he elaborates the philosophy which he terms in Spanish "*humanitarismo*," and which has been rendered in English as "humanism" or "pan-humanism." I believe that the latter term is more descriptive of Relgis' universalist and pacifist doctrine. A basic work in understanding this philosophy is the book originally entitled "*Umanitarismul si internationala intelectualilor*" and which has been published in Spanish under the

¹ See Felix H. Frank and John H. Hershey, "Eugen Relgis: Rumanian Humanist," *The Humanist* (Yellow Springs, Ohio), No. 1, 1951 and W. T. Starr and F. S. Stimson, "Eugene Relgis, Pan-Humanist," *Books Abroad* (Norman, Okla.), Spring, 1961.

² Published in English by the Oriole Press of Berkeley Heights, N.J.

title *El Humanitarismo* (Editorial Americalee, Buenos Aires, 1956). An idealist deeply preoccupied by social problems, Relgis maintains that a philosophical-moral system which transcends borders, political and religious ideologies and, in short, anything that tends to separate man from man and cause wars, is necessary to assure the peaceful existence and true progress of the human race. As a practical and not a utopian thinker, Relgis understands the necessity of basing this progressive evolution on ever greater advances on the social and economic level. Such a philosophy won for him the persecution of four dictatorial regimes in his native country, and he finally arrived in Montevideo in 1947 as a political refugee. The impact of this thinker on an America thirsty for new horizons can be seen in the following statement by the Argentinian academician Arturo Capdevila: "You, Eugene Relgis, ought to be counted among the most meritorious travellers. You came, you saw and you understood. You understood with your penetrating vision a complex and vast reality. For that reason you have been able to give us with your book a brave and vital message. You can say from now on that you did not suffer in vain, gravely and deeply, the sorrows of the spirit. Your voice will be heard; all of your lesson will be applied." (From a letter to Eugene Relgis about his book, *Cultural Perspectives in South America*.) It is the projection to America of the vision of a writer who, as Stefan Zweig said in the prologue to *Muted Voices*, "struggles tirelessly for the great goal of spiritual fraternity."

In 1958 the University of Montevideo published an essay by Relgis dedicated solely to the problems of contemporary America. This book, *Cultural Perspectives in South America*, received a prize from the Ministry of Public Education in that same year and was greeted by Arturo Capdevila in the terms we have seen above. It contains in synthesis the message which Relgis, as an European intellectual, has brought to America.

Relgis begins by clearly differentiating between "civilization" and "culture." He shows that civilization is the transitory, temporal form which society adopts in each phase of its development, while culture is the basic intellectual, moral and

artistic content which persists through the different changes which may take place in the civilization or external organization of a country or group of countries. The author suggests that the American continent has at present several types of civilization, but that a typically American culture or cultures has not yet developed. Nevertheless, he considers that America is an extremely fertile terrain for cultural creation, if American intellectuals know how to properly take advantage of its possibilities. And, within South America, Relgis asserts that Uruguay is the most probable country for this process to be initiated, that it is, in his words, "a country of the future."

In the first place, he believes that small countries are better able to conserve their spiritual independence from the lethal embrace of the large powers now struggling for the control of the world than the larger and more strategic nations, and that they may thus escape the tendency visible in these giants and their satellites toward the dehumanization and mechanization of life, antithesis of the humanistic ideals of Relgis. He feels that the small countries on the fringes of the cold war offer "persecuted man . . . a refuge for his honest labor, in accord with his abilities, and allow him to recuperate his dignity as an individual and as a loyal comrade of 'his brothers, his fellow human beings'."

But of even more importance for Relgis is the extensive racial mixture of Uruguay and of the entire continent, which seems to him to be likely to produce a new human type: "the type of integral man of whom we dream: healthy and strong in body, who enjoys the benefits of civilization and of nature, and whose intelligence can develop without the bonds of a super-refined culture, without the terrors of a mentality enslaved by dogmas, tyrannical ideologies or ancestral superstitions." This "integral man" of Relgis resembles the "cosmic race" of the Mexican philosopher Vasconcelos, but I believe that Relgis' concept is more universal, as can be seen in the following description of the kind of culture which he hopes will be created by the new American man: "It is for that reason that I believe in the future of America. Not as the specific manifestation of a certain period and of certain nations, but as a

healthier and more harmonious development of universal culture, as the most varied manifestation of a humanized science and art, which were too confined in the laboratories and museums of Europe."

In other words, the cultural mission of America consists in a careful selection of the eternal and universal values of Europe and their assimilation into American cultural life in order to create typically American values that later, transcending the limits of this continent, will carry their message of peace and fraternity to the entire world.

Such is the vision of Relgis, who dreams of the renaissance of European culture by way of this hemisphere. This is the essence of the message contained in this work: "Through the neohumanism which we believe to have discovered in some American cultural centers, and above all in our refuge which is Uruguay, it is possible to return to Europe at least a part of its own ancient values, falsified or destroyed by its national, civil and imperialist wars, by all of its authoritarian, absolutist, anticultural and antihuman regimes. . . . Paying our debt to Europe, we serve through her, all of Humanity." And Relgis recalls in this regard the prophecy that the German biologist, George F. Nicolai, now a professor of the University of Santiago de Chile, made to him in Berlin more than thirty years ago: "The new Europe will return to us by way of South America!"

But Relgis also sees several dangers which could cause the development of an authentic American and universal culture to fail. Of these dangers the most apparent is the plague of dictators and the political mentality, in the sectarian sense of the word: "Politics, with its petty, utilitarian mentality, and its oppressive and arbitrary procedures, infiltrates every area, even slipping under the doors of those social and humanitarian institutions that proudly proclaim themselves to be autonomous." In order to counteract the pernicious influence of this tendency and avoid the disasters which Europe has suffered, intelligent social action is necessary to create conditions favorable to free research. "We only point out that the first condition for freedom of conscience and all of the practical

freedoms which spring from it, is to avoid the errors of fanaticism, the oppression of all political and ecclesiastical, educational, ethical or even esthetical dogmatisms . . . The superstitions and fetichisms from above, created and sustained by the ruling classes, are more tenacious and harmful [than those of the people]."

Another danger that the author points out is the tendency toward the mechanization and dehumanization of life, analyzed already by Ortega y Gasset and many other modern thinkers, with the consequent destruction of all of the values prized by Relgis. In order to combat this tendency, as well as the traditional evil of authoritarianism in all of its aspects, a new humanist and dynamic ideology capable of making the intellectuals an effective force in the struggle is imperative. And Relgis considers that the ideas of the Uruguayan writer José Enrique Rodó are fundamental in the elaboration of this philosophy: "We can consider Rodó a precursor of humanism in his country, and place him among the greatest humanists of our time, because he has given his concept an extension which embraces ethics and esthetics at the same time, without forgetting that the point of departure of all idealism is the individual who develops himself, freely, on the double plane of knowledge and action." Relgis believes that this neohumanist philosophy based on the individual is already being elaborated in Latin America, and that it parallels his own philosophical concept, "integral humanism": "To us, this neohumanism means integral humanism, which is based on the consciousness which man should have of his position in the whole of nature; of the relations between the individual and his species, in time and space; of the interdependence of social groupings; and, in short, of the peaceful means which should be employed in an atmosphere of solidarity to foment his own creative evolution. These means, these 'arms' of combat are: freedom which has no other limits than those of the freedom of others, and love which knows how to discern, which in the diversity of the manifestations, of the forms and degrees of development, searches always for that which unites harmoniously and not that which divides and impels us toward an abyss of hatred and slaughter." It is especially in Uruguay

that Relgis feels that he has discovered the most propitious ground for this cultural elaboration.

The process has begun, but the dangers are many. Therefore, Relgis advises prudence to Latin America in the road it has undertaken: "Don't europeanize yourselves, that is: don't adopt the bad habits of intolerance and of violence of our unfortunate Europe. And on the other hand, don't americanize yourselves excessively, that is: don't become slaves of the mechanization of the North, and of that false moral based on Profit that counts the minutes of commercialized time and judges the value of a man by his material possessions."

Such, in brief, is the message which Relgis, fleeing from the persecutions and dogmatism of his beloved Europe, has brought to the Spanish-speaking peoples of this hemisphere. Clearly it contains much which we, perhaps more than they, need to carefully consider as we try to devise a valid set of values in opposition to the negative currents of our civilization.

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