

On Choosing Right and Wrong

With the nation's tragedy still fresh in mind (the one-month mourning period ends today), and with the advent of the season traditionally devoted to "peace on earth, good will toward men," the nation's perennial introspection remains heightened.

What kind of a people are we? Are we in a period of moral decay? What are the causes of the increase in crime? In juvenile delinquency? Do we, as a nation, no longer know right from wrong?

These are valid questions, and they deserve thought. Answers, of course, will vary according to who provides them.

MARYA MANNES, a noted social critic and author, believes we have gone too far down the road of blaming others for our own shortcomings. In a recent article, she said:

"It's Society. It's Environment. It's a Broken Home. But it's hardly ever You. Today no one has to take any responsibility. The psychiatrist, the sociologist, the playwrights have gone a long way to see to that."

"A fellow commits a crime because he's basically insecure, because he hated his stepmother at nine, or because his sister needs an operation. A boy takes a bribe because his mother didn't love him (or overprotected him) or his brother bullied him."

"A policeman loans a store because his salary is too low. A city official accepts a payoff because it's offered to him. Members of minority groups, racial and otherwise, commit crimes because they are economically deprived or socially estranged."

MISS MANNES'S biting indictment has a lot of truth in it. It is true that often we are tempted to blame the ills of society on society itself, and thus exonerate the individual.

It is also true that each individual is and must be responsible for his own actions, and, because, to differing degrees, each individual has free choice and will power, each is capable of choosing whether to do right or wrong.

Still, it appears to us, Miss Mannes goes too far in her blanket indictment, and for two reasons. The first is that the vast majority of human beings DO know right from wrong, and choose to adhere to the right. The second is that environmental factors DO make it far more difficult for some to make such a choice than it is for others.

ONE is tempted to suspect that Miss Mannes has rarely been hungry, or cold, or ostracized because of her color, or been a member of a family of six or eight or ten jammed into one room, or out searching vainly for a job, or tried to subsist and maintain a family on a welfare hand-out after her husband has left her.

It is true that a number of individuals have overcome these and other handicaps to become productive and respected citizens. And the more credit to them. They did it through a particular combination of brains and guts and determination which is not the lot of all men.

How much easier it is for one with the same combination to make a success if, at the same time, he does not have to combat the handicaps which are the lot of the poor.

THE ancient argument between heredity and environment, and how much each affects each life, is part of the same picture.

Some people simply are blessed with more intelligence, more drive, more ability, than others. And some people have had the advantage of loving homes, of superior education, of the assurance of three square meals a day.

When these two happy conditions coincide, the result is more apt than not to be an outstanding individual.

When the opposite conditions coincide, the chances are that the result will be one of the unhappy many who are fated to remain forever at the bottom of the ladder.

STILL, Miss Mannes has a point, and we agree with her when she says that too much of the blame for social evils is foisted off on the nearest handy excuse, and that not enough emphasis is put upon personal responsibility, personal willingness to see the difference between right and wrong, and willingness to make the right choice.

She said: "If the line between right and wrong is erased, there is no defense against the anarchy of evil. Before this happens—and it is by no means far away—it might be well for the schools of the nation to substitute for the controversial prayer a daily lesson in ethics, law and responsibility to society that would fortify conscience as exercise strengthens muscles."

Such teachings have long been the province of the church and, more important, the home. If these abdicate the responsibility, should not the schools attempt to take up the torch?—E. A.

Sen. Morse Replies

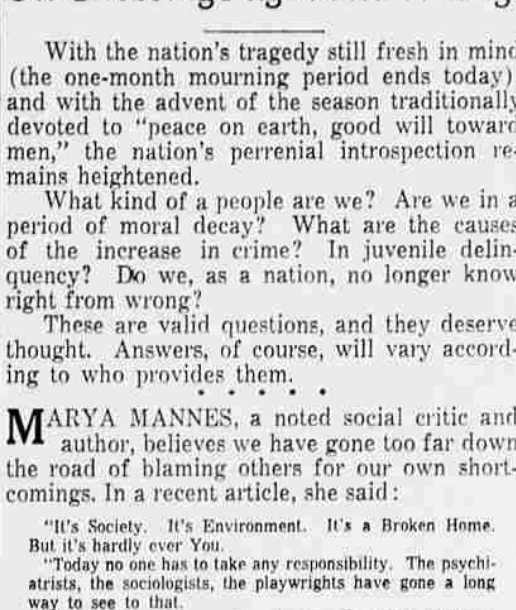
Elsewhere in this section today appears a longish letter from Sen. Wayne L. Morse, in reply to a Mail Tribune editorial of Dec. 10.

We are glad to publish it. Still, having re-read the editorial in question in light of the Senator's comments, we see no reason to make any change in our opinions.

We disagree on the necessity for condemnation in any effective Oregon Dunes National Seashore bill. We disagree on his position on the foreign aid bill.

Despite the disagreements, we retain a high respect, and considerable affection, for Senator Morse, whom we have known for some 30 years. To us, however, he remains an enigma, and—to the degree that he has failed to fulfill his brilliant potentialities—a tragic figure.—E. A.

Temporary Visa



Matter of Fact

By Joseph Alsop

(c) New York Herald Tribune Syndicate

BODIES DRIFTING IN MIST WASHINGTON — "It's like watching bodies drifting through a mist. We can see the direction of movement. We know the movement has been going on for several months. But we can't measure this movement, much less be quite sure of its immediate or ultimate purpose."

In this suggestive but non-committal manner, one of those who man the local watchtowers recently described the Soviets' gradual but persistent reinforcement of their Chinese frontier. The region to which the reinforcement is mainly directed is the border of the most remote and vulnerable of all the provinces of Communist China, Sinkiang, in Central Asia.

Attention was first concentrated on the Sino-Soviet border last September, when one of Moscow's more violent denunciations of Peking included a bitter complaint against "5,000 border violations" by Chinese Communist troops and citizens. An intensified watch has been kept since then.

By the normal rules of demagogical interpretation, it must be added, the Moscow statement of last September was mainly significant for another passage warning the Peking leaders that they could count on no support from "the armed might of the socialist camp" if they pursued certain Chinese "aims and interests" which did not deserve that support.

At that time, there seemed to be some possibility that the Chinese might be considering another attack on the still undefended Indian border. Thus the September statement had to be interpreted primarily as a deterrent reminder that the Chinese might have trouble on their own border if they made further trouble on the Indian border.

What is so striking about the Soviets' reinforcement of their border with China is the fact that it has been continuing, without remission, ever since last September, and therefore longer after there was any likelihood of another Chinese adventure against India.

The frontiers of Sinkiang which are now being reinforced, are just about the most remote and least penetrable area of the Soviet Union. Thus it has been learned only within the last year that quite serious border fighting broke out in this area as early as 1960, just after Sino-Soviet relations soured for good.

It is not exaggerating, in fact to say that there was a brief border battle between Soviet and Chinese troops, for organized military units were engaged on each side. Since news of this battle took nearly three years to seep westwards, it can be seen why the present position on the Sinkiang frontier is hard to estimate precisely.

As to the Soviet troop build-up on this remote frontier, there can be little doubt any longer, even though the watchers only see "bodies drifting through a mist." Soviet military publications have printed warnings. Soviet troops are known with certainty to have been removed from Poland, and other troops are thought to have been transferred from East Germany.

As to the motive of this Soviet troop build-up, however, there are almost no limits on speculation. One suggestive item of evidence is the fact that the Poles recently made a fairly desperate effort to damp down the Sino-Soviet dispute. Wladyslaw Gomułka sent personal emissaries for this purpose, to Moscow, to Peking, to Belgrade, and to Rome, and Paris for meetings with the French and Italian Communist leaders.

Judging by the ever-mounting venom and hysteria of the Peking attacks on Nikita S. Khrushchev, the Gomułka effort has got nowhere, at least as yet. Moreover, the Poles, like all the other Eastern European Communists, enjoy and benefit from the freedom of action conferred on them by the Moscow-Peking split. Hence it seems likely that Gomułka was trying to prevent something worse than a mere split.

Again, the area being reinforced by the Soviets is decidedly suggestive. For a sustained border conflict in Sinkiang, so remote from the center and so hard to supply, would certainly impose a maximum strain on the crazy Chinese Communist economic - military machine, even if the border conflict were carefully limited. If Moscow wants to test the possibilities of causing an economic - military collapse in Communist China, the Sinkiang border is a good place for a modest experiment of this sort.

The great majority of analysts until very recently pooh-poohed the smallest suggestion that really had trouble might be approaching on the Sino - Soviet border. Very likely, this conservative view of the matter is still the correct one. But it has to be noted that border trouble has lately begun to be regarded as "a real possibility" - not a probability, mind you, but a possibility serious enough to be weighed with vivid, somewhat anxious interest.

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Going still further behind these words, we discern the implied belief that all men are God's creatures and that we were all created in His image—that "we all have one Father." If we hate, hurt, or vilify our neighbors, we are hating, hurting, or vilifying God's image and God's children. In loving and helping our neighbors, we love and serve God. We are doing His will on earth.

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GREAT IDEAS...



From the Great Books

By Mortimer J. Adler

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LOVE OF FELLOW MAN Dear Dr. Adler: Today we hear much about love discussed in our churches as related to God and our fellow man. In the movies, on the stage, and on television, love is prayed for us daily. We hear songs of love in opera, sung by singers on the stage, on our radios and on recorded music. Yet the following question is asked by many people today: What is love? What is the basic teaching in our tradition about the love between man and his fellow man?

Mrs. Lucille Hillin 1118 Stanley Stillwater, Okla.

Dear Mrs. Hillin: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This simple precept in Leviticus sums up the essential moral message of Biblical faith according to Jesus of Nazareth and the Talmudic sages. From it we may derive guidance as to the proper relation among men in our present situation.

The precept is, indeed, a simple one, but like many seemingly simple Biblical injunctions, it presents knotty problems of interpretation. If we take the saying literally, it seems to mean that we should take the attitude of self-regard and self-care as a model for our attitude toward others—that we should look upon the life and welfare of another as if it were our own. Then the commandment becomes, "Love your neighbor as if he were yourself."

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Today and Tomorrow



By Walter Lippmann

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FRUGALITY AND RETRENCHMENT In supporting Secretary McNamara's efforts to cut back military spending on superfluous installations, President Johnson is no doubt improving the prospects of his tax bill. But at the same time he has lifted the cover on a contradiction in our public life. The contradiction is between what we do and what it is proper for public men to say it should be.

For the fact is that government—federal, state and local—buys about a fifth of the goods and services produced by the American economy. To cut back this public spending substantially would produce a strong reaction in employment and in business.

Thus, the two Republican senators from New York reacted at once when they heard that seven installations in New York State might be closed down or their operations reduced.

ACTUALLY, the McNamara economies are a mere nibble at the immense costs of the defense establishment. The economy administered by the Pentagon is over two-thirds as large as the whole economy of Great Britain.

Our military supply system is now some 17 times larger than the largest private enterprise, namely gigantic General Motors complex.

In seven states, employment in defense industries is from 20 per cent (Arizona) to 30 per cent (Kansas) of total manufacturing employment.

In fact, then, the United States economy is no longer a plain private enterprise system. Under the impact of the second world war and of the armaments of the cold war, the American economy has become an organic mixture of public and private money, public and private management. Any serious reduction of public spending must, therefore, have far-reaching effects on the whole economy.

TODAY, the average work week is slightly under 40 hours. The unions, seeking to spread employment, so that a larger percentage of our population may be employed, are working for a 35 hour week.

Joseph Prendergrass, of the National Recreation Association, predicts that within a century the average work week in America will be SEVEN hours.

Herbert Hoover, one of our great thinkers, said many years ago: "This civilization of ours is not going to depend on what we do while we work, but on what we do in our TIME OFF."

THAT'S what Mr. Prendergrass and his National Recreation Association are thinking about when he says that within a century the American work week will be down to seven hours.

What he means is that if and when the American work week gets down to something like seven hours it's going to be necessary for Americans to learn how to spend a large share of their time in WHOLESOME PLAY.

Otherwise our nation will go to the dogs.

QUESTION — suggested by reading a lot of newspapers and listening to a lot of radio and TV broadcasts: How can you pass a law that will prevent the spread of juvenile delinquency—of which we read and hear so much?

PERSONALLY, I doubt if it can be done by passing a law—or a whole batch of laws. The prevention of juvenile delinquency starts in the home. If the home training is right and sincere and honest and effective, there will be relatively little juvenile delinquency.

We shall not soon forget November twenty-second; but it is December twenty-fifth that endures of itself. To the supracosts of any color, to the Castrols and Birchites and all of their spirit, this writer would like to direct some familiar words of uncertain authorship but certain meaning:

"No heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today. Take heaven. No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present instant. Take peace. The gloom of the world is but a shadow; behind it, yet within reach, is joy. Take joy. And so, at this Christmas time, I greet you with the prayer that for you, now and forever, the day breaks and the shadows flee away."

Our bruise, said Maritain, is of an evangelical nature; it has produced compassion. It is "the deepest reason for the sense of mercy and pity, and the sense of responsibility toward all those in distress, which are rooted in the collective American psyche, deep beneath the hardness and harshness of the hunt for material interests. . . . This spark of the Gospel lying deep in people who more often than not do not think at all of the Gospel, is not a thing that one speaks of. . . . It exists, however, and is active in the great mass of the nation. And what is more valuable in this poor world than to find a trace of Gospel fraternal love active among men?"

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This is the second time in one generation that such a concatenation of events has scraped the bones of our being. The first time was the December season of 1941 when we had to try to believe that all men are brothers and that love shall conquer hatred, hard upon the stunning act of organized lunacy known as Pearl Harbor. Twice this

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The Day Breaks; The Shadows Flee Away



By ERIC SEVAREID

(Distributed 1963 By The Mail Syndicate, Inc.)

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Certainly empathy and sympathy with the other person is bound to result in a more humane and understanding how he feels. The reason for this sympathy, however, lies in something more than individual feelings; it lies in human community and brotherhood. We are bound together in kinship, man with his fellowman, with his "brother," or "neighbor," or the "children of his people."

Going still further behind these words, we discern the implied belief that all men are God's creatures and that we were all created in His image—that "we all have one Father." If we hate, hurt, or vilify our neighbors, we are hating, hurting, or vilifying God's image and God's children. In loving and helping our neighbors, we love and serve God. We are doing His will on earth.

Love, then, is something more than fellow-feeling and good will. Love, let us remember, is commanded—as a duty to God—and is grounded in the ultimate source and order of things. The reason given for the precept in Leviticus is simply: "I am the Lord." Love is required of us as a matter of justice under the law of the Creator and Ruler of the universe. And justice is embodied in acts of loving-kindness—in the works of love.

But what does the word "neighbor" mean in the precept? Does it mean, as the context seems to indicate, a tribal brother, a member of one's own nation, somebody of one's own racial origin? Such an interpretation is belied by a later verse in the same chapter of Leviticus: "But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and you shall love him as thyself." The love of "strangers" is enjoined 36 times in the Old Testament, and is often coupled with the reminder that the Jews themselves were strangers in