

INSTITUTIONS AND SYMBOLS

THERE are doubtless dozens of ways to analyze the situation of modern man, but the approach that may prove most fruitful is the study of man in relation to the institutions he has inherited or created. What is an "institution"? For present purposes, we may say an institution is an instrument for the broad interpretation of human experience and for dealing with it. The Church is such an institution, so also the schools and educational system of a culture. The State and its government form another institution. Science, as a way of looking at life and the universe, is an institution. Institutions have a living role in human life so long as they supply both structure and meaning to the activities of men in community.

Institutions, in other words, are the relatively stable psycho-moral environment of human beings.

If we had to distinguish between what we call "ancient" and "modern" times with some exactitude, we might say that in ancient times institutions were looked upon as being virtually "natural" phenomena—as fixed and permanent as the external physical environment—while in modern times we believe ourselves able to create the institutions that promise the greatest serviceability to mankind.

Plato, then, as the originator of the "Utopia," or the idea of social institutions as the rational creation of man, represents an important dividing line between the ancient past and the present.

It may be said that much of the anxiety of the present grows from a questioning of whether man is competent to design the institutions under which he lives. From experience we have learned that we are not as skillful in originating new institutions and adapting our lives to them as the revolutionary philosophers of the eighteenth

century had thought. Nor are we now so sure as they that the program of the eighteenth-century revolutions is faithful to what they called the "laws of nature" and is, as they believed, the best possible program for the organization of society.

The revolutions of the twentieth century—except for those in the Orient, which, from a Western point of view, have only brought countries like India and Indonesia "up-to-date"—have been reversions to the principle of hierarchy and the security provided by some kind of "supreme" authority. The Nazi revolution offered a dark *mystique* involving the sure intuitions of *der Führer*, while the role of absolute authority in the Communist revolution was assumed by the Communist Party, staffed by those modern demi-gods, the *Bolsheviki*.

These revolutions, then, bespoke the practical breakdown of human faith in rational institutions. Even though the Communists claimed to be the supreme rationalists and to practice "scientific" socialism, the operative principle in the Communist revolution was complete subservience of the people to the will of the Party. All the "rationality" of the movement, in other words, belonged to the leaders, who were the priests of the Marxist revelation. Thus, speaking socially, the "rationality" of the Communist revolution was only nominal, no more than a verbal tribute to the dream of the eighteenth century to give Communism an artificial continuity with the revolutionary tradition.

In the present, the fluidity of institutions which are supposed to be the works of man has been practically lost through fear. The more existing institutions suffer criticism and attack, the more vociferous and self-righteous becomes their defense, until the simple idea of changing them takes on the aspect of a deadly sin, implying

admission of error or weakness. So, before we are able to do anything of any importance with our institutions, we shall have to wait until the fear has passed away, until we are able to regard proposals for change as evidence of courage and strength.

But behind the brittle bastions of contemporary institutions, men are wondering and thinking and questioning. Human devotion to freedom is undoubtedly the primary force behind this wondering, but the form it takes reflects certain unmistakable influences. The most important of these, perhaps, is the influence of science. Sociologists and political thinkers affected by the "objectivity" of the social sciences are pointing out that modern industrial States, regardless of their politics, tend to follow certain well-defined patterns of development. War and technology, for example, may have more to do with shaping the practical realities of the human environment than communism or capitalism. It is Seidenberg's contention, for example (in *Post-Historic Man*), that the engineering imagination will one day establish the "totalitarian" rule of a technological perfection over our lives, giving the requirements of the impersonal "system" absolute control. "Freedom," on this view, is no more than an interim privilege allowed to human beings during their rise from the autocracy of instinct to the autocracy of technology.

Let us say, then, that from Plato until the present, the creative energies of human beings have been largely occupied in thinking of the human situation at an institutional level. Men have formulated the problem of man as Man-in-Society, and have constructed solutions in the terms in which the problem was set. Let us say, further, that this cycle of thinking about man seems now to have reached a sterile, dead end. And let us admit, for the purposes of argument, that within the context of this cycle, Seidenberg is *right*, or right enough to make us explore new avenues of thinking.

In order to open up a new avenue, we should like to quote a passage from *The Dark Eye in Africa* by Laurens van der Post, in which the author examines the meaning of *Don Quixote* for our time:

The knight of La Mancha and his peasant follower ride on in all of us from our first classic rose-pink dawn to our last romantic twilight. For the knight and the peasant are not two separate people, but one; the knight riding in search of a fit cause for his dedicated and heroic spirit is symbol of the aboriginal myth in us seeking flesh and blood to make it living reality; the peasant following grumbling behind is our physical worldly self which clings to the myth, for without its spirit his life has no meaning. They are two aspects of one continuing ambivalent truth: without nations and communities the myth cannot live; but without myth the life of a people lacks direction and meaning. Tragedy comes when one or other of these inseparable aspects is made to usurp the validity of the other and to masquerade as the totality, as, for instance, when the knight rejects the evidence of the peasant's vision in a worldly issue and attacks shepherds and sheep as robbers. Yet there is no disaster so great as when the spirit is denied its journey—when the knight loses his horse, spear and cause—for when that happens a terrible meaninglessness invades life. We have only to look round us to see how high a tide of meaninglessness has already risen in the being of man, and how denied is his legitimate meaning in the society to which he belongs. He has been driven more and more to rediscover it illegitimately through social upheaval and war. I believe this growing desperation is largely because the institutions and societies of our day will not give their constituent members causes worthy of their heroic capacities and love. Society treats men as children that must not be exposed to risk and insecurity, or to revert to my basic image, it refuses the knight his armor, his horse, his cause, and separates him from his peasant.

Now this, quite plainly, is a universe of discourse for which the Seidenberg book has practically no vocabulary—unless, of course, it be admitted that the knight in Mr. Seidenberg is precisely the reason why he wrote his book! But the logic of van der Post is concerned with matters that do not appear overtly in *Post-Historic Man*. One might say that *Post-Historic Man* is an important contribution for the reason

that it *exhausts* the logic of that thinking which assumes the human problem to be solely or mainly that of Man-in-Society.

What is the primary reality in *Don Quixote*, or in Colonel van der Post's version of its meaning? It is the dual nature of man.

That man has a dual nature is the assumption of many religions, many philosophies. If you start at the other end, with metaphysics, you may develop a conception of man as a composite being constituted of both spirit and matter, and of further permutations of the two. This sort of account of man may have great philosophic validity, but the difficulty lies in *relating* it to daily human experience. Hence the extraordinary value of symbolism. With a symbol, it is possible to take a metaphysical conception of the human being and to clothe it with recognizable reality, such that the force of the idea becomes richly apparent without "dictating terms."

Let us now make a comparison between institutions and symbols. For a further account of the role of institutions, we take another passage from Colonel van der Post's book:

No human being or society, however self-sufficient and rational it may appear, can live without institutions that deal with those aspects of life which cannot be explained rationally. No community can be left indefinitely outside in the night of the human spirit in the beast-infested jungle which lies beyond the conscious fortifications which civilization raises for *us* in life.

Institutions, then, are means of relating our lives intelligibly with the concrete forces of nature. While they have a philosophic and moral aspect, as working mechanisms they are predominantly *practical*, often to the point of neglecting their philosophic implications and origins. Institutions may thus be turned against the best interests of human beings, and when this happens, it is always done in the name of those interests.

Symbols may be conceived to have a corresponding role in individual thought, although they, too, may become sterile and formalized. But

as vital representations, they enable us to derive a sense of practical meaning from such abstract conceptions as "the dual nature of man," and to give a measure of concrete embodiment to vague intuitions about the moral issues of human life. The symbol collects for us many varied meanings of general ideas, as those ideas may be thought to apply to ordinary existence.

Now if, as may be the case, the quest for meaning in life is going to replace the search for the perfect social arrangement that we have been pursuing since Plato's time, then the suggestiveness of symbols may become as important to us as in the past, utopian dreams have been. Instead of asking ourselves what is the "type" of the society we long to inhabit, we may rather seek for symbols appropriate to the sort of individual life we feel must be realized.

Speculations of this sort are not absent from modern thought. In Ruth Nanda Anshen's essay, "Our Emergent Civilization," contained in William P. Montague's *The Future of Theism*, there is a discussion of one of the problems posed by Roderick Seidenberg in *Post-Historic Man*. Mr. Seidenberg had seen a relapse into "entropy" for mankind as the logical and ultimate consequence of the second law of thermodynamics. Here, we may identify entropy as the natural tendency of all complex things and beings to "come apart" and give way to a merely random activity—a purely physical chaos insensible to reason and lacking any perceptible form or purpose. Contemplating this prospect, as the morbid anticipation of a science devoted to the study of physical reality, Dr. Anshen writes:

. . . there may come a time when a second volume of science is written in which not entropy but the antientropy that preceded it will be the principal theme. And yet if that second and greater volume is ever written it may be written in a different language, for the good and curious reason that the powers that make for integration and organicity are, as we have already seen, characteristic of what is essentially internal or mental, and as such not open directly to external observation any more than are the minds of other people.

All this suggests a hypothesis which I do not think is too far-fetched or fanciful. It is the hypothesis that the antientropic power that must exist in nature as the cause of the organizations with which nature is filled is a mental power akin to what we find in ourselves. To call such a factor the Will of God would, then, be no empty metaphor but the very truth. For it is, in Matthew Arnold's great phrase, "a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." That it is not an omnipotent power is all too sadly obvious. Everywhere there is the conflict of wills and tendencies that makes for disorganization and pain. But among these varied tendencies, and leavening the chaos that they constitute, is the tendency to higher organization and to a higher harmony.

But now in conclusion there is a final question that must be asked. If the cosmic mind, or God, is not omnipotent, does that mean that the chaos of nature is something outside God and menacing him with a more or less unpredictable fate? The brave Zoroastrians and after them William James, John Stuart Mill and many others who have preferred to save God's goodness at the expense of His traditional omnipotence have seemed to think so. With all respect to the great leaders of that school of thought, I cannot believe that in this point they are right. If there is a cosmic mind, or God, then everything moves and has its being within that mind. I prefer to think of the chaotic tendencies of nature as what Boehme or Meister Eckhart characterized as "that in God which is not God." Cosmic evolution could then be regarded as the work of organizing the independent centers of activity in the divine mind that constitute its contents taken distributively and as a plurality, and informing them more and more with the harmony characteristic of that mind when considered in its collective unity.

When viewed in this way and interpreted in the language of the noblest of the legends of ancient Greece, the Will of God would not be the analogue of any omnipotent Zeus but rather of the Prometheus, the Divine Rebel, whose heart was directed singly to the good and who waged an unyielding war against the Tyrant's claim that Right be subordinated to might.

If such a Promethean Spirit is indeed a reality, he should be thought of not as a King of kings but as a Comrade of comrades, needing our aid as we need his in that unending pursuit of the ideal which for God no less than for Man makes up the meaning of existence.

There is certainly greater inspiration in the image of man as a Divine Rebel than there is in the idea of him as the Conforming Consumer or the obedient Party Member.

But how shall we answer those who exclaim, "You cannot just *forget* the social and political environment! These things are *real*." They are indeed, just as Sancho Panza was real, but they become monstrous tyrants when they are allowed to stand for the whole of reality. We now have the task of acquiring a sense of primary reality for the role of the knight in human life. It was, after all, the power of the imagination which endowed our political arrangements with their extraordinary authority and power over our lives. And the imagination can give that power to other conceptions—not, perhaps, by a single and strenuous act of the will, but through a thoughtful determination which is reinforced by recognition of the aridity of a purely political or "social" conception of human life.

Our troubles, after all, may be assigned to misconceived works of the imagination. The very intelligence which we prize as human beings has created the vast and threatening structure of military power and technology which now consumes all but the most marginal aspects of our lives. This same intelligence can assign reality and importance to another side of human life—the Promethean side, the side which for Cervantes was represented by Don Quixote. Let us at any rate seek for symbols which will serve to make the complexities and puzzles of our inner life, our mental and moral life, intelligible. Pursuing such a course, we might even discover that this was really what Plato had in mind in his *Republic*, but which other and later Utopians believed could be realized only *after* the perfect "society" had been made into fact.

REVIEW

SOPHISTICATED DESPAIR

As Edmund Fuller pointed out in the *American Scholar* for last spring, darkness, violence and despair are still very much in vogue among today's novelists. So true is this that the writer of "affirmative" stories is something of an oddity to the *avant-garde* critics and seldom gains a respectful hearing in such circles. Not being very *avant-garde* ourselves, we like characters in novels who come *out* of darkness, violence and despair, and we are all in favor of the affirmative tone, wherever it can be found.

In the Summer *American Scholar*, Joseph Wood Krutch places the despairers in a philosophical context:

While several middle-brow magazines have been urging upon our novelists the businessman-as-hero and, in general, complaining that neither the virtue nor the happy situation of the modern American is being given adequate recognition, the high-brow organs keep urging a deeper and deeper exploration of misery and wickedness.

The general line usually taken is not quite that of the old-fashioned satirist who stressed his duty to "lash the vices of the age" nor that of the old-fashioned reformer who called for more light in dirty corners because, in the Ibsen phrase, "Evils grow in the dark." No, the current argument is subtler and more existentialist—in the Kierkegaardian as well as the Sartian version. What we need, it insists, is an adequate Sense of Sin; something to correct that false optimism which began with Rousseauistic notions about natural goodness and perfectibility and which, watered down, now persists in the doctrine that men are never criminal nor wicked but only "maladjusted" or "wrongly conditioned."

Now I am a reality-of-evil man myself. I believe that men (and that includes me) are frequently wicked, not merely "maladjusted." I agree that a good deal of contemporary political and social as well as moral thinking is wrong because it refuses to face this fact. But there are two reasons why I do not join too enthusiastically in the call for more darkness, violence, despair and sadism in contemporary art.

One reason is simply that there is an awful lot of it already and no reader of contemporary fiction,

poetry or drama is likely to get the impression that men and women always behave nicely. No doubt one way of calling attention to the reality of beauty and the reality of goodness is to give a true picture of the ugly and the evil. And you can get this argument from a source as austere as Paul Tillich, who set it forth in an article on modern religious art in which he collaborated with Theodore Green. Defending those religious pictures which are full of "violence and anguish, anxiety and despair," the article goes on to say that "their violence is an implicit affirmation of all the values which are being threatened and violated in these tragic times."

Once again I agree. But when we have so little except this affirmation by contrast, I wonder if it is sensible to call for more and more. Can we know the good and the beautiful only through their opposites? Don't both modern writers and their readers by now have a sufficiently adequate conviction of the reality of evil? Since we know very well that men can be beasts, would it be a surrender to shallow optimism to suggest, occasionally, that they can also be something else? Moreover, I can't banish wholly the suspicion that some who profess to be demonstrating their devotion to kindness and chastity by copying Baudelaire and Sade are pulling our legs—and perhaps even their own. Rasputin's doctrine of Salvation through Sinning is very seductive.

The other reason that I have my reservations concerning the current doctrine is related to the first: How far, I wonder, should the artist accept the notion that he is the product rather than, in part at least, the maker of his times? Does he, as the Marxists are fond of saying, merely "reflect" an age? Or does he play a part in making it what it is? Alfred Kazin, for instance, writes: "There is sickness in contemporary literature, a very great sickness; but it is hardly self-willed, and it is bound up with the situation of contemporary humanity." Isn't the despair of our literature also and in itself a part of "the situation of contemporary humanity"? Could literature itself do something to ameliorate it? Lewis Mumford has written: "If our civilization is not to produce greater holocausts, our writers will have to become something more than merely mirrors of its violence and disintegration." And with that I am inclined to agree.

To give the foregoing observations an international flavor—which they unfortunately deserve—we turn to a review of Osamu Dazai's *The Setting Sun* in the *Hindu Weekly Review* for

Aug. 5. Both author and reviewer take naturally to the mood of despair, making it evident that British and American authors are not alone in their "negativism":

In Dazai's book the reader will look in vain for a purely Japanese atmosphere, for values which are the sum merely of oriental thinking and morality. It transcends these purely local experiences and assumes the dimensions of a despairing but moving chronicle of modern Japan which at the same time has universal validity. What happened to Kazuku, the heroine of the novel, could easily have happened to any woman anywhere if she had been subjected to similar pressures and experiences. The same can be said of Uehara, the gargoyle-like writer with whom Kazuku has a strange and Kafkaesque intimacy, and of Naoji, the brilliantly sensitive, yet unfeeling, brother of the heroine, who tries to find escape in alcohol and narcotics. It is the testament of this frustrated brother that lifts Dazai's book above the ordinary and shows us a part of the author's own turbulent soul seeking release and justifying the act of doing so. But Naoji in the book does not succeed because he finds that while he could discard the crust of the order he belongs to, an aristocracy in decay, he cannot get rid of the core. So it was with Dazai also who committed suicide before he reached forty, full of promise. But Dazai's postscript, *The Setting Sun*, is etched in brilliant style.

While Dazai's suicide may have shown the "sincerity" of his belief in the futility of human existence, what would happen if all the world's authors ended their own lives before they reached forty, no matter how "full of promise" reviewers found them? There is a strong Tolstoyan point in indicating a connection between the general themes of despair and the disjointed lives of many of the *avant-garde* writers. It is not that only despairing people take to fiction writing, but rather that the emotional climate in the arty realms emphasizes whatever latent capacity for despondency the writer or artist may have.

Another dimension of the discussion undertaken by Mr. Krutch is provided by Jessamyn West, whose "Secret of the Masters," in the Sept. 21 *Saturday Review* contains some interesting slants. While Miss West explains why really good novels inevitably war against self-

righteousness she also suggests that most modern writers are not really *exploring* despair at all. An exploration requires the writer to be something of a philosopher, and it is much easier to "replace sin by violence." Miss West continues:

Openness, persisted in, destroys hate. The novelist may begin his writing with every intention of destroying what he hates. And since a novelist writes of persons, this means the destruction (through revelation) of an evil person. But in openness the writer becomes the evil person, does what the evil person does for his reasons and with his justifications. As this takes place, as the novelist opens himself to evil, a self-righteous hatred of evil is no longer possible. The evil which now exists is within; and one is self-righteous in relation to others, not to oneself. When the writer has himself assumed the aspect of evil and does not magisterially condemn from the outside, he can bring to his readers understanding and elicit from them compassion. This is why we do not, as readers, hate the great villains of literature. Milton does not hate Satan; nor Thackeray, Becky, nor Shakespeare, Macbeth. For a time Milton *was* Satan; Thackeray, Becky; Shakespeare, Macbeth. And the openness of the novelist (together with his talent and his skill) permits us, his readers, though we know that Satan must be cast down and that Macbeth must die, to respond to them without narrowness—with compassion instead of hatred. We do not love them, however. Nor do I think this openness of which I have been speaking can be called love, though it must include the possibility of love as it includes the possibility of evil.

In the old days, evil and its specific manifestation in sin had a meaning which, if it served no other purpose, was dramatically useful to the novelist. Sin has now been replaced by violence and does not develop in the novel (no matter what its horsepower of raw energy outside the novel) the functional torque of one small, relevant sin. And without this torque the novel does not engage itself efficiently with the reader. Perhaps what the novelist must recognize is that evil changes its aspects from age to age, and part of his struggle with the world is to recognize the new masks which evil puts on.

COMMENTARY THE TRUE RELIGION

IN the passage taken from Ruth Nanda Anshen in this week's lead (page 8), there is a quotation from Matthew Arnold which seems to mar an otherwise powerful expression. The "will of God," according to Arnold, is "a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." Why *not ourselves*? There is certainly a power of this sort in men, and why should we claim for it only a "kinship" with the universal power?

There is no more potent symbol in the entire resources of human culture than the figure of Prometheus, the stark image of Everyman, at his greatest.

Where else lies human greatness, if not in that quality of the individual which seeks and finds its universal dimension? What more godlike than this?

It seems plainly evident that we shall have no new definitions of man worth repeating without new definitions of "God" as well. And the incommensurable aspect in each—in man and in God—will be fundamentally the same reality.

If man is capable of evil, then there must be the potentiality of evil in God, too. Any other doctrine tortures our minds with impossible theological arguments.

It gains us nothing but disgrace and impotence to have a God that is separate from man—some being, force or power "not ourselves." Consistent intelligence can accept only two alternatives—Pantheism or Atheism. There is no logical stopping-place between.

Man, as an expression of the Promethean Spirit, is God by right of Conquest. Divinity, to have the high meaning we assign this term, must be something that is *won*. And in our experience, man is the only being who assays, suffers, and, sometimes, finally, *wins*. Where shall we take our definitions, if not from our own experience?

The books, the literature, the epics, the songs—all expressions which move and uplift the human heart—celebrate and rejoice in human achievement and transcendence. This is all we know of God, and doubtless all we can know, if *knowing* is to be a word with meaning.

It is a great pity that the Humanists have permitted the theologians to drive man from the field in the search for divinity. This is to concede defeat, to accept the Epimethean destiny and invite the intrusion of all the shabby substitutes for true divinity—the worthless "bargains" of the priests and inquisitors.

Religion, to be true, must be about man the Protagonist, not man the Creature, or man, as we know him today, the Victim.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

A YEAR or so ago we reported a discussion between a college professor and his wife on the relative advantages and disadvantages of nursery school training for small children. This professor has a habit—which we confess to share—of bringing up unusual circumstances and individuals to contravene some generally established conclusions; in this case, he became quite eloquent on the values gained by John Stuart Mill in the course of his solitary early training by his father. Further, he proposed that most children are conditioned into "normalcy" far too soon anyway, and are "socialized" into following approved patterns of general behavior, which militates against the development of a unique individuality.

Actually, such views form an interesting segment of the discussion being carried on these days by some educators, psychologists and sociologists with those who believe that education should fit a child for "adjustment to the social norm." It is quite possible to "adjust" the young out of the capacity to think independently, and a complacent robotlike citizenry is not supposed to be what we really want.

However, some personal experience has convinced us that at least *one* modern nursery school deserves quite some words in its favor. In the first place, few parents are so fortunately situated as to have the leisure for joint educational efforts with their children. While it is possible that a university professor may be able to spend more than half his time at home together with his wife and children, this is an unusual exception to the rule. Moreover, as early marriages and early families become more common, it is quite customary for both parents to work outside the home, at least for a while. In such instances, someone must take care of the child or children, and a distant or elderly relative—or perhaps a friendly neighbor—is not always the best choice. For the child will be "conditioned" by the habits of thought and emotional attitudes of any elder with whom he spends considerable time, and it is quite possible for the relative or casual helper to be less vitally interested in the needs of the young than the nursery school teacher. Since some sort of discipline is necessary we may note that a single relative, caring for a child, will be apt to institute a system of "discipline"

which is based upon personal rewards and punishments. A good nursery school, on the other hand, maintains a sense of order and institutes discipline on an entirely impersonal and impartial basis. A trained teacher realizes that one of her primary obligations is to maintain impersonality and impartiality, so that the odds are much in favor of the child learning more of justice from such a teacher than when cared for by someone who believes in either rewards or punishments, or both.

Instructive literature is available from the National Association for Nursery Education. An introductory brochure has the following points of emphasis: Prospective nursery school parents are actually warned against "programs in which all of the children are treated as a total group, not as individuals," and against "programs in which the teachers constantly direct the children's activities, showing what to draw or paint, giving them patterns, telling them what they are to be in dramatic play, expecting them to play many organized games." Here is indication that educators at the nursery school level are definitely interested in the encouragement of a uniquely developing individuality.

One of the strong points for the nursery school is that it offers a forum and source of information for well-meaning parents who have not had the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the findings of child psychologists. The nursery school brochure "encourages parents to visit the school, to discuss policies and make suggestions, to participate in parent meetings and group discussions, and sometimes to assist in school activities. It expects parents to share in their child's progress. Parents plan with the teachers to help the child through the first days of his new experience. From time to time teachers and parents pool their knowledge of the child's needs and his accomplishments." Most nursery schools are eager to lend basic books on training during the early years. Since the financial rewards of teaching in a nursery school are meager, most teachers so engaged have a genuine love for their work, and are happy to give extra time to parents to discuss their child's problems.

Among the hints which may be useful to many parents are the following—taken from Mary Edge Harlin's *First Steps in a Grown Up World*:

The little child's tempo is much slower than ours—give him time to obey, to respond, to cooperate. Walk slowly beside him; do not propel him by his head or shoulders. If you touch him at all, hold his hand, if he is willing. Stoop or sit on low chair when talking to a little child, so as to bring your face on a level with his.

If discipline is necessary, be sure that child understands clearly why, "Have the punishment fit the crime," and be calm yourself. Be consistent in your requirements and appreciative of efforts in the right direction and of progress. When the incident is dealt with, it is over. Receive the child joyously and do not refer to past misdeeds, unless absolutely necessary.

We now turn to a pamphlet distributed by the National Association for Nursery Education, "Essentials of Nursery Education," for a passage which puts the matter of "socializing" and "group education" in a fresh context:

In a preschool group the child spends his time with others who have needs and desires strikingly similar to his own. Furthermore, they express these needs and desires at the same time and in the same ways that he does. Here then, is a rare opportunity for him to learn the importance of the other fellow; to learn to share materials, attention and space with him; to learn how to live in a group that is different in structure from the family group. Here too, the child learns to accept other forms of authority, perhaps different from those he finds in his family. The teacher is not his mother, yet she does represent the authority in the nursery school, the group exerts its authority too. An only child never may have had to share materials with any one at home. In the nursery school, where there are many children and a limited amount of equipment, he soon discovers that the group expects him to share these materials. Thus his concept of authority broadens; he becomes less dependent on his home. He learns to think and to work with others.

One rather obvious benefit of nursery school play comes from the necessity of having all toys in common. The child who attends has his own special things at home, which he may or may not have to share with other children. But at the school he is required to "take turns" in a fair sequence, and thus has an opportunity to discover that toys can be no less joyfully appreciated when they are receiving their maximum use, with others enjoying them too. *This* sort of "socializing" we

are much in favor of. One wonders how the House Un-American Activities Committee can have missed the opportunity to investigate the possibilities of Communist subversion in all this "sharing." After all, right under our noses, in community after community, nursery school children have "all things common"!

From the standpoint of the psychologist, most nursery schools offer a welcome approach to the problem of "wrong behavior." The nursery school teacher is personally concerned with destructive or undesirable behavior only in the sense that she wishes to lead the child on to a better way of expressing himself. While many parents still resort to the "you are a bad boy" reproach, the teacher does not consider any boy "bad." Patterns of behavior may need alteration, and immediate steps may be taken in that direction, but the *child* is never altogether "wrong" or "bad."

Because nursery schools are privately supported institutions and because their supervisors are determined to offer as much of value as they can to interested parents, the young child is apt to receive a great deal more individual attention than he will when he first enters public school. It is not uncommon to have four teachers available for a total school population of thirty children, and in such instances the peculiar talents and personalities of individual teachers can more easily come into play, to help with the unfolding of special propensities in the young. So, even for parents who are able to spend joint time with their children, we are not so sure that one or two days a week at a nursery school would be a bad thing. Here, each according to his desire and capacity, has a chance to begin making his own way, apart from the emotional ties which tend to bind him to babyhood at home.

FRONTIERS

Listener-Sponsored Radio

ABOUT eight and a half years ago, in April, 1949, a small group of venturesome spirits launched in Berkeley, California, the listener-sponsored radio station, KPFA. Some of the group knew something about radio, and some of them didn't, but they were all committed to an ideal later given the following precise definition:

. . . to serve the arts, explore the bases of a peaceful society, heighten the cultural experience of the individual, and promote the full distribution of public information.

When you consider that it takes a lot of money to start a radio station—hardly less than \$100,000, these days—you wonder where these bold but impecunious Idealists got their nerve. At any rate, they did it. They combed the suburbs of Northern California for wealthy patrons who would be willing to back the project. They sought help from the artists, writers, and educators of the San Francisco and Berkeley area. They raised the money and put on the air a sort of radio which has won from intelligent listeners a loyalty which seems to resemble what the true Moslem feels when he turns his face toward Mecca.

KPFA sells no advertising time. It depends for its support entirely on the ten-dollar-a-year subscriptions of its listeners. (Not quite "entirely," since a couple of thousand more subscribers are needed to balance the KPFA budget on the basis of current operations, but at the present rapid rate of growth, KPFA should be completely self-sustaining by 1959.) You practically have to listen to KPFA programs to comprehend what a radio station free of the demands of commercial sponsors can do in the way of exciting, enjoyable, and illuminating programming. A vast ingenuity inspires the staff of KPFA, who are all enthusiasts of the project, and the station produces more "live" programs than any other broadcasting unit in the world. The public affairs programs encourage expression of every point of view on national and local issues. You never know what you'll hear next—an atheist or a Catholic priest—an articulate conservative or a radical whose thinking is lucid but thus far unheard. The only requirement on KPFA is the requirement of civility and intelligence. KPFA news reporters do all they can to correct the biases which originate at the sources of

today's news, contributing what impartiality is possible in a world saturated with partisan emotions, honey-combed with ulterior intentions.

Good music is of course a principal feature of KPFA programs. Since the station is now on the air from 9 A.M. to 11 P.M., a great deal of music is played—most of it music of a quality and character which cannot be heard from conventional "music stations."

Artists, musicians and educators are devoted to KPFA. When, in 1951, the station was forced off the air for lack of funds, people of this sort held a mass meeting and raised enough money to get it going again. Then, a year later, the Ford Foundation (the Fund for Adult Education) stepped in with a generous grant, enabling basic technical improvements and giving the station a new start with a more powerful signal that can be heard as far as communities like Carmel, Fresno, Sacramento, and Santa Rosa.

MANAS has before paid tribute to the achievements of KPFA (issues of Aug. 3, 1949, and April 25, 1951). The present reminder of the existence of this station is really to call attention to the strong possibility that, within six months or so, a sister station will begin broadcasts in Southern California, with a signal powerful enough to reach south to San Diego and north to Santa Barbara.

While MANAS readers live all over the world, and only a small proportion of them will be able to hear the new listener-sponsored station's programs, this forward step in listener-sponsored broadcasting should be of interest to radio listeners everywhere, for if free, non-commercial radio is possible in California, it can be successful in other cities, states, and countries. Listener-sponsored radio is an almost miraculous answer to the weary wails and complaints of listeners who have given up hope of programs which show simple respect for human intelligence. People who are tired of being regarded as "targets" for sales-managers and advertising agencies, yet feel reluctant to write off the magnificent technology of modern radio communications as a total loss, should welcome with enthusiasm any news of progress in listener-sponsored radio.

For those who want background facts, it should be said that both KPFA and the prospective station for

Southern California are owned by the Pacifica Foundation, a nonprofit, educational corporation of California. According to a statement by Pacifica Foundation—

Control of policy lies with its {the Foundation's} Executive Membership, a body of educators, artists, business men and professional broadcasters, whose diversity of views and unanimity of concern with free communication reflect the spirit of the Pacifica project and the communities it serves. Beyond the development of the Los Angeles facility, Pacifica Foundation has plans to extend listener-sponsored radio to other metropolitan centers, throughout the United States. The Foundation already takes an active part in the production of radio programs for general distribution to other educational broadcasting outlets.

Like KPFA, the Southern California station will use a high-powered FM educational channel. Actually, the Los Angeles area is considerably stronger in FM listeners than the San Francisco Bay area, not only in total listeners but also in the proportion of FM sets to the total of both AM and FM sets. Some forty-eight per cent of all homes in the Los Angeles area are equipped with FM receivers. Those actively engaged in establishing the Los Angeles station regard this high proportion of FM listeners as promising evidence of potentially rich listener-support. Contributions are now being accepted to help with the initial financing of the Los Angeles station. Following is the appeal:

A radio station devoting itself to the most vital and artistic content of our culture and to the creation of a genuinely free forum for the exploration of diverse socio-political and ethical views is about to be realized in Southern California. As a public service it will require public support. To maintain intact the idealism of such an enterprise, support must be entirely voluntary.

Responsible citizens are urged to measure carefully the importance of listener-sponsored radio as a public institution and to consider well how generously they should contribute to its realization and future. Philanthropy, in the early stages of development, must of necessity be the station's life-blood. It is estimated that \$100,000 will be required in the next year to purchase equipment and to get the station into operation. The obvious responsibility of those who respond to the ideals of the Pacifica project, and who can afford it, is to donate money.

As the station begins its broadcasting, listeners will be expected to evaluate the service they are receiving. As they find it worth-while, their responsibility will be to subscribe. KPFA's experience indicates that listener-sponsorship is an entirely practicable way to make free, non-commercial radio self-supporting. Only during the initial and developmental period is substantial help needed—and this, needless to say, is more of an investment than it is "philanthropy"—an investment with a high rate of cultural return!

One interesting thing about the KPFA venture which will be equally true of the station for Southern California—is that no one associates himself with this enterprise with hope of significant financial reward. Probably every staff member and employee of KPFA could make more money by working for a commercial station, and while the contributions of well-wishers to KPFA have been generous, the gifts of the staff to the station in the form of unpaid salaries are the most dramatic evidence of all of devotion to a cause. During the early days, such gifts by the staff aggregated more than \$10,000.

It is difficult, of course, for those who have had no opportunity to listen to KPFA to realize the fervor that is generated by its broadcasting, but some idea may be gained of the programs from a list of offerings presented over KPFA during the past several months. The following programs are random recollections by a former KPFA staff member who is now active in promoting the future of the Los Angeles station:

The 1957 Carmel Bach Festival, broadcast in completely "live" performance.

Un-American Activities Committee hearings in San Francisco in 1957, followed by pro-and-con commentary.

American poets, such as Allen Ginsberg, William Carlos Williams, Robert Lowell, and Wallace Stevens, who read their own works.

BBC dramatic presentations from Shakespeare, Shaw, Synge, Zorin, Wilde, and others.

Public forums on capital punishment, nuclear testing, public school integration, foreign aid, censorship.

Lectures by Martin Niemoller, Edward Teller, Bertrand Russell, Margaret Mead.

Regular book reviews and serial programs by Kenneth Rexroth, Alan Watts, Mildred Brady.

Residents of Southern California who have further curiosity about KPFA programming may write to the station, at 2207 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, and ask for sample copies of the *KPFA Folio*, which lists the programs to be heard over a period of two weeks. Meanwhile, for literature about the Los Angeles project, inquiries may be addressed to Pacifica Foundation, P.O. Box 504, Altadena, California. Those who wish to indicate their willingness to become subscribers (listener-sponsors) when the station goes on the air may do so by pledging their \$10 for the first year, on a form supplied for this purpose.

Indication of the urgent need for such a station is provided by Leo Rosten, guest contributor in the October *Harper's* of the Department, "The Easy Chair." Mr. Rosten reports on his efforts to persuade contemporary television producers to use the "true stories"—sixteen of them—which were the winners of the contest recently sponsored by the American Traditions Project, for which prizes (from \$5,000 to \$100) were provided by the Fund for the Republic. The stories, according to Mr. Rosten, who is technical adviser to the Project, are good. "The heroes are real men and women who, in the finest American tradition and for reasons no more complicated than simple decency, went to considerable risk to help innocent men who were getting a raw deal." The contest was nationwide and the winning stories were selected from a total of 450 entries.

Mr. Rosten thinks he knows "mass appeal" when he sees it, having himself written for the movies, and each of these stories, he says, has it; in fact, to him they "seemed to have everything"—

dramatic conflict, human interest, and an "up-beat" ending. Moreover, they lent themselves admirably to fifteen-minute, thirty-minute, or sixty-minute treatment. None could be suspected of undermining the American way of life making children neurotic, or pandering to the baser passions.

Rosten checked his own judgment with three television experts, all of whom agreed on the quality of the stories and gave him the names of nine producers. Then he sent the stories off to the producers—who could have them free!

All but two of the stories were declined "with the nicest notes of regret you ever read." It seems that you can't use material which shows the police in a bad

light, and segregation, of course, mustn't be mentioned. One producer said the stories were just "too *strong*." Another noted that "each of the cases involves some malpractice of justice which would meet with disapproval from our sponsor."

While two producers are now considering some of the stories, the prospects seem dim to Mr. Rosten. Looking to a misty future, he speculates, "Maybe some of the stories about the American Tradition will, in time, be allowed inside the antiseptic halls of television." Meanwhile, he has this to say:

. . . it seems self-evident to me that to strain the milk of life through the cheesecloth of advertising must curdle creativity and—more ominous—contaminate truth. We should know by now that when soap-makers commission operas they get a form of garbage called soap-opera.

Mr. Rosten is looking for advertisers who will keep their greedy little fingers out of the editorial departments of radio or television, and let the writers and artists alone. Maybe he will find one or two. But for now and for the future—for any *foreseeable* future—the answer is not to wait for businessmen and merchandising experts to discover the importance of editorial and artistic integrity, but to encourage and support listener-sponsored radio, which is radio without temptation to compromise, and with the incalculable stimulus and fertility of free expression.