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THE OLD POWER AND THE NEW ALCHEMY

PEOPLE with special interests and causes don't exactly clamor for entry into the pages of MANAS—our circulation is not large enough to promise much in the way of "mass" influence; but we do get our share of mail from those who are persuaded that they are in possession of The Solution. Usually, the argument proceeds in a legislative direction, sometimes with considerable logic, and often with supporting analogies from the historical record. Our lack of enthusiasm for these proposals is no doubt in part a temperamental distaste for political controversy and hurly-burly, but there is more to it, we think, than that.

It is quite possible that there exists a law of diminishing returns in the exploitation of the political process. At the moment, the best example we can think of to support this idea is Herbert Spencer's analysis of what happened to the Liberal Movement in England, which started out by working to consolidate the gains of the political revolution of the eighteenth century, but ended by enacting repressive and regulatory legislation which became the foundation of the modern welfare state. The question of whether the welfare state is desirable—or inevitable—is of course still open and arguable. (We shall not pursue that issue, here, but simply suggest a reading of Spencer's material collected in the volume, *Man and the State*, published by Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho.)

Another approach to the question would be to read a book on the life and work of Edward Bellamy—say, the biography by Arthur E. Morgan (Columbia University Press, 1944)—in which it becomes evident that Bellamy's vision of the good society, formulated in the nineteenth century, was practically a prophetic catalog of the social achievements of the twentieth century. Bellamy's proposals included municipal ownership of utilities, direct election of senators, the merit system in civil service, the inheritance tax, parcel post, woman suffrage, a longer school year for children, better child labor laws, juster wages and hours for workmen, elimination of industrial abuses, public ownership of irrigation systems, and soil conservation. All these mileposts of social progress were among the "first steps" advocated by Bellany's "Nationalist" movement. Dr. Morgan observes:

> The surprisingly large part of its "first steps" that already has been achieved includes much of the advanced "New Deal" legislation which has been accepted by both political parties. Some of the men directly responsible for that legislation are in direct line of descent from the First National Club of Boston, or received their first social stimulus from *Looking Backward.* Other elements of social legislation now looming on the horizon were substantially parts of the Nationalist program.

Our point is that we doubt very much that a man of Bellamy's stature would today conceive the needs of the twentieth century in the same terms. There are certain things which may be accomplished by legislation, and others which cannot. Bellamy, we think, was wise enough to realize this, and wise enough to have known when the saturation point of legislative benefit had been reached. Our proposition is that the great challenge, today, is not in the realm of legislation or "social engineering," but elsewhere, and that the ending of the crisis in human affairs, which we are now undergoing, will depend upon general recognition of the new challenge.

What is at issue is the symmetry of human life. The purpose of legislation is to provide what it is possible to provide in the way of an external environment that fosters the symmetrical development of human beings. As Lyman Bryson said, it is a mistake to think that a political process is justified by its public result. "A political process

is justified by its private result." When, then, do you stop politicking? When you can no longer discern a useful private result from the working of the political process.

It seems to us that, by and large, we have reached that point in our historical development, and this would explain the fact that you find only the Company Men going into politics these days. Men with imagination and unusual powers of perception are seeking other fields of work. You find them in education, in psychology, in therapy, in any of the areas where the problem of the relation of the individual to society becomes acute, or where the relation of the individual to himself becomes acute, which is practically everywhere.

For the pioneering efforts of the twentieth century, politics is an empty gun. It is not that we shall have no use at all for politics, but that before politics can do us any more good, we shall have to develop an inner demand and a private capacity for living a symmetrical life, so that the people who want to make politics will at least know what to do. Politics, today, is all shell and no heart. It is a means which devours its ends. Its processes take place outside of human beings. It does not touch them, make them better, nor can it inspire them to seek the elements of richer lives. Actually the only promising and morally legitimate political activity of the present—the politics of non-violent resistance to evil and war—is itself a last-ditch struggle against the excesses of politics and excesses of faith in politics. There was nothing wrong with the socialist utopian dream. What was wrong was the assumption that any utopian society can be arranged solely or even mainly by the politics of power.

Where are the highest fulfillments of human life, and what has politics to do with them? First, we commonly say, come the creative activities—the practice of the arts, of literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, design, music, drama. Then there are the professions, connected with science, medicine, and the whole gamut of related fields. What has politics to do with the genius of these undertakings? Practically nothing, except as an intrusion, or as a practical mechanism for extending their benefits, which must be taken into consideration. Only a fool would demand the passage of a law to help him to be "creative." Only a pretender would claim that the social system prevented him from being a good human being. Only a victim of the mass delusion of the political means would say that his life was irrevocably shaped by the lagging political forms of his age. Yet only a blind man could avoid recognizing that such fools, pretenders, and victims have invited the major problems of the age. What was public service in the nineteenth century is in the twentieth a monstrous deception.

More than a hundred years ago, Alfred de Musset reproached Voltaire for destroying the faith of the age:

> Sleepest thou content, Voltaire?
> Thy dread smile, hovers it still
> Above thy fleshless bones?
> Thine age they called too young to understand thee;
> This one should suit thee better—
> Thy men are born!
> And the huge edifice that, day and night, thy great hands undermined,
> Is fallen upon us.

Some poet of positive emotion should now write more pertinent questions, addressed to the whole corps of cocksure intellectual termites who advised us in the accents of knowing, scientific scholarship that the requirements of human life are no more than food, clothing, sex, security, self-esteem, and all the other humdrum attainments of the well-cared-for mass man. Let us have no straining after absolutes, no hungering for the secrets behind consciousness. Christ, poor man, displayed all the symptoms of a neurotic. This emasculate chorus became, whatever its beginnings, the voice of the contemporary Grand Inquisitor, of the monitors of the affluent, technological, psychologically *adjusted* great society. *Their* men are born, and move now to an end that promises only to be soon and sudden.

That the man who held one of the important secrets of the viable future died with but a pair of spectacles, sandals, and a loin cloth to leave behind him is an impressive refutation of the claims for the politically engineered good society. Gandhi spent his whole life in search of truth. *Without that quest there is no good society*—this is his revealed truth which he left to coming generations. We doubt if it can be much longer ignored. Writing of the childhood of the human race, the distinguished scientist, J. Arthur Thompson, said that in the course of evolution there must have been "a re-definition and re-thrilling of the moral fibres under the influence of the new synthesis or mutation—Man. . . . With reason and language and consciousness of history both past and possible, there must have been a re-tuning of the moral nature." If, without violating the canons of his discipline, a scientist of Thompson's stature could so interpolate a meaning in the distant past, in order to explain the Odyssey of mankind, it seems no presumption to continue the hypothesis, and to propose that if human evolution is to reach to further heights, another "re-definition" and "re-thrilling" may be the necessary cause.

One need hardly be a seer to take note of the tremor of fresh discovery in the longings of human beings to know themselves. The signs are all about. Was it William James who borrowed from the ancient Brahmins the expression, "twice-born," to suggest a subtle quality of being in human life? At any rate, the term will do to describe those persons who are no longer content with traditional or other men's definitions of themselves, and who cannot rest until they find some touch with the reality of the world which is the same as the reality in themselves.

The ultimate question, for the individual, is where he derives his sense of identity, his feeling of being himself and no other. You might say that the growing-up crisis for every human comes when he can no longer, for whatever reason, obtain reassurance about his identity from his social environment, from the cultural institutions which have nurtured him in the past. One element of greatness in a man shows itself when he demonstrates an identity independent of the prevailing institutions of his time. Tolstoy is the best European example of this greatness, Thoreau its American exemplar. Both were men who outgrew the confinements of politics, but not the bonds of human brotherhood. Tolstoy's *Confession* is probably the clearest account of the agony of this kind of growing up. There are doubtless others to be found in the special vocabularies of particular mystic traditions, but Tolstoy's has the virtue of being in our common speech.

What makes for greatness in this stance of Tolstoy and Thoreau is their anticipation by a hundred years of what is now becoming a common judgment of political institutions. They saw in the seed what would appear in the full-grown jungle of power-state politics. The lesser men of today are having to be *stripped* by the inexorable historical process. That is, there is less and less in the familiar institutions of our time that a self-respecting, intelligent man can identify with. He has now to learn how to withdraw, and how to identify with those things he can do of his own motion, or in an *organic* way with a few others, without benefit of contract or legal status. And this living, human process, he begins to understand, was always the life of whatever was good in politics, anyway. Behind the façade of state and municipality, which gave artificial shape to the patterns of men's lives, was always this flow of living humanity, which gave office its dignity and made the laws *work.* Take away that flow, reduce the human element to strict legality, and there remains only a stiff, pretentious caricature, the shadow of a dying intent.

And when the civil authority becomes little more than a sounding board for the military, as today; when both domestic and foreign policies are made in war colleges and the good life is publicly declared to be dependent upon a stockpile

of nuclear missiles sufficient to incinerate the world ten times over—when our leaders are uniformly, openly, unashamedly, proudly of this ignominious persuasion, what happens to the private citizens? The vulnerable among the common people accept this identity, this devastating account of life and being, and little men begin to collect arsenals and hide them in garages and secret places. The police must hunt them out and punish them like small boys who have been bad, instead of like men who are imitating their leaders. And then you get vulgar public speakers who excite their vulgar public audiences by saying that they would like to hang the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States; and you get bustling pseudo-patriots of God and Country who insist that no American who does not harbor quick and angry suspicions of his fellow citizens can be trusted, who say that distinguished presidents are either Communist tools or Communist dupes. This is the private result of the kind of public policy we have been having in the middle years of the twentieth century.

So it is that men of decency and hope are disenchanted of national feelings of identity, and, increasingly, of reliance upon political manipulations and coercions, coming to feel that there must be other ways of attaining the ends that all men long for and that some men are willing to seek.

There will always be politics, just as there will always be houses, farms, roads, machines, and other necessities with their conveniences and amenities. But after this retuning of the moral nature, after men are in some sense born again form a growth forced by the smouldering heat of history, it will be a reluctant politics, shorn of the sovereignty of total power and the idolatry of final resort. It will be the kind of politics that is practiced by men who know the limit of the political means and have found out better ways to get things done.

Letter from **PRAGUE**

PRAGUE.—Committees concerned with the interchange of cultures find it increasingly difficult to devise really meaningful projects for their participants. It is still good that young people of many nationalities work together, live together, and openly discuss their problems, but the underlying problem isn't being met. The cultures brought together are primarily Western or so oriented, while the world grows more sharply divided. It is true that one can talk *about* this division, but the discussion has real meaning only when the discussants include those who can represent both sides. On this point we always recall John Stuart Mill's famous line, "the man who knows only his own side of the question doesn't even know that."

This view has been growing stronger in our thinking after our six months of living in Prague. We recently were visited by twenty-one American college students. They did not know what to expect and they were here for only five days. But they departed deeply thoughtful and moved, saying later that the stay in Prague was the most valuable time of their six months in Europe. They saw the famous city, heard its music, visited its ballet and opera, but, most important, they talked with people, all kinds of people. There was a mutual exposure of prejudice followed by entirely free and open discussion. They discovered (as we have) that from the attitude of and the reception by the people they met here, there appears to be less anti-Western propaganda than expected. They also discovered that their own questions indicated the extent of their exposure to anti-Eastern propaganda. The people of the East *recognize* propaganda. It is disturbing to begin to see yourself as "brain-washed." The young people they met in Prague (workers as well as students) knew more about the world and about our country than the Americans knew of either. I wish you could read the reports of the individual high school students who made up a group of fourteen who came to Europe (and Prague) two summers ago. The perception and response of these teen-agers seem almost unbelievable. We have become increasingly convinced that this pre-college age group is the most important to help. They are eager, curious, and critical. They want to know and decide for themselves. They aren't afraid to question the expert, the authority. They ask for trust and challenge, but how seldom we, the adult community, give them what they want and need in preparation for tackling the greatest challenge that man in his history has ever had to face. A couple of our own children have now made several trips on student ships that have carried from 900 to 2,000 college students to Europe during their summer holidays. We've picked up some of them on the highways of Europe. Not one per cent know anything about the places they're coming to, nor do they ever find out. The hitch-hikers and the hostellers learn something, but those who suppose it might be important, or even know that it is possible and safe, to go to the Eastern countries are very rare. We do not only think it important: it seems imperative.

As guests of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union this summer (all the way to Samarkand), and in Moscow, we talked with the Ministry for Church Affairs. We suggested the idea of a group of American students and young church people from the Soviet Union joining in a work camp in a distressed area (Southern Italy or Africa). We were told that if this proposal were made, the government would support it. We will have some similar talks with Cultural and Foreign Ministries here in Prague before we leave. Maybe the door isn't wide open, but it certainly isn't closed; for any kind of understanding, it should be used. A bridge of some kind must have two ends, though the approaches may not be of equal size or elaborateness. The traffic, in the beginning, may be a little slow in coming from one end. But we are trying to do something about that.

CORRESPONDENT IN PRAGUE

REVIEW
THE LESSON OF THE MASTER

ON Oct. 4 MANAS reviewed *Confucianism in Action,* a collection of studies dealing with major areas of Chinese and Japanese life in which Confucian ideas played a prominent role. We pointed out the double challenge the book's contributors faced. They wanted, on the one hand, to combat the widespread misconception of Chinese civilization as an essentially static system of communities with ideas, institutions, and folkways in "a perpetual harmonious balance." On the other hand, they wanted to discover, explore, and evaluate the genuine Confucian tradition. That the findings of *Confucianism in Action*—its philosophic insights, its historic parallels and demonstrations—had scope and applicability *beyond* the Confucian tradition: this was the note we ended on. The book deserved it.

Now we have a sequel: *The Confucian Persuasion,* edited by A. F. Wright (Stanford University Press, $8.50). Like its predecessor, *The Confucian Persuasion* relates in new and stimulating ways the contributions of a distinctive tradition to what Aldous Huxley calls the Perennial Philosophy. Both books grew out of the 1957 and 1958 conferences sponsored by the Committee on Chinese Thought of the Association for Asian Studies. Both seek to show the Confucian tradition interacting with others and changing in response to the demands of new defenders and new institutions. Both attempt to clarify some recurrent complexities of the human situation—some of the ambitions, rally cries, and bafflements for which "Confucianism" gives only a local habitation and a name.

The Confucian Persuasion follows the title (and much of the approach) of Marvin Meyers' celebrated study of pre-Civil War America: *The Jacksonian Persuasion.* Meyers, you may recall, defines a persuasion as "a matched set of attitudes, beliefs, projected actions: a half-formulated moral perspective involving emotional commitment." His definition implies the main line of inquiry underlying these ten studies of Confucianism. As the editor explains:

> The rebels, the statesmen, the emperors and peasants, who move across our pages—for all their variety of aims and settings—share certain common assumptions. The historians, the connoisseurs of painting, the leaders of mass rebellions, tend to invoke the same values and to partake of a common moral perspective. They are not systematic thinkers, but men of thought and action. Each, in his way, is selecting and adapting inherited ideas to the peculiar complexities of his time and milieu.

In one way or another each study in *The Confucian Persuasion* illustrates this perspectivist approach. Hisayuki Miyakawa's "The Confucianization of South China," for example, shows how the Chinese, as the principal molders of East Asian history, carried out an acculturation policy with two groups of neighboring barbarians. The people to the north were nomads or large-scale hunters. Though few in number, they were able to conquer the agricultural masses of China by superior military force. But the culture they conquered was technically, intellectually, and economically superior to their own—and they were compelled to adopt it. Thus the conquerors, in this case, became assimilated by the conquered. With the people to the *south,* however, acculturation was a different matter. Like the Chinese, they subsisted by hunting, farming, and fishing; they were not particularly warlike; and numerically at least, they nearly matched their neighbors. To assimilate the southern barbarians, then, the Chinese had to embark on a long-term educational program. Confucianism in the south triumphed over two competing traditions, Taoism and Buddhism. But, contends Miyakawa, it failed to eradicate the shamanistic practices because it "stressed relations between one individual and another, instead of relations between the individual and the Absolute."

A. F. Wright's "Sui Yang-Ti: Personality and Stereotype" analyzes the historical personality and the political stereotype of Yang-ti (569-618), the "last bad ruler" of the Sui Dynasty. Yang-ti

figures as a perennial stock villain in Chinese folk myth and popular literature. Yet the historical Yang-ti was not (as the myths portray him) a depraved wretch—a Chinese Caligula, but a gifted and brilliant man whose fate it was to bring himself and his empire to spectacular ruin. His career, however, conflicted at many points with the Confucian ethos. Thus a moralizing tendency in Confucian historians probably gave the greatest authority to the persistent "last bad ruler" image of Yang-ti.

E. G. Pulleyblank's "Neo-Confucianism and Neo-Legalism in T'ang Intellectual Life" treats in detail a theme we noted in the review of *Confucianism in Action.* Clashes and compromises between the Legalist and Confucian approaches to life have been common in Chinese culture. Indeed, if we view Legalism and Confucianism as special instances of Might Makes Right and Right Makes Might attitudes (and this is a philosophically as well as historically valid way to view them), we can say such approaches have been common in all cultures—with the clashes inevitable and the compromises, for some at least, predictable. Pulleyblank's study illustrates this theme for the Chen-yuan period (785-805) of the T'ang Dynasty.

J. F. Cahill's "Confucian Elements in the Theory of Painting" attempts to remedy a deficiency in most modern studies of Chinese painting. Cahill finds "a curious lack of reference to Confucian thought as a force in the creation of art and in the formulation of art theory." He accounts for this as follows: (1) The Confucian tradition, according to a widespread but erroneous view, has been regarded as "inherently reactionary and sterile in the political and social sphere." This view has been extended into æsthetics. (2) The rationalist bent in Confucianism denies it any place in what are essentially non-rational processes—the production and appreciation of works of art. (3) The more immediate appeal of Taoism and Buddhism to the modern Western mind has led to a concentration of attention upon Taoist and Buddhist elements in art as in other areas of Chinese culture. Cahill attempts to show how and why these judgments are one-sided or wrong-headed. He appeals to testimonies of painters and critics notably influenced by Confucian ideas—especially the idea of art as a revelation of the artist's moral nature.

Robert Ruhlmann's "Traditional Heroes in Chinese Popular Fiction" examines ways in which the heroes of novels, short stories, and oral literature have embodied Confucian values and ideals. Whatever their creators' intentions, Ruhlmann points out, these heroes "convey a powerful image of the conflicting forces at work in the society of their time." They can be reduced, he finds, to three types. First is the impetuous, uninhibited, and generous Swordsman—a lovable and explosive "good fellow." Then comes the Scholar, of outstanding intelligence, resourcefulness, eloquence, and self-control, "knowing all knowable things and some others," whose powers of reading minds, seeing into the future, and influencing the forces of nature have a supernatural cast. Finally comes the Prince, "holder of Heaven's mandate," who does nothing spectacular himself, but is skilled in judging men and in choosing Scholars and Swordsmen who will enable him to fulfill his destiny. To what extent are these types Confucian? Less than we might expect, concludes Ruhlmann. Yet, though "all efforts to 'Confucianize' fiction remained only partly successful," the influence of the tradition shows clearly and is not negligible.

D. S. Nivison's "Protest Against Conventions and Conventions of Protest" deals with a tendency toward iconoclasm (fairly common during the T'ang and Sung Dynasties). This took the form of "conventions of protests" against the educational mold into which students felt themselves forced. These reactions against parental and quasi-parental authority appeared anti-Confucian. Yet to a large degree they were sanctioned by teachings of the Master. As we know, the *Analects* show an aristocratic bias and a strong

preference for independent judgment. Confucius held, for example, that the task of learning to write is not at all one of acquiring verbal tricks and forms. It is a task of self-cultivation, a moral exercise, a matter of nourishing and controlling one's *ch'i* or spirit. *Ch'i* is like water, words the mere objects that "float" in it; if *ch'i* is adequate, there will be no trouble with words. This literary ideal, claims Nivison, is found everywhere in Chinese critical thought since T'ang. Deeply grasped and wisely followed (for it is possible to disparage words too much), this ideal enlarges our conception of the mainstream of Confucianism.

F. W. Mote's "Confucian Eremitism in the Yuan Period" considers a problem of social instability which arose after the Mongol Conquest of 1230-1279. Eremitism, including both voluntary and compulsory withdrawal from Chinese society, developed in the following way. In the reconstruction period after the Conquest, some persons remained zealously devoted to Confucian ideals. They led an active life in the service of the Yuan puppet governors and practiced fortitude in the face of the Mongols' indifference. Another group, probably comprising a majority of the literate, turned in despair to the other extreme—to various forms of escapism and *fin de siècle* frivolity. A third group, however, renounced both state service and extreme self-indulgence; instead, they chose or were compelled to adopt some variety of recluse existence. Mote shows how some of these persons became recluses on the basis of the Confucian ideal of loyalty, others from Taoist sympathies, others simply to escape Mongol tyranny, and still others to cultivate nationalist convictions eventually leading to the rise of a new dynasty.

Yuji Muramatsu's "Some Themes in Chinese Rebel Ideologies" inquires into several of the recurrent motifs in *The Confucian Persuasion.* One of these is the prevalence of non-Confucian religious beliefs—Shamanist, Taoist, and Buddhist—which were important in inspiring and solidifying mass rebellions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Another is the respect or awe among the rebels for the Confucian notion of the mandate of Heaven—or for those who allegedly held a mandate. A third is an ethnocentric notion of China as "the central cultural florescence," especially against alien dynasties such as the Ch'ing. Last is the theme of demands for equal distribution of property, including land, either by sporadic mob plundering or by more systematic group pressures. All these themes, contends Muramatsu, contributed to a heightened resentment against foreigners which the Western invasion of China in the nineteenth century brought about.

J. R. Levenson's "Ill Wind in the Well-Field: The Erosion of the Confucian Ground of Controversy" scrutinizes an incident in modern Chinese history occurring when Mencius was brought into a land controversy. (We might well think of Mencius as standing in the same relation to Confucius that Plato stood in relation to Socrates—though this parallel can be forced too far.) In 1919, "a classic year for Chinese free-thinkers" according to Levenson, a journalist named Hu Han-min wrote an article acknowledging the ancient system of *ching-t'ien* ("well-field"). *Ching-t'ien* was a system of land-holding originally described and recommended by Mencius in the fourth century B.C. It worked as follows: Eight families would form a group to buy and to cultivate a *ching*—a unit of land so-called because it was laid out regularly like the written character *ching* or "well." They would subdivide the *ching* into nine equal fields. Each family would then cultivate one of the fields for its own welfare, but all families would assist in cultivating the ninth or center field for the common good. Now the *ching-t'ien,* after centuries of having a literal Confucian significance (as simply a social system which Mencius described, recommended, and challenged his heirs to deal with), turned into metaphor. Gradually it *stood* for attitudes, values, or social theories which were not Confucian at all. This is why in 1919 Hu Han-min's article advocating a literal return to *ching-t'ien,* as a

system of primitive communism, created such a stir. The stir has not died down; the transformation (or as its advocates would say, the recovery) of *ching-t'ien* still goes on. In our country, says Levenson, the transformation of *ching-t'ien* "was effected by all men who in any way—as traditionalists, radical idealists, or materialists—defended its historicity." Even Mao Tse-tung has had his say on Marxist parallels to the *ching-t'ien.* And, as you might guess, so has Chou En-lai.

Tse-tsung Chow's "The Anti-Confucian Movement in Early Republican China" provides a fitting study to conclude *The Confucian Persuasion.* It deals mainly with early efforts to reconcile Chinese and Western ideas. These were closely related to a controversy between the Ancient Text and Modern Text schools on the nature of Confucianism. The Ancient Text scholars regarded the Six Classics as historical material and Confucius himself as a great teacher, historian, and editor of the Classics. (Most Chinese still regard the Six Classics as the basis of their culture. The Classics include the *Shi-Ching* or Book of Songs, the *Shu-Ching* or Book of History, the *I Ching* or Book of Changes, the *Ch'un Ch'iu* or Spring and Autumn Annals, the *Li-Ki* or Book of Rites, and the *Yueh* or Book of Music.) According to the Ancient Text scholars, the Master had merely adhered to the Classics and preserved the tradition. They believed it was the Duke of Chou and not Confucius who had created most Chinese institutions. The Modern Text scholars held the significantly different view that Confucius himself was the author or reviser of the Six Classics. For them, the Classics were not primarily historical material but imaginative descriptions of antiquity written to explain Confucius' own political thought and to promote the institutional reforms he wanted to see. The watchword of the Modern Text scholars was: "Make Use of Antiquity to Change Institutions." This was no down-grading of Confucius. Rather, as Tse-tsung Chow points out, it made him a great philosopher, statesman, educator, and even an "uncrowned king" with "the mandate of Heaven."

In this review we've stressed the perspectivist approach underlying *The Confucian Persuasion.* The approach brought to light many themes and findings. Its application in this book (and, we hope, others to come) illustrates richly and memorably a lesson of the Master. "By nature," he said, "men nearly resemble each other; in practice they grow wide apart." He added: "It is only the very wisest and the very stupidest who never change."

Davis, California

RALPH S. POMEROY

COMMENTARY
THE ROLE OF THE PRESS

WHILE we were wondering what would be the best way to persuade our readers to buy a copy of A. J. Liebling's *The Press* (Ballantine paperback, 75 cents), the sudden disappearance early this month of two Los Angeles newspapers, Hearst's morning *Examiner,* and the Chandlers' *Mirror,* solved our problem. The first section of Mr. Liebling's book is titled "Toward a One-Paper Town." The passing of the *Mirror* and the *Examiner* are additional illustrations of the trend described and deplored by Mr. Liebling. An older volume, and a more serious one, although Mr. Liebling is by no means a frivolous critic, is Oswald Garrison Villard's *The Disappearing Daily,* which ought to be read along with *The Press.* Mr. Villard, you could say, was the last of the old-time independent publishers, and Mr. Liebling is one of the few independent reporters who still say exactly what they think. (Mr. Liebling says what he thinks partly, of course, because his publisher, the *New Yorker* magazine, lets him.) In his foreword, Liebling writes:

> As the number of cities in the United States with only a single newspaper ownership increases, news becomes increasingly nonessential to the newspaper. In the mind of the average publisher, it is a costly and uneconomic frill, like the free lunch that saloons used to furnish customers to buy beer. . . . In a monopoly situation, the paper can cut out news as the saloons cut out free lunch. There is no longer a place next door for the customers to go to. . . . Many proprietors, moreover, have a prejudice against news—they never feel at home with it. In this they resemble racing owners who are nervous around horses.
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> Money is not made by competition among newspapers, but by avoiding it. The wars are over, and newspaper owners are content to buy their enemies off, or just buy them. The object of diplomacy is to obtain an unassailable local position, like a robber-castle, in New Orleans or Elizabeth or Des Moines, and then levy tribute on the helpless peasantry, who will have no other means of discovering what is playing at the Nugget. . . . The function of the press in society is to inform, but its role is to make money. The monopoly publisher's reaction, on being told that he ought to spend money on reporting distant events, is therefore exactly that of the proprietor of a large, fat cow, who is told that he ought to enter her in a horse race.

Los Angeles is of course not yet a one-newspaper town. There still remain the *Times,* which ate up the *Mirror,* and the *Herald-Express,* which ate up the *Examiner.* But you wonder a bit about the vigor of the contest between two multi-million-dollar corporations which, by odd coincidence, decided to perform these sacrifices on exactly the same day. Maybe a little ESP was at work. Or maybe, if you want an optimistic view, both publishers had read the announcement that the New York *Times* is coming out with a West Coast edition and are getting ready for the novelty of some real competition.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

SOME time ago a reader suggested that we report on an unusual educational experiment presently thriving in Los Angeles—the Midtown School. In existence only three-and-a-half years, this is a determined one-man, or rather one-family, venture. Kenneth Reiner started Midtown because he felt that the public school system almost invariably guides children into unthinking conformity, leaving them susceptible to all forms of regimentation.

Midtown has no grades, no tests, and no report cards; it has sixty students who range from two to seventeen years of age, a staff of seventeen teachers and assistants. Mr. and Mrs. Reiner (who also teaches and directs) feel that incalculable value has already been achieved—well worth the $750,000 which the wealthy engineer-inventor has put into the project.

Lee Austin's story on Midtown in the Los Angeles *Mirror* for Nov. 29, 1961, provides these highlights:

> If a pupil wants to read a book, paint pictures or study a foreign language for a couple of days or so, it's all right with the teacher. If he would rather play in the sandpile or write on the classroom's steel panel walls, especially designed for that purpose, that's all right too.
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> "Don't force a child," is Reiner's philsophy. "In this school the children learn without knowing they are learning." . . .
>
> Reiner offers "tuition aid" to attract pupils from the lower economic brackets. He wants a varied student body because he believes "children learn from children better than teachers" about social adjustment, customs and traditions.
>
> Students are grouped roughly by the ages of 2 to 4, 5 to 7, 8 to 9 and 10 to 17 in unique hexagonal buildings which reflect Reiner's strong feelings against conformity even in school designing.
>
> The one-room buildings are airy, light comes through glass walls. They have extended overhanging roofs to provide sheltered exterior study areas. Movable furniture permits the pupils to arrange work tables and chairs to fit their individual study needs. . . .
>
> Even the playground is different. It has a rockpile for climbing, logs to balance on, auto tires to roll and barrels to crawl through, in addition to the usual sandpiles and swings. . . .
>
> Field trips are an important part of the school's doctrine of learning by doing. The tours range from the county museum and city library to Malibu beach's tide pools and the San Diego Zoo.
>
> The pupils often go to Reiner's orchard to pick apples which they make into applesauce and sell to neighbors around the school.
>
> Recently a teacher took his group to the "Ban the Bomb" march at civic center. Reiner doesn't condone such field trips but he says "our teachers have considerable latitude to implement the school's philosophy in their own way."
>
> The Reiners do not feel their ideas about education are radical. They point to Midtown's similarity to the old one-room schoolhouse days, when children of all ages studied different subjects at the same time.
>
> "Learning is an individual, internal and continual process of experiencing, relating and integrating," says Reiner. "Midtown is a demonstration of our theories and ideals and we are willing to put our own children, money and reputations into it."

From what we have heard from people who have talked to the Reiners, many parents and teachers will find themselves wishing to see Midtown, if only for a look at the architecture. The buildings have gone up one at a time as the student body and staff increased—and with each addition there has been an opportunity to reassess the importance of both interior and exterior design as stimuli to learning. A school "News Letter" (November, 1961), for example, includes a picture of the newest classroom, together with an explanation of the reasons for its design as developed by the Reiners and a friendly architect:

> Taken as a whole, the unique nature of a Midtown classroom is one which calls for, and even demands, new and creative thinking on the part of all of its occupants in terms of the nature and scope of

> activities which take place. Here is an environment where staff members and children alike find it possible, and necessary, to break away from the kind of stereotypes which have in the past limited teacher-child attitudes and relationships to each other, and instead challenges them to initiate and work out new concepts and methods of learning, relating and problem solving in order to achieve the development of their individual abilities on a continuing basis.

Even these scanty reports on the educational theories of the Reiners recall the outlook of the authors of *The Challenge of Children* (William Morrow, 1957), a book reviewed in MANAS for Feb. 13, 1957. It tells the story of a group of parents at Pacific Palisades, California, who decided, as the Reiners did, that their children were not having an opportunity to discover anything like their full potentialities. We quote from the last chapter, which suggests a definition of the "natural" in education:

> Without the development of individuality there is the danger of careless conformity, and this means the loss of our own unique and creative contribution to life.
>
> Education, to the degree that it consists of undigested facts, a cramming of assorted dates, formulae and statistics into a child's mind, a rote memorization of textbook content, is lifeless—it stifles creativity. When education isolates people through its teaching of stereotyped systems of thinking, it leaves them unable to communicate and without genuine understanding for others. Such people have much information but little wisdom. This condition brings out artificiality uncreativeness, inflexibility and pretense, just as pride of intellectual distinction indicates false values: . . .

But the larger schools, colleges, and universities do change and improve in some degree, as the significance of such experiments as those conducted by the Cooperative Parents Group of Pacific Palisades and Midtown School is grasped and talked about.

FRONTIERS

Erich Fromm Speaks Out

IN the preface of Eric Fromm's most controversial book to date, *May Man Prevail?* (Doubleday, 1961), this psychoanalyst of social conscience writes of the need to challenge our common political assumptions. Almost without exception, and regardless of party, ethnic, cultural or intellectual background, the political ethos of America is characterized by the following articles of faith:

> Communism, represented by the Soviet Union and China is a revolutionary-imperialist movement out to conquer the world by force or subversion. Its industrial and military development has made the Communistic camp, and particularly the Soviet Union into a powerful rival, capable of destroying our human and industrial potential to a considerable degree. This bloc can be restrained from executing its wish for world conquest solely by the knowledge that any such attempt would be met with a counterblow that would destroy or cripple its human and economic potential. In this deterrent capacity lies the only hope for peace since Russia will abstain from her attempt at world conquest only because of fear of our deterrent. As long as we have a sufficiently strong deterrent power and military allies around the world, peace is secured.

Dr. Fromm feels that the premises on which these conclusions are based are either untrue or distorted, and sets out in *May Man Prevail?* to demonstrate that this is so. It follows that, while most humanists and socialists, and all pacifists will understand and endorse Fromm's reasoning, a certain number of readers may be expected to claim that this book is positively subversive—for throughout we encounter the intimation that we evaluate the Russians in terms of American parallels, precisely in the way that we would evaluate ourselves if we had come to the United States for the first time from another planet. Take for instance the frightening non-partisanship of the following:

> The Russians are today in some respects where Americans were one hundred years ago; they are building a society, full of hope and enthusiasm to go ahead and to accomplish what they have set out to do. While in the United States, although there is still unnecessary poverty and unnecessary suffering, we are only filling out what has been left to do; we are only doing more of the same. We have no vision of something new, no aim that truly inspires us. If this continues, we and the West will not survive. We will lack the energy and vitality that are necessary for any nation or group of nations to live and to survive in a world that is witnessing the awakening of nations that have been silent for hundreds of years. Our weapons will not save us—at best they will drag our enemies into the holocaust thirty minutes after we have perished.

In a highly complimentary review of *May Man Prevail?* (Nov. 4, 1961, Saturday *Review),* Stuart Chase recalls that during his own recent visit to Russia he frequently heard "Wall Street" referred to in exactly the same mood of righteous contempt that Americans reserve for speaking of "the Kremlin." Mr. Chase particularly admires Dr. Fromm's clinical account of paranoid thinking, which he summarizes: "a paranoid individual imagines that everyone is conspiring against him, even his family. Often he feels they want to do away with him. A whole society can degenerate into this condition, as in the mass fear of witches and devils in the seventeenth century. Most of us now regard Russians as the burghers of Salem regarded the women they called witches—as beings capable of supernatural villainy." So we all suffer from what Fromm calls "projection," a process by which we manage to create an imaginary, external locus for all the evil potential in our own immaturities and aggressiveness. Chase paraphrases Fromm on this point by explaining that after completing the projection, we experience a false security, because "we feel cleansed of evil and full of virtue." He adds: "If projection is added to paranoid thinking, as in the cold war, we have 'a dangerously explosive psychological mixture,' especially when Russian and Chinese leaders suffer from similar mental abnormalities."

May Man Prevail? contains the essential ingredients of Dr. Fromm's excellent pamphlet *The Case for Unilateral Disarmament,* and provides a

useful background on the internal conditions of Germany, Russia and China. The following is from Dr. Fromm's last chapter, "Suggestions for Peace":

> The Soviet system challenges us to develop a system that can satisfy the needs of man better than communism does. But while we talk a great deal about freedom and the superiority of our system, we avoid the Soviet challenge and prefer to describe communism as an international conspiracy out to conquer the world by force and subversion. The Russians hope to see the victory of communism as the result of its superior performance. Are we afraid that we can not meet the Communist competition, and is this the reason why we prefer to define the struggle as a military one rather than as a socio-economic one? Are we unwilling to make the necessary changes within our own society, and do we, for this reason, declare that no essential changes are necessary?" Are we afraid to curb the political influence of our corporate investors in Latin America? By concentrating on the military threat against us and the resulting arms race we miss the *one* chance for victory: to demonstrate that it is possible to have at home—and in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—economic progress *and* individuality, economic and social planning *and* democracy. This is the answer to the Communist challenge—not nuclear deterrent.

There are other reasons why a generally callow American public tends to over-simplify the real nature of the international struggle, escaping responsibility by assuming that it is largely or entirely a military problem. William O. Douglas, in *America Challenged*, suggests four reasons why constructive differences of opinion—permitting a better understanding of Russian concerns and problems—are now disappearing. "The tendency is for American democracy to become polarized in four large bureaucracies: (1) the vast civil regimes that possess our government; (2) the mighty military cabal whose reach into our affairs becomes greater with each national budget; (3) the bureaucracy of the management that controls our five hundred leading corporations; (4) the bureaucracy of the unions whose domains have reached large proportions. There are clashes and contests within and between those rival groups; but each tends to breed conformists, not dissenters." The nature of the human being is such that too much conformity inevitably wears away enthusiasm—a lack-luster effect noted by every author who has attempted to portray the state of mind which would exist in a mechanical utopia of the future.

These are the things we have going against us. Among the things for us are men like William O. Douglas, a Supreme Court Justice, and Erich Fromm, a psychotherapist and author. Dr. Fromm concludes *May Man Prevail.?* with a statement of America's "challenge" as seen in psychological terms:

> Our present thinking is a symptom of a deep-seated, though unconscious defeatism, of a lack of faith in the very values which we proclaim. We only cover up this defeatism by concentrating on the evils of communism and by promoting hate. If we continue with our policy of the deterrent and with our unholy alliances with dictatorial states in the name of freedom, we shall defeat the very values we hope to defend. We shall lose our freedom and probably also our lives.