

SOME COMMENTS ON THE RACIAL MAN *

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In a very interesting article in the July-September issue, Dr. Hugo Lj. Odhner discusses the analogy between the form and use of the individual man and the human race. While analogies cannot prove the truth of concepts, they can illustrate and suggest and enhance our comprehension. Dr. Odhner cites many examples of specific analogies between the functions of human organs and corresponding functions of specialized parts of society, which help our understanding of the complexities and interdependencies of the modern world.

I regret that Dr. Odhner did not choose to take up the implications expressed in his lead paragraph quoted from Bertrand Russell ". . . Human society as a whole *is becoming*, in this respect, more and more like a single human body; . . ." I have italicized the words "is becoming" to emphasize the dynamic nature of the analogy, and the transformation taking place right now which is producing a modern society far more the image of an individual man than any society in the past. If Racial Man is in the form of an individual: if Racial Man parallels the growth of the individual through birth, infancy, maturity, old age and death; what point in this growth have we reached now in 1965?

We understand from the Writings of Swedenborg that the Last Judgment or Final Exam of the spirit of man has already taken place and that we, as a race, have passed the Exam. But when will we see the evidence of this in the world around us? Will it come as a gradual change or a sudden, perhaps violent, transformation and reorganization of society? Swedenborg was not specific. There are many indications, however, that we are already in the beginning phases of this transformation, or metamorphosis, and that it will all be over in only about half a century. In analogy with the growth of the individual, within fifty years Racial Man will have passed out of adolescence to maturity.

While many will agree that some such transformation is taking place and that the race is moving toward maturity, this agreement is usually somewhat vague and qualitative. Teilhard de Chardin,

* Communications from two readers on "The Racial Man and the Human Form of Society," by Dr. Hugo Lj. Odhner (NEW PHILOSOPHY, July-September, 1965, pp. 82-92).

in *The Future of Man* makes a very strong *qualitative* case for the coming "totalization" of man. But to get some estimate of how soon the change will be upon us we must make a *quantitative* analysis of certain major changes in society. On the basis of such studies Dr. John R. Platt¹ concludes that the transformation must occur within the next fifty years. I reached the same conclusion independently after making similar studies.²

Dr. William R. Kintner has said that the conflict with communism is a contest to determine what philosophy will "organize the planet." If the human race is to be organized in the near future, and it appears that our choice is between this and destruction, then we must be concerned with the form of that organization. Any group that can contribute to "The New Philosophy" that will organize the race should make sure that its voice is heard. Once the pattern of organization is set, it may be difficult or impossible to change it.

Dr. Platt refers to the present generation as the "hinge of history" because of the enormous change which will take place during the next fifty years, because the race will be turning to a new course, and because it will achieve a new stability with a greatly reduced rate of change after passing through this most critical era in the whole history of man. It is particularly important that the generation now in school be given some fore warning of what they will face as they come into the "operational" phase of their lives some twenty years from now. While it is obviously very difficult for the teacher, or anyone else, to estimate what is in store for us in the next twenty years, at least we know it will be quite different from the recent past when we were in school and even from the present. A number of books are appearing which provide some very useful insights into what we can expect.³

Perhaps twenty to twenty-five percent of our educational effort is devoted to history. A much smaller effort is directed toward the study of current events. How much time is devoted to trying to instruct students regarding the time period in which they will

¹ "The Steps to Man," *Science*, August 6, 1965.

² *Beyond Tomorrow—The Next Fifty Years in Space* (Amherst Press, Amherst, Wisconsin, c. 1965).

³ For example: *Profiles of the Future*, Arthur C. Clarke (Harper and Row, 1963). *The World in 1984*. A collection of 100 essays on the future, Two Volumes, edited by Nigel Calder (Penguin Books).

spend their lives? A quick survey of our school curricula indicates that the answer is zero! Apparently no organized, systematic effort is directed in this direction. The common excuse that "we don't know what is going to happen" is not good enough. We don't *know* what is going to happen when our car reaches a point one minute and one mile ahead of us on the turnpike, but we certainly devote at least a part of our attention to assessing the probabilities and alternatives.

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MORNA HYATT

In Dr. Odhner's address at the annual meeting he showed how beautifully the doctrine of the Grand Man can be illustrated by drawing a parallel between various types of men and certain types of cells in the human body. However, he pointed out several difficulties that arise. "How far can the racial man be said to have a continuous identity?" "Does society have anything that could be called consciousness?" Because I was mulling over these questions, I was much interested in an article by Howard Curtis, chairman of the biology department, Brookhaven National Laboratory, on "What Science Knows About Aging." (*Think*, March-April, 1964.) His discussion of the aging process in a human being is fascinating when considered in relation to the racial man and to societies.

It seems that even without going into any parallels with the racial man, there are large unanswered questions as to the causes and results of aging in the individual. Gerontologists cannot agree on a definition of aging. Mr. Curtis has arrived at the following, which he calls not very satisfactory but the best definition that can be offered now: "Aging is a process of deterioration which leads to an increased susceptibility to disease, or a decreased ability to withstand stress." He points out that each cell in an organism is an almost self-sufficient entity in itself, and it is natural to conclude that if the whole body ages, each cell in the body also ages, but experiments have shown that this is not necessarily so. A heart taken from a chicken embryo has been kept alive and beating in a culture dish for 25 years. Some scientists have concluded that

individual cells are not responsible for aging. On the other hand the single-celled paramecium will "age" in spite of cell division until it is rejuvenated with a different type of cell division.

Thus there have been two schools of thought: One postulates that the individual cells of an animal wear out, and the other that the whole animal somehow piles up deleterious products in its tissues to such an extent that the cells become unable to perform their normal functions efficiently. We now believe that both ideas are correct in their ways, but that both must be modified and combined to conform to the very considerable amount of additional evidence accumulated in recent years.

Mice exposed to radiation from an atomic reactor are apparently unaffected at first, but grow old and die prematurely. It had been thought for some time that aging was the result of the accumulation of stresses of any kind, including diseases, and radiation might be one of these stresses. However, extensive experiments with a variety of stresses have shown that stress itself does not cause aging. It has been found that as an animal ages normally there is an increase in the number of cells in its body that have abnormal (mutated) chromosomes. Radiations increase the rate of mutation and hence, it is supposed, the rate of aging. Many experiments have confirmed the theory that "one of the most important reasons why people age is that the cells of the body acquire mutations." However, this applies only to liver and muscle cells. In other cells, such as those in the bone marrow, although radiation will cause many mutations, these mutations disappear after a time. This is thought to be because bone marrow cells are continuously dividing whereas liver cells are not, and in the division process the cells which are weakened by mutations lose out in the struggle for survival. In organs whose cells do not divide, the number of mutated cells gradually increases and so the whole organ grows weaker with age. This theory is based on the assumption that mutations are harmful. According to the article, beneficial mutations are too rare to be considered. The cause of the mutations which bring on normal aging is not known. It cannot be natural background radiations from cosmic rays, etc., since they are too weak.

Brain cells are apparently less subject to mutation than other cells of the body. Although we lose a few brain cells as we grow older, "Thought processes can continue with little decrement until late in life. It is only necessary to keep the mind active to keep it working well."

Cancer occurs in organs with dividing cells but not in others. It is common in bone marrow (leukemia) but has never been found in brain cells (only in the supporting cells of the brain). One theory is that mutations cause cancer in some organs and aging in others.

Either the chromosomes of germ cells are very stable or else the mechanism of reproduction "acts as a screen to allow only perfect cells to complete the reproductive process."

Although science, by reducing diseases, has added years to man's life expectancy, his maximum life span has not been noticeably changed. The aging process goes on as always. Scientists see two avenues along which to proceed in their attempts to retard aging: diet and stabilizing the molecular structure of the chromosomes.

It is interesting and perhaps fruitful to speculate how all these points could have their parallel in the Racial Man or the Grand Man which is Heaven or the Church, or in the lesser "men" of various human organizations. In each case we would substitute individual men in societies for individual cells in the human body. The Writings teach that each of the Churches on earth has had its childhood, youth, manhood, and old age. Was this aging the result of the gradual decline of each and every individual or does the more modern concept of aging fit better: that aging is caused by an increase in the number of deleteriously mutated cells in organs in which the normal cells are unable to rid themselves of the faulty cells?

It is good to learn that stress is not necessarily cumulative, for it would seem to be analogous to temptations and combat with evil. We always bear the scars but are certainly not weakened in the struggle. Our ability to withstand the next onslaught is increased rather than decreased.

To what must mutation-producing radiations correspond? And why are mutations nearly always deleterious? A study of the correspondences of the liver, muscles, and bone marrow would undoubtedly show why the first two are victims of mutations but not the latter. Would this study lead to an understanding of the cancer that exists in human society?

Life on earth is but a preparation for life in heaven. Will it be necessary for scientists to learn how to retard aging in order for men to have a longer earthly period of preparation?

RANDOLPH W. CHILDS—AN APPRECIATION

Since the last annual meeting of the Swedenborg Scientific Association we have lost a good friend through the passing of Randolph W. Childs into the spiritual world.

Randolph Childs has contributed to the pages of the *NEW PHILOSOPHY*; and he has served the association in a number of other ways. From time to time he has advised us in his professional capacity as a lawyer, especially with regard to our by-laws. From 1955 to 1962 he was a member of the board of directors of the association.

However, Randolph Childs is chiefly remembered for another use to the association, both before he was a member of the board and also since. As a very active lifetime member of the New Church, a son of one of the Academy founders, and a long-time worker on the board of that body, he brought to our association not only an evident interest in the physical well-being of our organization but also a manifest love for all of the works of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Because he had an humble approach to the problems of philosophy he was as keenly interested in discussion groups as in published material. He gave his active support to such meetings. He felt the use of such meetings, where people could get together and be of mutual assistance in learning together. He will be remembered by us for this because he was many times a host in his own home, and helped to be host in other homes as well.

While it is true that in large measure the work of such an association as ours is of intellectual or mechanical or business nature, yet its life can only be stimulated by an affection for the uses to be performed. Randolph's presence with us will be remembered for the reason that he brought with him just that—the affection of use.

EDWARD F. ALLEN

PHILOSOPHICAL NOTES

Aphorism and Ancient Philosophy. The writings of earliest Greek philosophy are in the form of aphorisms. Philip Wheelwright says that

So far as Greece is concerned, there are virtually no evidences of anything that could properly be called philosophy existing in earlier times. [That is, much before the 6th century B.C.—Ed.]. There are momentary flashes of