

HUMANISM AND THE HUMANIST

Humanism is a way of life based on the idea that man is all-important. He determines his own salvation. The supernatural or the mystical has no place in the life of the humanist. His faith is founded on man's capacity for achievement, his potentialities for greatness, his inherent power for ceaseless improvement. Julian Huxley puts it in this way: "Man's role is to be the instrument of further evolution on this planet—an evolutionary view of human destiny as against a theological or a magical, a fatalistic or a hedonistic one."

To the humanist, in his present life lies all of man's opportunity and reward. He finds his glory in his work, his accomplishment. He receives his inspiration from his sense of self-accomplishment. His punishment comes from the realization of having failed in his duty to his neighbor and himself. To

cause pain to his child, his wife, his friend, his fellows, is to commit a wrong and to condemn himself for an act of inhumanity. He believes in the principle of human love, love for friends and foes alike. To him hope is a virtue that lies in the head and heart of every man as long as life endures. The sense of human dignity should be developed for without it man will fail to respect himself and his fellowman. By the use of his own personal strength and with the assistance of such unavoidable forces as are provided by his cultural and social environment, man could direct his own growth and improvement towards the fulfillment of his destiny.

Humanist societies exist in many countries today. They have not yet received the same recognition that governments accord to religious groups. But what they lack in privilege, the humanists

make up in prestige. For example, the American Humanist Association has in its ranks a good number of top scientists and intellectuals. The international Humanist union includes such influential leaders as the British biologist Julian Huxley and two Nobel prize winners: the British agriculturist Lord Boyd Orr and the American geneticist Herman Muller.

The famous Norwegian psychiatrist Gabriel Langfeldt, a prominent Humanist, declared that individuals, in the future development of mankind, would have to consider ethics as something removed from religion. He warned: "Crediting ethics to supernaturally inspired messages and to revelations has led and still leads to brutal wars. Ethics, anchored as it is in purely human needs, will always win where religion and ethics come into conflict."

Humanists maintain that their man-centered faith offers much hope to the world. They are convinced that their emphasis upon life here and now enables man to concentrate all his thought and energy upon the im-

provement of the earth he occupies. Humanist Langfeldt states: "As man becomes more educated, mysticism and dogma disappear and are replaced by rational thinking. We believe in the goodness of men. If we can get rid of the political and religious pressures burdening man today and encourage his honesty, generousness and intelligence instead, we can make a better world for all of us."

Unlike those whose orthodox religious beliefs consider their life on this earth as no more than a moment of transition to a life after death, the humanist lives and thinks in terms of his destiny on this earth. In the process of realizing that destiny, he makes use of mind, will, and emotion and takes advantage of the social and cultural forces or influences made available to him as a result of evolutionary progress to improve himself as a man and to contribute the best service he is capable of performing. What this human destiny is Julian Huxley has put it in these words: "We can no longer envisage human destiny in such terms as

the will of God set over against the sinful will of man, or as the plan of a divine creator frustrated by the imperfections and wilfulness of his creation. Human des-

tiny is to participate in the creative process of development, whereby the universe as a whole can realize more of its potentialities in richer and greater fulfilments."

THE AGE OF PILLS

Almost everyone takes pills, from the humble aspirin to the multi-coloured, king-sized three-deckers, which put you to sleep, wake you up, stimulate and soathe you all in one. It is an age of pills. Nembutal yellow as buttercups, azure amytal and the purple benzedrine; equinol, slumberol, and hey, ho, the valleyol. Vitamins to keep you strong, life pills to keep you sterile, and death pills for inducing permanent sleep and an open verdict. A thousand or so armless thalidomide babies are as unlikely to discourage pill-taking as lung cancer is to discourage smoking, or road deaths motor-ing, or fall-out nuclear testing. In any case, the little fellows (thalidomide babies) can be mechanically equipped with an "educated" finger which does almost as well as 10 uneducated ones, enabling them to play the dulcimer and beach ball like anyone else. A pill a day keeps the druggist in pay. They are plentifully available, and new, interesting varieties are constantly appearing. Pills for slimming, pills for fattening and pills for potency. They help athletes to run faster, scholars to secure higher marks, comedians to be funnier, and lovers to be bolder. Little elegant boxes, like snuff-boxes, contain them. In France they are on free sale in suppository form. No one, a French chemist explains, commits suicide with suppositories. This is doubtless so. It would be too unromantic, and possibly even impracticable. — From London Diary, *Malcolm Muggeridge*.