

TWO HUMAN SITUATIONS

MAN in the matrix of nature, and man in the matrix of social institutions—these are two distinct human situations. We know little—far less, perhaps, than we should—about the first of these situations. It is conceivable, of course, that man "in a state of nature" is only a plausible abstraction, without much practical relation to actual human experience. It is possible, also, that the true state of nature, for man, *includes* a cultural environment of some sort, so that his isolation from social institutions would be wholly unnatural—something like the bee separated from the hive, or the elephant from the herd. Possibly, for man, the cultural situation is the only natural situation, so that it becomes a mistake to oppose the "cultural" to the "natural."

But it is certainly a fact that, in human history, there are times when man's primary problems are seen to lie in the confrontation of the natural world, while at other times his difficulties seem to arise mostly from his social situation. These radically different attitudes toward human experience are directly reflected in philosophy. For example, Indian religion, whether Hindu or Buddhist, pays almost no attention to the social institutions which surround its devotees. The quest is for the meaning of life itself. Analysis or criticism of the cultural environment has no place in either the *Bhagavad-Gita* or the *Dhammapada*. The approach of classical Oriental philosophy to human problems is *gnostic* in spirit, implying that ultimate knowledge, while difficult, is entirely possible. Such knowledge is said to result from the adoption of the attitudes and the practice of the disciplines which belong to the traditional path to enlightenment. The task of the individual is to penetrate the *natural* mysteries of existence. He has to see through and beyond the illusions of nature, in order to control and master the forces which arise in himself.

In modern times, until quite recently, there has been very little interest in this sort of "quest" for knowledge or truth. In the West, at any rate, the preoccupation of the dominant thinkers has been with the forces of history and the effects of social institutions. In fact, Western thinkers have for the most part regarded pre-Platonic systems of philosophy as very little more than dalliance with the illusions and pretensions of theology—at best a kind of "poetry." There has of course been a lot of philosophical speculation in Western thought, but the thinking on which men have *acted* has been social thinking—revolutionary criticism and analysis of cultural institutions. In these terms, then, it is possible to characterize the cycle of Western history as a time when man has for the most part ignored the problems presented by the "matrix of nature" (not its *practical* problems, to which we have devoted extraordinary attention, producing all the tools of modern science and technology to deal with them), and has regarded serious philosophical problems as growing out of social relationships and the nature of political power.

We should probably take note of the fact that the Western emphasis on "social reality" undoubtedly resulted in part from skepticism and agnosticism toward the "higher" sort of truth which the ancients had sought. The West's experience of spiritual questing had been with the heavily institutionalized procedures of Catholic Christianity, which were clumsy and mechanical, when not actually fraudulent, and which had become historically identified with social oppressions in politics and obscurantism in philosophy. The birth of modern thought was from a matrix of rebellion and disillusionment, and the child was, from the first, aggressive, hostile and even anxious—determined to have independence from the dragging weight of

theological assumptions. It is natural, therefore, that modern thought has been stubbornly iconoclastic toward ancient theories of knowing, and that its creative enterprise has been directed toward mastery of the *visible* aspects of nature, concerning which, it was believed, there could be no mystery-mongering and no private revelations to a sacerdotal caste.

But, to make a long story very short, Western thinking seems now to have come very close to exhausting the potentialities of the matrix of social experience—that is, the exclusively *social* theories of meaning seem drained of fruitfulness; and this recognition comes at a time when the climactic achievement of science and technology—the discovery of nuclear energy—is symbolic of the powers of man turned against himself.

We may say, therefore, that the present represents an unmistakable crossroads in modern thought. After two or three centuries of preoccupation with the matrix of social institutions, we are now led, again by disillusionment, to question the validity of our definitions of "reality" and to wonder about the old problems, so long neglected, of man in the matrix of nature. These are his essential problems, problems which persist, regardless of social institutions.

We are unable, however, to shift into another focus of attention without carrying with us certain of the habits and assumptions of more recent notions of "reality." Any fundamental change in orientation with respect to basic philosophy is bound to produce conflict and struggle, and the pain of change is likely to be the greatest wherever the old views have had a dogmatic element, and where essential moral issues have seemed to depend upon them. The question, in contemporary terms, is this: If we return to ancient wisdomism, adopting the spirit typified in the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Upanishads*, or by the *Tao Te Ching*, will we become vulnerable, on the one hand, to theological mystification, at the cost of the scientific spirit, and on the other, will we

lose our hard-won social values which have for so long been associated and allied with the agnostic temper?

Of all the groups or segments of Western thought confronted by this question, the one most likely to find a constructive answer is the loosely allied body of persons who describe themselves as "Humanists." By and large, the humanists are persuaded of the indispensable value of the modern scientific spirit, yet, unlike science itself, the humanists reject moral "neutrality." The humanists *are* humanists by reason of deep ethical inclinations, yet they have not allowed themselves to be betrayed into supernaturalism, being in this respect scientific rather than religious. It is the humanists, therefore, who have the best opportunity to conduct what might be called "preliminary maneuvers" toward a fresh study of the primary human situation—man in the matrix of nature.

Here, the problem of the humanists is the same as that of other groups of liberal tendency. After some two or three generations of pursuing vigorous attack against dogmatic and religious "explanations" of the immediate, timeless human problems—the essential problems of man, as distinguished from the problems created by history—is it possible for the humanists to execute an "about-face" and to examine man and human experience directly?

But what, precisely, is the "direct" examination of man and human experience? It is the unprejudiced study of life in its immediacy, unaffected by the scientific convention of "objectivity" and uninhibited by fear of reaching "transcendental" conclusions. This, as we have defined it, is the study of man "in the matrix of nature," as distinguished from the level and techniques of analysis which have grown up in a period when study of man in the matrix of social institutions has seemed more important.

The ability to make such a direct examination, however, depends upon a realization of the far-reaching "bias" in the scientific and sociological

approach. For example, the so-called "scientific" study of man is obliged to ignore all the inward phenomena of human life. If a man experiences a profound religious inspiration, it is considered "scientific" to describe the behavior of the man under the influence of that inspiration, to compare it with the similar behavior of others, and to attempt to assign "causes" for that "class" of behavior. It is not considered scientific to take the event of that religious inspiration as a primary value to be pursued by others. More specifically, the social scientist or social psychologist might study the life of Gandhi in order to write a monograph on a great religious figure of the twentieth century, but he would not conceive the following of Gandhi's example, as, say, Martin Luther King has followed it in Montgomery, Alabama, as a "scientific" enterprise.

Science, in other words, exhibits a clear distaste for immediate discovery in the field of human experience. If there is an inward reality, the scientist insists that he must wait for that inward influence to reflect itself in some "objective" manner, so that it can be "processed" by familiar scientific techniques.

Pursuing this analysis further, it might be pointed out that it seems never to have occurred to scholars who study "genius" that about the only way to know anything about genius is to *become* one. Now this, of course, may be neither easy nor even feasible, but there is nothing in human experience to suggest that understanding genius *ought* to be a simple matter of tabulating the results of intelligence tests and sending out questionnaires to men who happen to have become eminent in their fields. Tabulations and questionnaires doubtless have a place in the scheme of things; the point, here, is that, in the name of science, they have been allowed to become substitutes for any actual experience of the real thing. No doubt an approach of this sort would prove vastly confusing to scholars who are used to relying on what they call the scientific method, but if, in the study of man, a method condemns all

findings to mediocrity, then its abandonment and replacement by some wholesome confusion becomes extremely desirable.

The fact is that, in the scientific study of man, the tail has been wagging the dog for at least a generation too long. If this study cannot be effectively pursued with the methods we are familiar with, then the solution is to change the methods. It is sheer prejudice to insist upon retaining the old methods because they are claimed to be "scientific." The right methods, in any investigation, are those which are appropriate to what is being investigated. The failure to dispense with a poor or inadequate method in science is just as obscurantist as the theological doctor's insistence to Galileo that no spots on the sun could be seen through the great Florentine's telescope because Aristotle had said nothing about spots on the sun. Galileo's method of looking through a telescope was *right* for seeing sun-spots, not the practice of looking in a book by Aristotle. We need to ask ourselves what is the right way to look at *man*.

An article by Ruth Nanda Anshen in the June issue of *Mankind*, a Hyderabad (India) monthly, deals with the need of the humanists to reconsider their orientation in respect to man. Miss Anshen writes:

Much of liberal thought during the last two centuries was "humanistic" in the sense that it was "naturalistic." In other words, it developed out of human existence alone without comprehending that human existence itself is the problem. It coalesced man's existential with his essential condition, impervious to the split between them mirrored in the universal paradox and self-contradiction. All was said by man, nothing to man. . . .

History is a never-ending witness of the inglorious consequences of the glorious achievements of the mind and spirit of man. A poignant illustration is science. The great plethoric growth of knowledge, the enlargement of the conceptual frame-work of reference, has plunged contemporary man who has torn himself away from the permanence within change into a condition of diminished consciousness. The reason for this lies in the fact that he has

accepted the severely limited descriptions of modern natural science as complete explanations of the meaning and purpose of life, as the entire truth about the world itself. The miraculous and triumphant advance of modern science in comprehending and controlling nature has emasculated man's faith in the reality of spiritual and moral values, values which are eternal for man in time and space and which are transmitted through the humanistic tradition. This triumphant advance has also weakened man's belief in his own significance in the cosmic scheme. It has culminated in those new realities concerning the subatomic world that appear to undermine the basic hypotheses of causality and uniformity on which science itself has been established. As a result, a profound paradox presents itself, a paradox of history in which that most fecund instrument of human reason has given birth to deep scepticism in reason.

From the viewpoint of science, Miss Anshen is advocating a leave-taking from the familiar "securities" of conventional definition. This is what Humanism means to her:

It [the humanistic tradition] affirms the seminal power of the realm of the unchanging and timeless values on which man can fix his gaze whenever the language of change and decline which history speaks becomes too overwhelming for the human heart. It expresses itself in the yearning the thirst of the human spirit to be transformed while committing an act of revolt, of non-conformity, in apparent opposition to tradition. This revolt, however, must take place in each generation in order that the spiritual and moral values may not become petrified in the lava of mere historical and habit-forming phenomena. This revolt is the promise of a possible renewal of the life-giving power which issues from its metahistorical source. It permits that transvaluation of values which is the most creative aspect of Reality and approaches what Aristotle describes as "that which is better than reason being the source of reason." For conformity without revolt leads inevitably to traditionalism which is synonymous with decline and death, and is the lethal fruit of all intensified perversions of high traditions, a fatal disease too often found to be endemic to the guardians of culture. These guardians are in perpetual danger of forgetting the truth that tradition itself is the constant enemy of the founders of tradition. . . .

The original meaning of the tradition which is embodied in humanism has been buried in the miasma of the prejudices and the mores of an

established but obsolescent social order. The pristine sense of humanism cries out for an act of recognition. It cries out for the rearticulation of the genuine spiritual and moral heritage of the human race. This heritage is not a dead-weight whose supine acceptance may rather subdue than liberate our minds. Instead its very concept and essence imply the transmission of all mankind's most sacred possessions, the consciousness of the fundamental achievements of man's life which have assumed their classical form and corporealization in the works of the greatest sons of the human race. . . . Thus humanism may be said to consist in an act of piety which reopens and widens the spiritual and essentially religious sense of continuity and community of mankind in a universe of creative discourse. Such humanism is immortally present in Western as well as Eastern tradition and vouchsafes the possibility of a common metaphysical faith which transcends all schisms and conflicts without both.

It is time that the humanists begin to spell out this "common metaphysical faith." Humanism can acknowledge no institutional suzerain, whether of science or religion. It is the charge and mission of humanism to forever maintain the independence of the *spirit* of both science and religion, to indulge in no compromises with the well-worn tracks of either. Miss Anshen offers the initial postulate of a "new" Humanism in the conclusion of her article:

The order of nature is not always perceptible to the senses; for the order we perceive is but the image of a deeper order which remains forever hidden beyond every manifestation of discursive knowledge and can only be rendered conscious through a cognitive act of intuition. Our ability to understand the universe is a function not only of our intelligence and of our rationality but also of our empathy. And knowledge can never be completed without love. This is the essence of humanism and the meaning of the words of Heraclitus of Ephesus: "The invisible harmony of the universe is greater than the visible one."

Letter on *Radioactive Fall-Out*

IN MANAS for June 26 the lead article speaks of the disagreement among scientists on the danger from radioactive fall-out. The article cites the claim that fall-out radiation is less than "natural background" radiation and that from medical and dental X-rays. It is also said that the risks are much smaller than the risks we take in our everyday living.

While no authority on radiation, genetics or leukemia, I have read the report of the National Academy of Sciences and the comparable British report, as well as some other writings on the subject, and I suspect that there is not much disagreement on the scientific aspects of the dispute. I am looking forward to reading the report of the recent Congressional investigation on this point. The report of the National Academy of Sciences and the report of the British Medical Research Council both say that the nuclear weapons testing fall-out radiation to the general population is considerably less than that from X-rays or from the background radiation. However, both reports also recommend that X-rays be reduced to the lowest level justified. The National Academy of Sciences said, "But the concept of a *safe rate* of radiation simply does not make sense if one is concerned with genetic damage to future generations." (Their emphasis.)

Your article referred to Dr. Pauling's statement on the harm from fall-out. By now you have probably read in the July SSRS Newsletter the gist of the statement by AEC Commissioner Libby in a television interview in which he said that he and Dr. Pauling were in agreement as to facts. The disagreement is over whether it is all right to kill a million people a little earlier than they would ordinarily have died and to cause 200,000 children to be born defective in a generation in order to get the tremendous advantages conferred by nuclear weapons testing. *Fellowship* for March quotes the testimony of the

chairman of the Committee on Genetic Effects of Atomic Radiation of the National Academy of Sciences, in which he said radioactive fall-out would cause 6,000 more "handicapped" babies (presumably U.S. only) in this generation and more in future generations, but that he thought it a "fair price" for the value of atomic tests.

The dispute over harm done from radiation seems to me to be more a matter of whether or not the harm is justified than whether or not there is any harm. Of course, there is less danger of any of us dying of bone cancer than there is of being hit by an automobile.

But what about our X-ray-happy doctors? How many people are they sending to an earlier grave with their X-rays? How much of the increased leukemia rate is due to radiological treatments given by doctors? The Iowa Tuberculosis Association has a mobile X-ray unit that goes from town to town to take chest X-rays of anyone over twenty-one years of age they can induce into their truck. They don't tell them they may die a little sooner, that they may get leukemia, or that their descendants may have defects.

WALTER GORMLY

Mount Vernon, Iowa

REVIEW

IN DEFENSE OF DESPERATION

THE best writers and critics of our time are desperate men. Almost without interruption or relief, they protest against their age, against the illusion of "progress," against the claim that modern man is a civilized human being. A good illustration of this temper is found in a review of a book of Baudelaire's letters, by Kenneth Rexroth, in the *Nation* for July 20. Rexroth writes:

. . . the tragedy of the modern world, the metaphysical horror, the social lie, the world ill, these are catch phrases masking total moral breakdown, the alienation of man from his work, from his fellows and from himself. Organized society in our epoch is deadly fraud from start to finish. We are so used to it that we forget, or never face, what men like Veblen, or Riesman, or C. Wright Mills mean in actual human terms.

Baudelaire has only an incidental importance in this statement, so that we need not examine the body of the review to understand it. What Rexroth is saying is that the artist reflects in his work the tragedy of the modern world, so that to understand the artist it is necessary to see the world as he has seen it. Similar comment was made by Lewis Mumford in *In the Name of Sanity*:

Let us not reproach the artist for telling us this message, which we have not the sensitivity to record or the courage to tell to ourselves: the message that the future, on the terms that it presents itself to us now, has become formless, valueless, meaningless: that in this irrational age, governed by absolute violence and pathological hate, our whole civilization might vanish from the face of the earth as completely as images of any sort have vanished from these pictures {of modern art}: as dismayingly as that little isle in the Pacific vanished from the surface of the ocean under the explosion of the hydrogen bomb. This is the new apocalypse, haunted by more terrible specters than the traditional Four Horsemen, as they appeared to the innocent eyes of John of Patmos—a revelation that promises neither a new heaven nor a new earth but an end that would nullify the whole long process of history. Let the painters who have faced this ultimate nothingness, who have found a

symbol for it, be understood if not honored: what they tell us is what we are all hiding from ourselves.

It is a question, of course, of "reality," and who has it—the poets and modern artists, or ourselves. Who suffers from aberration?

The artist who so declares against the modern world—the artist and the critic who supports him, and the social thinker (Veblen, Riesman, Mills) who says the same thing through rational analysis—upsets us, not because he finds things wrong with the world—we do that, too—but because his objection and protest are made in virtually *absolute* terms. He will not argue, he cannot be temporized with; he refuses the suggestion that the evils of our time are "relative" affairs.

How can you say, "Things are going to get better," to a man who asserts, as Rexroth asserts, that "Organized society in our epoch is deadly fraud from start to finish"? You can agree with him, or you can call him a "fanatic," but that is about all.

Suppose you call him a fanatic. This means that you think that the general pattern of human endeavor in our time directs human energy to worth-while ends, that a man need not become a revolutionist or a dissenter in order to lead a life of integrity. It means that you see nothing essentially wrong with the various doctrines of "success" and "security" which shape our national institutions and define the relations of the young with those institutions. It means, for example, that when you come across the fact that the brightest young men of our time are probably working in guided missile plants, you will not be disturbed, and that when you learn—as you can from the *Nation* for July 20—that in the past three years some seventy-five new magazines have been launched, most of them with titles like *Revealed*, *TV Scandal*, *Exposés*, *Uncensored Confessions*, *Cabaret*, *Hush-Hush*, *Bare*, *TNT*, and *Humbug*, you feel that modern technology is bringing the full measure of its blessings to the written word. It means that the statistics of mental illness leave

you calm, that you are not worried about the spread of alcoholism, and that you think teen-age crime is only a "phase" in the life of bored young people who will eventually settle down to business.

This may be a bit misleading. The artist-critic of our time does not read us a sermon on juvenile delinquency. Everybody is against juvenile delinquency. The artist is at odds with conventional standards of "goodness" and "respectability." He cries out against the fact that a man can produce nothing admirable, say nothing worth remembering, champion all the official hypocrisies of the age, yet go down in history as a "fine" member of the community. The artist sees society as caught in a muck of lies. Impotent against the bland front of well-publicized fatuities justifying the present, he makes himself into an exhibit of conscious satire—this, he shouts, is the art you deserve, and poses himself in the middle of the city dump.

Rexroth writes:

With the arrest of industrial and commercial civilization at the level of the French Restoration, French official culture disintegrates into a congeries of lies, like a heap of evil jackstraws. The only heroes that society has to offer are confidence men. It can provide the cast for no more than bitter comedy—Jonson's *Volpone*, Machiavelli's *Mandragola*—and what is the nineteenth-century novel, from Balzac or even Choderlos de Laclos, but the representation of this malignant mockery? Where the poet preserves an awareness of his prophetic responsibility, where he insists that poetry still is a symbolic criticism of values, he is forced to become his own tragic hero. . .

Baudelaire or Rimbaud or Celine face the monster all the time. The horrors of a world where man is wolf to man struggle all through every moment in their very blood-stream, like leukemia.

This portrait of the artist-as-victim may not attract us, but if Mumford is right—if the artist is telling us what we are all hiding from ourselves—then we need to regard him as a barometer of the health that is in us. And the critics who defend

the artists say that our time is in the clutches of wasting moral disease.

The familiar response to such judgments is usually the platitude that "life goes on," and it is more than a platitude. Life *does* go on. The voice of complacency assures us that men always find a way out of their dilemmas, that the long centuries of the past are all the promise we need that things will get better, or rather, that they are not so bad.

But does this assurance wholly apply? Is there anything about the present which distinguishes it from past epochs? There have always been agonizing prophets, and why should ours be any more accurate in their anticipations of doom than those of other ages?

Life, we suspect, has always "gone on" in the past for the reason that the arguments about culture and morality, in which prophets participate, have proceeded far above the heads of the great mass of mankind. In the past, men lived closer to the land, enjoying what was for the most part a protecting illiteracy. They knew nothing of the slogans of ideology. But increasingly, today, the great mass of mankind is being pried loose from the natural environment. Technology is forcing entire populations to live in an artificial world and to take their cues, not from the seasons and the weather, but from the speeches of politicians and the writings of propagandists. In the old days, "the social lie, the world ill," afflicted only the quality folk, while today it is beginning to afflict everybody.

Is, then, the agonized cry of the artist, his desperate reproach and his rejection of our civilization, a more profound insight into "reality" than the name-calling of those who complain that artists are fanatics and maladjusted neurotics? Does the artist see something that the rest of us do not see?

The man who has a well-paying job, as jobs go, nowadays, who reads the slick magazines and keeps "abreast of the times" by listening to the radio newscasts and the television

commentators—such a man, of whom there are many millions, is not likely to sense what the artist, or the critic like Riesman or Mills, is talking about. This man is a victim of the fraud, while the artist, who is also a victim, differs only in that he revolts against his victimization and fights against the conditions which have made him a victim.

We are not, of course, speaking of great men or great artists. The great man is able to make an affirmative statement in any age. But our portion of great men, these days, is extremely limited. One or two to a generation seems to be all that we can have, or deserve. So the problem, today, is to make the best of what we've got.

For the most part, the artist tries to describe the ugliness in our lives. His work is a kind of cultural self-contempt. Behind the ugliness and despair is a dream of emancipation. If he did not have this dream, he would have nothing to compare the modern world with, and nothing to excite his resistance and contempt. So it is this dream, more than anything else, which we need to learn to share with the artist.

Meanwhile, we can listen to the growing voices of those who announce their rejection of the world as we know it, and be grateful to them for exposing to view the shabby realities that, out of sheer habit, we have come to accept.

COMMENTARY

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ARTIST

THIS week's Review will probably draw some protest from artists, and rightly, we think, since it considers only one side of contemporary artistic expression—the side of rebellion and revulsion. Anyone with his eyes open can find beauty and serenity in the world, even in the world as it is, although other qualities make more insistent claim upon the artist's attention. But since it is Mumford whom we quote in defense of the "desperation" of the artist, we may take from him also a passage which bears another meaning. This passage is from Mumford's *Art and Technics*:

All that art is and does rests upon the fact that when man is in a healthy state, he takes life seriously, as something sacred and potentially significant: and he necessarily takes himself seriously, too, as a transmitter of life and a creator through his own special efforts, of new forms of life not given in the natural world. . . .

But under what conditions, today, can man be in a "healthy state"? Mumford speaks to this point:

The healthy art of our time is either the mediocre production of people too fatuous or complacent to be aware of what has been happening to the world—or it is the work of spiritual recluses, almost as withdrawn as the traditional Hindu or Christian hermits, artists who bathe tranquilly in the quiet springs of traditional life, but who avoid the strong, turbid currents of contemporary existence, which might knock them down or carry them away. . . . The fact that such artists live and quietly sustain themselves is in itself a good sign, though it reveals nothing about our social development, since this kind of artist has always found a cranny to grow in under the most unfavorable personal or social conditions.

What these self-enclosed artists reveal is the unshakable determination of life itself, as I think it was Amiel who said "even under conditions of maximum opposition by external forces."

There is something more, of course, to be said, but Mumford's observations comprehend the principle of continuity in human beings and the inner resources on which it feeds. That rare

blooms will grow on refuse heaps, that a natural therapy discovers to men the Promethean mystery of their being—these are truths which the revolutionist and dissenter ought never to forget, and which it is the duty of the artist to declare. The artist must be *more* than a mirror of the times; he must also find a way to continue the yea-saying which is the breath of his real life, and unite it with his protest. Art is more than a Rorschach blot, and poetry more than the whimper of defeat.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

MENTAL DISORGANIZATION

THE perfectly "organized," fully "integrated" human being is, indeed, a rarity—and this has always been so. However, in the age of psychiatry, most literate adults are made acutely conscious of the symptoms of disorganization which they sometimes detect in themselves and which are represented, in extreme form, by the statistics of mental patients requiring institutional care. Conscientious parents, even when tolerant of whatever vagaries or imperfections are evident in their own personalities, are becoming prone to anxiety over indications of emotional disturbance in their children. Often, the parent who worries over a child's moodiness or irrational behavior blames himself for being impatient or indifferent during the child's earlier years. And it is usually at about the time when the child is expected to become "rational" (in other words, semi-adult), that the concern begins. It is then that the worried parent turns to psychological literature. He may read case histories reporting the emotional disorganization of children more severely afflicted than his own—and he may, in the process, also become hypersensitive to his child's "antisocial" or moody demeanor.

What is perhaps not realized is that too great a preoccupation with the "case history" sort of psychological literature can easily do more harm than good. A worried parent is a tense parent, and the tense child, on the other hand, needs a relaxing emotional atmosphere. No one really helps a child by dwelling upon the negative side of behavior, no matter how even his temper or thorough the parent may be in endeavoring to work out a system of home therapy. The fearful or insecure child will benefit the most from adults who radiate a healthful optimism, who focus upon latent strengths and capacities for happiness rather than upon factors of inhibition. For this reason the child will sometimes feel more secure from

companionship with a friendly adult other than a parent, because these qualities are supplied.

Such are some of the dangers, for parents, in "the age of psychology." However, psychological literature covers a wide range, and much help is available if one seeks to understand *both* the child and himself. Erich Fromm, Bruno Bettelheim and Karen Horney have shown that the incipient neuroses of children and adults stem from the same general causes, even though the precise circumstances may be very different. We all, for instance, experience *some* of the symptoms of schizophrenia; the difference between the adult and the child lies in the fact that schizophrenic preoccupations in the adult lead to interruption of constructive endeavor, whereas the same emotional components in a child preclude the *initiation* of beneficially expressive behavior. Nearly everyone should be able to understand schizophrenia, precisely because anyone who is less than fully "integrated" in an emotional and mental sense belongs to the same club. The intelligent parent, in discovering a definite kinship between himself and an emotionally disturbed child, is in a far better position to do something with the child toward the end of mutual improvement. The case-history readers, we fear, are apt to find themselves trying to do something *to* the child—albeit for his benefit—in the same manner that the least percipient of our psychiatrists approach a patient as something "to be fixed." (See Erich Fromm's "Limitations of Psychoanalysis," reviewed in MANAS for June 12.)

An article in the August *Harper's* by Dr. Ian Stevenson, psychiatrist in the University of Virginia medical school, illustrates the manner in which schizophrenic distortion of reality is as much a part of the present stage of human evolution as it is a matter of specific illness and therapy. Dr. Stevenson explains in simple terms the basic connection between thought and emotion, and the temporary disturbance of the relationship:

When a particular problem has a high value it takes priority and temporarily excludes other thoughts from the field of consciousness. A person so occupied mentally may say then that he cannot get something off his mind. The thoughts which attempt to solve such an important problem carry with them strong feelings which we call emotions. Emotions in mild amounts impel us usefully toward constructive behavior. Fear warns us of danger and anger equips us to deal with it, at least in one way.

But just as fever which combats infection may harm when it becomes excessive, so emotions, if too strong and too enduring, can bring disorder rather than adaptation. For all emotions influence the train of thoughts by tending to suck in other thoughts of the same quality. An angry person may suddenly find himself thinking of old injuries he had believed long since forgotten but which the present anger stirs into his awareness. An angry or a frightened person thus exhibits what we call emotional thinking. The thoughts run in a groove cut by the dominant emotion. They pre-empt the field of consciousness; if other thoughts gain ascendancy for a moment, the more powerful emotional thoughts quickly obtrude again.

As these continue they become less and less representative of the external situation, and since they misrepresent the environment they no longer provide accurate guides to action. Behavior ceases to adapt the person appropriately to the environment. Other persons become offended and act to protect their own interests, often aggressively. Their responses then augment the original fears.

The "pre-emption of the field of consciousness by a dominant emotion" is expressed by children as a continually nagging emphasis on wanting or not wanting some specific thing to happen. The environment for the child is his home, and the parents in that home can easily become "offended." The child has refused to "be himself" in relation to the family and insists upon manifesting only that part of himself which represents a point of disturbance. Here we have the same situation as that described by Dr. Stevenson when discussing the emotionally disturbed adult, for he remarks that "this quality alone makes the patient difficult to understand, for himself as well as others. But as his fear mounts and his thoughts become more disorganized, his

ability to communicate falls off markedly. He may end by talking only allusively, telegraphically, and metaphorically. He uses a private symbolism."

But the tendency to speak telegraphically and metaphorically, to employ private symbolism, is particularly noticeable in disturbed children—or very little emotional disorganization, we might say, may produce this apparent result for the child, since he has not yet grown to a stage where he takes much pride in the maintenance of rational communication. In other words—and this point can never be made too often—the moody, uncommunicative child may not be as "disturbed" as the adult who loses interest in building or maintaining constructive continuity in interpersonal relations.

Particular interest lies in Dr. Stevenson's remark that "the main entrances to schizophrenia lie in the failure to master stressful situations. And the patient must go out the way he came in, otherwise events will force him back." Here the wish of the concerned parent to be able to "go back and start all over again" with a particular child finds a point of contact if the disturbed child "must go out the way he came in" to overcome his difficulty; a present symptom of faulty or reluctant communication simply provides a point of departure for building an improved relationship. In other words, the distressing behavior of a child may be usefully symptomatic, in the same manner that a sneeze announces a cold in the head. Theologians—and this includes the eminent Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr—have always been insistent that men recognize their sinful propensity. But what the age of psychiatry has done for us is to take the emphasis away from preoccupation of *evil*—which is irrational—and place it on the common indices of psychological immaturity, which is a *rational* approach. We are all "susceptible persons" unless we have reached at least the consistency in balance of an Albert Schweitzer, but this commonality of susceptibility, if understood, can become a foundation for positive efforts to eradicate weakness.

The summer vacation for children of school age can be either a very happy or a very gloomy time, depending upon the emotional components manifesting most strongly. The child who is mildly unsure of himself in the context of school relations may become bored, morose, and complaining, when the outside stimuli of day-to-day challenge in the classroom are removed. Such a child cannot be expected to be "self-reliant," or to initiate helpful and absorbing activities; he is simply not sure of himself, and this means that he doubts his capacity to create the conditions of his own happiness. It is during the summer months, we feel, that most parents face the greatest challenge of the year, for the child needs continuance of routines of mild discipline and, the chances are, something more. What he probably needs most is a closer integration with the daily lives of his parents, and the feeling that a mother or father is always ready to introduce him to some new form of enjoyable activity concerning which *they* derive satisfaction. Here and there one finds the apparently "integrated" child who may safely be left to initiate and roam at will. Such a child is easy to recognize; he is an inveterate enthusiast, he awakens in the morning with immediate thoughts of enjoyable projects. If you can have a child answering to this description, you are in great luck, for this child will be your benefactor.

FRONTIERS That "Universal Art Form"

As those whose lavish bread and butter comes from the motion picture industry often boast, the screen can lay claim to being an "art-form" which combines all others—drama, photographic composition, and what Budd Schulberg has called the "rhythm of motion." But as Schulberg also remarked, in his preface to the screen play of *Face in the Crowd*, "for the most part, in America, it has loomed as an overpowering giant who, when he opens his mouth, talks baby-talk."

The trouble with motion pictures is the unlimited possibilities they afford for use of eye-catching devices, coupled with a strong temptation to develop production technics at the expense of moving or impressive content. Also, the movies have talked "baby-talk" largely because an indiscriminating and frenetic public has elevated the masters of vapid excitement far above the position they deserve. Even magazines and newspapers known for fairly serious criticisms in other fields have tended to regard "the movies" with a special tolerance for infantile qualities. An example of this is found in a recent *Saturday Review* column, "SR Goes to the Movies," devoted to Stanley Kramer's *The Pride and the Passion*. The writer, Hollis Alpert, seems to find it difficult to do anything but praise a motion picture featuring Frank Sinatra and Cary Grant. His comments, at any rate, are typical of the sort of review which has nothing to do with *any* sort of "art form":

Some of the story was kept, new elements added, most of the history thrown out. Kramer then rounded up a star combination—Cary Grant, Frank Sinatra, Sophia Loren, not only because there were tailored parts for them in the picture, but because the combination guaranteed the financing he needed.

Almost any enterprising, fairly reputable producer could have gotten that far, but the distinctive qualities in Kramer made him go a lot farther. For one thing, he went to Spain for six months where he recruited a virtual army of Spaniards, obtained permission to use historic

monuments and shrines for settings, and organized one of the most extraordinary logistical operations in movie history. He, in other words, dragged the big gun over half of Spain, decided that for spectacle one must be truly spectacular—and set up his cameras on carefully scouted vantage points, used helicopters when there was no ideal vantage point, built several replicas of his cannon because of the rigors it would be put through, built a wall in front of the walls of Avila so that it wouldn't be necessary to knock down the real one. One result of all this effort is that the spectacle in "The Pride and the Passion" looks real.

It is this orientation which makes so many worth-while authors and playwrights, lured to Hollywood by obvious means, return to their garrets or to Broadway in disgust. The only reviews of motion pictures that really are reviews appear in the small-circulation magazines such as the *Nation*, *New Republic*, *Christian Century*, etc.

The psychological story of movie production in the past is summed up by Mr. Schulberg:

Conditioned to think of their mass audience as a retarded twelve-year-old, and encouraged to pollyannaism by various censorship groups, the big studio producer-managers tooled out their fifty-odd pictures a year with only an occasional nod to the demands of reality or the challenge of the intensely personal creative conviction. Now and then a *Grapes of Wrath*, an *Informer*, a *Lost Weekend* would cut through the asbestos curtain of play-it-safe. One picture in two hundred might reveal the unfathomable depths of the motion picture at its potential best.

Little wonder that writers who believed in themselves oriented themselves to film work in one of two ways: either they forsook the screen to devote themselves to media in which their voice was obeyed or at least respected; or they accepted work in Hollywood as a cynical, albeit craftsmanlike way of subsidizing the things they really wanted to do. But to conceive of writing the *really-want-to-do* pictures directly for the screen was to be Don Quixote at his most quixotic. Any self-respecting writer accumulated his paychecks and went back, like Faulkner or Odets or Maxwell Anderson or Edith Sitwell (and how many others whose stature has little or no relation to their screen achievements) to "their own work," the word that conveyed them most intimately.

Mr. Schulberg and Elia Kazan collaborated in the production of *A Face in the Crowd*. Mr. Kazan believes that the original genius of the writer is the essence of a good motion picture. So believing, *he* may actually improve on what the author has done, from genuine sympathy with it. (This happened, we think, with Tennessee Williams' *Baby Doll*.) Kazan, incidentally, is all in favor of the popularity of television, since it is precisely this development which encourages "off-beat," intelligent productions. The constructive result of TV dominance has become only gradually apparent, but the handwriting is on the wall and some of it, according to Mr. Kazan, is good to see. He writes:

The first sign that the old order was changing came in an odd but characteristic way: there was a certain loosening of the industry's self-imposed censorship code. There were departures from the frantic and crippling rule that *You must please everybody; you can't offend anybody*. An older law was operating at the box-office: if you try to please everybody, you don't please anybody.

At the same time, the unwritten taboos began to be relaxed. The superstition about "offbeat" material took a new turn. There seemed to be some mysterious plus in the "offbeat." Warily, story departments were instructed to look for subjects with this peculiar quality.

So now the writers—the fellows who used to sit in that clump in the farthest corner of the studio commissary—are being brought forward. A number of them have been moved "up" to non-writing jobs. They have been made producers and/or directors. Since it would seem obvious that writers are needed as writers, this may sound as inscrutably silly as other Hollywood behavior I've described—but it is at least a fumbling recognition that writers "have something" and that whatever it is, it's needed now. More reasonably, books and other stories that used to be thought unsuitable for pictures are being bought and tried. In a surprising number of cases, the "original author" is being asked to make his own screen version. Above all, writers are being invited, cajoled and very well paid to write original and serious pictures. This last is the big step and the big hope. One of the things I've done, against all business advice, is to upset the traditional balance and make the writer more important than the stars. I don't

think it's a mistake. The breakdown of the old standardized picture-making has made room for creative people. It is a boon to anyone who has something personal and strong to say. For art is nothing if it is not personal. It can't be homogenized. By its nature, it must disturb, stir up, enlighten and "offend."

The best thing about a Kazan picture is that it can be discussed and argued about in terms of values. Just try doing this with *The Pride and the Passion* or *The Ten Commandments!* Movies will not be bigger and better than ever. If they are better, it will be because they are smaller, trying to do a single job with integrity and a flare of creative enthusiasm. The most recent Academy Awards have gone to *From Here to Eternity*, *On the Waterfront* and *Marty*, not one of which resembled, either in tone, direction, or content, the sort of thing one had come to expect from Hollywood.