

A POWER OF MIND

THE task of the educator—or the reformer; the two are not essentially different—lies in awakening and stirring to action the power of the imagination. The man with a specific social objective, for example, can accomplish little unless he is able to show men what their lives might be like under other circumstances. This he invites them to *imagine*, in order to gain their support. The great ideal of the eighteenth-century revolution—that all men are equal, endowed with the same rights and entitled to the same opportunities—was a spur to the popular imagination, leading countless men to feel a new sort of self-respect and self-reliance. To think of oneself in this way becomes the genesis of vastly fruitful action.

All deliberated action is action which is first conceived in the mind, and shaped by the imagination. It takes place, of course, within some framework of existence which serves as foundation. We think of "normal" progress as the elaboration of change within some pre-existing structure, while to contemplate changing the pre-existing structure is to project revolution, for which far greater powers of the imagination are required. When men undertake to change the very circumstances on which, in the past, they have depended for support of normal growth, the need for order becomes urgent, and can now have only a subjective origin—it must come from either vision or fear. Where imagination is weak, the vision fails, and fear fills the vacuum. Once fear is allowed to rule, what little imagination there was suffers paralysis, and then the generally debasing process of low-grade adjustment takes over entirely.

How could such disasters be avoided? Only, it seems quite apparent, through deliberate efforts to develop and maintain at all times disciplined capacities of the imagination, together with the

habit of critical questioning of all our structures, even the ones on which we rely with confidence. This could be called, in Socratic terms, the socially examined life, and Plato, pursuing the practice in the *Republic*, concluded that there can be no harmonious life for mankind until rulers or managers become philosophers, or philosophers become kings.

Plato's solution was admittedly utopian, and it will be regarded as utopian today. Yet he believed that no other remedy was worth attempting. And it seems certain that even a little progress in that direction would ease the path of social change. What, then, might be said about taking the first steps in Plato's program? But first we should seek clarity on the difficulties of any discussion of this subject. We must recognize that the capacity to philosophize is an innate quality in human beings, and that efforts toward stirring it should never be mistaken as a means of "producing" it. The matter is more or less as Michael Polanyi suggests in *Personal Knowledge*, when considering the practice of an art or of any high human attainment involving creative capacity:

An art which cannot be specified in detail cannot be transmitted by prescription, since no prescription for it exists. It can be passed on only by example by master to apprentice. This restricts the range of diffusion to that of personal contacts, and we find accordingly that craftsmanship tends to survive in closely circumscribed local traditions. Indeed, the diffusion of crafts from one country to another can often be traced to the migration of groups of craftsmen, as that of the Huguenots driven from France by the repeal of the Edict of Nantes under Louis XIV. Again, while *the articulate contents of science* are successfully taught all over the world in hundreds of new universities, *the unspecifiable art of scientific research* has not yet penetrated to many of these. The regions of Europe in which the scientific method first originated 400 years ago are still scientifically more fruitful today, in spite of their

impoverishment, than several overseas areas where much more money is available for scientific research. Without the opportunity offered to young scientists to serve an apprenticeship in Europe, and without the migration of European scientists to the new countries, research centers overseas could hardly ever have made much headway.

So it is likely to be, also, with those exercises of the intelligence which have the best chance of awakening the imagination. The problem is to stir it, yet at the same time to free the mind from constraint. The role of literature provides an example. An epic literature is surely effective material for awakening the image-making faculty of the young. It seems probable that no great culture has ever come into being without this resource. Wherever we turn, whether to India, to northern lands, or to the tribal societies of the American Indians, we find that an important part of the training of the young has involved transmitting to them an intimate knowledge of the heroes of the past. In an oral culture, this process amounted to an intense molding of emotional expression.

There are several discussions by Eric Havelock of this influence of heroic tradition in oral cultures, in his *Preface to Plato*. In one place he speaks of how even the common speech of a non-literate culture takes on a poetized, rhythmic character, due to the use of the forms of the epics for all social purposes. The customs of the Arabs are an instance:

T. E. Lawrence, describing the muster of an expeditionary force of Arab warriors, observed the improvised verses which accompanied the line-up, and the rhythms which assisted the organization of the forward march. These procedures were not the result of some special addiction to heroism on the part of the Arabs; they were not Homeric in our narrow and emasculated sense, meaning simply romantic. They were truly Homeric in their functional necessity. Here was a culture, strictly non-literate, as the Balkan cultures were not. The epic style was therefore a necessity for government and not just a means of recreation. Lawrence also noticed that the educational system centered on the hearth by which this epic capacity was indoctrinated. Presumably, as Arabia Deserta succumbs to literacy, these

mechanisms will wither away. Only a few ballad-makers will survive, a vestigial remnant divorced from functional relationship to their community, and waiting for antiquarians to collect their songs under the impression that this is truly Homeric stuff.

In such non-literate cultures the task of education could be described as putting the whole community into a formulaic state of mind. The instrument for doing this was to use the tribal epics as a paradigm. Their style is intensified to be sure. Their idiom shows a virtuosity which in common transactions might be imitated but at a simpler level of artistry. A minstrel would be a man of superior memory, and so also might be the prince and the judge. This automatically meant superior rhythmic sense, since rhythm was the preservative of speech. With superior memory and rhythmic sense would go also a greater virtuosity in the management of the formulas. The lesser memories of the populace would be content to use simpler and less elaborate language. But the whole community from minstrel and prince down to the peasant was attuned to the psychology of remembrance.

An epic might memorialize a whole area of history, and manners. In a village the local head-men might be able to repeat it, the peasantry, might remember only part of it. But all alike were trained to respond to formulaic directives—a military, order, let us say, or a local tax assessment—in which the epic style was imitated or echoed.

This amounts to saying that the poet and particularly the epic poet, would exercise a degree of cultural control over his community which is scarcely imaginable under modern literate conditions in which poetry is no longer part of the day's work.

Our first thought will doubtless be: How different the problems of education in those days! Or perhaps: Those people had no problems of education! It is obvious that unity and order were achieved in such cultures by a kind of collective conditioning of the imagination. While, within the scope of the epics, there was exercise of thought, and, in the case of the Greeks, a magnificent practice of the arts, a time came in Greek history when the very emotional splendor of epic imagery could be seen as a confinement which prohibited subtler reaches of the imagination. This was Plato's contention, made explicit in his attack upon the poets. The mind, Plato maintained,

ought to be autonomous, and not be turned into the responsive creature of poetic imagery. As a means of molding the collective psyche of the Greeks, the epics were unsurpassed, but a philosopher, Plato insisted, must shape his own character. A character developed under the spell of the mimetic poets, he said, was something imposed, not self-developed.

This is indeed the problem in all exercises of the imagination. The man may become captive of his material. A universe of discourse may be mistaken for final reality, giving the limits of possibility. What is learned from the poets, said Plato, does not lead to self-questioning, but is its enemy. For Plato, Homer is the tribal encyclopedia, from which authority must be withdrawn before there can be independent thinking on the part of the Greeks. His point is that Greeks do not reflectively follow the example of the Homeric heroes, but do it *automatically*. They do not deliberate their behavior. There is no choice, and therefore, in these respects, they are not behaving like men. In the formulas of Homer, as Havelock says, "were framed both law and history and religion and technology as these were known in his society." Havelock devotes many pages of analysis to Homer and the part played by his poems in Greek life, concluding:

In sum then, Plato's conception of poetry, if we apply it to that preliterate epoch in which the Greek institutions of the Classical age first crystallized in characteristic form, was basically correct. Poetry was not "literature" but a political and social necessity. It was not an art form, nor a creation of the private imagination, but an encyclopedia maintained by cooperative effort on the part of the "best Greek polities."

Another passage goes into greater detail:

It is at any rate clear that the learning process of Homeric man had to be pleasurable in order to be effective. We call it a "learning process." It is under this guise indeed that Plato attacks it, as not being a proper method of learning. But such as it was, it had been the method of indoctrination by which the public and private law had been crystallized, conserved, and transmitted successively from generation to

generation. Precisely how did this indoctrination work upon the mind of the recipient? What kind of learning process was this?

Surely it was one in which you learned by doing. But the doing, so far as it concerns the preservation of important language, was of a special kind. What you "did" were the thousand acts and thoughts, battles, speeches, journeys, lives, and deaths that you were reciting in rhythmic verse, or hearing, or repeating. The poetic performance if it were to mobilize all these psychic resources of memorization had itself to be a continual re-enactment of the tribal folkways, laws and procedures, and the listener had to become engaged in this reenactment to the point of total emotional involvement. In short, the artist identified with his story and the audience identified with the artist. This was the imperative demand made upon both of them if the process was to work.

You did not learn your ethics and politics, skills and directives, by having them presented to you as corpus for silent study, reflection and absorption. You were not asked to grasp their principles through rational analysis. You were not invited to so much as think of them. Instead you submitted to the paideutic spell. You allowed yourself to become "musical" in the functional sense of that Greek term. . . . The pattern of behavior in artist and audience was . . . in some important respects identical. It can be described mechanically as a continual repeating of rhythmic doings. Psychologically it is an act of personal commitment, of total engagement and of emotional identification. The term *mimesis* is chosen by Plato as the one most adequate to describe both re-enactment and also identification, and as one most applicable to the common psychology shared both by artist and by audience.

We now begin to see how great was the task undertaken by Plato, of which he was fully conscious. He knew quite well, Havelock says, that he was "entering the lists against a whole cultural tradition":

That is why his peroration ends with a challenge to man to resist the temptations not only of power, wealth, and pleasure but of poetry itself. The appeal translated into terms of modern cultural traditions sounds absurd. Plato was not given to absurdity.

The weapons for this struggle were the dialectic, which subjected tradition and conventional opinion to minute analysis, and the

idea of the soul as an intelligence independent of both the body and the cultural habits of the time. The time had come, in Plato's view, for Greeks to awaken from their dream life of subsistence upon myth and allegory. By Socratic questioning, by the discipline of mathematics and the dialectic, they were slowly to gain the capacity to think of themselves as beings who choose the principles by which they would live, rather than to drift into identification with Achilles or some other Homeric character. The concept of spiritual egoity gains currency in Plato's time. The Theory of the Forms is a means of separating the deliveries of the senses from the ideal of true knowledge, by means of which men acquire the skill of thinking abstractly. Havelock concludes that for the purposes of the emancipation of the European mind from the Homeric age of dream consciousness, "the Theory of the Forms was a historical necessity." Yet he feels that in introducing this idea, Plato incurs the risk of another kind of magic or fascination, precisely of the sort he had rejected in relation to the mimetic poets. Yet the doctrine of the Forms is certainly obscure, perhaps deliberately incomplete, and its use ought perhaps to be regarded in the light of what Plato says in the seventh epistle concerning ultimate questions—that he would never attempt to write down anything definitive concerning their solution. It may certainly be said that Plato's influence, through the centuries, has rather been in the direction of freeing men's minds than toward confining them.

We have gone into the Platonic project of education at some length because there are certain parallels between that time and our own. That is, there is a sense in which the problem of the release of the mind and the imagination is the same. Homer gave the Greeks their litanies, and we have ours. Our world is now in process of awakening from a great dream—a dream which is rapidly becoming a nightmare. Not only mimetic poets are persuasive architects of human belief. We are, for example, participants in and sufferers from the breakdown of the dream of nationalism as a way

of life. We are equally involved in disillusionment with the great promise of immeasurable prosperity, progress, and human good to be brought to the world by scientific technology. And, finally, we are beginning to wonder about the whole family of scientific conceptions of the nature of man and various conventional doctrines concerning how human good is to be served and the general welfare assured.

There is naturally a question as to whether we shall be *able* to separate ourselves from our habits of thinking about these things, to free ourselves from securities so long relied upon and hopes so widely cherished. While our methods of education may not be so "total" in their emotional effect as the dramatic singers who indoctrinated the youth of Greece, we have other saturating devices which have been efficient in spreading the orthodoxies of the day. We have, it is true, some rebels, and will doubtless have more as time goes on, but the "revolutionary" doctrines of the day—the ones, at least, now attracting the most attention—seem sadly lacking in imagination.

There are basic questions which need answering. One is: Who or what are we, if not members of a national state, as our fathers thought? Well, the makings of an answer are in the air. "We are," it is said, "members of the living world." This seems a good beginning, but with much more to be filled in. And there is still the question: Who or what are we, if we are not what the scientists have been saying we are? This one may be more difficult. The Socratic answer can be given, and might be welcomed by some, but conviction in such matters takes root only in soil which has been carefully prepared by earnest men over a long period.

Then there is the question of the schools. It is not so very long ago that there were no schools, and the people of America think of the development of their schools as perhaps their finest achievement. They are having great difficulty, now, in admitting that the schools and public education may have become our sorriest

mess. Why, for example, is there so much *spontaneous* rejection of the schools by the young? Could there be teaching without schools? What would become of democracy without compulsory education? And so on. The answers we have are only germinal.

Today we speak easily of "gaps" which interfere with normal human relations. There is the generation gap by which we explain the failure of communication between the under-thirties and the rest, and between children and parents. There is the credibility gap, leading to breakdown of authority in government and the ominous spread of anxiety and loss of faith or confidence among the people. We might also speak of the gap which separates the races, caused on the one hand by indifference and injustice on the part of the dominant race, and on the other by mounting frustration and anger on the part of minority groups, who are finding themselves practically unable to think any longer of the goal of a harmonious multi-racial society. There is, finally, the psycho-physical abyss which separates almost all of us from the natural world, and across which we are now beginning to get signals threatening extreme disorder and malfunction, in what seems impersonal reprisal for continued exploitation, ignorance, and neglect of the organic balances of life on earth.

But the language of gaps is concerned only with symptoms, while our ill is a failure of the imagination. It might be put simply as the incapacity to think of ourselves in the place of others, an inability to feel what others feel, whether it is a black man, a red man, a young man or woman, or even a stream, a lake, a tree. Our psychological life, one could say, has become static and inhumane, mechanical and unfit for living process. Our idea of growth is limited to adding to what we have; it does not include altering what we are. There is reason, therefore, to replace the language of symptoms with a deeper analysis, since symptoms can be attacked by professional "fixers," while the real deficiency,

which is impoverishment of the imagination, requires individual attention from everyone involved. No man can ever be lifted higher than his imagination will reach. When he seems to go higher, having been elevated by some clever device created by specialists, the gaps develop. The gaps come inevitably, since where he is is not really *his* level, but an artificial height. And its benefits were never humanly real, however much had been claimed for them.

A great many things need to be done, but none of them can ever work well without concurrent restoration of the powers of the independent mind, and primary attention to those great questions which can gain answers only by the sustained use of the imagination.

REVIEW

MYLAI—IN THE MAGAZINES

NOT being regular readers of *Esquire*, we did not find out about the "Confessions" of William Calley, which began in that magazine last November (with more in the February issue), until reading about them in Julius Lester's column in *Liberation* for December, 1970 (which appeared in March). Apparently, *Esquire* has performed a considerable service in publishing this material. Lester begins:

The idea of Lt. Calley "confessing" is, at first hearing, repugnant. After all, he is a man who, it seems certain, murdered over one hundred Vietnamese. This alone qualifies him for the "Monster of the Month" award. What good will it do anyone to have his public confession?

Surprisingly, the value of the "confessions" is enormous, and to call them "confessions" is to misrepresent them. They are the story of one young American white male, and, therefore, the story of several hundred thousand young American males who went to Vietnam. Calley does not seek to exploit his notoriety (or fame, depending on your point of view). He does not try to justify himself, nor does he cry the blues. Instead, he talks candidly about himself, his feelings about America, Vietnam and the war. The result is that we are brought into intimate contact with a human being, with the "average" American kid who went to Vietnam to fight. He is no hero; nor is he a monster. Just an American. Reading the "confessions" makes you wonder if you would have responded any differently under the same conditions. This is not to excuse the Mylai massacre in any way. There is no excuse, but it helps us all to understand how it could have happened. The men who committed the crime are not, by nature, any more evil than the rest of us. Indeed, those who fired their guns at Mylai are as much victims as those whom their guns killed.

When Calley was brought back to the United States to be tried for murder in a military court, he found that he was famous. He got so many letters he had to hire a secretary. Veterans wrote him, describing similar incidents in the Korean war. They were indignant over his courtmartial. The quotations from Calley in Lester's article sound

authentic. In any event, they make Lester think that Calley's book, after it is published, might have the same impact on soldiers and soldiers-to-be that Malcom X's autobiography had on blacks: "After all, America teems with young Calleys, young men who love their country and would kill 100 people if America ordered them to Calley's straightforward telling of his story might go a long way toward educating a lot of people to the necessity for significant and fundamental change." One of the quotations from Calley is the following:

My country accuses me of slaughtering innocent people. Even the President calls it a massacre. I lay there and ask myself, My God, who are they talking about? I only know I went to Vietnam and I did my job there the best I could. I didn't stand on a corner like everyone else and say, "I won't go. It's wrong."

I don't know. I'm only a man who's been put together with a few philosophies. I was sent to Vietnam with the absolute philosophy that the U.S.A.'s right. And there was no grey and white, no grey and beige, no green or other colors—there was just black or white, and I was sent to kill an enemy because his philosophy was wrong. I personally made no assault on anyone in Vietnam, personally. I represented my country, and I obeyed it. One thing about my court-martial is, I'll be learning things. What is a massacre? An atom bomb on Hiroshima isn't a massacre: I don't understand. . . .

It's odd. Soldiers are never tried for a war crime unless they've lost the war. Maybe that is an indication we've lost it, I don't know. . . .

Julius Lester hopes that Calley's "confessions" will be used by high school and college instructors as documents in American history. "They are," he says, "the purest distillation of the American soul ever to appear in print."

We might let that judgment stand, at least for a while, as a tract for the times. For confirmation, one could turn to the March 27 issue of the *Saturday Review*, in which Robert Jay Lifton considers the psychological effects of getting used to atrocity. He says: "In the starkness of its murders and the extreme dehumanization experienced by victimizers and imposed on

victims, Mylai reveals to us how far America has gone along the path of deadly illusion." Dr. Lifton is a psychiatrist who first gained wide attention with his book, *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima*. He spent many months living in Hiroshima, studying the effects of the first atomic bomb explosion in war on those who survived. (An early report on this research, later incorporated in his book, appeared in *Daedalus* for the Summer of 1963, and was reviewed in *MANAS* for Sept. 11 of that year.) He found that the human psyche exercises automatic defenses against the appalling dimensions of so horrible an event. After a time the survivors were able to continue their daily tasks without feeling overwhelmed. Dr. Lifton calls this "psychological closure" or "denial," and finds it characteristic of all those who must endure the intimate realities of man's inhumanity to man. He found himself going through the same sort of psychic insulation to the agony of the victims of Hiroshima, even though he experienced it only at second hand. Speaking generally of this psychological adjustment, he writes in the *Saturday Review*:

The experience of psychic numbing, or emotional desensitization—what some survivors called "paralysis of the mind"—was a necessary defense against feeling what they clearly knew to be happening. But when one looks further into the matter he discovers that those who made and planned the use of that first nuclear weapon—and those who today make its successors and plan their use—require their own form of psychic numbing. They too cannot afford to feel what they cognitively know would happen.

Dr. Lifton discusses this semi-conscious self-deception at some length, suggesting that it leads to a psychological life in which there is less and less contact with reality. He then applies his analysis to the present war in Southeast Asia:

Mylai was acted out by men who had lost their bearings, men wandering about in both a military and psychic no man's land. The atrocity itself can be seen as a grotesquely paradoxical effort to put straight this crooked landscape, order and significance in disorder and absurdity. . . .

Atrocities are committed by desperate men—in the case of Mylai, men victimized by the absolute contradictions of the war they were asked to fight, by the murderous illusions of their country's policy. Atrocity, then, is a perverse quest for meaning, the end result of a spurious sense of mission, the product of false witness.

To say that American military involvement in Vietnam is itself a crime is also to say that it is an atrocity-producing situation. Or to put the matter another way, Mylai illuminates, as nothing else has, the essential nature of America's war in Vietnam.

This writer sees Mylai as "the product of earlier, smaller Mylais," resulting from the need to deny the atrocity-producing situation. This is one effect of the numbness or desensitization process he finds expressed by the entire war. Another is the almost complete blurring of responsibility:

One searches in vain for a man or a group of men who will come forward to take the blame or even identify a human source or responsibility for what took place—from those who fired the bullets at Mylai (who must bear some responsibility, but were essentially pawns and victims of the atrocity-producing situation, and are now being made scapegoats as well); to the junior-grade officers who gave orders to do the firing and apparently did some of it themselves; to the senior-grade officers who seem to have ordered the operation; to the highest military and civilian planners in Vietnam, the Pentagon, and the White House who created such things as a "*permanent free-fire zone*" (which, according to Richard Hammer, means "in essence . . . that any Americans operating within it had basically, a license to kill and any Vietnamese living within it had a license to be killed"), planners who made even more basic decisions about continuing and even extending the war; to the amorphous conglomerate of the American people who, presumably, chose, or at least now tolerate, the aforementioned as their representatives. The atrocity-producing situation, at least in this case, depends upon what Masao Maruyama has called a "system of non-responsibility." Situation and system alike are characterized by a technology and a technicized bureaucracy not checked by sentient human minds.

Dr. Lifton fears that there may be a "half-admission" of what happened, identifying it as a disaster due to negligence or aberration, and resulting in punishment of a few scapegoats,

instead of recognition of the ugly reality—that the war is in fact an atrocity-producing situation.

This powerful article by a psychiatrist is matched in strength by Norman Cousins' editorial in the same issue of *SR*, which begins by describing a piece of deception attempted by a Department of Defense spokesman concerning the invasion of Laos. A reporter demonstrated that the evidence, exhibited in the briefing of newsmen, was false, and Secretary Laird was obliged to admit that he knew it. Mr. Cousins recalls similar exposés of deceit by government spokesmen, then says:

These lies ignite a sense of outrage. The American people are not paying the most extravagant bills incurred by their government in history only to be lied to and manipulated. But what produces the fiercest feelings of indignation of all is the fact that the officials who are doing the lying are the same ones who now presume to pass on the good character and loyalty of the American people by setting up a spying system that presently has more than seven million American names placed in computers for instant use—and one shudders to think what is happening to due process in such use.

Unfortunately, our space is used up. We had been meaning to add to this roundup of magazine material on the Vietnam war a note on Milton Mayer's "April 15: If You Want Mylai, Buy It," in the April *Progressive*, since this is Milton at his sprightly best on the subject of tax refusal. In conclusion, then, it seems worth while to notice, especially in these depressing days, that several American magazines are performing vigorous reportorial and editorial functions, doing what they can toward fulfilling an essential obligation—which is, in Dr. Lifton's words: "to confront atrocity in order to move beyond it."

COMMENTARY

THE TRIAL AND THE WAR

ANOTHER paragraph in Julius Lester's article on William Calley, quoted from Calley's "Confessions" in *Esquire*, seems to illustrate exactly what Eric Havelock is talking about when he tells how Greek youth acquired their views on ethics and politics from the mimetic poets (see page 2). The boys and young men were not asked to "think" about these ideas, but were made to absorb them into their psychological being as "an act of personal commitment, of total engagement and of emotional identification."

Calley said in *Esquire*:

Maybe if I were President, I could change things. Till then, I'll be like anyone else and I'll carry my orders out. I'll do everything the American people want me to do. That's what the Army's for. It's a chisel, whose chief job is to keep itself sharp and let the American people use it. Even if the people say, "Go wipe out South America," the Army will do it. No questions about it. Majority rules, and if a majority tells me, "Go across to South Vietnam," I'm going to go. If a majority tells me, "Lieutenant, go and kill one thousand enemies," I'll go and kill one thousand enemies. But—I won't advocate it. I won't preach for it. I won't be a hypocrite about it. Or maybe that *is* a hypocrite, but I'll do as I'm told to. I won't revolt. I'll put the will of America above my own conscience, always. I'm an American citizen.

This sounds pretty simplified, and of course it is. But Calley, American citizen and officer in the Army, had a problem. He went to Vietnam, he says, to save people from Communism, but found that they didn't want to be saved. He and his men would go into a village to look for Viet Cong, would find none and leave, but five minutes later they were fired on from the village. "One soldier throws his rifle away and refuses to fight." The men ask Calley why they are there. He can't answer:

I couldn't say, "I don't know why we are going to Tringson Three (a village). I think that the Army is screwed up. I think that the country's screwed up, but troops: we are going to Mylai One. And we're

going to kill those Communists." I couldn't say it. What do I do if America's really screwed up? Defect?

A hard question for a man like Calley. An impossible question. He was, as Dr. Lifton says in his *Saturday Review* article, in an impossible situation—what Lifton calls an "atrocious-producing situation." So, having now been found guilty of committing an atrocity, William Calley has been sentenced to life imprisonment by a military court.

Is Calley *really* guilty? According to reports from Washington, a great many people around the country don't think so. It is a hard situation for people who, like Calley, accept the tribal encyclopedia just as he did. And others who don't, but understand a little of how he feels, wonder why the penalty is applied to Calley and not to all the rest of us who are legally and in some measure morally responsible for this atrocity-producing war. Actually, the trial seems about as bad as the war.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

ON RADICALS AND REVOLUTION

IN his new book, *How To Change Colleges* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, \$4.95 cloth, \$2.45 paper), Harold Taylor writes in the early chapters about his encounters with radical activist students who have no patience with any aspect of the existing social order. He says:

Most of the radicals argued that nothing could be done about social, political or educational reform through regular channels in either the society or the university, since the university was simply an extension of the coercive apparatus of the society. They informed me that the United States as an imperialist power has set out to control the world by military and economic force, that the educational system is being used to support that aim, that students are victims under the controls of the system, that capitalist democracy makes all of this an historical necessity. It therefore followed that the system must be broken up at whatever point possible by whatever means, starting with the university. The way to do that was to set fire to buildings, plant bombs, break windows, trash the campus and community, disrupt classes, interfere with speeches, fight the police if possible, and to insult and disrupt the faculty and administration. When reminded that this would not produce the changes they had in mind but only infuriate the public, alienate supporters, and encourage the growth of militant right-wing coalitions against the revolution, they made the familiar reply: If we have to have fascism before we get rid of what we have now, then that's the way it will have to be.

Mr. Taylor found that his own sympathy with changes very much along the lines of radical student thinking was not sufficient. "Unless the views were expressed in exactly their terms, and identified the United States as the enemy of mankind, the best words to describe me were 'liberal fascist' or 'white pig'." Reasoned argument had no effect, so, as Mr. Taylor puts it—

I finally got down to bedrock. I said: You are dealing almost completely in abstractions. You have set up the United States as an abstraction and are heaping on it all your personal frustrations. You set

up an ideal state in your head, an imprecise ideal state in which everyone has everything he needs and wants, but you don't describe how it is all arranged to make that possible. Then you blame the United States, the taxpayers, the university presidents, the faculty, your parents, Richard Nixon, Spiro Agnew, and "the system" for not giving you the state you have in your head. Take your mind off Mr. Nixon for a while and get down to business. If you are serious you will have to deal with the reality of your own self, your friends your family, your community, your world, and you will have to know how you are linked, outside yourself, to all the others who make up your society. Otherwise you keep deluding yourself that it is always somebody else's fault or the fault of some sort of abstraction called the United States.

Casting around for a way to describe the state of mind and feeling Mr. Taylor is here examining, we thought of the term "theological." It seems quite apparent that the segment of radical students he is talking about is made up of angry sectarians who are totally convinced that there is only one way to be "saved." All who reject it must be cast outside the pale, and no effort need be made to understand or reason with them, since it is plain that they are conditioned by their past and are "damned" to begin with. There is hardly any analogy for this kind of thinking except in religious history.

It is not, of course, an attitude peculiar to the young, but may find its most ardent and articulate expression among students and in this way become identified with them. In his recent book, *The Uses of Disorder*, Richard Sennett suggests that the vast complexity involved in any sort of deliberated social change, these days, may lead young radicals to embrace the condition of arrested adolescence, in which the yearning for purity is satisfied by demanding that all others conform to a simple ideal which is in the mind of the would-be reformer, but which has very little relation to the ways in which human beings develop, change, and grow.

It might be useful to contrast this narrow "revolutionism" with the reasoning processes of those who claim that following self-interest is the

only "practical" way of life. It is true enough that a man with a dog-eat-dog philosophy does not expect to be rewarded for his "moral" qualities, nor are his motives an excuse for ignorance or inefficiency. He expects to get ahead by looking out for himself. Accordingly, he practices a rough empiricism in human relations, doing what in his opinion will "work." He is, he thinks, a tough-minded man, a "realist." He is a man, one may say, who needs an opportunity to consider alternative views of life. Yet by comparison with the way he faces his sort of "reality," the impracticality, and even the irresponsibility, of self-righteous men may sometimes seem to know no bounds. Somehow or other, they acquire the idea that by meaning well, by having lofty motives, they are relieved of the need to be thorough, systematic, and orderly in what they do. When Mr. Taylor pointed out that violence, arson and vandalism could not possibly lead to the "revolutionary" ends claimed by the advocates of these methods, they were totally uninterested in a discussion of means to ends; they were simply "right," and they excommunicated Mr. Taylor!

What then is a radical? In the best meaning of the term—one who goes to the root—a radical is a man who speaks for a larger self. He does not speak for himself alone. To declare oneself a radical without realizing how demanding are the qualifications of anyone who would speak for others, becomes, from this point of view, either frivolous or a form of pretense.

There is at the outset an important and difficult question to be faced: How can any man speak for "all" the people, or even very many of them, when so few, as a matter of fact, really agree as to what they want or what is good for them, except in terms so abstract as to be almost unreal?

Yet men do try to speak for others, and some succeed better than others. One may say that he speaks for the *potentialities* of all men, and then endeavor to explain what he means. Most religious teachers do this. Reformers who dream

of and advocate a world society do this. There is a sense in which all educators who are concerned with the advance of general human intelligence do it.

While there is no obvious certainty in the claims or representations of any of these men, some appeals seem better grounded in reason and experience than others. The way men respond to the more serious of these appeals depends upon their ideas of the nature of man, good and evil, the world and its processes, and human progress and possibility. The more the individual is aware of how this persuasion works, the more deliberate he becomes in both his efforts to influence others and to understand others. Gandhi's conception of non-violence and his program of constructive work, for example, was really a vast educational undertaking which he believed would assist human beings to grow more deliberate, which means more free, in their development of a deeper, richer, more inclusive selfhood. When, during a conference in London, a British spokesman asked Gandhi by what right he could say he spoke for the hundreds of millions of the Indian people, he answered, "By right of service." No one challenged him.

The point to be made, here, is that Gandhi took very seriously the need of a man who desires to speak for others to *qualify* himself with both knowledge and evidence of the kind of responsibility he feels ready to assume. One who advocates violence, for example, has an obligation, first of all, to look at the historical record, to inform himself of the consequences of killing and destruction to all those involved. If he advocates seizure of power and the enforcement of a "revolutionary" program, he needs to consider the price in human suffering of any program which substitutes terror for legitimate authority in government; to consider the fact that laws decreed by a revolutionary junta may turn hundreds of thousands of persons into "criminals," overnight, as has happened more than once in revolutions accomplished by sudden military

coups. He must recognize the effects of the infection of fear, which spreads among the populace, leading, finally, to suspicion of one's next-door neighbors, to the multiplication of informers and other parasites of regimes spawned and maintained by naked power. These hardly controllable evils flow all too easily from application of the theory of progress by violence. It sets in motion a process of human and social degradation which begins, as Mr. Taylor suggests, with the substitution of abstractions for actual knowledge of one's self, family, community and world. The true radical, then, will recognize that to speak for other men is to accept the full implications of having and being a larger self—which means learning how changes take place in human attitudes, how growth occurs, and observing closely the circumstances and necessities of beneficial human development. "Otherwise," as Mr. Taylor observes, "you keep deluding yourself that it is always somebody else's fault or the fault of some sort of abstraction called the United States."

His book, of course, is concerned with much more than this problem of self-righteousness. We shall return to it at some later time.

FRONTIERS

Psychic Research and Religion

UNDER Review in MANAS for March 3 there was some discussion of a paper by J. Schoneberg Setzer concerning the possibilities of strengthening religious belief through investigation of parapsychological phenomena. In this paper Dr. Setzer said: "it is probably only the ignored field of parapsychology which can assist Mother Church through the basic crisis of religious authority that is increasingly weakening the faith of her members." A MANAS reader writes in comment:

From what I can gather from Dr. Setzer's approach, he seems to share a general—perhaps universal—misconception of religion, *per se*, and church dogma and doctrine; they do not necessarily coincide, and when they do overlap, it seems to have been merely by inadvertence. The shortcomings of doctrinal attempts lie in the very basis of language, in trying to use words for "unspeakable" experiences; the hearers have no corresponding experiences to serve as referents, and consequently assign false meanings in order to use them at all.

Another misconception he exemplifies is the equating of the paraphysical, the "occult," with the spiritual, using "spiritual" not the séance sense, but to describe the "*cogito, ergo sum*" side of man.

So much of the trivial and sensational approach to the occult is addressed to readers who have become sated with conventional fiction, ghost stories, or with the kiddie matinee type of horror movies. They play with the idea that of course it isn't so but just the same, what if . . . ? As such they could scarcely be considered as candidates for a real investigation into the paraphysical.

Other fields of interest that Dr. Setzer mentions all have one attitude in common: they all seem to be oriented toward the production of objective phenomena, and thus have the flaws of merely empirical pursuit, like alchemy or voodoo.

Their common shortcoming (spiritualism and magic) lies in their emphasis on means and methods, entirely disregarding the matter of motive. Printing took literacy to the people—and look what they read! The automobile facilitates reaching church—if people wanted to go!

This correspondent is quite right in suggesting that Dr. Setzer is after "empirical" evidence, and he may also be right in proposing that there is no necessary connection between psychological phenomena and the spiritual content of religion. As to the first point, there is a passage in Dr. Setzer's paper, not quoted in the March 3 review, in which he says:

Furthermore, modern philosophers, both theistic and atheistic, have amply demonstrated to everyone within earshot that all philosophical arguments for and against the existence of God, and all arguments with regard to the nature of God, can be demolished by the opposition. In essence, all philosophical reasons are seen today as little but rationalizations that support the unprovable basic premises which are formed out of a man's life experiences.

Consequently, if the traditional foundations of religious authority are no longer sufficient by themselves, it seems only reasonable that the church would be striving to strengthen its religious authority by making use of that one authority model which generally is effective in our age. This authority model is the model of empirical science.

Whether ecclesiastical traditionalists particularly like it or not, this is increasingly the only model that is relevant to both church and unchurched. And the sooner religious leaders realize this, the better it will probably be for the whole religious enterprise. For if there is indeed an eternal God, and if there is a human spirit that survives the death of the body, and if the church expects people to believe these assertions and to live accordingly, then the church had better enlarge its ability to prove that the existence of God and the human spirit are not only scientifically possible but also reasonably probable.

As a position, this seems clear enough. The question may be, not only will it work, but *should* it?

One could, to begin with, question the inherent merit of beliefs which seem to require the services of specialists in psychic research—as a kind of benevolent secular arm—to provide proof of matters which, admittedly, reason cannot supply. There is for example the possibility that belief in a God which violates the canons of reason is not a belief that should be cherished any

longer, whatever the interest of the churches in the matter. There may be a deific principle which underlies all reality, yet if the greatest of thinkers have refused to discuss it in definitive terms or even, sometimes, to name it, what shall it profit religious longing to reject their counsels and ignore their example? As to the matter of the immortality of the soul—it seems worth noting that what is most memorable on this subject has been written by men who felt no urgent need of parapsychical demonstrations. Such "proofs" have always had a very subordinate role in the high religions and transcendental philosophy.

From a historical point of view, the activity of wonder-working, the role of "oracles," and of other extraordinary personages have not served to "prove" the validity of a philosophic outlook so much as to keep alive a sense of mystery and wonder in the common people. They were elements of the popular culture in antiquity, and not the foundation of religious philosophy, although, as in the East, they might be taken into account in philosophical explanations of things.

This is not to deny an important place to psychic research, but only to argue that this place may be better understood without expecting it to serve as some kind of practical, scientific equivalent of miraculous intervention. There can be little doubt that, already, work done in this field has thrown some light on the complexities of the human psyche and added dimensions of possibility for those who are endeavoring to see nature whole and as it is. Yet it may be reasonable to add that genuine religion must and will always involve freeing oneself of every sort of "authority model." Finally, it seems worth remembering that great religious teachers seldom addressed themselves to organizations in order to accomplish their ends: they spoke to *men*.