

who are members of Ethical Culture societies would say that the Ethical Culture society is an object of cathexis to the same degree and the same intensity as is, for example, the Catholic church for a true believer.

The notion of ritual in the absence of god is another vexatious point. In a sense what we are asked to do is to take the latent functions that characterize religious ritual—ritual addressed to supernatural beings—and convert them into manifest functions, and then to convert these manifest functions into motivational variables. I am very dubious about this kind of procedure. To be sure, the latent functions of traditional religion consist of some of the things that Wallace has talked about, but in the absence of these latent functions, traditional religionists would nevertheless perform their religious rituals in order to attain their manifest functions. Whether we can get people to perform rituals—whether it is even desirable to get them to perform rituals—on the basis of these latent functions, now become manifest, is, I repeat, a very dubious point.

I would raise one final allied question. It seems to me that many of the components of the new theology are components that are already found in a number of movements today. The student free-speech movement at Berkeley, the freedom riders in the South, and a host of other such movements mobilize the kind of energy that Wallace has been talking about, and certainly serve as objects of intense cathexis for the participants. To what extent would a new movement either have a different kind of theological content or serve a different kind of function than that which these movements are already serving? That is another question which the new theology would have to answer.

COMMENTARY ON THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES FROM THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

by Lawrence K. Frank

Conferences of this kind remind me of Proust's statement that "each one can find lucidity only in those ideas which are in the same state of confusion as his own."

As Julian Huxley reminded us some years ago, the human organism

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did not adapt to nature as did other organisms through specialization of body but, instead, remained plastic, flexible, and created a human way of life. This was done by using ideas and symbols to create a design for living, by transforming the actual world into a symbolic culture world. The function of that symbolic culture world was to enable the human organism to escape from the boredom of food, fighting, and fornication—to be able to create a world which had meaning and significance by transforming the environment (nature) and transforming human nature according to the ideas, beliefs, the myths by which he made human living significant.

If you take this viewpoint, as at least one way of approach, then we should ask ourselves, "How did man develop these ideas, these symbols, these rituals?" He did it by imagination, which sometimes has been called revelation. I prefer to think of it as a creative act, imposing order and meaning upon the world which was not apparent and curbing and regulating human function and behavior. This approach gives us a clue to the so-called human predicament, that man, as long as he lives, is and must function as an organism, exposed to all the impacts and signals that come from environment and subject to all the impulses and emotional reactions of his own urgings, but through enculturation and socialization he must learn to live as a personality in a symbolic world, regulating his conduct and all his relationships to other people in such a fashion that he conforms, if possible, to the requirements of that symbolic world. This symbolic world is of most importance for the human individual because it enables him to project his aspirations, his goal values, putting meaning into this organic existence and thereby distinguishing himself from other organisms.

We can now ask what has been the function of religion or theology. My own rather naïve thinking is that theology or religion is the genesis of human culture. In the beginning there was only one symbol system, theology, out of which have arisen what we call science and art. Much of our present disorder and conflict stems from our lack of a unified symbol system. The moment we become dubious about our relationship to the universe, our personalities by so much become disturbed and unsettled. That is the existential crisis as I interpret it today. Now if we are to ask ourselves what theology can contribute to the resolution of this problem, to the immense problem of renewing our Western culture, of helping to create a social order with what Ortega y Gasset called a "vital sensibility," then we must ask, as we have in this conference, what are the resources to which we can turn for this immense task of cultural renewal? Theology has, over the

ages, assumed and asserted that it had responsibility for social order. It also has claimed supernatural sanction for what it said people should and should not do. It has also given man a conception of his own personality, or his own self.

Those ways of operating are no longer effective. Theology has no longer the sanctions or the authority, as shown by the increasing disorder, violence, and the breakdown of social order everywhere. I think individual personalities are showing the distress and the disturbance, all the troubles that psychiatrists are noting, because they no longer can maintain a firm stance vis-à-vis the universe and other people or carry on their internal monologue with the self. One of the most important problems theology has is how man can relate to and communicate with himself. This is distinct from science helping us to communicate with the universe or from art providing the vicarious experiences which make life worth living.

Specifically, what are the resources that theology might call upon to help us create a social order which has meaning for a growing, urbanized, industrialized technological society? I do not think the historically, classically developed social sciences have much to offer. Let me remind you that the eighteenth century is the source of most of our social science thinking—political science, sociology, and, to a large extent, economics, with anthropology beginning to break away. These social sciences were developed largely in terms of the writings of Locke, Hume, Hobbes, Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, and the French *philosophes*. We have been living by and from these conceptions from the eighteenth century, and today they are no longer relevant or adequate. Where can we find analogues, replacements, for these eighteenth-century conceptions which, as I understand it, were offered as models for establishing a "Great Society"?

We are asked what theology has to offer today for the formation of a Great Society. I do not think the social sciences can contribute much because this is not a problem for empirical study. Rather, we must exercise some creative imagination and formulate some new models. What the eighteenth-century thinkers did was not to study trends and rely upon empirical research. They looked to Newtonian concepts and assumptions as valid patterns for reorienting their society and for constructing models, as we now say, for a government, for an economic system, for a design for living, that would be rational and orderly. They also assumed that man was rational and could be directed by reason. We have been living on those assumptions, which are becoming progressively anachronistic and self-defeating.

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We now have a new climate of opinion which has been developed by science and the arts in the last sixty years, in terms of which we must devise a new set of models for developing and renewing our society and culture, recognizing that a culture is what is sought, an aspiration never fully achieved. That is why religion has been so important, to reinforce that aspiration, to reiterate it, to ritualize it, as Wallace has said, in such a fashion that people felt they were committed and would display the devotion necessary to try and achieve, in their own lives, and with other people, that which is sought. I do not believe this will come from science alone or from the arts but that the theologians will have to be creative and help to develop a new and acceptable design for living that is appropriate to the new opportunities and evocative of human potentialities.

The task is to give man an image of himself that furnishes some sense of his own dignity and worth and helps him to maintain his personal integrity. We are not getting that from the social sciences or from the behavioral sciences. Where, then, can we look for insights and understanding to provide for the development of a new image of man? Which of the many schools of psychology are you going to accept? I do not think the behavioral sciences will be productive because they are primarily interested in a series of short-term studies of the relation between variables or in establishing correlations—linear relationships that ignore man as an organism-personality, with a life career in a changing life-space and a social environment, who lives by and for symbols. This is the challenge facing this group today—where to find ways of creating an image of the self and a model of a social order to which we can invite people to make a commitment, not only because this is the way in which to maintain social order, but because in that way they may find fulfilment of their own human personality needs and aspirations and can contribute to the shared goals of living. Maybe we will have to create a conception of citizenship as much more than civil rights and political action, a conception of citizenship as that which you do in every moment and relation of your life. This is not different from what the theologians have been saying—that we create a society by what we do and by what we do not do. This is the intent of the new proposal for reducing poverty, helping people to help themselves, giving people a new morale for coping with the common problems of living in such a fashion that they do have some sense of worthwhileness.

If we are going to do something of this kind, it is clear that theology must reassess very clearly and explicitly the traditional conceptions of human nature. Theologians have built into our culture a conception of

human nature "as a child of God" but innately wicked and sinful, or fallen from grace, tainted by original sin, prone to evil, a highly negative conception of man, denying or ignoring his many human potentialities. They have given him an image of himself inimical to the very aspirations and standards of conduct which we expect him to live up to. We build this into children, give them a sense not only of their own guilt but a sense of guilt for the whole of mankind, an intolerable burden. As many of our psychiatric friends know, most of their patients are suffering from an overstrict conscience, from a sense of guilt which has been built into them, not because of what they have done, but from the very start. When the Presbyterians set up their new Sunday school program, somebody did a little piece called "New Wine in Old Bottles" and said they had taken the lessons from modern psychology and child development but that every child, when three years old, must be taught he is a wicked sinner! Are we deliberately distorting human nature? Are we stunting the capacities and potentialities of man? It is almost as if we inoculated people with a dread disease so they had to come to our hospital-churches to be saved!

Where can we get these new conceptions of man and of human potentialities which we have only begun to touch? Potentialities are latent until they are evoked. Every culture has accepted, cultivated, rewarded some human potentialities and has denied and suppressed other potentialities in its attempt to realize in its people the kind of human nature which it holds basically important. So we have no real knowledge or understanding of any human potentialities until we have begun to evoke them.

When we say we have no values, as we sometimes hear these days, I would like to suggest that this is nonsense. Western European culture, at least, has had a conception of the worth of the individual personality and has believed in the dignity and integrity of man. We now recognize this as beginning at birth or before conception. We need to formulate these values and make them operational in the social order. This is a tremendously difficult, creative task. It is not going to be done quickly.

The major threat today is a threat of the failure of nerve. Can we muster the courage, the self-confidence, for a task of this kind? What are the resources we have? If we cannot find them in the social sciences, in the psychology-behavior side, maybe we can find them in the arts. The arts have very often given man his image of himself; they often are more acutely sensitive to the human predicament than many theologians have been. They are concerned with man's perplexities and striv-

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ings. Much of art today, however, fails to give us more than a diagnosis, pointing out the absurdity and failures of man.

Where are we going to get the courage, self-confidence, the faith in human beings to enable us to do the necessary job? That may be more important than the purely cognitive development (I believe the scientific conflicts over cosmology and evolution will gradually work out). But the conflicts over human nature and the desirable kind of society are much more difficult to deal with. In this endeavor, we should remember that we are not alone. This situation is facing every culture all over the world today. The unseen hand of tradition has weakened and lost its direction.

To a considerable extent we require a conception of social order as that which is in man—not something outside, which is an eighteenth-century conception, operated by social forces (those metaphors are obsolete). Society is in us, and we are society. How do we build in children a conception of their place and function and of the inviolabilities, recognizing that every individual member must take the responsibility of guarding the property and person of every other individual. Heretofore we have done it largely by threat, by terrorization, threatening children with immediate or future punishment for misconduct. Are we able to conceive of a social order not based upon dominance and submission and terrorization? One way would be to recognize a new conception of social order, a democratic social order. A democratic society is an aspiration toward a way of life in which no individual, no matter how unimportant, how insignificant he may seem, can be unnecessarily deprived, frustrated, neglected, humiliated, or injured. We can now say on the basis of a vast amount of clinical evidence that anyone so mistreated or neglected will be incapable of participating fully in the maintenance of the kind of free social order we want. Does this not give a picture of what the problem of religion is—to provide some kind of order and direction, some sort of meaning and significance for human life, in terms of the way people live, conduct their human relations, and live with themselves?

A belief in man, in human nature and its potentialities, might provide the inspiration and the courage we so urgently need today to cope with the threatening world and the breakdown of our culture. We need to believe in ourselves if we are to fulfil our great opportunities and responsibilities.