

## VIRTUES IN DECLINE

A CORRESPONDENT, impressed by a discussion in MANAS of the extreme want and poverty which afflict so great a proportion of the modern world, writes in appreciation, continuing with a comment that ought to be further developed, if only because it is so seldom heard:

. . . there is the other side of poverty which is brought about by an unwillingness to accept responsibility, especially for family life, this latter type of poverty being very difficult to approach.

The question of "responsibility" is difficult to get at for the reason that much of the talk about responsibility resembles a simple nostalgia for "the good old days" of independence and rugged individualism, when the old-fashioned virtues of industry and sobriety were still admired in public as well as in family councils and church committee meetings. The fact of the matter is that "responsibility" has become a somewhat old-fashioned idea. Not only responsibility, but practically all the traditional virtues, have become somewhat unpopular topics for discussion. Honesty is not respected half so much as commercial success, and veracity, while useful in other people, is more of a technique than a principle. Charity is almost an epithet to the liberal who believes in some kind of Welfare State, and Faith smacks of medievalism. So, the old-time virtues have practically disappeared from their places of eminence and authority, and many would say, Good riddance! Preachments about virtue only cover up the great social inequities of modern society. A man preoccupied with trying to be "good" is usually a man who wants to get to Heaven, and a man who is "sober" and "industrious" generally wants to get rich. Both the Good Man and the Hard Worker are out to get Theirs, leaving the devil or the poor-house to take the hinder-most.

It seems obvious that most of the old arguments for practicing the old-fashioned virtues were not very good, and that because of these arguments, the virtues had to go. Far be it from us to attempt to revive them on the old basis. Wanting to get rich, while probably not as bad as wanting to get to Heaven, is still a waste of energy, so far as genuine human development is concerned, and, with taxes the way they are, it is fast becoming a practical impossibility, anyway. Perhaps there was some deep psychological need to get back to a starting-point on the subject of the virtues, in order to find better reasons for having them. Perhaps human life naturally gets all fouled up when the virtues are practiced for the wrong reasons. Whatever the explanation, we don't have very many of the virtues left.

So, the question arises, can we get along without them? If a definition seems needed at this point, it could be said that the virtues are means for the ordering of human life. A man given to excessive self-indulgence in any direction is a man without the strength to do what may seem important to him to do. A society where responsibility becomes increasingly a *political* concept is a society which gains its order from political regimentation, and not from the quality of the citizens. Eventually, such a society grows into some sort of totalitarian State, simply because of the progressive transfer of responsibility from the individual to the welfare agencies of the State.

When this happens, there are some curious results. Take for example the present Communist State of Soviet Russia. One great dogma of this system is that the individual is wholly created by his environment. Even Mendel's laws of heredity have been repealed in Russia, on the ground that they contradict the environmental theory of human betterment. Naturally, in Russia, the State, having all the responsibility for creating the Good

Society, must have all the power. Thus anyone who manifests opposition to the State is doomed as a kind of infernal being who must be ejected from the potential Soviet paradise. On Communist assumptions, there is no *rational* way to deal with individuals who do not exhibit the proper responses to the conditionings afforded by the State, and the State, therefore, through its public spokesmen, relapses into a kind of pre-revolutionary barbarism and condemns the offenders with language which for blistering denunciation makes ordinary billingsgate sound like St. Francis' Sermon to the Birds. The same sort of "evolution" is found in the Nazi expressions of anti-Semitism. Here the State pretended to capture the forces of Heredity, in which the virtues were supposed to reside, and the people who didn't have the right heredity became absolutely irredeemable. There was no use in arguing with them because they had violated the *premises* of the Nazi society. Non-Aryans *couldn't* participate in the Nazi logic, and political critics *wouldn't* execute the Kremlin syllogisms, so it came to a choice between abandoning the political theory of the virtues or liquidating the offenders. Everyone knows what happened, is still happening, today.

It should be clear that it is a dangerous thing to let the virtues get away from the people. But if the people are to keep the virtues, they have to have good reasons for wanting them. And this, really, is a part of the modern dilemma. The need for the virtues is exhibited in many ways besides the results of their being monopolized by the State. In the simplest of human relationships, the loss of the virtues makes itself felt as a constant strain on the functions of daily living. People make commitments with little or no intention of fulfilling them. Craftsmen have become sloppy and uninterested in the quality of their work. Men feel that the power is all outside of them, beyond them, but pressing in on them, and when power is outside human beings, they tend to accept and justify feelings of personal impotence.

The virtues, after all, are qualities which must find their place in a theory of human nature, in some integrated set of convictions about the nature of man. That is, insofar as our thinking about the virtues has a rational character, they must find such a place. Fortunately, we do have non-rational feelings about the virtues—that they are good, and ought to be preserved—and here, probably, is the explanation of why, below the intellectual level, the virtues are still honored and pursued. But the decay of a civilization never begins below the rational level. It starts among men who feel the need of having reasons for what they do, and for what they believe. Here, in the stratum of rational decision, is the area of human growth as well as of failure and decline. And the more self-conscious men become, the more deliberate their actions, and the greater their need for good reasons for what they do.

Basically, the rational justification of the virtues lies with the conception of a moral law—not a moral law which is debated and "passed" by organized society, or one that is created by the social pressure of custom and tradition, but a moral law which is an intrinsic part of all the relationships in which human beings are involved. It is the moral law which indicates that men have work to do, duties to perform, and heights to reach. The virtues naturally depend upon the ends a man has. If his ends are trivial or artificial, the virtues he claims or seeks will have similar qualities. Or if man is not supposed to be a moral agent—a being with a will of his own—his virtues can be only pseudo-virtues, or mere appearances. This, we think, is the explanation of the decline of the virtues in the modern world. Genuine virtue is the luster of genuine individuality. It is at once the tool and the by-product of souls at work at the task of knowing. In our time, the soul has almost nothing at all to do. The ends we proclaim for life are all "practical." They represent getting to some place, acquiring some thing, realizing some particular joy or emotion—all ends which may be reached or sought without generating the virtues. Or, it might be said that when the virtues are used

as means to gain an objective which is less than actual *knowing*, they turn bad and become even odious to look upon. That is why "piety" is very near to being a synonym of "hypocrisy," and why it seems almost belittling of one we admire to call him a "virtuous" man.

A short history of virtue in the West would perhaps run something like this: As pagan ideals died out and the Christian conception of life became more and more organized and more and more "routine" in definition, the virtues were increasingly poisoned by their subservience to ignoble ends. Then, from being poisoned, men became rebellious. They acquired a new set of virtues—largely intellectual virtues—the qualities of the scientist, of the searcher for knowledge of the physical laws of nature. But rebellion, having begun, reached further. While the new virtues started out by being non-religious, they ended by being anti-religious, and finally anti-virtuous. In the attempt to get rid of the theological poison, the rebels destroyed the very ground in which any sort of virtues can grow. They denied not only God, Heaven and Hell, but also the moral law and the spiritual nature of man. This ended all possible philosophical justification of individual moral discipline, and the virtues were left for the instincts of the masses to preserve.

A good illustration of what has happened to the idea of the virtues is provided by Dwight Macdonald in his essay, "The Responsibility of Peoples," which first appeared in *Politics* in 1945:

At the Mare Island, California, naval base last summer two munitions ships blew up while they were being loaded. In a twinkling, the blast leveled everything for miles around and killed some three hundred sailors. The next day, the admiral in charge issued an Order of the Day in which he paid tribute to the "heroism" and "self-sacrifice" of the dead.

Now obviously the men who were killed were killed because they happened to be around when the explosives went off, and not because of any decision or action of their own. . . . These particular sailors had not even had a choice about being around so dangerous a neighborhood: they were mostly Negroes, and they were assigned to this dirty and dangerous

work because of their race (about which they had no choice either). Indeed, they most definitely did not want the job. The fifty Negro sailors who were recently convicted and sentenced to long prison terms for mutiny were all employed at Mare Island unloading munitions and most of them survivors of last summer's blast. They felt so strong a disinclination, after the tragedy, towards sharing their dead comrades' "heroic" fate that they risked a possible death penalty for mutiny.

The admiral's Order of the Day was thus a fantastic distortion of reality. Yet the administrative reflex which prompted him to issue it was sound. Instinctively, he felt it necessary to give to something which was non-purposive and impersonal a *human* meaning, to maintain the fiction that men who die in modern war do not do so as chance victims but as active "patriots," who heroically *choose* to sacrifice their lives for their countries. It was his misfortune that the Mare Island explosion did not even superficially lend itself to this purpose. It is the good fortune of our war correspondents that battle deaths can be given at least a superficial plausibility along these lines.

This is the dramatic, the impressive illustration of how we have lost sight of the real meaning of virtue and virtuous action. It shows, too, that this loss takes place whenever non-purposive, non-human acts are valued above acts involving free decision or choice. But there are countless other illustrations, less dramatic, of the devaluation of human choice in present-day relationships. They all point to the fact that the virtues will be recovered only when choice is recovered—when self-reliance and self-reverence are restored to human life.

## *Letter from* **JAPAN**

TOKYO.—The number of crimes in post-war Japan under enlightened democracy far exceeds the criminal activities of pre-war militaristic Japan. Murder cases throughout the nation last year, for instance, tripled those of 1944. Some wit has remarked that the people now have even the freedom to kill one another. Crimes of violence have steadily increased since the Surrender.

Various reasons have been put forth to explain this rise in the criminal tendencies of the Japanese people. Pointing out similar instances of the outcropping of vicious crimes in other nations in the wake of war, many people put the whole burden upon war and its effects upon the populace. Indeed, war holds human life cheaply. It holds in high esteem the man or the weapon which kills the greatest number of human beings.

Again, war—and especially war defeat—leaves misery and frustration which often translate themselves into violence. But the aftermath of war for a defeated nation need not necessarily be so horrible if it were burdened only by material shortcomings. It is the mental apathy and the spiritual aimlessness which are so disconcerting and so dangerous.

Japan's material rehabilitation is well on its way. In some respects it has surpassed the pre-war conditions. Great structural reforms have been accomplished; many things have changed outwardly. But far too many people do not know the whys and wherefores. They do not know where they are going.

Their past leaders and beliefs have been thoroughly discredited, and the Japanese people had great hopes in the enlightenment they believed democracy would bring. It may be going too far to say they are disillusioned, but it is true that even the great majority of the honest citizens feel an emptiness in the new order of things. They have seen the old order crumble, but the new

concepts have been foisted upon them by methods not unlike the old. Japan's present democratic structure was not hers by choice; the full force of the military occupation stood behind it. This is not to say that the Japanese people, given a free choice today, would not select democracy in lieu of their former police state. But it must be recognized that a gradual assimilation and a sudden transformation by force are two different things.

The striking thing, however, is that the Japanese people are beginning to realize that under the pressure of international tensions, democracies react no differently from other forms of government. Japan's demilitarization they believed to be a permanent thing. But now the pressure is being placed on the Japanese Government to accede to rearmament, and they see recruits in the National Police Reserve—in uniforms which make it difficult to distinguish them from Nisei GI's—gradually taking the place of the pre-war professional soldier. They see the Americans stuck with the Chinese much as the Japanese were mired in the hinterlands of the vast China continent. They see the similarity between the military mentality of the Occupation forces and the former Japanese armed forces. They see a conscious effort to utilize the historical antipathy the Japanese have for the Russians. They see the Communists driven underground much as they were during the heyday of the Japanese militarism.

Japan's past is evil, the Japanese people are told, but what are they to believe when some of that past is being revived? It is no wonder that many people are disillusioned and that the general feeling of hopelessness should take hold of many more and lead to social unbalance and acts of utter violence.

JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### PHOENIX OF THE ARTS

ACCIDENTS will happen, and one of the accidents brought by the threatening progress of modern military science is the trend to decentralization in the United States. Both people and factories are spreading out around the country. Eventually, perhaps, the advantages of spreading out will become evident enough on their own account, and our great cities will remain only as deserted canyons—monuments to little more than the curious capacity of human beings to lay one stone on top of another until, finally, for no discernible good reason, they have an Empire State Building.

It is possible, too, that with less centralized homes, people will begin to have less centralized minds. Conceivably, with the onward march of television, the time will come when moving picture theaters will also be completely deserted. And then, when TT (Television Torpor) is recognized as a recreational disease, a new (or old) conception of entertainment may have opportunity to gain adherents among the pioneers who see that low-grade, effortless "amusement" operates like a narcotic upon young and old. Thus a second "accident" we look forward to is that with the complete mechanization of popular entertainment, and with the growth of what the sociologists call face-to-face communities, in the hinterlands, there may develop a hunger for a revival of the drama, and that the people, given a little professional cooperation, will revive it themselves.

We are encouraged in this dream by a passage from Maxwell Anderson's small volume of essays, *Off Broadway*, in which this eminent playwright gives his reasons—and they are good ones—why he likes the theatre and dislikes the movies:

The theater is the phoenix of the arts. It has died many deaths in many cities and many languages—and come to life again, sometimes in the same cities and languages, sometimes in other languages and in cities across the sea. There is no doubt that the moving pictures have sucked most of the current lifeblood out of Broadway, and that the anemia of the last few New York seasons was largely

caused by the draining of promising writers and actors into Hollywood, but that does not mean that Hollywood has acquired durability and that the theater will die. Hollywood will die because the seeds of its death were planted in its invention, and a lethal gene lurked in that camera eye from the beginning. The theater will live because it can be re-created at any time by the proverbial actor with a passion to enunciate and four planks to stand on, but the pictures will die because they are a mechanical invention and will inevitably be superseded.

Mr. Anderson wrote this fourteen years ago, when television was an interesting theory instead of a threat to a great industry. His prophetic instinct, however, was sound, and his logic irrefutable. And with the decline of the movies, let us hope, a natural longing for playcraft and flesh-and-blood drama will assert itself in American communities.

It is just as well to aim high, in any such enterprise, and we can think of no better guidance for those who may contemplate theatrical enterprise than the example of Will Shakespeare's company of Elizabethan times. The actors with whom Shakespeare was associated were known as "the Chamberlain's company." Marchette Chute describes their way of working together in *Shakespeare of London*:

The men who made up this company were for all practical purposes closer to Shakespeare than his own brothers, for he worked with them summer and winter, most of the day and often well into the night. . . .

An Elizabethan acting company was organized in such a way that each member was heavily dependent on his fellow members, and the economic life of the troupe depended upon selfless and intelligent cooperation. There was joint ownership of costumes and properties and scripts, and in the case of Shakespeare's company a hitherto unheard-of step was eventually taken and there was joint ownership of a theater building.

The success of this kind of thing depended less on legal agreements than on friendship, and each actor had to be willing to subordinate his personal interests to the welfare of the group as a whole. In the next decade a group of shareholders in another theater company drew up elaborate articles of agreement which covered every possible contingency from the ownership of the costumes to the payment of

the gatherers; but the shareholders' only interest was in making money, and in less than two years the organization had collapsed in a flurry of lawsuits. Shakespeare's company had no need of rigid articles of agreement to keep it from quarrelling, and it was not until the actors' shares began to be inherited by outsiders that there were any lawsuits at all.

It is evident, here, and from other passages of Miss Chute's delightful book, that the theater was really the religion of Will Shakespeare and his associates. It was a religion not in a confining sense, however, but as any man's real work becomes his religion, if it is worth doing at all. Shakespeare left behind no essays to explain what he felt about the dramatic art, but we suspect that he would have said, if asked, something like what Maxwell Anderson says in *Off Broadway*. Any man who tries to write a play, Mr. Anderson proposes, will discover, if he works hard enough, "that the theater is the central artistic symbol of the struggle of good and evil in men." This, certainly, was what it was for Shakespeare. The theater, says Mr. Anderson,

affirms that the good and evil in man are the good and evil in evolution, that men have within themselves the beasts from which they emerge and the god toward which they climb. It affirms that evil is what takes man back toward the beast, that good is what urges him upward toward the god. It affirms that these struggles of the spirit are enacted in the historic struggles of men—some representing evil, some good. It offers us criteria for deciding what is good and what is evil.

These essays by Maxwell Anderson could easily serve as a practical manual for anyone seriously concerned with a theatrical venture. We know of no more luminous discussion of the meaning of tragedy than this book contains, and no more profound account of the genesis and significance of dramatic art. We suppose *Off Broadway* (William Sloane Associates, \$2.50) is out of print; surely, so good a book can hardly be available, but it may be had from the library, and as a further stimulus to reading it, we offer another quotation:

The theater originated in two complementary religious ceremonies, one celebrating the animal in man and one celebrating the god. Old Greek Comedy was dedicated to the spirits of lust and riot and earth, spirits which are certainly necessary to the health and

continuance of the race. Greek tragedy was dedicated to man's aspiration, to his kinship with the gods, to his unending, blind attempt to lift himself above his lusts and his pure animalism into a world where there are other values than pleasure and survival. However unaware of it we may be, our theater has followed the Greek patterns with no change in essence, from Aristophanes and Euripides to our own day. Our ribald musical comedies are simply our approximations of the Bacchic rites of Old Comedy. In the rest of our theater we sometimes follow Sophocles, whose tragedy is always an exaltation of the human spirit, sometimes Euripides, whose tragicomedy follows the same pattern of an excellence achieved through suffering. The forms of both tragedy and comedy have changed a good deal in nonessentials, but in essentials—and especially in the core of meaning which they must have for audiences—they are in the main the same religious rites which grew up around the altars of Attica long ago.

Mr. Anderson gains for the modern theater a dignity we would not have believed it possessed. Because he is himself a part of the modern theater, it seems just to admit his argument, while urging that the quality he finds in modern drama is there because he sees it there, and because he knows it ought to be there. Yet his illustrations are persuasive, and his concluding words on tragedy are evidence of a sage maturity in the American theater:

. . . the theater at its best is a religious affirmation, an age-old rite restating and reassuring man's belief in his own destiny and his ultimate hope. The theater is much older than the doctrine of evolution, but its one faith, asseverated again and again for every age and every year, is a faith in evolution, in the reaching and the climb of men toward distant goals, glimpsed but never seen, perhaps never achieved, or achieved only to be passed impatiently on the way to a more distant horizon.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **EDITORIAL REPORT**

SIX weeks ago, readers were invited to comment on the proposal that MANAS suspend publication during July and August, the reasons given being that the paper's very small staff needed a rest, and that the constant financial drain of operating a weekly at a loss has made this step practically necessary, for this year, at least.

The response to this appeal has been entirely gratifying. Numerous subscribers have approved the proposal, and nearly all of those so writing have suggested that there be no extension of their subscriptions for two months, to compensate for the missed issues. Accordingly, with this encouragement, MANAS will suspend for two months, after next week's issue, to resume publication on Sept. 5. (All subscriptions will be extended for nine weeks, excepting those on which we have definite instruction not to extend.)

We wish to express our appreciation for the "tolerance" with which our readers have accepted this arrangement, and the hope that no similar measure will be necessary in future years. Naturally, the suspension was proposed with considerable reluctance, but the pressures indicating a major economy measure were great, and the staff, too, welcomes even a brief opportunity to augment personal resources. If MANAS were able, say, to triple its circulation, a large part of its financial problem would be solved. So, again, we appeal to our readers to do what they can to bring the paper to the attention of potential subscribers, and to supply the publishers with the names and addresses of prospective readers.

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### **TELEPATHIC HOAX**

Not being regular readers of *Fate*, we discovered only belatedly that the article on telepathy in *Fate* for December, 1950, briefly quoted in MANAS for May 23, has turned out to

be a literary hoax (for which the *Fate* editors are duly apologetic). Our luck has not been very good with supposed telepathic experts. But the frequency with which hoaxes and frauds are uncovered in connection with psychic wonders only bears out what was said in the article which quoted *Fate*—when academic science ignores some important realm of human experience, "a runaway, wildcat, pseudo-science for the masses springs up along the margins of conventional learning and science, and competes vigorously with the stodgy academic doctrines." The scientific denial of psychic realities helps to create the state of mind which makes such hoaxes likely.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

Many parents say to themselves, "When Johnny grows up and has to pay for things himself with money he has had to work for he will be more careful." From the ideas presented in "Children" for May 30, one is impressed with the idea that if children are at an early age initiated into the joys of actual work and receive pay therefrom, it will awaken in them whatever is necessary about a sense of material values and encourage the wise use and allocation of their self-earned resources. But this does not always follow, however theoretically sound the idea may be.

I know a child who has to get up early in the morning, deliver papers in all kinds of weather, keep his equipment in repair, keep his own accounts, yet doesn't seem to be bothered in the least about how his money goes. He loses his jackets, lets library books run long and expensively over-due, is careless of his equipment on camping trips and in general doesn't seem to mind where and how fast his money disappears. This is indeed a puzzle when one realizes how hard that child must have to work for his money, and it also seems to make your confident generalizations sound a little foolish. Also, it produces a worried parent.

THIS youngster, whose behavior is mildly criticized by our correspondent, has at least demonstrated something more important than the capacity to be careful with money. He has begun at the best end of the economic ladder—*he likes to work*. Often, in such instances, the desire of a boy or girl to *work*—society makes earlier realization easier for a boy—grows through childhood, until the first opportunity for some kind of responsible job is available. This is one of the first conscious hungers for a place in the mature world, and, when it arises in the child, an important phase of his educational growth may begin.

Every few weeks we find ourselves mentioning Gandhi's Sevagram program, or Arthur Morgan's philosophy of community education, for the reason that a large proportion of the questions raised here on child-parent

relationships grow from situations attributable to lack of a "work-relationship" between parents and children in the home. We have therefore made numerous suggestions for the establishment of some kind of mutual work. When this is not possible, the next best thing, we think, is for the child to acquire some job of his own. The money he earns may or may not be important to him, as such, but the work itself usually will be. Dollars and cents may have practically no significance to your son unless he has an acute desire to possess a certain article or piece of equipment. *But the fact that he actually participates in the adult world by adequately performing a useful task is a big thing—the big thing*. If he takes on a job such as that of delivering papers, and discovers that he is actually regarded by his employer as satisfactory in the performance of his task, he acquires a sense of "belonging" in society. This sense, in turn, often marks the beginning of the end for his most childish traits.

All this, we might add, is not because the earning of money itself is beneficial, and not because most of the jobs available for young persons are particularly constructive or educational. It is because, and only because, the child is always going to try to conquer the sort of world he finds himself in. Unless we can give him a better world, we need to sympathize with his desire—almost a psychic need—to emerge victorious in some testing of his strength against the conventional obstacles. And the first thing to be most naturally sought is approbation for work done, not a money-pile.

In the case of the particular boy whose behavior prompted the question, it would be well to investigate the attitude he shows towards *other people's* property. Though carelessness of any sort invariably breaks over from one field to another, it is still true that some are more careful of other persons' property than of their own. This may denote the temperament of a constructive dreamer who is never so much interested in what he actually *has*, as in the things he is doing or



planning to do. If he feels that his carelessness touches no one but himself, he simply prefers to be careless.

Very few creative or artistic natures have developed an adequate balance-wheel which enables them to show appropriate concern for their material possessions. This is not a virtue, of course. It is, indubitably, a "fault," for all material things deserve reasonable respect.

On the other hand, it is hardly one of the worst vices. An *over-anxious concern* for property is the hallmark of many spiritually retrogressive trends in our civilization—which is one reason why we will find so many psychologists and social scientists bemoaning the death of individual creativity. A recent essay by a psychologist-historian on "The Meaning of Individuality" pointed out that the more regimented we allow our lives to become, the more we seek to affirm some kind of individuality *in terms of the property we possess*. People have "personalized" portable radios, shirts, automobiles, and so on—that is, their initials are affixed, to indicate that there is something different about that particular piece of clothing or machinery. This is a pathetic substitute for originality.

If a parent has the spare time, he might try to find someone who has no property or regular job, and who is also a very nice person. There are many such. Anyway, if you can find one, introduce your son to him. A child will need all the moral support he can get, if he is to continue being unimpressed by property.

Children are properly unconcerned with ownership, at first. Until the world has its way with them, the prevailing tendency is to give anything and everything away to the first likeable comer, who thinks he would be happy with it, *unless the toy or article is in direct use*. But egotism lurks in the background, and when the child sees people yelling "mine," or "yours," this egotism fastens to Property with ease. We can say, and quite truly, that the child carries with him

enough selfishness so that he will show it soon enough in any case. But why make it sooner?

A recent clipping on the successful cooperative educational patterns evolved by the Hutterite religious communities provides an occasion for wondering if all children couldn't make their way through adolescence believing that the real "owner" of anything is the person putting it to its best *use*.

## *FRONTIERS* In Praise of a Senator

CONSTRUCTIVE political commentary is more than somewhat difficult in a journal devoted to "principles that may be capable of supporting intelligent idealism." Politics usually proceeds on the assumption that the task of government is to keep the social machinery going, to patch things up whenever there are signs of imminent breakdown. We cannot altogether blame politicians, therefore, for tending toward the utterly conventional, so long as the apparent necessities of office insidiously involve them in maintaining the status quo. The exponents of liberal and radical opinion, on the contrary, have an easy time of it, so far as being on the side of the "idealists" is concerned. A small magazine—even the *Nation* is "small" in comparison with the tremendous sales of *Life*, *Time* and the *Satevepost*—has both leisure and inclination to stand apart from the psychology of Keeping the Machinery Going. And because these critics are usually more concerned with enjoying the favor of a certain wing of opinion than with the totality of public thought, there is also less concern for taking into account majority opinions—the liberal works on the assumption that majority opinion is badly in need of revision, anyway.

For all these reasons, it seems particularly worth while to call attention to remarks addressed to the Senate of the United States on Feb. 12, 1951, by the Honorable Ralph E. Flanders of Vermont. Senator Flanders says a great many things that have been said before, in *MANAS*, in the *Progressive*, and in England's *New Statesman and Nation*. But his address, "The Terms of an Honest Peace," was a definite commitment upon which he staked his political reputation and integrity. Showing full appreciation for the peace plans already suggested—he refers to the proposals by Walter Reuther of the CIO, by Senator McMahon of Connecticut, and by former Senator Tydings, "who, in spite of the fact that he was chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, made a bold and outright plea for disarmament"—Senator Flanders adds a qualification that is a bit unusual for a political man.

After praising the plans mentioned, he points out what he feels may be a fatal error in the way in which they can easily be regarded by many of their adherents:

I do not like to see the proposals used as a means of buying peace. The value of peace is without price. It must be sought as a precious jewel—not purchased in an open market. . . . Opportunity for peace must not be presented as an ultimatum to be accepted in a given number of days and then withdrawn. Our willingness to join in a disarmed peace must be set before the nations of the world as a permanent exhibit. We must proclaim it monthly, weekly, daily, hourly. It is always valid.

Senator Flanders' proposal is "a simple one":

. . . to disarm completely in every weapon and to any degree above the few small arms required for maintenance of civil order. The essential, of course, is that the carrying out of this disarmament must be progressive and must be done under the direction and under the inspection of the United Nations itself.

But what is most important about the Flanders proposal is not the idea of "disarmament" itself, which can be cloaked in many guises—as for example the Stockholm Peace Pledge. Senator Flanders makes clear that it is the *accompanying attitude* which makes one's claim to internationalist ideals seem valid—or false—to the rest of the world. One has to face, frankly and fairly, the mistaken policies of one's own country, especially as viewed through the eyes of a rival power, and one must also *prove* concern for "international welfare" by considering the future economic needs of present rivals. While anyone who reads the entirety of the address will be convinced that Senator Flanders is not advocating "appeasement," he does insist that no fundamental proposal in regard to disarmament can possibly succeed unless we work out concrete plans for assisting Russia to easier access to the great oceans of the world and to more adequate oil supply.

Criticism of the policies of one's own government can be either partisan and meaningless, or impartial and constructive. Opposition on a purely Party basis leads to charges against "the

present administration," for instance, and this is not *evalautive* criticism at all. As a critic, Flanders scores extremely well, singling out the total philosophy of armament rather than the presumed errors of a Democratic President or his cabinet:

It is clear enough that the future of the young men and of many of the young women of this country no longer lies in their own hands. That future is at the command of the military. Schooling will be interrupted, opportunities for beginning employment in life work will be denied. The whole future of the youth of America is clouded with uncertainty as to everything except that the Armed Forces hold their lives and prospects in their hands. We are being forced to shift the American way of life into the pattern of the garrison state. Not only are we shifting, we are there now. Yet it is only as the months go by that we will begin to realize all that has happened to us.

We must look closely enough at our present position and course to recognize that we have lost the battle for the American way of life. Instead we are beginning our experience with the garrison state. On the domestic front the Soviet has already won. Military victory will be barren in the face of this grim fact. . . .

We must also face the fact that we are losing the sympathy and support of other nations in the world, large and small, and that through the clever propaganda of the Soviet government we are being made to appear as one of two contenders for supreme power in the affairs of the globe. We know this is not so. But it is not so clear to the outsider. We are losing on this field of battle as well.

It would indeed be a wonderful thing if our own political representatives would take on the burden of being our severest critics, especially if, like Senator Flanders, they would be willing to stand forth—on a limb—and proclaim faith in something positive with which to replace past political habits. If we had enough of such criticism we might be able to develop a better function for the minority opinion journals than that of storming at the moral failings of the more "practical" men of government. *Constructive* proposals from small journals could be their greatest contribution to the problems of the times, and for this reason we should not close such a resumé without acknowledging that the small and little known publication, *Contemporary Issues*,

published in England, has again jumped the important gap between destructive criticism and constructive planning. It is interesting to note the close parallel between the remarks of Senator Flanders—a man who is shown considerable respect by his Congressional colleagues—and the thinking of *CI's* unconventional editors:

There is a progressive degeneration in men's minds when they have been captured by the logic of supporting war. . . . The gross, devouring, featureless conceptions involved sicken the senses even as they impose conviction, destroy intellectual fertility, remove all sensitivity and with it the capacity to distinguish between original and crude copy. Journalists have observed with an air of profundity the "parallel" between this pre-war period and the previous one, with its aspects of "isolationism," "appeasement" and so on (as if the parallel exhausted the matter!), but have failed to observe that history is repeated only as farce, that a swindler is much bolder after his first success, that, in short, the political justification offered for this war is a caricature even of that of the last.

For this reason, is not the best appeal now through practical proof of intent? Suppose only some of the 60 billions and more spent on armaments (which would, if the tactic were successful, be unnecessary) were employed to buy food of all kinds (first of all surpluses), medicines, and all the other most essential consumption goods, and these were dropped on the states behind the Iron curtain from the air, shipped into the neighboring countries, smuggled past the borders directly into the hands of that population.

The measure is infinitely cheaper than any war could be. Its transparent simplicity expresses just its self-evident merit. There is no refutation of it, it is no more than sanity. For that reason we appeal to everyone who can no longer conceal from himself the bottomless madness of the alternative to take the proposal up, insist on it, and publicly advocate it.

### *Has it Occurred to Us?*

A LONG-TIME editor for a large publishing house used to console writers whose work bogged down suddenly, or whose novel could not seem to get itself started, by passing along his observation (from a neutral corner, so to say) that all real writers become discouraged. Perhaps this notion is not startlingly original. It may even be an over-worked idea, considering the deference paid nowadays to the fine new complaint of "frustration."

But has it occurred to us that genuinely original work requires a genuinely original *effort*? What is done in the same old way is no summons to the free imagination—and is not art. Nothing can be done without a distinctly new application of some individual's energy, but what distinguishes the man of genius is his overwhelming conviction of this fact.

Discouragement and frustration, from this standpoint, appear not as a failure of will, but as a kind of disguised invitation to powers presently sleeping or resting within. The futile man takes discouragement as a sentence of despair, and looks upon frustration as an omen of steadily mounting disaster. The man of accomplishment responds to the sense of temporary disability as if it were a high sign. He is like a swimmer who, instead of allowing the breaker to churn him into the sea bottom, heads into the wave before it crashes and so emerges into open sea.

This turnabout reaction to frustration is not, of course, characteristic of all novelists, nor is it found among artists alone. The great division between optimists and pessimists can be drawn along these lines, and possibly, also, the only valid distinction between "youth" and "old age." The one cannot be discouraged out of the pursuit of its aims, while the other can hardly energize itself, even for the sake of pleasure. We are reminded of the Hindu classic, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, which opens with a soldier discouraged on the battlefield before the fighting has properly begun. A

queer figure for a hero, by any standards, yet the god-sage Krishna taught the despairing Arjuna patiently and tenderly, until, in the end, he can say to his pupil, Choose your own path and act upon your choice. The god, in the long dialogue, has tried the mind of Arjuna by philosophic discussion, and, marking the trend of his questions, Krishna is satisfied that the path finally chosen will be far nobler than the way of despondency Arjuna was about to embark upon in the first moments of battle.

Perhaps we too often think of bravery as belonging to the "last gasp," to the desperate encounter. We may wonder, sometimes, if dauntlessness does not attain its grandest heights in the quietest corners. The heart, says an old proverb, knows its own bitterness, and by the same token, the heart knows its own light and strength. The simplest occasion, anything between and including getting up in the morning and going to bed at night (and some dreams, be it added), may be a spot of courage or a blot of despair, and none the wiser, except ourselves.

Except ourselves?—but who, so much as ourselves, needs to know how stout is our heart? If there were always someone to hold up our hands, how would we hold up our heads? If there were nothing we had to bear alone, there would soon be nothing we *could* bear alone. Each man who uses his own powers and calls forth his own strength keeps a lonely and a silent vigil. In the fane of our inner consciousness are no perpetual lamps, save those that are perpetually tended. The effort to hold one's own against the fear of failure, and notwithstanding the disturbance of a desire for success, makes for a silence which may at first seem grim, if only by contrast with the false gaiety outside. But before long we learn to respect that silence and to preserve it, for we come to think of it as a place of power.

The inauguration of any work, large or small, depends upon an initial momentum. (How many times have we quailed at the bogey of Beginning?) At length we *do* begin, and, congratulating

ourselves upon our remarkable display of spirit and initiative, we entirely overlook the approach of the next hurdle. (Is anything as static as a first beginning?) Suddenly, with growing dismay, we realize that the job of continuing appears to be assuming gigantic proportions. As our momentum slackens, the next effort seems more and more impossible. At this juncture, we perhaps should ask ourselves why we find it oppressive to be conscious that we may *not* be able to do what we have in mind? The question of courage may be illuminated if we consider that both success and failure arouse in us the same feeling, at base: fear and distrust of our fate or of ourselves. Courage, it may be, cannot exist unless the mind can hold at bay all thoughts of both success and failure.

Has it occurred to us that if we had no capacity for *discouragement*, we might never enlarge our courage? Our fears may need to be greater, so that we shall build bravery still higher, and if there comes a time when we cannot know fear, we must then know the courage which is sustained not out of self-interest, nor pride, nor merely for this and that crisis, but constantly, naturally, and without strain. This is not the kind of courage one has and loses; it is the courage we learn and live by.