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# THE DEEP-FREEZE OF SYSTEM THINKING

TO have today the historical initiative—the capacity to take action that will change the lives of many millions of people, all over the world—or even to seem to have it, should be an almost unbearable responsibility for any modern nation claiming to be "civilized." We say *seem* to have this initiative, since it is by no means certain that extensive nuclear weaponry is an open-sesame to freedom of action in international affairs. What is certain is the fact that a great many people in the world are convinced that righteousness has no hope of survival without the support of these tools of immeasurable destruction, while all the others—the people who happen to live in lands where there is small possibility of acquiring such armament—are naturally driven to question a big-power theory of progress which denies them any self-determination except with the consent of the nuclear-armed nations.

Then, for the possessor of these weapons, there is the psychological necessity of rationalizing the horror of their use. Since the devastation brought by nuclear war comes very close to being absolute (even if this is not actually the case, the popular imagination raises the destruction to an unthinkable power), the rationalization tends to argue that of course nuclear weapons will never be used—or only under the pressure of extreme provocation by a wholly irresponsible enemy. The manifest possibility of having to deal with such an enemy, the rationalization continues, takes away all the guilt of preparing so thoroughly for nuclear war.

This rationalization is accompanied by a number of built-in difficulties. The nuclear power is obliged to list or at least imply various concrete situations in which nuclear weapons *would* be used. Otherwise, as practical men are quick to point out, a calculating foe will be able to assume that the nuclear threat is really only a bluff, and this would render the weapons useless as a deterrent. Under such psychological circumstances, plans for national security become a kind of nightmare metaphysic in which the two chief variables are (1) an ambivalent Righteousness (we must/must not use nuclear weapons) and (2) the capacity for striking terror (you have to make the weapons, then exhibit them effectively) into the hearts of other men. A further result of the reliance on nuclear power is its tendency to displace other instruments of policy. Why bother with lesser means of "persuasion" when you have an absolutely indisputable, totally death-dealing argument? What is the use of wasting time with mere diplomacy?

For a nation placed in this position, there are certain unavoidable psychological consequences. The need to be totally right in all serious confrontations with other nations becomes a moral necessity. Waging a nuclear war will be so irreversibly horrible that the thought of being wrong can hardly be tolerated, and for this reason the language of international politics tends to adopt the ultimate terms and values of theology. Mere policies, gambits of power on the international scene, become the preliminary requirements of what may turn out to be the crucial Act of Salvation.

A more desirable effect is the sudden acceleration of serious thought among those who by both habit and inclination regard the problems of the world from a human rather than a national point of view. The assumptions of national interest are now so distant from the assumptions of humane social philosophy that they remain together inside a single brain only by a kind of voluntary schizophrenia. Decent people who cannot find it in their hearts to question their own government must accept the permanent moral ache of not being able to understand at all what is happening. Since the dilemmas confronting honest intelligence have long since stretched beyond hope of resolution in familiar terms, public discussion of policy is impoverished by lack of meaningful content. Only those equal to a casual love affair with the mindless force of nuclear fission have anything vigorous to say in justification

of national policy. The pacifists, while vigorous enough, say what they have to say in another universe of discourse. They ask the end of military power.

It is in this demoralizing frame of reference that a few brave souls attempt to continue the general Dialogue about ends and means for human beings. We have recently devoted considerable attention in these pages to the manifesto of the sponsors of the Triple Revolution, the pointed gist of their contention being that, given the growing technological unemployment caused by cybernation, the United States will soon have no choice except to expand the idea of the Welfare State into an American brand of Socialism. Actually, it is to the great credit of the critics of the Triple Revolution Memorandum that no one—or no one important—has chosen to condemn the recommendations with red-baiting techniques. As W. H. Ferry recently remarked: "I am deeply impressed by the almost universal anguish aroused by the proposal for a guaranteed income. This anguish I at first interpreted as the normal abhorrence of an unusual idea, but I now see it is genuine fear of demoralization of the community."

What is that "genuine fear" based upon?

No one who has ever operated a small business, and also worked for a wage or a salary in a big company, can have any real doubt about the answer to this question. There is something basically tough, and in some sense good, about the open market. A small business is a project in hardheadedness and survival. You have a little slack, but not much. You can't be a dreamer. You have to produce something people need and do it at a price they are willing to pay. There is no doubt about the fact that this develops a kind of strength in the people who become able to do it. It also makes for a kind of sagacity in getting things done. The enormous problems superimposed on the small businessman by taxes and paperwork required by the government are another part of the question; basically, they have to do with the argument about decentralization and the costs of the Garrison State, and will not be discussed here. What we are talking about is a certain order of facts known to every small businessman, whether or not he makes something humanly useful, and whether or not he has a decent regard for the people working with or for him.

On the other hand, if you have ever worked for a large corporation, you need no instruction on the hazards of socialism, whatever the justifying, over-all ends. You know from personal experience that protected jobs are often filled by people who only pretend to work for their living. A large corporation often has dozens of side-pockets where people of this sort vegetate. The bureaucracies are not all in the government. Corporations are capable of cherishing ridiculous ideologies of their own and paying second-rate people to publicize them. Men without talent and imagination often fill important jobs. In fact, you could argue that the larger a company becomes, the more the conditions approximating state capitalism prevail. There are doubtless exceptions—companies where men skilled in organization and management keep the dead wood out—but in such cases the companies will naturally grow, often to the point where you could argue that for all but those at the very top, the employees are working in a properly administered socialist empire. What do these people own? At best a few shares of stock. Does this property assure them "freedom"? Hardly. General Motors, so far as its corporate reality is concerned, is as much an argument for socialism as it is for capitalism. Such corporations have grown far too large to represent the free enterprise to which capitalist slogans apply. Within their borders, they use incentives devised by applied social psychology, and develop a bland company "patriotism."

Is it conceivable that a government could find tough and sagacious administrators to overcome these problems? It might be difficult, but it is at least conceivable. Three vast areas of enterprise in the United States—government, education, and the military—are already "socialist" in the sense that the people working in these fields are without the spur of economic competition. Perhaps you could say that the watch-dogs of Congress are the spur of government undertakings, that the high responsibility of national security is the spur of the military, and that the integrity of the teaching profession sets the standards in education. Human nature is at least

malleable enough to adjust to these "substitutes" for competition.

Well, enough has been said to show that such matters are at least arguable, after the first big point—that protected jobs without any "survival" requirements present a real problem—is allowed. And it seems obvious enough that the values which attend small business and all those undertakings in which individual ingenuity and self-reliance are paramount, in the long run depend for their existence upon general decentralization of both power and authority, and not upon the large-scale socio-political manipulations of "free" corporate giants.

Well, what are we to say to the question of why so many people in other parts of the world did not feel, in Mr. Ferry's words, "genuine fear of demoralization of the community" from adopting some kind of socialism?

There can be only one rational answer to this question. It is that these people believed they had little or nothing to lose. The simple fact is that Americans find European Socialists and Communists difficult to understand because in the United States they have never experienced the humiliations of a class society and have had, until recently, the frontier to migrate to, where they could pit themselves against the physical environment.

In Europe, equalitarian longings, fired by the radical dream of the solidarity of mankind, could go only in one direction—against the status quo. An angry, violent rejection of centuries-old injustice produced the revolution which has so changed the map and the balance of power in both Europe and Asia. That humane, civilizing ends, linked with the ideal of the brotherhood of man, were behind this great revolt has become very difficult for the average American to imagine, mainly because of the historic alienation of the radical thinker and the political activist from the traditional moral ideas of the West, and because of the terroristic methods used to sustain the power of the Communist revolution.

It is as though a time had come, in the social evolution of mankind, when there might have been peace and plenty for all, through the development of science and the techniques of economic production, but that energetic acquisitive individualism linked with shrivelled ethical awareness let that time pass by, until there was no alternative save that of vengeful outbreaks of violence by men who would be patient no longer. And when, having been brought into being by angry partisan passions, the revolutionary states consolidated their power by the same means, this was taken as evidence in the United States that a socialist society could survive by no other policy.

It may be said, of course, that the fundamental question still remains: Will a man work productively, conscientiously, consistently, without the whip of acquisitive ambition or the fear of losing his job? Even though this question may be held to be irrelevant because automation is going to take away most of the jobs, people are nonetheless going to ask it. The question is rooted in moral thinking and human beings don't comfortably dispose of moral issues by brushing them aside with facts. More important than this, however, is the way the question gets asked. The language is no good for the kind of problems we need to solve.

That kind of language leaves out entirely the far more important question of whether the work people are expected to do, nowadays, *is actually worth doing*. The moralizing about human nature goes off in the wrong direction. We can't tell much about incentives and what men may be expected to do under some other kind of system so long as we limit discussion to work which has so many anti-human aspects. Obviously, even under the best possible circumstances, the problem of work incentives will have to be faced, but its solution will almost certainly involve another kind of moral vocabulary and evaluation of human good. And let us make no pretense, meanwhile, that any of the present-day socialist societies have developed such a vocabulary. The assiduous manufacture of slogans and the careful control of public opinion in socialist countries make it plain that they don't dare *let go* of the reins of control over people's lives.

So much for the typical American's distaste for and rejection of socialism. This is easy to understand. What is not being faced and understood is the enlightened and thoughtful American's distaste

for the increasingly shoddy fruits of capitalism. Why should this be? Mainly because we dare not talk openly about the sour aspects of our common life. How could we justify arming for total obliteration of other peoples who think differently if our own system is not above reproach?

This brings us to notice of *The Great Evasion,* a study of certain of the contentions of Karl Marx, by William Appleby Williams, a contemporary historian (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964) . Mr. Williams argues for "the wisdom of admitting the heretic [Marx] into the dialogue about America's future." With this introduction, a great many people will of course avoid the book, but it happens to be important and worth reading. Mr. Williams is hardly interested in converting anyone to Communism. He simply wants to unfreeze modern social intelligence from its hardened condition since the beginning of the cold war and invite attention to two of Marx's criticisms of Western industrial society—not to the revolutionary panacea applied by his political heirs. The first of these criticisms concerns the dependence of modern Capitalism on a continually expanding market. This is not an unfamiliar idea to economists and its discussion can be left to those who have competence in that field. (The author makes the obvious connection of this view with the onset of cybernation.)

The other idea, now almost a cliché of modern psychosocial criticism, is expressed by the term "alienation." If you come to Mr. Williams' exploration of Marx's anticipation of the effects of endless industrial "production," fresh from reading Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society,* you are likely to think you are still turning the pages of the French scholar's work. For example:

> Marx himself seemed to stand in awe of what he called "the stupendous productive power" of corporation capitalism. Clearly enough, it has created—even without the final rationalization of cybernated production—the possibility of material affluence. The outpourings of goods and services is almost literally incomprehensible. Try to imagine, for example, a metaphor that will provide any meaningful image of the number of simple, old-fashioned wooden pencils manufactured in America in one year. Or bobby pins. Or bobby soxers full of anxiety for the latest edition of the magazines that offer reassurance by telling them how to spend the next allowance.
>
> Since these examples derive from the use of science in the marketplace, they may also provide some insight into the process through which science attracts people by reducing difficult human problems into non-human terms. Science deals with one reality by creating another reality. It copes with the world of nature by creating a world of abstractions. We have so far maintained a precarious bridge between those two worlds through technology, which translates the scientific abstractions back into this-worldly objects. But that very technology may in the end re-define man himself as no more than a part of his products. This would reverse the humanistic tradition of seeing the products as the creation and projection of man. We would, in this sense, triumph over the alienation inherent in possessive individualism by becoming integrated with the things made by unattended machines.
>
> That, of course, is precisely what Marx was worried about. And he understood that advanced capitalism was the form in which possessive individualism, operating through the competitive marketplace, might well alienate man from his humanity. Its power to provide affluence could also manufacture a new man, because in destroying individual property as a meaningful element in the marketplace it would subvert capitalistic man's basic definition of his own existence and leave him no sign or substance of his existence save the symbols provided by the material artifacts he possessed. He would participate in the system only as he stood at the end of the assembly line and collected commodities.

The various commentaries on alienation all grow together into a single fabric. Precisely these consequences of the techniques of acquisitive individualism, armed by the technological process, are described in intimate detail both by Ellul and by Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man.*

What is the cultural end-product of all this "high achievement"? One way of seeing it is with the eyes of Joseph Wood Krutch upon riding a bus from Los Angeles to San Francisco (the airport was fogged in and he had to go Greyhound):

> I got the most extensive view I ever had of what is now commonly called Sloburbs. Also the fullest realization of their horror. Nowhere are they worse

> than in the Los Angeles area, and nowhere are they more extensive. For several hours the same dismal scenes change so little that it is hard to believe that one is moving at all. Gas station, motel, car lot, bar, hamburger stand; then gas station, motel, car lot, bar and hamburger stand all over again, all bathed in the hellish glow of neon. . . .
>
> Tucson, where I now live, is no exception. . . . as I drove home the other day through spreading ugliness I was amazed again that this sort of anti-city could be so characterless. Everything looks impoverished, random, unrelated to everything else, as though it had no memory of yesterday and no expectation of tomorrow. . . . Poverty, I reminded myself, creates slums and slums can be even uglier. But I wondered if ever before in history a prosperous people had consented to live in communities so devoid of every grace and dignity, so slumlike in everything except the money they represent. They are something new and almost uniquely unattractive—neither country nor village nor town nor city—just an agglomeration without plan, without any sense of unity or direction, as though even offices and shops were thought of as (like nearly everything else in our civilization) disposable and therefore not worth considering from any standpoint except the make-do of the moment. . . .

Why should an abundant society be content to accept communities so obviously the antithesis of that "gracious living" that the service magazines talk about and declare to be nowadays open to all? (*American Scholar,* Spring, 1965.)

Alienation? We have it all around, heaped up, pressed down, running over.

The solution of an angry revolution which, no sooner has it succeeded, turns to the same worship of economic production and power, obviously holds no attractions. Yet the understanding of the pain which produced that revolution, and of the dream, although largely betrayed, which gave it moral power, is certainly a historical necessity in the present, if deep and far-reaching reconciling emotions are to be born into the world.

There is no fact so plain as the fact that, today, the minds of the most intelligent and public-spirited men throughout the world are held impotent in the paralyzing deep-freeze of almost universal hostility and fear. How can there be fruitful thought about the good of man so long as those forces prevail? How can so fragile yet so precious a thing as *dialogue* come into being in this atmosphere?

Anger cannot cherish, fear cannot guard, a human community. The logic of possessive individualism is an excluding force, an infallible formula for ramifying alienation. This is a moral, not an economic question. It is a question prior to all systems and all arguments for systems. It concerns the essential quality of human beings. It has to do with whether men respond to the needs and necessities of other human beings, or to the voracious appetites of their great and endlessly multiplying machines. It has to do with the scale of human community, not with the powers and privileges required by production. Systems, who cares about *systems,* which find no way to survive save by drafting all that human beings are and have to their service—claiming even, after corrupting them, their moral ideas?

# *REVIEW*

## HILLBILLIES, BEATLES AND A MORAL OR TWO

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE, a frequent contributor to *Encounter,* turns up with an article in—of all places—*TV Guide* (March 6). It is Mr. Muggeridge's task and joy to explain why the Beverly Hillbillies are so tremendously popular in Great Britain, in the course of which he finds a parallel in the fascination of Americans by the Beatles. Mr. Muggeridge writes:

> Strolling by night, as I often do, about the lanes of southern England, it is by no means uncommon to hear through cottage windows the unmistakable accents of *The Beverly Hillbillies.* There is, if anyone cared to pursue it, a decided thread of irony in these ancient cottages, some of them thatched, with leaded windows and centuries-old oak beams, overflowing with sounds so essentially 20th-century and American. What would Wordsworth have thought of it? Or, more appositely, Rudyard Kipling, some of whose best stories about England's distant past, like "Rewards and Fairies," were inspired by the antiquity of this very landscape. He, as I have been told by local inhabitants, resented the intrusion of motor coaches, even when they came bearing vociferous admirers of his writings. How much more would he have resented the intrusion of the *Hillbillies.*
>
> Why should it work the other way round, the Hillbillies enjoy a following in England when their weird idiom and eccentric behavior strike even many Americans as decidedly out-of-the-way, if not downright imbecile?
>
> The vogue of *The Beverly Hillbillies* is as comprehensible as that of the Western. They are American folklore, and as such partake of America's sweet smell of success. We do not need to understand what we admire, if we did, how should we ever have had any heroes, or even gods?

Muggeridge connects the Hillbillies' popularity with the longing for some kind of compromise between the stern virtues of traditional Christianity and the desire to enjoy the "fun" things of life. He continues:

> The basic moral, or ideology, of *The Beverly Hillbillies* is as acceptable in England as in America. We, too, yearn after wealth which does not corrupt, after an innocence which triumphantly survives the possession of riches. We, too, can thrill over the spectacle of Jed and his ribald family constantly on the edge of succumbing to the lures of luxurious living, but always at the last moment pulling back and resuming their old, virtuous ways. In accordance with the principles of an Affluent Society as laid down by Professor Galbraith, we have rejected the outmoded Christian notion that the poor are blessed, but we should still like to be convinced that it is possible to be rich and blessed.
>
> Here the Hillbillies are a great help. Week by week they demonstrate that, though possessed of great wealth, they can still just get through the needle's eye into the kingdom of heaven. Television, it seems to me, like popular culture generally, is largely dedicated to providing reassurance on precisely this score. The early Christians, in order to secure themselves against indulgence in sensuality and cupidity, persuaded themselves that their fleshly appetites were vicious and great possessions a handicap to virtuous living. The writings of the fathers and saints are full of denunciations of sex and riches. Now, when we have created a way of life in which sex is our chief relaxation and riches our main pursuit, traditional Christian teaching in this respect would seem to require revision. We cannot accept the drastic notion of ourselves as sinners. Nor can we in decency just repudiate the fathers and the saints. A way out of the dilemma is to show, on the one hand, that the erotic transports of an Emperor Tiberius are available and permissible within the confines of monogamous marriage; on the other, that, like the Hillbillies, we can be rich and still successfully repel the assaults of the Evil One.

And the Beatles, though Mr. Muggeridge does not like them, are a similar source of reassurance for Americans:

> If one tries to probe the fabulous success of these four moronic and unpleasing youths with long hair and little talent, one realizes it is due precisely to the fact that, like the Hillbillies, they remain "unspoilt." Wealth has come to them, and fame, but they are still the same simple-hearted, inarticulate Liverpudlians that they always were. The Beatles are our Beverly Hillbillies. The Victorians, obsessed as they were with the lusts of the flesh, were always trying to demonstrate in their popular art that chastity could survive in the poor and the simple despite all the lures and stratagems of accomplished seducers. We, obsessed with money, seek in our popular art to

reinforce the conclusion that the poor remain blessed even when they become rich.

Some humor regarding the Beatles (from Charles Champlin's column in the Los Angeles *Times* for March 19) fits here. Rightist righteousness is sometimes inclined to view the wild rise of the Beatles with positive venom. Mr. Champlin reports:

> Week after next, the Rev. David Noebel of the Christian Crusade will be stumping this area, talking on the general theme of "Communism, Hypnotism and the Beatles." According to the advance information, Mr. Noebel's idea is that the music of the Beatles "is part of a systematic plan geared to making a generation of American youth mentally ill and emotionally unstable."
>
> It had not until now occurred to me that the Beatles were a Communist plot. When you think about it, though, "I Want to Hold Your Hand" certainly does smack of peaceful coexistence. And "A Hard Day's Night" does convey over-tones of exploitation of the workers, "Eight Days a Week" even more so.

Yet as Mr. Champlin points out, if a true "free enterprise" success story can still be told, it can be told of the Beatles. Actually, they have given the rags-to-riches myth more universal appeal. When, in the past, young men working gas pumps hoped for discovery as potential movie stars, along with Hollywood car-hops and waitresses, they had at least to be loaded with physical charms. As Mr. Champlin says:

> The trouble with this dream, which still continues, however, is that you had to be surpassingly pretty or handsome, or have at a minimum an interesting face. Came the Beatles and the entire beat group thing, and you no longer had to be surpassingly handsome. (Ringo is fate, but his most enraptured fan would probably not argue that he is handsome.) Here were four nice guys plucked out of the Liverpudlian obscurity, and look what happened. And the Beatles began the Rolling Stones, the Swinging Blue Jeans, Freddy and the Dreamers, the Kinks, and on and on.
>
> No, the argument here is that the beat groups and vocalists have taken over as this day's dream-symbols of escape from the rank-and-file rut, of fame and success and majesty. And this is part of what the screaming is about—a strong feeling that "There, with the help of Brian Epstein, might go I."

A short quotation from Denis Saurat will return us to serious note:

> Hamlet says: O God! I could be bounded in a nut-shell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.
>
> It will be apparent that in the world of dreams we have chosen our part. The dissociation of human personality is indeed the basis of our perception of fairies, of angels, of God. The outer shell of our ego vanishes, and fragments of us go roving m time and space.

The "outer shell" of the ego indeed cracks and allows escape with the Beatles, for, conceivably, one of their greatest appeals is a manifest and unabashed ignorance of "what is going on in the world." But Beatles are not simply vacuous in portraying innocence and in by-passing the stern concerns of contemporary existence. Irresponsible joyousness, without schemes or plan, makes the Beatle image. And who is to say that this image has no legitimate place in a world geared to ominous processes so far beyond the reach of the ordinary man's control?

# *COMMENTARY*
## FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

THE kind of religion which the Constitution of the United States should encourage is religion which heightens the sense of justice, with fair play toward the ideas and beliefs of every man, woman and child, regardless of what one "believes" personally.

During July, 1964, the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara pursued discussion of the First Amendment. We are here interested in Scott Buchanan's view that "freedom of religion" may head the list of fundamental rights guaranteed by the First Amendment for other than accidental reasons. He said:

> The immunity and protection for religion that is assured in the First Amendment has lost much of its meaning, or perhaps never discovered its meaning, because religious sectarianism has allowed its internal quarrels to eclipse the high transcendent aims and its civic functions. Religion has followed its familiar propensity to allow its practices to sink to the level of religiosity; it has often redoubled its efforts as it has lost sight of its ends. When religion is healthy, its philosophical and theological explorations shed light on both individual and common deliberation. Faith seeking understanding stretches the private and public mind. In healthy religions dogmas are questions that draw all minds into the search. The by-product is the enriching of deliberation, and religion teaches that there is no end to the possible enrichment. Congress shall make no law touching an establishment of religion or the free exercise thereof because the sources of the citizen's enlightenment must not be cut off. If the decadence of the religion continues, and dogmas continue to become devices for closing minds, there may come a day when this part of the First Amendment will have to be rewritten to enable the revival of religion or some substitute for it that will keep the top of the deliberative mind open.

This is a point which argues for protracted discussion of religion—in or out of the schools—in its relationship to the Bill of Rights. The "Founding Fathers" held that the majority must protect freedom of individual opinion because every man is *meant* to be self-governed—which is a way of saying that men do not fulfill themselves as groups but only as individuals. This suggests that the framers of the Constitution were well aware of the meaning behind such current terms as "autonomy" and "self-actualization." The guarantees of political liberty are ideally designed to give assurance that "one can do what one ought to will." In other words, when the individual knows that he is *more* than the state, as well as a part of it, he contributes his utmost to the human community. And in these terms he gives vitality and universal meaning to religion.

# CHILDREN
## . . . and Ourselves

EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS STUDY

THE application of psychology to education, particularly in the field of adult learning, should certainly encourage the discovery that lifelong mental growth is the only mature fulfillment for human beings. As J. R. Kidd says in *How Adults Learn:*

> Any teacher or foreman must always try to understand how the individual views the learning situation. What does it mean to him?
>
> Gradually within a human being there is the development of the self, and this development is crucial for all learning. . . .
>
> The learner reacts to experience as an organized whole. . . .
>
> It is self-evident that learning is something that happens to *a* person, it is an *individual* thing. It is equally true that one cannot have much understanding of learning unless he sees how the "self" is engaged in the changes we call learning.

One cannot have a coherent philosophy of education without being convinced that each individual, whether young or old, is capable of a self-directed transformation of goals and purposes. We must either accept the old behaviorist view that people are decisively limited by their culture and immediate environment, or assume that each one can understand and affect his particular "fate"—discover a destiny which reaches beyond the "personality patterns" produced by the conditioning process. The approach that seems broadly common to psychologists such as Maslow, Rogers, Moustakas, May, and others, may be Platonic or Emersonian, but it is also becoming a beacon light to many educators. Dr. Kidd's references to Dr. Maslow indicate an emerging climate of educational opinion in which revaluation of religion can also take place. Properly speaking, religion should serve man with enlargement of perspective, growth of empathy—should lead away from provincialism and partisanship. Though the separate religions tend to have an opposite effect, an examination of the teachings of any of the great scriptures—apart from beliefs connected with them—reveals insights by which the individual moves towards "self-actualization" and " autonomy."

In search of an inviting yet clearly defined educational approach to religion, we come to one basic idea—that the human mind, whether of a child or an adult, can learn nothing new, discover nothing worth knowing, if the experience of religion is merely sectarian. One may *believe,* of course, but that is an entirely different matter.

To explore man's inner need for a feeling of transcendence, and of the permanence of the self or soul, does not require a theological point of departure. One can turn to the scriptures that have moved countless people according to rote and find that they also move him, but through his spontaneous reaction.

"Authority" in respect to the great scriptures of the world is likely to have a debilitating effect upon the creative side of the individual mind. A great scripture, like a great work of art, should be approached anew each day, as if it were fresh to us and we to it. For *we,* it is to be hoped, have ourselves changed meanwhile and grown in perspective, even if only a little. From this point of view, then, the attempt to remember what we have heard or read in interpretation of a passage, a chapter, or an entire scripture, is not really very important, except as a point of further departure.

Great scriptures are in this sense like the music or the poetry which has reached into the hearts of so many that it has blended into the common heritage. If these "scriptures" are encountered directly, without notice of any sectarian position, they may be found to say much of both psychology and philosophy, as well as of religion. This sort of "comparative religion" can be natural to all men, and, through parents, to all children.

Great scriptures have a special kind of magic. Reading *The Dhammapada,* we find ourselves weaving our own web of psychological and ethical philosophy, as correlations between the Buddha's various sayings begin to establish themselves. From the *Bhagavad-Gita,* one comes to see something of what is meant by the term "mystery religion"; metaphors and symbols, confusing at first glance, later yield germinal ideas. And New Testament references to entering "the Kingdom of Heaven" can mean psychological transformation.

It seems evident that enlightened education in the area of "religion" requires far more than a spread of information regarding the beliefs and rituals of religious groups. The great religious teacher, clearly, did not attempt to codify doctrines for mass worship; he spoke to the individual—specifically, to the individual looking for a means of self-transformation. To appreciate this dimension of religion, which is wholly unsectarian, is to recognize that philosophy and psychology cannot be separated from real religion. "Group beliefs" tend to be strongly partisan, while the teachings of a Buddha or a Christ have nothing to do with divisive views. No good teacher wishes to manipulate his pupils into accepting beliefs, since his fundamental interest is in helping men to become something more than conditioned or reactive beings. As Herbert Fingarette says in *The Self in Transformation:*

> It is the special fate of modern man that he has a "choice" of spiritual visions. The paradox is that although each requires complete commitment for complete validity, we can today generate a context in which we see that no one of them is the sole vision. . . .
>
> At first one lives with one vision for years before there is readiness for another. After the accumulation of experience and of acquaintance with more than one of these ways of seeing, the movement from one organizing view to another can come more rapidly. This shifting of visions is not then any the less a matter of genuine and deep commitment. It is not a sampling or tasting, not an eclecticism. For one calls upon a vision with a life, one's own, behind it.

A religious affirmation is something *presented* to the individual. What he *does* with it is his own concern, but the atmosphere of a democratic society should encourage the attitudes of philosophy—philosophy as a means of exploring many different points of view. In a related context Leonard Bradford remarks: "If people who previously were psychologically as well as spatially isolated now begin to be aware of the impact of the larger world in their lives, and become willing to accept some of the values of that world, it is surely a liberation in some sense. These are changes in values, attitudes, and sensibilities well within the normal range of educational objectives." (*Handbook of Adult Education*.)

Debates following the Supreme Court decision of 1963 to outlaw "religious instruction" in the public schools have been succeeded by useful and even illuminating dialogues among philosophically-minded educators. While "third-force" psychologists are evolving a new nonsectarian language for evaluation of spiritual experience, others have been considering the feasibility of such proposals as those put by Prof. Theodore Brameld—a study of religion which would assure respect for the core of ethical inspiration in all great teachings, and transcend divisiveness. (See MANAS, April 8 and 15, 1964.)

# *FRONTIERS*

## You Can't Keep Philosophy Down

THE paper by A. H. Maslow, quoted in Review for March 31, titled "Isomorphic Relationships Between Knower and Known" (a revision of a lecture given by Dr. Maslow in 1959 to a class in General Semantics taught by Dr. S. I. Hayakawa, at San Francisco State College), has had the effect of making us read once again a chapter in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria.*

From the modern viewpoint (but what *is* the modern viewpoint?—it is changing so fast!), Coleridge's metaphysical speculations are of no importance. He had curious notions such as that men are endowed with an "inner sense" or "philosophic organ" which is better developed in some than in others. Indeed, he argues:

> So there is many a one among us, yes, and some who think themselves philosophers, too, to whom the philosophic organ is entirely wanting. To such a man philosophy is a mere play of words and notions, like a theory of music to the deaf, or like the geometry of light in the blind. The connection of the parts and their logical dependencies may be seen and remembered: but the whole is groundless and hollow, unsustained by any living contact, unaccompanied with any realizing intuition which exists by and in the act that affirms its existence, which is known, because it is, and is, because it is known. . . .
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> The postulate of philosophy and at the same time the test of philosophic capacity, is no other than the heaven-descended KNOW THYSELF! And this at once practically and speculatively. For as philosophy is neither a science of the reason or understanding only, nor merely a science of morals, but the science of BEING altogether, its primary ground can be neither speculative nor merely practical, but both in one. All knowledge rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject. For we can *know* that only which is true: and the truth is universally placed in the coincidence of the thought with the thing, of the representation with the object represented.

This is some of Coleridge's "transcendental philosophy." It was recalled by Dr. Maslow's opening paragraphs, which are as follows:

> My general thesis is that many of the communication difficulties between persons are the by-product of communication barriers within the person; and that communication between the person and the world, to and fro, depends largely on their isomorphism (or similarity of structure or form); that the world can communicate to a person only that of which he is worthy, that which he deserves or is "up to"; that, to a large extent, he can receive from the world, and give to the world, only that which he himself is. As Kierkegaard said of a certain book, "Such works are like mirrors; if an ape peeps in no apostle looks out." Goethe's contention was that we can fully understand only what we really love.
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> For this reason, the study of the "innards" of the personality is one's necessary base for the understanding of what he can communicate to the world, and what the world is able to communicate to him. This truth is intuitively known to every therapist, every artist, every teacher, but it should be made more explicit.

It is not necessary to claim that Coleridge and Maslow are saying the same thing in order to urge that their ideas are somehow related and issue in similar conclusions. But why, if Maslow is right, and the quality of the knowing individual is the most important element in what he knows, does this view of man and his knowledge tend to be dropped out of familiar thinking about the human situation?

The answer is easy. This is a dangerous doctrine. That it nonetheless keeps coming up is the cause of frequent disturbance to conventional beliefs about the nature of man.

One kind of scientist—an Einstein, say—makes it plain that intuition is at the root of all great, innovating hypotheses. The techniques of experiment and research have the lesser role of verifying the intuitions of distinguished and creative minds. But other men—some of them regarded as scientists—will say to you: "Don't talk to me about 'intuitions'! We want none of these vague deliveries of subjective invention! Give us facts that all men can recognize. We have had enough of truth-owning élites—philosophers and theologians—who tell us about their private insights, their unique connections with the

Supreme! Allow them the slightest justification for private, subjective verity, and in a matter of months they'll have an institution claiming some secret kind of infallibility and then demand political authority over the common herd in the name of Truth!"

So, on the social-moral ground that the historical abuses attending the claim to "special knowledge" must never again become possible, the scientific epistemology gained the support of revolutionary politics. Objectivity became the criterion of any and all possible truths. And the new élites, instead of playing the role of prophets, mystics, and seers, established their authority in terms of their skill in manipulating the new criterion of truth. From technical competence they decided for all men what is "scientific fact" and what is not. Exploration of the more dubious truths—the truths, that is, with an unmistakably subjective element in them, such as readings of the arts and of literature—they delegated to properly submissive individuals who understood their duty: to produce cultural agreements with the epistemological assumptions.

What actually happened was that the pretentious élites of organized religion were replaced by another breed of élites who claimed to be something else—scientific interpreters of "objective truth."

The lesson—or one of the lessons—to be learned from all this is the extreme hazard of allowing questions of truth to be decided by moralists on pragmatic grounds. The consequences of theories of knowledge are too far-reaching for them to be entrusted to bands of angry revolutionists who will do anything to put power into their own righteous hands. Actually, it is a lot easier to listen carefully to and watch the men who declare intuitionist theories of truth for symptoms of hunger for authority, than it is to police the devious machinations of crypto-élites who insist that all men are equal—not only before the law, but in psychological and moral endowments.

The only legitimate politics you can make out of transcendentalist or spiritual philosophy is a negative politics—the politics which denies itself any competence in making moral judgments of individuals. The inner life of human beings—the life which includes all those variables of which Coleridge and Maslow speak—can be freely pursued only in a region beyond politics. It will not do, in behalf of a totally politicalized society, to claim that the inner life has no reality. Today we know that this is no protection against manipulation and fraud. What we must do is protect the inner life against the invasions of expanding political authority, and protect political life against control by spurious inner "authority." And the only way we can get the courage to attempt this, and the collective *balance* to live together without any kind of tyrannical authority, is by deliberately setting out to enrich our inner lives.

When this has been done sufficiently we shall doubtless have the wisdom to devise a proper politics. On the other hand, if we do not enrich our inner lives, no politics we devise will be any good. It is in the light of such conclusions—increasingly manifest to impartial observers—that the non-political thinking of men like A. H. Maslow, and their intuitive epistemologies, become all-important to our time.

We are at a height of political disillusionment, these days. We know what we want, or what we would like to have, but we are persuaded that it is quite impossible to get. It remains to be seen whether we shall become able, in the course of twenty-five years or so, to do anything more than Plato was able to do—to write, in effect, a brilliant but tragic memorial to what might have been, were men wiser, or were there more wise men. By a *tour de force*, Plato put in charge of his Republic men who could qualify as rulers according to some high standard of "philosophic organ" or "self-actualization," and gave them an authority that they could not ordinarily enjoy save by popular acclaim. He did this to make his point.

What was that point? There is much disagreement on this question, but our view is that Plato was saying, in the Republic and elsewhere, that men must learn to internalize their sense of moral order, if they are ever to have a Good Society. Externalized moral orders tend to destroy the vulnerable, half-grown moral qualities of individuals. For Plato, the death of Socrates was final evidence of this. As Werner Jaeger says in his *Aristotle:*

> That dialogue [*Crito*] shows the tragic conflict of the fourth century sharpened into conscious absurdity; the state is now such that according to its laws the justest and purest in the Greek nation must drink the hemlock. The death of Socrates is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole state, not merely of the contemporary officeholders. In the *Gorgias* Plato measures the Periclean state and its weaker successors by the standard of the radical moral law, and arrives at an unconditional condemnation of the historical state. When he goes on in the *Republic* to sacrifice the life of the individual completely to the state with a one-sided strictness intolerable to the natural feelings of his century, his justification lies in the changed spirit of his new state. The sun that shines in it is the Idea of the Good, which illuminates its darkest corners. Thus the subordination of all individuals to it, the reconversion of emancipated persons into true "citizens," is after all only a way of expressing the historical fact that morality has finally separated itself from politics and from the laws or customs of the historical state; and that henceforth the independent conscience of the individual is the supreme court even for public questions. There had been conflicts of this sort before; what is new is the proclamation of permanent conflict. Plato's demand that philosophers shall be kings, which he maintained unabated right to the end, means that the state is to be rendered ethical through and through. It shows that the persons who stood highest in the intellectual scale had already abandoned the actual ship of state, for a state like Plato's could not have come alive in his own time, and perhaps not at any time.

Well, what then? Well, the thing to do is to get (become) the guardians and worry about politics after we get them. *They*, at least, are no threat to anyone. Dr. Maslow puts it well in his conclusion:

> As Emerson said: "What we are, that only we can see." Only we must now add that what we see tends in turn to make us what it is and what we are. The communication relationship between the person and the world is a dynamic one of mutual forming and lifting-lowering of each other, a process that we may call "reciprocal isomorphism." A higher order of persons can understand a higher order of knowledge, but also a higher order of environment tends to lift the level of the person, just as a lower order of environment tends to lower it.

This paper by Dr. Maslow will be a chapter in a book edited by Georgy Kepes, *Sign, Image, Symbol,* in the Vision and Value Series, to be published this year by George Braziller.