

INVITATION TO UTOPIA

ONE of the upsetting things about listening to a good radio program is that you can't play over a part that seemed particularly important or that you didn't understand. You can of course ask for a typed transcript, but if the program was made up of free discussion, the station may be obliged to charge you for typing out from the tape recording what was said, and for anyone whose editorial budget is already in the minus column, such expenses are out of the question. As usual, it turns out that memory must serve. In the present instance, we at least have KPFK's folio of program notes, so that it is possible to report the names of the participants, even if the question of who said what remains obscure. (KPFK is the Los Angeles member of the Pacifica Foundation group of non-commercial, listener-supported radio stations, the other members being WBAI in New York and KPFA in Berkeley, California.)

The program we have in mind (produced by WBAI) was a discussion of the theatre during the 1959-60 season, which means the New York legitimate theatre, on and off Broadway. Taking part were Kenneth Tynan, British drama critic who lately has been writing for the *New Yorker*, Gore Vidal, an American playwright, and David Susskind, television producer. The talk ranged far beyond the assigned subject, since the participants seemed to agree that there hadn't been much worth discussing in the theatrical events of the year. With some reluctance, they would drag themselves back to their topic after enthusiastic forays into sociology, morals, and the problem of free expression in the arts. As a performance the program was remarkable for its demonstration of the quick and mobile intelligence of these men. The air was filled with *bon mots*, epigrams, and spontaneous humor sufficient to turn nearly anyone active in the communications trade green with envy. We were sure of recognizing only Kenneth Tynan's remarks, because of his English accent, and perhaps for this reason he seemed to dominate in both wit and sagacity. But, taken

together, this trio of writers—possibly we should call them simply "intellectuals"—put on a show that was surely as sparkling and as pungent as anything done by the Greek sophists of the age of Pericles.

To call anyone a sophist is at best a dubious compliment. It would probably be fairer to suggest that these men appeared on this program in the role of sophists, for after it was over and the sparks had gone out, you remembered two things—the brilliance of what was said, and its lack of consequence. Of course, to have insisted that the questions raised be pursued until their discussion became truly consequential would have pulled the program out of shape and turned these urbane and cosmopolitan gentlemen into table-pounders and crusaders. This was not their role. The thing to do, doubtless, is to thank them for being "provocative" and look more closely at some of the things they talked about. Yet it is a melancholy fact that this lack of consequence in any sort of serious discussion infects the entire modern world, and the fact should be noted.

We are inclined to make Tynan the hero of this situation, since he was the one who offered the most searching comments and who, while he talked the most, was most frequently interrupted when we wanted him to go on. The question, on the occasions we have in mind, was why there are not more good plays written—"challenging" plays on the essential issues of human relations. Tynan suggested that the arrangements of life in America—and Britain, also—do not make for clear experience of direct human relations. The dominating connection between people, he said, is not the human nexus but the *cash* nexus.

From here we shall have to go on without quoting Mr. Tynan directly or indirectly, since we are almost certain to misrepresent him by confusing our own ideas with his. It was plain, however, that what he meant was that the culture of the times directs the attention of the individual to what others

may mean to him in terms of money, rather than as human beings. The question, *How much will he pay me?* or *How much will he buy?* is too often the first thing to enter a man's mind when he meets someone else. There are a lot of similar questions, all of them relating to economic interest. This automatic reflex of economic interest crowds out the possibility of genuine human relations between people. It is the psychological force behind the disaster complained of by Norman Podhoretz: "Everything we get *costs* too much—too much money, too much energy, too much spirit."

But Mr. Tynan barely got his judgment stated and his corrective utopian dream briefly outlined before another of the participants clumped all over the idea by insisting that economic exploitation is only one of many ways in which people exploit one another; they exploit each other sexually, too, and this is not likely to stop in Mr. Tynan's economically non-competitive utopia, since "human nature," etc., etc.

Technically, no doubt, the objector was right, but the interruption had the effect of making it appear that there was no use in pursuing Mr. Tynan's idea. So the argument rushed on to other fields.

It was at this point that we longed for Mr. Tynan to become a table-pounder. After all, to show that exploitation and imperialism and aggression have other forms than economic acquisitiveness does not establish these activities as absolutely predestined patterns of human behavior which can never be changed because they are written in our genes or in our stars. There is good reason to do some brooding on this situation—on the fact that we are not compelled by some outside force to treat other people as means to our own ends, but are led, insidiously, by a great variety of customs and habit-patterns to behave in this way.

It is true enough that there is a built-in tendency in human nature to "use" other people. Christian moralists call this tendency "selfishness," and the Buddhists speak of it as the "heresy of separateness." But modern, technological society has sanctified this tendency into a first principle of economic distribution and raised an ideology of "survival" from

its practical justifications. Economic man is waited upon, served, cajoled, and endlessly flattered while moral man, ethical man, or simply *human* man, is put on bread and water, and very little of that.

We are witnessing everywhere, today, covert rejections of the principle of economic interest. Usually they are compromised or oblique rejections. That is, people go through the motions of standard economic behavior: they take jobs they don't want and do work they do not respect, relieving the resulting pressure by sensual self-indulgence or by adopting a "philosophy" of cynicism which helps them to feel somehow "above" their daily activities. It is the candor of the "beats" in rejecting openly the economic interest and the whole system of implied motivations which gives social organization to the economic interest, that many people secretly admire, even while expressing conventional astonishment and disgust for beat antics and poses.

It is this dearth of motives we are able to give our hearts to which is slowly dissolving the good qualities and paralyzing the good impulses of the men of our time. As Kenneth Keniston put it in the Spring 1960 *American Scholar*:

Most men consider the cynicism of not acting to promote one's avowed purposes a worse offense than the cynicism of not having any purposes at all. But to act to promote or make real a positive vision of the future is—in our current world view—to condemn oneself to certain frustration and probable failure. The thought that it may make matters worse is even more paralyzing for men of good faith. Thus, a welter of good intentions, desire not to do harm, doubt as to whether there are *any* means to promote worthy ends, and fear of frustration or failure conspire to make it far easier not to articulate any positive morality in the first place.

So, Mr. Tynan was not permitted to get very far in the articulation of his dream of a society where *human* relations would replace economic relations as our basis for knowing and dealing with one another. The sure reflexes of fear of total exposure stopped him from developing this idea to the point where it might exercise some real persuasion and demand some real action.

In another phase of the discussion, Mr. Tynan suggested that the art of the theatre is poor because life is poor. Life, he said, comes first. People are living the lives of shut-ins. If they could open up their lives, the expression of the arts might flower. Here, again, he was interrupted. Another member of the panel insisted that the kind of life a man leads has "nothing to do" with the quality of his art. Or, on the other hand, the very struggle against confining influences may give the artist vigorous speech.

Again, a plausible argument marked Mr. Tynan's effort "no contest." The moral meaning of the interruption seemed to be that the conditioning effect upon the playwright of the age he lives in ought not to be examined with the intention of defining a better sort of conditioning, but only as a field for disinterested observations—as, say, an entomologist would look at a colony of ants. This argument might be illustrated by the claim that Dostoevsky's genius was nurtured by the Czarist threat of execution for his participation in a student protest; that World War I was the beneficent cause of German Expressionism; and that the brutalization of life in Europe, while perhaps undesirable, nevertheless supplied the matrix for Existentialist literature and drama.

No one will deny that the arts are the product or the byproduct of struggle, but to fail to inquire into the sort of struggle that has the greatest meaning for the arts is to make this observation into a cliché. Simply to point out the artist's need of struggle by no means disposes of Mr. Tynan's argument that *life comes first*—that good art can arise only from a good life. An easy rejection of this argument becomes possible only if it is assumed that when a "good life" is spoken of, some sort of material utopia is meant.

But a good life is not a life from which the elements of struggle have been removed through the skills of technology and the establishment of an equalitarian social system. A good life, Mr. Tynan surely must have meant, is a life in which the authentic issues of the human struggle are understood, and not pushed off the stage by the capering pretense of spurious issues. Veritable genius may, and often does, break through the pretense, and create a good but agonized existence

for rare individuals, but this can hardly justify a *laissez faire* attitude toward conditions as they are. This oblique defense of the status quo is only another smoke screen to hide the generalized ignorance and failure of our time. A successful advocacy of the good life would create the moral obligation to *work* for it, and how could such an obligation be fulfilled?

Fundamentally, we are confronted by almost total breakdown of definitions of the good. As Mr. Hutchins put it years ago: "We are, as a matter of fact, living today by the haphazard, accidental, shifting shreds of a theology and metaphysics to which we cling because we must cling to something." Why don't we do something about this situation? The reasons are several. First of all, we are supposed to have replaced the pseudo-truths of theology with the Reliable Knowledge—the *Facts*—of science, and the speculations of metaphysics with the disciplines of logic and semantics. But science and logic didn't really replace crumbled metaphysics. For a generation or so, we have tried to subsist on a bland and purely verbal synthesis of "science and religion," being deluded into thinking that "progress" was still going on by the furious activity of technology and by various other forms of busyness.

Second, we are beginning to suspect that if we look closely at the foundations—the moral and intellectual foundations—of our lives, today, we shall discover—*nothing*. Only the Existentialists have dared to look, and their report is not encouraging to the less stoical members of the community.

Why not, then, do as Mr. Hutchins proposes? Get ourselves a new metaphysics, or at least find out what the alternatives are. Again, the reasons for the failure to act are several. First, the heavy weight of the corpus of works by the anti-metaphysicians presses upon our minds. Can the "new spirit" announced by Diderot have died away so soon? Have we not many guides and comforters to take the place of the metaphysicians and moral philosophers? Then there is the legitimate distrust of intellectuality—or rather, of intellectual plausibility—inspired by the researches of Sigmund Freud and his numerous successors. Finally, there is the historic alliance of agnosticism, materialism, and the forces of social revolution. The most notable

lovers of freedom and of their fellows during recent centuries, have been unbelievers, almost to a man. Could *they* have been wrong?

So there is ample explanation for the fact that what we sometimes call "progressive thinking" has ground to a dull and apathetic stop. The lifeless remains of yesterday's theories of progress lie all about. We don't even want to bury them, for fear that we shall be called upon to testify that they are indeed dead. And then what?

Does hope lie anywhere? It lies, so far as we can see, with the development of the non-objective utopias. There is a single line of constructive philosophical thought in the world today, a line engaged in what might be termed the rediscovery of man. The region this line of thought investigates is the area of consciousness. Its ultimate value is both cloaked and suggested by the term "self." Everything we do, everything we long to know, comes back to this one great question of the self. The determination of men to avoid "engagement," their fierce wish not to become "involved," is not only a form of negativism. The dreadful futility of the available engagements supports this apparent selfishness.

What is the new place of reality? It is in the mind, the mind and the feelings. A certain objectivity toward ideas of the good has been achieved in recent years. There are many things we don't know, but we have learned that whatever the good may be in the abstract, it is *experienced* good we care about, with values felt and appreciated by the mind.

If, then, we are to have a new metaphysics, it seems certain that it will be founded upon the immediacies of psychological experience. The first principles will be consciously *felt* principles. It will be a metaphysics which enjoys a kind of pragmatic sanction as well as intellectual validation.

What would a non-objective utopia be like? It would be a conceptual utopia—that is, a psychological domain in which the fixed reference-points and values are realized conceptions of man and his relations and role in the universe. The

mechanical fittings of the physical world would be vastly subordinate to these elements of inner reality.

By some such means as this, all the old words have some hope of acquiring new and living meanings. Already words like "love" and "truth" and "self" have obtained a fresh vitality from the minds and feelings of men who are working on their content. The positive rule of these investigations is that whatever is concluded must have an affirmative, functional meaning. The first negative rule is that the immediacy of individual psychological experience must never be set aside, giving way to some systematic, ideological interpretation which, sooner or later, externalizes the values.

What assures depth and dimensions to this "new" philosophy is the recognition that the moral struggle persists in the human breast, although the account of its meaning is no longer theological, doctrinal, or moralistic. We are slowly getting a new vocabulary, a new kind of calling to high purpose, and a new light on ancient meanings of human dignity and role.

Letter from **BULGARIA**

SOFIA.—Upon leaving my sixth Socialist capital, I must confess to a sharp feeling of irritation at one constant refrain: The Uncultured West. It is likely much less important than many other refrains, but it is as persistent and even more annoying.

If peace is one of the major themes of the moment in Communist countries, Culture is surely another. It comes out in curious ways, but it also has positive achievements. One almost amusing item is the emphasis laid upon checking hats and coats in all Soviet public buildings. It is quite impossible to get into a theatre or restaurant with your coat and hat. The rules are plain, and waiters and ushers are firm. I have been sent out, back to the *vestiaire*, to check my rubbers! I asked a Russian friend one day about this, acknowledging the convenience of the custom, but somewhat questioning the rigidity of the system. His quietly delivered response was: "It is considered uncultured to take outer garments inside."

The positive achievements are in the field of cultural enjoyment. One never sees empty seats in a theatre, or a concert hall, or at the marionette shows. This is true in Moscow, in Warsaw, Prague, Bucharest and Sofia. I have seen them all. Full occupancy is achieved in several ways: by low prices; by distribution of tickets through organizations; by the activities of Cultural Secretaries in plants, unions, cooperatives and large offices; and, as in Warsaw, by the "expectation" that all staff members of educational and cultural organizations will attend such performances at least twice a month. The quoted word, "expectation," was used judiciously, after some thought, by my Warsaw informant. I have no idea what the alternative, if any, would be for those who did not attend.

This is surely an achievement. In Bucharest I was told that there were in the city five continuously performing, first-class symphony orchestras, and that the world's most modern symphony hall had just been completed, incorporating the most advanced construction and acoustic principles in its 3200-seat auditorium. It replaces the 1100-seat former home

of the Georges Enesco Symphony, the city's first. One thinks of Lincoln Center, and the controversy as to its planned reduction of symphony seats for the world's largest city.

In each country I have been visiting the organization usually called "Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries," or by some such name. These committees, are universally large, vigorous, and competent dispensers of propaganda in a number of forms, and of material whose value is genuinely cultural, without obvious overtones. In some cases, the organization supervises or has close relations with a publisher, commonly called the Foreign Languages Press. In Prague, indeed, this Press dwarfs the cultural organization, since it does job-publishing for export to the West on a large scale. In Bucharest I was given a large collection of cultural items at the Committee's office, including a stunning guide book to Romania, books of reproductions of paintings and etchings, some sticky collections of "statistics," and several modern novels. One of the latter, *Gathering Storm*, by Cezar Petrescu, is a thoroughly able job, drawing the reader through the "old" Romanian pre-World War I society into modern-day Communism.

You may be wondering when I will get around to Sofia. Here I had an extraordinary experience in meeting a high official of the Committee on Cultural Relations, a gentleman with all the relaxed and friendly amiability of a first-class bear trap. Again I was given a good supply of Committee publications, many of them being pamphlets describing Communist achievement in the status of women, raising the standard of living, industrialization, agricultural cooperatives, etc. Incidentally, Bulgaria was the first Communist State to announce 100 per cent collectivization of agricultural lands, and by common consent of the foreigners I talked with in Sofia, this country has achieved a magnificent "leap forward" in rural standards of living.

But whereas previously I had been seeing only evidence of widened cultural enjoyment, in Sofia I was given a glimpse of the Socialist conditions for the production of cultural works, an area of natural curiosity, especially when problems such as that of Pasternak arise. Here are three quotations of advice

to Socialist creative artists, taken directly from sources supplied to me by the Cultural Committee in Sofia.

From *Bulgarian Graphic Art*, a book by Evtim Tomov, published by the Committee in 1959:

". . . the graphic arts are the most . . . democratic of the fine arts . . . [They form the art] which lends itself to unlimited reproduction, reaching any and every one in the intimacy of his home. This democratic essence [is] exceedingly timely and indispensable under the new conditions of life.

"The radical changes which occurred in the nation's political, economic and cultural life in the wake of Sept. 9, 1944, setting it on the road to socialism, exerted an important influence on the arts. It follows that art and artists should carry out the noble task of creating works of art worthy of the time we live in.

"Bulgarian graphic arts received a particularly strong stimulus from the . . . Soviet . . . example. . . .

"Those [artists] who in the past hewed close to the traditions of Bulgarian . . . arts and were highly skilled in their trade, are rapidly falling in with the new requirements and are seeking to replace in their works the themes and ideas provided by the new way of life."

From *Modern Bulgarian Poetry*, published by the Committee in 1959. (The author did not sign this 14-page introduction to the 38-page mineographed booklet of modern poetry. I wouldn't have done so, either.)

"What is the main reason for the weakness of contemporary Bulgarian poetry?

"It is the old but always new reason: insufficient knowledge of life, running away from reality, escaping from the problems of the day and failing to grasp the spirit of the times. . . .

"In spite of the weaknesses, Bulgarian poetry is beyond any doubt developing correctly. It is linked with deep, lasting and close ties with the people and with the Communist Party which is guiding them. It is also connected with the great Soviet poetry, with its imposing power, vitality, and justice. Bulgarian poets learn from Soviet poets not only to adhere to high ideological principles and to serve the people readily, but are also guided by their poetical skill and all those secrets without which none can reach the heights of poetic creation. . . .

"But the quality of the poetic work of Bulgarian writers has not yet attained the heights of the heroism of our working people. Our poetry (is still) poorer and paler than the rich, heroic and versatile soul of the modern man."

From *The Cultural Development of Bulgaria* (anonymous pamphlet), Foreign Languages Press, Sofia, 1959:

"The composition of operas, though a relatively new phenomenon, is developing along correct lines. The directions left us as a bequest by our great teacher, Georgi Dimitrov [Father of Bulgaria's Revolution, who died in late 1940's], that works of art should be national in form and socialist in content . . . are the guiding principles in the work of all our composers."

I rest my case. Is one justified in saying that cultural enjoyment is one thing, and cultural creation another?

One further note. The deathless documents from which the above quotations were culled are, so far as I know, still in Sofia. Though they are published in English, and thus apparently for outside consumption, I was unable to persuade the Bulgarian Customs and Post Office to send them home for me. Diplomatic intervention in my behalf has taken place, but I have not heard the result.

ROVING CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

TWO KINDS OF RELIGION

A REGULAR feature of the *Unitarian Register* is a page of quotations entitled "Thoughts for Meditation," edited by Jacob Trapp. In glancing through the quotations in the May issue, presented under the general heading, "Mutual Respect," we were struck by the tremendous contrast of these utterances with an unenlightened Sunday school program based on an unenlightened religion, such as Peter S. Feibleman describes in *A Place without Twilight*. In the following paragraphs, Mr. Feibleman tells about two children of a religious family, one of whom is completely cowed by the implicit threat of a "born in sin" type of Christianity, while the other escapes only through rebellion based on an instinctive self-respect:

Dan liked Sunday school. It was the only thing he had that wasn't on Mama's don't-list. He was cute about it then, too. He would sit and listen to the Bible stories so hard he practically squirmed when the preacher's wife took time out to breathe or cough or look around the room. I was sure for a while he thought the Lord Jesus Christ was king of the cowboys.

The whole thing took about four hours out of every Sunday morning. I had lots of reasons for hating it. Sunday school taught you the same as Mama did: believe in the Lord Jesus and believe in the Other World Heaven and believe in the Other World Hell, and learn and believe in all the sticky little details everybody knows about all those things they never saw—but don't get curious about *this* world, because nobody's supposed to know a thing about it. And don't go asking yourself if God did create the heaven and the earth, why he got so good and holy about one, and then turned around and made such a crapped-up mess out of the other. Don't ever ask why He put you here; just get baptized and stick with him, and then grit your teeth and see it through. Learn: every part of your body and your touching-world is full of dirty things and dirty ideas; don't expect to get all clean till you get out. Learn: every part of life that's fun is liable to be dirty and probably is, except praising the Lord. (Course, you can't really praise him for when a person gets born on this earth. So what you do is save it and have one slam-bang blessing party when the person dies and goes up to

heaven.) Learn to do right by the Lord just like you was making a deal with Him. Because if you do, He will do right by you. And if you don't, oh brother.

Now, let us turn to the *Register* quotations on "Mutual Respect":

Wise is he who looks with an equal eye upon all beings, seeing the one indwelling God in the hearts of all.—Srimad *Bhagavatam*

I met a hundred men on the road to Delhi and they were all my brothers.—*Indian Proverb*

Virtue never dwells alone. It always has neighbors.—*Analects of Confacins*

Men exist for the sake of one another. Teach them then, or bear with them.—*Marcus Aurelius*

Loving ourselves more, we could go out to our neighbor with a deeper compassion and a warmer affection, having found ourselves, we could more understandingly accept the found selves of other people.—*Grace Stewart*

Men have as yet no respect for themselves, and of consequence no just respect for others. The true bond of society is thus wanting. I hold that nothing is to make man a true lover of man but the discovery of something interesting and great in human nature. We must see and feel that a human being is something important.—*William Ellery Channing*

To see if we will now at last be true
To our own only true, deep-buried selves,
Being one with which we are one with the whole world.—*Mathew Arnold*

So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as a means only.—*Immanuel Kant*

In this world there is one godlike thing: the veneration done to human worth by the hearts of men. When it is not there heaven is veiled from us, and there is no worship, or worth, or blessedness in the earth any more.—*Thomas Carlyle*

The trouble with the doctrine of original sin is, of course, that it devaluates the human potential for nobility, and when no dream of nobility is allowable—when every human being, including one's self, must be held suspect of the worst motivations—the result is an attitude of bleak negativism, both personally and socially. In Mr. Feibleman's novel, young Dan evidently

"cracks" under the Sunday-school morality strain because there is no room for his individuality to develop. And after all, cracking under the strain probably is the best sort of thing, because the alternative is the passivity which accepts the necessity for a totalitarian order. On the road to break-down, these are Dan's reactions:

Dan always minded Mama to the word, without ever asking why; he minded her so perfect, I think it even began to worry her after a while. He didn't have any of the kickback Clarence had, and his quiet wasn't a hard, holding-off quiet, like mine. I did what I had to because it was what had to get done at the time, but there was always a million other things I would rather of been doing, and having, and being. But not Dan. Little by little, *no* began to mean plain *no* to Dan. It didn't just mean don't do—it meant don't wonder and don't be. So Mama gave him an order, he went and did it because it was the *only* thing: everything else was blacked right out, for him.

This, we take it, throws light on the psychological causes of the "dark" ages. For centuries the tradition of creative philosophy was preserved in Arabian culture, while the monolithic structure of organized Christianity—the Christianity of Roman officialdom, rather than of the early Greek Fathers—tried to make everybody just like "Dan." The free soul of man was killed to save "God's" soul, and when the free soul lies dead, the result is some form of insanity. Our instinctive dread of totalitarianism may stem from some dim awareness of this truth, but the trouble in our time is that we have misread the meaning of totalitarianism. Any form of conformity, however enforced, leads to the same result, because soul-death is not so much a matter of having to comply with the outward requirements of an external authority, as it is the end result of forgetting how to think beyond the confines of a prevailing orthodoxy. Votes, certainly, do not guarantee freedom, any more than imprisonment guarantees the stifling of the human spirit.

But this is the old, old problem expressed by a saying we happened on recently. "It takes a God to become a Man." When the young Buddha wandered throughout India in search of

enlightenment, he discovered that most of those who were professedly seeking "liberation" were following the road of negative asceticism. The various flagellant techniques all contributed to a denial of beinghood. What the Buddha came to see was that genuine transcendence of physical existence must arise from an awakening of the *mind*, and from recognition that "all that a man is, is made of thought."

COMMENTARY ON BECOMING HUMAN

SINCE the discussion begun last week in "Children . . . and Ourselves" is continued in this issue, we give way to the temptation to recall the controversial phrase used by Dr. Burton Henry of Los Angeles State College, and to look at it more closely. Dr. Henry spoke of "transforming the human genotype into a human being." This was regarded by his critic as a Jehovistic assumption of authority, implying "a lack of faith in the children themselves and in the soaring intelligence which is their prime characteristic. . . ."

It may be possible to read such an assumption into Dr. Henry's discourse on human relations, just as it is possible to arraign Plato as an advocate of authoritarian thought-control and theocratic censorship because of what he said about the poets of the *Republic*, and some further remarks in the *Laws*. But it may also be unreasonable to charge either one in this way—Dr. Henry, because of his clear interest in the *children* as subjects and ends in themselves, not objects of manipulation; Plato, because of his profound respect for the free mind and his obvious devotion to the work of education.

Getting down to the controversial point—what, exactly, *is* a child?

We don't really know, of course, any more than we know what a human being is. But we do know a little *about* human beings, young and old. We know for example, that a human being in total isolation from other human beings tends to go insane—to stop, that is, being, or at least behaving, like a human being.

The same is true of children. Children who do not receive the normal nurture of family and community life find it difficult to develop into human beings. Some years ago an article in *Harper's* described two little girls who were found in a wolf's den in India. They were, as we recall, about eight and ten years old. But they had lost, or never attained, the prime attributes of being

human. They had no speech, only growls and snarls. They could not walk, but had scrambled about all their lives on their hands and knees, in imitation of their wild foster parents, the wolves. It was a heartbreaking tragedy for the family who took them in. The children could not survive the change in environment and died after a few months. They never learned to talk, and only one small success brought a moment of happiness to the kind people who took them in—one of the girls once gave faint indication of trying to smile.

The point, perhaps, is that the core of humanness in these children—their egoity, we might call it—could not find expression because it had never had a human environment. The genotype was there, but without anyone to play the role of *teacher*, no human being emerged. The independence of the individual, we might say, can exist only in the matrix of the interdependence of our common humanity. The teacher has a classical role in helping to provide this matrix, and Dr. Henry, we think, insisted upon no more than this.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

HEREDITY, ENVIRONMENT, AND THE "SOUL":

II

THIS subject—opened up by a correspondent in last week's issue—is one that can be endlessly developed. We incline to the view expressed in Erich Fromm's classic article "Man is not a Thing!"—that in every human being there is a quality or essence which cannot be predictably conditioned, and that therefore neither "heredity" nor "environment" can entirely account for the unique qualities of individuality. But there is no doubt about the prodigious effects of environmental conditioning upon the human *personality*, especially during childhood and adolescence.

Just as Erich Fromm's arguments are convincing as to the presence of some inviolable core of self-determination, so is Bruno Bettelheim's work (*Truants from Life*) convincing in its presentation of evidence for the marked twisting and distorting effects of unfavorable surroundings during the early years. There is really no conflict here. Education involves the study of all that in a person which may be made malleable by alterations in the emotional and mental climate. The study of the "soul" embraces the field of philosophy and psychology which reaches beyond education conceived as a conditioning process—save to the extent that both philosophy and psychology can provide a wider perspective on "conditioning"—giving grounds for some transcendent hope that what a man presently is in no way limits what he may become.

It is obvious that certain environmental conditions may make it extremely difficult to discover either one's potential or essential identity. In our own society, one of the most clearly corrupting influences is that of excessive privilege based upon excessive wealth, and the children of even the poorest-paid clerks and workers may fail to learn anything about those old virtues

represented by the words "responsibility" and "duty," simply because there are so few constructive things which family and community require of them.

Irving Shulman's novelization of Robert Smith's screenplay, *Platinum High School*, carries this sort of criticism to the nth degree, and should be favored reading in Soviet Russia. "Platinum High School," a private military academy located on remote "Sabre Island," is able to charge exorbitant fees because judicial authorities—under pressure—tend to accept enrollment of juveniles at "Sabre Island" in lieu of a prison sentence. In the following dialogue the school registrar attempts to justify the existence of a school of this sort to an agonized father whose son has been killed during hell-week ceremonies:

"Mr. Conway," she was grim, "you look like a man who believes that wealth corrupts. And that absolute wealth corrupts absolutely."

"I've seen it happen," he admitted.

It was an experience, Mike felt, to listen to this girl, who combined cynicism, anger, and sociology into an apology for bullet holes in the side of a boat.

"Most of the boys who come to this school never had a chance at ordinary family associations," he heard her continue. "Their mothers were trained, like bitches in dog shows, to take all the prizes for social grace, poise, and elegance. But they couldn't know anything about humanity because it's a God-given morality outside their experience."

"I once told my wife something like that," Mike said.

"And our cadets' fathers started to lap scotch while they were still in prep-school," Jennifer said as she paced to the window, then turned. "By the time these selfish men and women marry within their class—which couldn't happen to people more deserving of each other—they're lost. And when they have children, by accident or design, because someone has to carry on the rotten family name, the parents are hiding behind lawyers and psychiatrists. That is, if they haven't killed each other. Is what I'm saying too strong for you, Mr. Conway?"

Platinum High School is worth reading if one is seeking analogies between the blatant sort of

corruption described by Mr. Shulman and the kind of corruption invited by lesser degrees of unearned privilege. From Dr. Viktor Frankl we learn that it is extraordinarily difficult, but not impossible, for the higher human qualities of "soul" to flower in a concentration camp. The same may be said of the social conditions under which privilege leads to amorality. Provided with an opposite sort of environment—one which invites self-discovery, and mingles discipline with a reciprocal affection, the young person may fulfill his natural calling, which is the discovery of the soul.

But children are natural conformists, and until the higher qualities of mind and sensibility have been awakened, they tend to follow the ethos of their group. Much of what is learned in the school years, as every educator and psychologist knows, is gained neither in the home nor in the classroom, but rather at play and in the streets. *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, by Iona and Peter Opie (Clarendon Press, 1959), emphasizes this point. Discussing "Regional Variation," these writers show that the retention of a particular personality pattern is extraordinarily difficult when a child moves from one locality to another. Mr. and Mrs. Opie write:

If the uniformity of schoolchild lore, to which we have so far been witness, was the whole story it would of course only be necessary to study one locality to know what goes on in every locality; and no matter how comprehensive and virile the lore was found to be, if it was the same everywhere, it would confirm the apprehensions of those who suppose that standardized education, mass entertainment, and national periodical literature have already subverted local traditions and characteristics. . . .

Two distinct streams of oral lore flow into the unending river of schoolchild chant and chatter, and these two streams are as different from each other as slang and dialect. The slangy superficial lore of comic songs, jokes, catch phrases, fashionable adjectives, slick nicknames, and crazes, in short that noise which is usually the first that is encountered in playground and street, spreads everywhere but, generally, is transitory. The dialectal lore flows more quietly but deeper; it is the language of the children's

darker doings: playing truant, giving warning, sneaking, swearing, snivelling, tormenting, and fighting. It belongs to all time, but is limited in locality. It is so timeworn indeed that it cannot be dated, and words of which Shakespeare would have known the meaning are still common parlance.

In the passage from childhood to adolescence, it becomes apparent that the child may encounter three sorts of negative psychic environment—that of parents in an inadequate home, that of the always-changing conformities imposed by his peer-group, and that constructed from lore concerning his own and others' "darker doings." His total "heredity" involves all these influences, which come down to him from a considerable antiquity. But what is it in the human being that, in so many cases, seems to make such influences irrelevant? We assume that this is what a philosopher means if he presently allows himself to use that old, religious word, "soul."

FRONTIERS

The Unpreparedness of Our Time

THE more you read of the dilemmas of foreign policy, of high-level discussions of the logistics of nuclear war, and of proposals for civilian defense, the more you wonder how anyone has the hardihood to seek policy-making office in the United States. The man who accepts such office has heavy responsibilities. He is supposed to execute the peoples' will. He is supposed to acquaint the people with the facts of the major issues of public decision. He is supposed to exercise his own best judgment in time of crisis, when it is not possible to consult the people. He is supposed to perform these duties with integrity and intellectual honesty.

But what if the clearest summaries of the "will of the people"—which today, in the nature of things, cannot be clear at all—reveal longings and inclinations and responses that are comprehensible only in terms of psychiatric diagnosis? Such symptoms have always been mildly present in the unresolved desires of mass societies and their reflections have been apparent in the internal contradictions of the platforms of mass political parties, but until now contradictions of this sort have been regarded with good-humored tolerance. Today, however, unlike the past, tolerance of contradictions in the policies and deeds of a great nation is beginning to take on the aspect of criminal betrayal. Yet what have we the right—a reasonable right—to expect? What has happened during the past fifteen years to bring to the formation of public opinion the disciplines of moral and logical consistency? Further, with some few exceptions, the leaders of the nation seem no better prepared for consistency than the "masses." Dr. Brock Chisholm put the matter briefly in his recent Los Angeles address:

For the first time in history groups of men can no longer survive at the expense of other groups. Now the ability to kill is so great that the whole human race is at stake. No government is yet geared to function according to this new concept.

The people expect their leaders to provide the nation with a program of national defense that is in accord with the moral traditions of the United States. The fact seems to be that this combination is no longer possible. Either the idea of defense must adapt itself to the moral principles, or the morals must give way to allow the defense. There is no middle ground except a policy of compromise, self-deception, and drift.

What a terrible position for national leaders to be in! Often these leaders are fairly skillful at stating some of the moral issues, but when they attempt to match the morals with a defense program, the contradictions become nakedly apparent. Take for example *Nuclear Policy for War and Peace*, a new book by Thomas E. Murray, a former member of the AEC and presently a consultant to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. This book is reviewed by Herbert Jehle in the *Saturday Review* for June 14. Dr. Jehle quotes the author's reproach to Americans as "a cry in the wilderness":

. . . it is possible to make out a very good case for the proposition that we are as indifferent to moral values in our policies as those whom we criticize. Our present strategic policy of massive retaliation, for example, when measured against the traditional Western Christian moral concept of war, appears to be nothing short of barbarian in its ultimate implications.

Yet what are the "ultimate implications" of the program Mr. Murray has in mind? Dr. Jehle summarizes:

To take but two examples, there is the "clean" H bomb, which he [Mr. Murray] wants to get vigorously developed—with the noble thought of sparing allies, neutrals, and ourselves the fate of fallout, and with the intent of having an "anti-missile," as if that were a workable gadget. Then there are the tactical nuclear weapons that he wants tested and developed, while at the same time he hopes other nations can be induced to stop testing their more interesting superweapons. Mr. Murray also thinks we could risk the use of tactical nuclear weapons without such action degenerating into a general nuclear war—that in the face of the strategists' credo that in nuclear

warfare all that counts is to be first with the use of a more or most potent weapon.

The main purpose and content of the book is just this thesis of tactical nuclear warfare. The reviewer cannot but feel that its irresponsible, superficial reasoning leads us straight to the abyss.

MANAS readers will recall the early portions of Governor Nelson Rockefeller's *Foreign Affairs* (April) article quoted in the June 8 issue. These were clear and rousing statements of principle. The body of the article, however, suffers the same sort of difficulties as Mr. Murray's book. Stanley Meisler, a Washington reporter, summarizes in the *Nation* for June 11:

Rockefeller's argument concerns itself so thoroughly with the psychology of an aggressor that it ignores the psychology of the United States. How would all-out Civil Defense affect the American people? Americans obviously would develop a false sense of security; they would create what Sen. Young, Gov. Meyner and Gen. Curtis E. LeMay, on three separate occasions, have called a Maginot line concept. Shelters, as we have seen, would protect an individual only from fallout. Using Civil Defense estimates, the three mythical bombs that struck New York City during *Operation Alert* [the April Civilian Defense drill] would have killed 3,935,490 persons and injured 1,098,410 persons instantly. Theoretically, not one of these persons could have been saved by a shelter, they would have been killed by the initial blast and heat. Later radiation, according to the estimates, would have killed 1,405,000 more people and injured 1,345,000 others. Even in theory, these are the only victims who might have been saved by the shelters. When Rockefeller suggests a shelter may save your life, he actually means, as these figures demonstrate, that it may insure the survival of some part of the species Man, a very different and much less comforting concept.

A terrifying assumption underlies Rockefeller's argument. While focussing on deterrence, the Governor's theory assumes that, if war came, victory through survival might be possible. Rockefeller's words harmonize with the ponderous theorizing of other *Foreign Affairs* contributors who talk in terms of numbers and percentages instead of horror and anguish, as if war were a chess game. At the moment, these attitudes control only political leaders and military strategists, but a gigantic Civil Defense would implant them into the civilian population. . . .

It is a pity not more people have opportunity to read analyses such as Herbert Jehle's *Saturday Review* article and Stanley Meisler's *Nation* evaluation of civil defense. For it is rapidly becoming obvious that the initiative for all effective peace-making must originate with the people themselves. The leaders are captives of their own rhetoric and of the behavior patterns of the national past.