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MAN IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY:
ALIENATION AND ANOMIE

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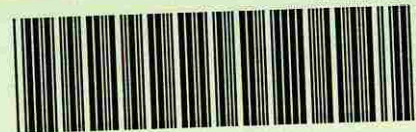
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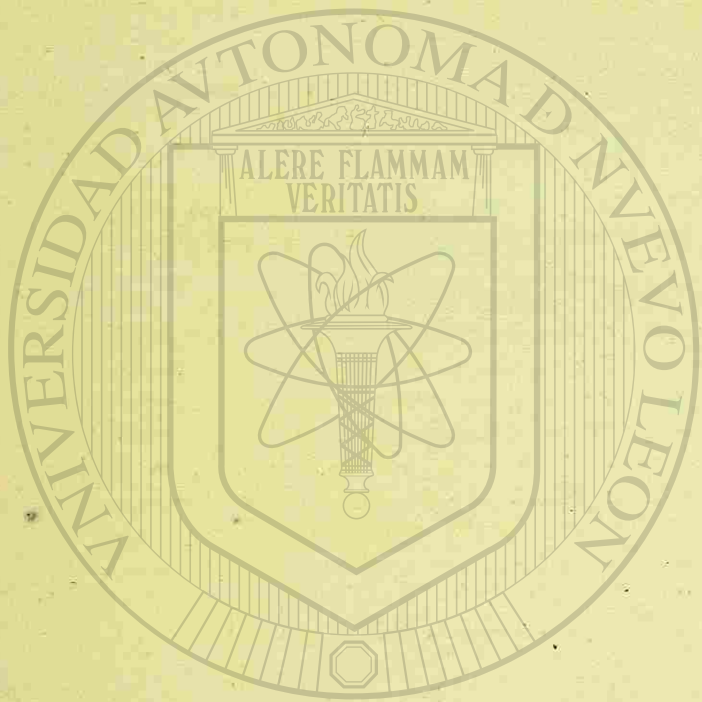
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MAN IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: ALIENATION
AND ANOMIE *

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THE CENTRAL THEME of the topic here developed involves the philosophical prospects of the day, or general trends in social thought and ideologies, the human condition of man including the question of man as a historical being, and something of the conditions of human life in the world today. These general questions lead us to the persistent and pervasive problem that the modern world confronts, the problem of widespread alienation, its frustrations and anxieties, together with the anomie of the present generation — its tendency to reject the authority of all institutions and value systems of the past. Finally, I shall consider the pathways of the mind and spirit, creativity and social goodwill, as they relate to man's place in the world.

TWO TRENDS IN PRESENT-DAY THOUGHT

One may distinguish two radically different trends or schools of thought in the world today. These two modes of thinking contradict each other in many ways, though also agreeing in some. Taken together they constitute a basic dialectic or dialog in the contemporary intellectual world. They are:

1. Naturalist-existentialist-relativist-behaviorist.
2. Normative-idealist-neoThomist-platonic-neoKantian-spiritualist (sometimes also existentialist).

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The first of these two trends reveals a central theory of the nature and reality of knowledge connected with a naturalistic concept of being which is usually non eleatic and skeptical of the humanity of man.

The second trend in thought today is that of the normative idealist. In some cases it tends to be neo-Thomist, attempting a modern reinterpretation of classical religious or theological thought. Sometimes it is more platonic, neo-Kantian, or spiritual in the broad humanistic sense. Under this heading may be grouped a wide range of differing trends which have the common denominator of searching for a norm and asserting the fundamental reality of the ideal.

Relativist and existentialist theories are central to our knowledge of the physical world today, as well as to knowledge of the human or social world. They tend to reject the possibility of universal standards or norms as merely subjective. Unhappily, in the popular view relativism and existentialism have often come to mean to the present generation that ideas are nothing more than opinions. Since normative principles are all subjective in this way of thinking, nothing can be either good or bad from an ethical standpoint; it can only have a certain relationship to a situation. Hence, we have what is called the situational ethic.

In accordance with this pattern of thinking it is easy to fall into the trap that no legitimate basis for authority exists in society because there is no demonstrable principle upon which authority can rest. The next stage through which much of the popular thinking of today goes, though it does not proceed logically from the preceding stage, is to assume that because no normative principle for authority can be demonstrated, all authority is evil. It is bad, the reasoning goes, because it limits the essential freedom that makes one person's opinion as good as another person's opinion, just as true as another person's opinion.

This stage brings us to the essential anarchism of the anti-establishment popular psychology of today. As already suggested, this anarchism does not necessarily follow from a commitment to the existentialist and relativist point of view. In general, one finds that most scientists and careful students who accept as scientifically necessary this view of the truth of relativism and of existence as truth, still believe that is possible within this existentialist-relativist context to define norms or standards.

At this point it may be appropriate to point out that the problem of norms raises the question of the significance of historical tradition and the meaning of history. One finds today, specially among the youthful generation—the generation I am in contact with as a university professor—that the existentialist relativist behaviorist point of view leads to a rejection of the significance

or the meaning of historical experience. It is not necessarily the case that the second of two viewpoints mentioned, the normative one, should be historical. Norms may be arrived at, in various ways, upon the basis of a philosophy of man's nature, for example, or upon theological bases. But some historical thought is commonly found among those thinkers who embrace the normative point of view.

TWO ATTITUDES TOWARD PHILOSOPHY: ANTONIO CASO

Another approach to contemporary thinking about the relationship of man to society appears in the thought of the Mexican philosopher, Antonio Caso. In one of his brilliant essays Caso distinguished these two "attitudes toward philosophy."

DOS ACTITUDES HACIA LA FILOSOFÍA

1. HEROICA: inventivo, entusiasmado, intrépido, problemático. PLATON, PLOTINO, AGUSTIN, BLAS PASCAL, HENRI BERGSON, MAX SCHELER.
2. DISCRETO: objetivo, sereno, lógico, débil. ARISTOTELES, CLEMENTE DE ALEJANDRIA, RENE DESCARTES, MANUEL KANT, EDMUNDO HUSSERL.

The "Heroic" thought, according to Caso, is concerned with the solution of problems. In this category he places such great philosophers as Plato, Plotinus, Saint Augustine, Blas Pascal and Henri Bergson of France, and Max Scheler of Germany. Today, we ascribe this kind of thinking to the activist—to one who believes that philosophy is true only as it is expressed in action and that it inevitably calls for action. In the literary tradition of the United States, Henry Thoreau was such a philosopher-activist who believed that the only true philosophy was the philosophy that was lived by. Henry Thoreau lived his philosophy, going to prison in passive resistance against the poll tax, because it supported a government which tolerated slavery. He was visited in prison by his good friend the poet, essayist, philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who is said to have asked Thoreau, "Henry, why are you here?" Thoreau replied: "Waldo, why are you not here?"¹ This reaction of Thoreau is that of the activist: it is the *heroica* of which Caso speaks.

¹ Quoted in the "Introduction" by Joseph L. King to Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (New York: Macmillan, 1929). p. xv.

In the second of these attitudes toward philosophy, the *discreto*, or "discreet", Caso seems to have been describing himself. Certainly, the term would well apply in general to Antonio Caso's own attitude toward philosophy. But it could not apply uniformly, for at one point Caso left the university in protest against its educational philosophy. The "discreet" philosopher is objective, *sereno*, *lógico*, perhaps *débil*, humble in his weakness. In this class Caso places such great figures as Aristotle, Clement of Alexandria, René Descartes of France, Emmanuel Kant of Germany and Edmundo Husserl, the 20th century existentialist philosopher of Germany.

The *discreto* today is the scientific thinker, detached in his thought. Like Emmanuel Kant, he may insist upon what Kant described as the "categorical imperative" that requires the individual to act in accordance with values and norms that cannot be demonstrated empirically or logically. Some of the most significant trends in thought today are of this general character. They are spiritual in some sense, insisting upon the philosophical possibility of establishing value systems, rather than upon a rule or principle that can be demonstrated empirically or logically, even though they rest chiefly upon what man as man believes to be true.

Obviously, these two classifications of thought, as outlined by Antonio Caso, do not describe the intellectual problem of today from all points of view. They are merely two basic ways of analysis which have a fundamental relevance to understanding the questioning going on in the world today. They are forms of analysis concerned with the nature of truth and its relationship to action.²

THE BASIC SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE

But if one turns from these questions of the form of thought to the questions of substance, that is to say to questions of the social order, social change, social movements and social behavior, other ways of analyzing the contemporary scene appear. In this author's view the most basic issue may be stated in the following simple form:

² "Heroísmo filosófico", in *Ensayos críticos y polémicos* (México: Cultura, 1922), pp. 67-68. Examples of philosophers were given in *Historia y antología del pensamiento filosófico*. (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1926), pp. 8-13. See also the comment in John H. Haddox, *Antonio Caso* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), p. 14.

1. IS THE GOOD LIFE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE GOOD SOCIETY (SOCIALISM)?
2. OR IS THE GOOD SOCIETY ACHIEVED THROUGH THE GOOD INDIVIDUAL?

Ideologies and political leaders today tend to embrace and to act upon the basis of one or the other of these two assumptions. The difference between the two explains to a considerable degree the meaning of the increasingly polarized political activity.

The trend toward polarized ideologies is so noticeable that many writers and thinkers today have pointed the finger particularly at this central question as the great intellectual problem that society faces today in its rapid social change. In simple terms the issue is that of the relationship of man and his humanity to society. Obviously, the first point of view stated above is the one most closely identified with the various varieties of socialist thought. This does not necessarily mean thought that derives from Karl Marx. Rather, embraces all social theories which assume that the structure of society produces the good life, as against theories that propose the human person as the essential element and argue that by improving the life of human beings one creates the good society.

This first proposition assumes either that the will of God or the natural law of the Universe, or possibly some combination of both of these as in the pantheism of Spinoza, is best expressed in these abstract structures of society. A famous example of this pantheist or quasi pantheist view appears in the ambivalent phrase in the United States Declaration of Independence which speaks of national independence as a right under "the laws of nature and nature's God." This first point of view assumes that although man is a child of God and/or a child of nature, he achieves his human character from the society or the culture of which he is a part.

This is Marxist doctrine, but it is also theory of Thomas Hobbes, (1588-1679) of Nicole Machiavelli (1469-1527), and of many other writers on the problem of a political and social order. Their view is that man is civilized by law and institutions — by virtue of a kind of law of necessity. This is the view of many, but not all, revolutionaries today who say that the only hope for mankind is a complete revolution in the structure of society. But it is also the point of view of many advocates of gradual and peaceful change.

The second point of view assumes, and it has many great exponents, that man either as a child of God having something of God's nature in him, or as a child of nature, has in him the reason, the good sense, and the good will to love his fellowman and to seek his own improvement in the companionship

of others. We may venture to say there is no greater common link between the tradition of Christian thought and the tradition of democratic thought than this basic concept that democracy rests upon the love of man for mankind. An eloquent expression of this idea appears in the writing of Esteban Echeverría of Argentina, one of the famous "Generation of 1837", in his *Dogma Socialista*. But the idea is by no means original with Echeverría and his group of the Association of May. It was expressed by Jean Jacques Rousseau and has roots in the answer of Jesus to the question of the Pharisee, "What is the great commandment?" His reply was: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and your neighbor as yourself." This Christian commandment finds secular expression in the democratic point of view that the good society is built on the love of man for mankind.

Antonio Caso, and many others, have pointed out that St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, in different ways, effected a kind of reconciliation of these two divergent points of view, in the sense that neither was true to the exclusion of the other. This "scholastic" view may well be the best and most fundamental approach to the theory of the contemporary revolutionary movements which assume that a revolutionary change in social structure is essential before one can begin to achieve justice and the good life. Indeed, when social theory is considered in terms of these two alternatives here presented, the truth becomes obvious that really great minds in our intellectual tradition have always pointed out. That neither of these two opposing views can be exclusively true. A solution must be found in the logical relationship of one to the other. Exclusive commitment to either point of view is dangerous in terms of the social action that may result from it. At the same time, however, we must remember that these two opposing theories of society rest upon such divergent philosophical concepts of the value of truth and existence that many scholars say no reconciliation is possible.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF MAN TO SOCIETY: THREE MODELS

Mario Laserna, a spokesman for one wing of the Conservative party in Colombia, has suggested these three "models" for thinking about the relationship of man to society:³

1. INDIVIDUALISMO RADICAL

BASE: Naturalista-biológica

ORGANISMO BASICO: El individuo

³ *Individuo y sociedad* (Bogotá, 1969), pp. 33-36.

2. COLECTIVISMO RADICAL (Authoritarianismo de Führer-prinzip, partido, o clase social)

BASE: Positivista-biológica

ORGANISMO BASICO: La sociedad

3. EL MODELO HUMANISTA TRADICIONAL

BASE: Cultura humana

ORGANISMO BASICO: ?

Despite the fact that Laserna is writing as the spokesman for an ideological position, he has given an interesting and, on the whole, an objective presentation of three possible approaches to thinking about society. What he calls "actitudes" or "modelos" are more precisely models of positions or attitudes rather than models of thought. But I find them especially interesting because they spring from a consideration of the two alternatives we have just discussed.

The first model is that of radical individualism. Here one begins by assuming that the important thing about human society is the biological nature of man as a being. The model is that of man as part of the animal world, so that his characteristics as a biological being are the basis upon which one considers the social problem. The result of this approach, then, is to see that the social organism of fundamental importance in the individual.

The second attitude, that of radical collectivism, places us in the cross-fire of the French manner of distinguishing between the political right "derecha radical" and the political left, or "izquierda radical". Laserna's position is that whether izquierda or derecha, this radical collectivism is the authoritarianism of the clan, or of a party, or of a class. The basis of this collectivism is "positivista biológica", by which he means that it rests upon social principles derived from looking upon society as an organism. Hence the organism for this model or attitude is the biological character, not of the individual, not of the social animal, but of society itself. Within this model society is treated in accordance with the positivist pattern of thinking in a kind of Darwinian or biological evolutionary form as a social organism; it is a social organism which obeys biological principles. This pattern of thinking resembles the ideas in Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, in which he treated cultures morphologically, comparing them as biological forms. If this second model of Laserna is examined alongside the previous definition of the basic issue in society — that of the primacy of society over the individual — it appears clearly to assume that man's humanity and the good life come to him through social structure.

What is particularly significant in Mario Laserna's presentation of this concept is that this model applies equally to the radical left and to the radical right. It embraces both the Leninist concept of dictatorship of the party of the

proletariat and something approaching the fascist concept. In both cases, the authoritarian approach suppresses the initiative of the individual in the belief that the way to achieve the good life for the individual is through imposing radical change in social structure.

The third of Laserna's models is what he himself proposes. It is the model of traditional humanism, of the humanism that rests its case upon the tradition of religion and upon the tradition of culture. To Laserna, this means those values, standards, and attitudes that have come down to the present out of the past; they are essentially concerned, not with society as a collective structure, but with man as man, either as an individual or as a family or group. What Laserna appears to be trying to say here, in a very general sense, is that some kind of merging of the first two attitudes he has stated is the only possible answer in accordance with an honest recognition of human values as the basis for social action. Although Laserna does not specify his idea of the corresponding basic institution, it would appear to be something within the traditional structure of family-church-community-society-state.

This third attitude or model also seems to be essentially one that analyzes the social problem against historical experience. If so, we are led to an important series of questions as to what we understand by the historical way. These questions seem especially important today, when so much of the present generation is rejecting the relevance of historical experience and of historical thinking. In considering the role of tradition we confront the whole question of the nature and meaning of human history.

THREE THEORETICAL APPROACHES

These three models of Laserna suggest three basically different theoretical approaches to understanding the relationship of man to society. His first model resembles that of the traditional (Christian) natural law, as developed by Saint Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Francisco Vitoria, and Francisco Suárez. It is Aristotelian and Thomistic. The second rests upon empirical sociological views as developed in nineteenth century positivism and Marxism, expressing a kind of natural law of empirical-historical derivation. It is also akin to twentieth century psychological and socio-analytical thought, as for example in the thought of Erich Fromm:

Laserna's third model, in emphasizing the role of human culture, and by implication the importance of historical tradition, raises the question of a third and more distinctively historical approach. To be sure, both Marxism and positivism rest upon a "scientific" view of history in which history provided

the basis of a science of society, and it is very important today to emphasize that the Marxist social theory of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels rested essentially upon their scientific historic materialism. As you will recall, the essentials of this Marxist historical view were that society was basically an economic phenomenon, that the system of production determined all aspects of the social order, including religion and philosophy, and that the basic social structure changed when control of the system of production (the "objective conditions") became such a narrow monopoly that it could be overthrown by an uprising of the proletariat. This was what Marx and his followers derived from the study of history, and upon these bases they erected their science of law and society.

Actually, the difference was not great between this view of history as the basis of a social order and that of such non-Marxists of the nineteenth century who developed what we call our science of sociology as Auguste Comte of France and Herbert Spencer of England. Their view of history was different from the Marxist view, but was like Marxism in resting the science of society upon principles derived from history.

But while the historical basis of all theory of social action was equally clear in these two streams of nineteenth century thought, the differences were likewise fundamental. The sociologists Comte and Spencer did not adopt historical materialism, nor did they view history as a struggle of classes. Rather, they saw the process of history as the gradual liberation of man's mind from superstition, so that increasingly man and society became reasonable, coming under the control of institutions based upon knowledge and reason rather than upon force. As society progressed it became more highly structured. These structures consisted of laws that represented intelligent action to deal with social problems. An increasingly complicated and institutionalized social order, working through an evolutionary process, eventually produced the good society.

The important thing to notice is the extent to which most of the thought of the nineteenth century, whether positivist or Marxist, rested upon certain simple conclusions that were drawn from the study of history. As one looks at the world today, seeing the significance of this kind of historical thought rejected, it begins to appear how great the twentieth century revolution in thought has been. One can either say that this rejection makes it important to get back to some kind of historical basis of thinking or one can say about history, with what is perhaps the majority among our youth today, "Eso no me dice nada" — that history means nothing to us and that only in the contemporary world can we look for solutions to our problems. This historical skepticism, as we shall note, is a major element in the alienation and anomie so characteristic of our intellectual age.

But this sociological history, whether Marxist or positivist, is not the really historical way of thinking. In fact, both Marxism and positivism, while laying a scientific historical basis for social science, rejected all *philosophy* of history as metaphysical. So, one must also ask of anyone defending an historical way of thinking. Is this Marxist or positivist "scientific" history? Is it the classic view, as old as Saint Augustine and repeated, in a sense, in Giambattista Vico's *New Science*? Or is it the idealistic view of history, seeing history as the manifestation of man's thought, becoming reality through man's action? This is the neo-Kantian view of history, one that is not too far from the idea of the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset — from his "vital" concept of law and history.

Ortega's philosophy of history has had considerable influence upon the present generation of intellectuals, particularly in Spanish America. It is also the idea represented in part in the contemporary Spanish philosopher, Julián Marías, who has popularized the Ortegian interpretation of history as "the method of the generations" (*El método de las generaciones*). The Marías historical method is an existentialist idealist interpretation of history which assumes that each generation makes a new formulation of values and principles, which the generation then proceeds to give reality by turning these ideas into facts.⁴

Finally, we may ask, is the historical theory better defined as institutional, a history that also centers around the ideas upon which institutions are built. This theory found expression in the United States, for instance, in the work of the historian James Harvey Robinson. In the Spanish tradition it is represented in the work of Rafael Altamira of Spain, of Ricardo Levene of Argentina, and of Silvio Zavala of Mexico. In considering the problem of revolutionary thought today, the ideas expressed by this trio have a special relevance, precisely because they view the process of social change as it finds expression in institutional changes that embody ideas.

THREE ASPECTS OF MAN'S HUMAN CONDITION

1. MAN AS BIOLOGICAL BEING (Physiological)
2. MAN AS SOCIAL BEING (Psychological - sociological)

⁴ José Ortega y Gasset, *History as a System and Other Essays toward a Philosophy of History* (New York: W. N. Norton & Co. 1962); Julián Marías, *El Método de las Generaciones* (3a. ed. Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1961).

3. MAN AS HISTORICAL BEING (Cultural - historical - anthropological)

Historical Materialist View: Economic motivation to action. Philosophical - idealist Historical View: Values and beliefs as basis of human action.

One may consider the human condition of man today in terms of three fundamental aspects. These are also aspects of man's capacity or power to act in society. One may look at the condition of man as a biological being, one may look at his condition as a social being, or one may look at his condition as a historical being. If one looks at man as a biological being, he is looking at his physiological condition, that is to say his health, his housing, his material well-being, the aspects of his living as a biological organism. If one looks at man as a social being, one looks at his psychology, at his intellectual life, at his beliefs, at his standards of behavior, at his ethics, at his esthetics. In short, one look at man in terms of social or group behavior of how men think and react toward each other and toward the society of which they are a part.

But when man is considered as a historical or cultural being, he is considered not just in terms of the way in which his mind operates — his psychology, his mind, his whole mental and psychological and nervous aspects. He is also considered in the cultural and historical setting in which he has developed and in his reaction to this setting. The last work of the Spanish philosopher José Gaos, recently published in Mexico where he spent the last decades of his life, consists of his lectures on anthropological philosophy given at the National University of Mexico. This is perhaps one of the more philosophical approaches that can be made to a study of man in his human condition as a historical being.⁵

But when man is regarded as an historical being from the standpoint of his power to act in society — or to be organized for action — it is necessary to make a choice which is not always clearly enough made in the thinking of the present day between two views of history we have previously discussed. We must choose between historical materialism, in which the basis of history is seen as the system of economic production, and the essentially idealist approach to history. This distinction becomes particularly important when it is remembered that historical understanding is an essential element of power. How people look at society today — and how they act in relation to their community, their nation or the world, rests on what they think they are and

⁵ *Del Hombre* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica y Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1970).

what they think they believe. This in turn depends on how they look at their history. One may well say that a sense of history provides power which makes the difference between willingness to act and unwillingness to act. A sense of history represents the difference between a sense of identity and a state of alienation. One of the tragic effects of the rejection of history in the thought of the world today is that is the rejection of this major constituent of the power structure — its cement, but even more significantly, its basic element.

One of my favorite poets, Ralph Waldo Emerson, expressed this idea of history in the following verse:

*There is no great and no small
To the soul that maketh all:
And where it cometh, all things are;
And it cometh everywhere.*

*I am the owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars and the solar year,
Of Caesar's hand and Plato's brain,
Of Lord Christ's heart and Shakespeare's strain.*

If Emerson had been writing for a Spanish-speaking audience he would have said Cervantes instead of Shakespeare and would have been saying essentially the same thing about the power that is history.

VARIETIES OF ALIENATION

1. Alienation from self — diverted from normal function, especially mental or psychological.
2. Alienation from spouse, friends, or relatives by the action of another person.
3. Alienation of the generations (Ortega y Gasset and Julián Marías).
4. Alienation in industry.
5. Alienation from society. Man feels himself impoverished, frustrated, imprisoned by powers outside his control, and rebels against society as irrational or unjust (Erich Fromm).⁶

⁶ *The Sane Society* (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1966).

6. Alienation from God.

These varieties of alienation derive in part from Erich Fromm, but have other sources as well. The first, alienation from self, is the most primitive or simple concept of alienation. It concerns alienation as something essentially mental or psychological — an abnormality or insanity. This is a specialized meaning, but also the original from which the other meanings seem to derive. In this case the word has essentially the same meaning in Spanish and Portuguese as it has in English.

The second variety of alienation represents another common use of the term in every day speech. We speak of alienation from one's wedded spouse or from friends or relatives by the action of another person. Thus we speak of a third person alienating the affection of a wife or of a husband or of a child or of a friend.

The third kind of alienation is the one already noted in the historical thought of Ortega y Gasset and of Julián Marías. Thus we speak of the alienation of each generation from the generation that preceded it, of the alienation of children from parents. This concept of alienation is one of historical process.

Today, we are concerned with a fourth type, alienation in industry. This is a phenomenon of industrialization in which the worker comes to feel that he is not really a part of the factory or of the process of production. He thinks of himself as somehow separated and apart from it — that he is not personally involved in anything he is creating, and so is alienated from the whole system of industrial production.

The sixth and even broader kind of alienation, alienation from society, is the kind that is spoken of most commonly today. This is an alienation, as Erich Fromm has suggested in his *Sane Society*, in which man feels himself frustrated, impoverished, a prisoner imprisoned by powers outside his control, and so rebels against society as irrational or unjust. In passing, it may be noted that Fromm's book might be more accurately called *The Insane Society*, since he is viewing this society, at least from the standpoint of the human being, as insane. Hence, alienation from this kind of society is in a sense the search for a sane society, and Fromm is describing what he believes a sane society would be like.

The last variety of alienation to be mentioned is alienation from God, or from religion in general. This kind of alienation is also a characteristic of much of the world today. Some would say it is the root of the three preceding types.

At this point we should be reminded that these forms of alienation are not

new. History provides numerous examples of all the kinds mentioned, including alienation from society, from industry, and from God. Moreover, some of the great intellectual and moral figures in our history have been alienated individuals. In this sense, one may speak of Jesus as alienated from the world in which he lived and one may speak of the Buddah as alienated from his Hindu world.

Literature provides many expressions of this idea of the insane society. Among the numerous, excellent plays of the Norwegian dramatist Ibsen, for example, is one called *The Enemy of the People* (*El Enemigo del Pueblo*). "The Enemy" is a physician who discovers that a spa of which he has charge uses polluted water. Since it has been advertised as a health spa, he proceeds to reveal this truth about the water supply in an effort to get the community to stop killing the people who come there for a cure. But the result of his zeal is that he is ostracized by the whole community in a kind of near lynching in which he is called the enemy of the people. At one point he says, in effect, that he is not sure whether it is the society that is mad or that he is insane. This theme of alienation occurs in many of the Ibsen plays, suggesting that the concept of alienation from society was common in his day.

The alienation of Thoreau has been mentioned, and many other figures of U.S. intellectual history would be recognized as embodying in some respects this alienation from the world in which they lived. This would be true particularly of those who have been identified with some kind of reform movement. A modest acquaintance with the writers of Spanish America and of Brazil suggests that a number of them would also fit in this category of literary and cultural figures whose essential position has been that of feeling themselves somehow or other rejected by the world and the situation in which they lived.

Is the alienation today different? If it is, it may be in part because it is so widespread. Because today we have not just the alienation of the individual intellectual or religious leader or reformer, but a great wave of popular alienation — of the separation of great masses of people from the values and the institutions in which they grew up. The alienation of today, therefore, is probably not so much a difference in kind as a difference in degree, a quantitative difference, traceable at least in part to modern mass communication. At times, of course, a quantitative difference becomes a qualitative difference. So it may be true today that the quantitative difference actually makes the alienation of today something different from the kind of alienation we have experienced before. In any event, it would be a mistake simply to assume that these feelings of alienation are something which have never occurred in the world before. At least gain further by perspective on the problem we are dealing with today

by recognizing that alienation has been a common occurrence in the history of man's culture.

MANIFESTATIONS OF ALIENATION

1. Idolatrous worship of persons, leaders, gods (Erich Fromm).
2. Egocentrism and a cult of self.
3. Withdrawal from family, church, school, community, and society.
4. Rejection of accepted ethical, esthetic, political, legal, economic, and other norms and values.
5. Rejection of accepted religious beliefs.
6. Rejection of history.
7. Resistance to political, social, economic, and cultural institutions:
 - a. Passive resistance (Ghandi, Thoreau),
 - b. Violent, revolutionary resistance (Camilo Torres, Tupamaros).
8. The counter-culture (*contracultura*) of today embraces elements of most of above manifestations.

The manifestations of alienation set forth above illustrate in a general way the varieties just discussed. The first manifestation, one taken from Erich Fromm, is the idolatrous worships of persons, leaders, gods, and passions. Extreme personalism in one form is the exaggeration of the leader concept. It is the exaggeration of the importance of Lenin in the U.R.S.S., of Mao in China, of Hitler in Germany, and of Mussolini in Italy. It would not be difficult to enumerate some notable instances in Latin America of this manifestation of an exaggerated personalism that expresses a feeling of rejection by society. This exaggerated cult of persons also finds expression in such religious manifestations as the contemporary Jesus cult among our youth. This cult manifests alienation not only from the society, but from the established religion as well.

Egocentrism and a cult of the self is one of the most obvious expressions of alienation among our educated youth today. It finds expression in the belief that nothing matters except one's self — that satisfaction of self is the measure of all things.

The phenomenon of withdrawal from family, church, school, community, and society is a third manifestation of alienation. Some of our most sensitive and educated youth have become itinerants. We see them walking around the streets, migrating from one town to another. They are "tramps" in the classical English use of the term (*vagabundos* in Spanish or Portuguese). We are seeing a generation who reject family, church, school, community the whole

society. Of course, we have had this phenomenon in our societies before, but not in such large numbers as today.

A fourth manifestation of alienation is the rejection of accepted ethical, esthetic, political, legal, economic, and other norms upon which the social structure has rested in the past. A fifth manifestation is closely related to the fourth — the rejection of accepted religious beliefs. Both resemble, and are interconnected with the third manifestation. We have already spoken of the sixth instance, the rejection of history.

The seventh manifestation, that of resistance to political, social, economic, and cultural institutions, takes either of two forms, that of passive resistance or that of violent rebellion. One should certainly not underestimate the influence of Mahatma Gandhi in this respect. Gandhi has been a great figure in the minds of the present generation. His influence may even have been greater outside India than it was in the India movement for independence. The fact that India, the second most populous country in the world, acquired its independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi has made this influence, perhaps more clearly than that of anyone else, one of the great cultural and psychological facts of this age. Its influence probably tends to be diluted as it moves out from India, but it certainly has had great influence in the United States.

A few years ago, in connection with a series of lecture given in the India International Center, in New Delhi, concerning impressions of India various parts of the world, this author was asked to state the concept of India generally held in the United States. His off-hand reply was that the average person in the United States had two strong impressions of India. The first was the impression given in a book by Katherine Mayo, called *Mother India*. This book gave a dismal picture of social, health, and cultural conditions in India, as viewed through the eyes of foreign missionaries. The second impression was that of Mahatma Gandhi and his passive resistance movement.

The eighth and final manifestation of alienation is that of the counter culture or *contracultura*. The counter culture is the positive response to the rejection of the existing culture. It appears in the "communities" of disillusioned youth that have mushroomed in contemporary society as well as among class conscious and ethnic groups. We hear a great deal of talk today about this counter culture which rejects the existing culture and presumes, with a good deal of naivete, that a new culture is being established with values basically different from those of the existing cultures. This new culture, it is assumed, finds its value systems in the little communities of the disenchanting, or in class conscious or ethnic groups.

SOME CHOICES

1. ERICH FROMM: "Man today is confronted with the most fundamental choice; not that between Capitalism or Communism, but that between *robotism* (of both the capitalist and the communist variety), or Humanistic Communitarian Socialism."⁷
2. HERBERT MARCUSE: Severe critic of both marxist-leninist and Capitalist society; influence on youth. Treats society as irrational, pretending to be rational. No solution. PHILOSOPHICAL ANARCHISM. Socialist Solidarity (vague). "... we shall be free to think about what we are going to do."⁸
3. ANTONIO CASO: "... let us organize our specific conscience, the national conscience now torn to pieces, ... hoping that other happier days will see Mexicans closer to one another in the mysterious and royal realm of the soul. After all, love is easier and less disturbing than hatred."⁹

Five different choices, from among many that appear in the present day dialogue on these issues, are suggested above. The first comes from Erich Fromm, the German existentialist philosopher and psychologist, as he may be called. In his *Sane Society*, Fromm says that the most fundamental choice man confronts today is not that between capitalism or communism, but rather between robotism of both the capitalist and the communist variety and the humanistic communitarian socialism. In speaking of the humanistic communitarian socialism, Erich Fromm is really speaking of the counter culture that finds its expression in a community. He speaks of values that are humanistic but are also communitarian. One suspects that for Erich Fromm the humanism is a product of the community rather than the creator of the community, although the meaning is not clear.

Another German philosopher, now resident in the United States, who has influenced youth movements of today, both in Europe and in the United States, is Herbert Marcuse. His *Essay on Liberation* states what may be called a second choice. Marcuse is a revisionist Marxist, a severe critic of both Marxist-Leninist and capitalist society. Like Fromm, he says that society is insane,

⁷ *The Sane Society*, p. 315.

⁸ *Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 79-91. See also Manuel Velázquez, "El Socialismo Antisocial de Herbert Marcuse", in *Pensamiento Político* (México), Vol. III, número 9 (Enero 1970), pp. 55-68.

⁹ *El Problema de México y la Ideología Nacional* (2a. ed. México: Libero-Mex, 1955. Original ed. 1924), p. 83.

but pretends to be sane. Marcuse advocates no particular solution to the social problem; his position can well be described as essentially that of philosophical anarchism, characterized more by what it rejects than by what it proposes to do. He talks vaguely in terms of socialist solidarity, but gives no clear definition of what socialist solidarity means. The quotation at the head of this section states the essential of Marcuse and his anarchism, saying "we shall be free to think about what we are going to do". This, for Marcuse, is liberation — without a definition of what we are going to be free to do. We are simply to be free to *think about what we are going to do*. This is a long way from traditional Marxism, is it not?

The next suggested choice brings us back to the Mexican Antonio Caso, and is from his book, *El Problema de México y la Ideología Nacional*, written almost fifty years ago, in the midst of the Mexican revolution. The English version of this quotation is by this author: "Let us organize our specific conscience, the national conscience now torn to pieces, hoping that other happier days will see Mexicans closer to one another in the mysterious and royal realm of the soul. After all, love is easier and less disturbing than hatred." It is interesting that fifty years ago Caso should have used the word "love" much as the alienated youth of today uses the term in his arguments and in his discussions. This is not to say that today's youth gives the word the same meaning Caso gave it. But it is significant how often this theme recurs in confronting the choices that we have in dealing with the alienation of today.

In *Mater et Magistra*, the encyclical of Pope John XXIII, one finds the two paragraphs quoted above. The version used is the one available to me, the English language version. Paragraph 217 says: "No folly seems more characteristic of our time than the desire to establish a firm and meaningful temporal order, but without God, its necessary foundation." The following paragraph (218) adds: "What the Catholic church teaches and declares regarding social life and relationships of men is, beyond question, for all time valid."

Pope John here repeated the essential social teaching of Christianity, but with a special social sense that runs through the Encyclical. One also finds, incidentally, that the World Council of Protestant Churches, meeting in Geneva during the days of Pope John, produced a social statement which differs little ideologically from the *Mater et Magistra*. Thus we see evidence of a rather wide-spread reaction of the established churches to the problem of alienation in the world today.

For the final suggested choice we turn to another revisionist Marxist, Professor Leoncio Basbaum of Brazil. The quotation presented above is from his book, *O Processo Evolutivo da Historia*. This book is essentially a treatment of the theory or philosophy of history. But throughout, one finds a current of

criticism of the orthodox Marxist theory of history. Professor Basbaum gives a new definition of economic determinism, historical materialism, and the class struggle more consonant in terms with the existentialist and relativist views of the present day. The dialectic is one in which the thesis is *liberdade* and the antithesis is *escravidão*. Liberty, he is saying, has become slavery. This is an expression of alienation, but it is also an expression of an alternative approach to the problem alienation presents. Liberty, operating as the thesis in Hegelian terms, has produced industrial slavery as its antithesis, and a new liberty is being produced as a synthesis. The new synthesis as in all dialectical process, is different from the two forces that produced it. It is a new liberty, based on human progress and scientific knowledge and on the unification of the world. This is the process currently going on and creating freedom in what is a counter culture. What one has here, then, is a more refined, a revisionist concept of the Marxist revolution, one to be carried out within this dialectical process by the rise of the working class.

The Basbaum theory is scarcely recognizable in terms of the original Marxism from which it comes, but it is a point of view widely held concerning the course of social action that is possible today. Out of this dialectical process, Professor Basbaum tells us, we are achieving a new form of liberty based on human progress within a historical process that is in a sense inescapable. We are confronted with an imperative to structure and to build the new human culture which the process of evolution has presented to us in the form of a new synthesis. This point of view is important in two respects. The Basbaum view is important because it is reasserting the significance of the historical; it is also important because in recognizing the historical it attempts to reconcile the historical with the general revolutionary movement going on in the world today.

SOME FUNDAMENTALS

1. ACCEPTANCE OF ALL THE MEANING OF RELATIVIST AND EXISTENTIALIST THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY, INCLUDING ITS RADICAL SKEPTICISM.
2. ASSERTION OF *BELIEF* IN GOD AND IN VALUE NORMS FOR PERSONAL CONDUCT AND FOR SOCIAL POLICY.
3. BELIEF IN HUMAN VALUES REQUIRES LOVE AND RESPECT FOR FELLOW MEN (LOVE THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF).
4. A SENSE OF COMMUNITY RESOLVES THE DILEMMA OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY. MAN MUST ACCEPT THE DISCIPLINE OF COMMUNITY. RECONCILIATION.

5. ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS MUST CONFORM TO THE DEMOCRATIC AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF IN THE LOVE OF FELLOWMAN, PROBABLY WITH LESS EMPHASIS ON THE NATION AND MORE EMPHASIS ON THE COMMUNITY AND ON THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF MAN.

If, out of the thoughts we have been sharing, we can draw some conclusions helpful in looking at the problem of man in society today, some of them might be summarized as above. These "Fundamentals" are assumptions which the thoughtful person must make today as a basis for thinking about the perplexing present day problems of social policy. Each reader might well add others, and not all will agree with all those set down here.

First, we have no alternative but to accept the meaning of relativist and existentialist theory and philosophy, including its radical skepticism. We must, because this is the essence of our science of physics today; without the Einstein contribution to theoretical physics we might not have put a man on the moon. This is also the essence of our psychology, of what we know about how man's mind and emotions work. So, to reject this relativism and existentialism is to reject much of what is fundamental in our knowledge today. But the danger in accepting this rational and scientific basis of the contemporary mind is that we may not recognize its limits. We may not see that its validity rests upon a concept of human reason which our skepticism and psychology lead us to question. The danger becomes particularly obvious when social scientists begin to talk of modifying human behavior on a social scale.

The second essential assumption, therefore, is the assertion of belief in God, and so in value norms for personal conduct and for social policy derived from this belief. We must do so because, if we accept the first assumption as the final word we admit that we can no longer say that belief in God is based on logic and reason. One of the great things about the thought of Miguel Unamuno was his recognition of this intellectual fact. "Filosofía y religión son enemigas entre sí, y por ser enemigas se necesitan una a otra," he wrote in his controversial book, *The Tragic Sense of Life*.¹⁰ William James, with whom Unamuno agreed on many things, wrote something similar: "This inferiority of the rationalistic level in founding belief is just as manifest when rationalism argues for religion as when it argues against it."¹¹ But Unamuno was led by his view of man as man, as well as by his doubting of the skepticism of Descartes'

¹⁰ Quoted from Miguel Unamuno, *Antología*. Prólogo de José Luis Aranguren. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1964), p. 307.

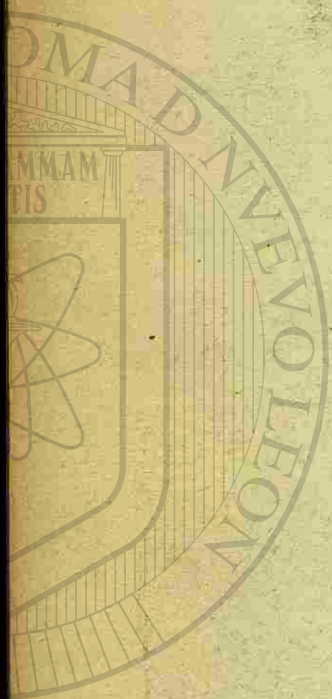
¹¹ *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The New American Library, 1958) p. 72.

rationalism, to one of the most passionate appeals for religious belief based on man's humanism, not just on his reason, expressed in modern thought.

The third essential assumption follows naturally from that of Unamuno. Belief in human values, in any pattern of religious belief, requires love and respect for fellow men. This is the Christian principle stated here as "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

The fourth essential, a sense of community, resolves pragmatically the dilemma of the individual and society. Man must accept the discipline of the community if he is to escape alienation and anomie sufficiently to find reconciliation to the world in which he lives. He need not take the route of the countercultures upon which our hippie communities are based, thought he may do so. He does need to recognize, a point appropriately emphasized in Pope John's *Encyclical*, the essential role of the community in the reconciliation of man to society. In Erich Fromm's terminology, this is the way to make society sane. In more Christian terms it is the reconciliation of man with God through reconciliation to society.

A fifth and final fundamental in considering man in contemporary society is that economic and political institutions must conform to this democratic and religious belief that love of fellow man is a commandment of God. What is required today is less exclusive emphasis on the nation than in the past and more emphasis on the immediate community, as well as upon the universal fellowship of man. This last fundamental seems abstract, abstruse, utopian, no doubt; and so it is. But it is a principle inescapable in our thinking about society one that is neglected at our peril. Without this ingredient, the society that we create in the future will not be a society of men, but a society of robots and machines.



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