

The New Man in a New World

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One of the topics connected with this subject is that of the new man situated between nature and himself. Nature is no longer something that man can understand on the basis of a theory or speculation. There is no longer the possibility of a “Weltanschauung”, or a theory about the world from a Christian point of view. All the traditional theories of creation are outdated. There is nothing that transcends nature, there is no metaphysical notion to which one can refer, for to think in this way is old fashioned. Today man wants to remain a natural being. For the great masses there is no theory, speculation or metaphysical anthropology which seeks to find in man any origin from God or any finality in Him. There is neither romanticism nor idealism. There is neither a search for a divine creativity of nature, nor an aesthetic appreciation of the objective beauty of nature. Equally there is no anthropology which tries to appreciate man's nature. In the modern world everything becomes functional and operational and the measure of all things is no longer the transcending powers of nature, or the human mind as such .

Man is a “between”. Man is always placed between nature and himself. In nature man finds the resources for further progress. Therefore, a second topic that one should consider is the distinction between nature and physics. The world is no longer what we see, but what man can achieve with it. Nature as “physics” is what man has achieved and achieves in relationship with nature. This “between” is something which has come between the world and man: The machine. The rise of the machine makes nature appear as a synthesis of man and matter. A machine in operation combines natural, material and human skill. A computer, which calculates automatically, bears the marks of both material nature and human skill. The New Man and the New World are to be seen in the union of these two elements. The value of this new world is in the hidden possibilities of nature, offered to man through the machine, for further progress and welfare. The highest aspiration of the New Man in the New World is to attain the maximum amount of this progress possible for the whole of the human race. The world is deprived of any religious, demonic or supernatural powers, and also of cheap materialism. At the same time this “between”, the machine, becomes the *alter ego*, the other I, of both God and Man. I underline this because it seems to me to be very fundamental for our study: Everything is defined on the basis of its potential capacity for further progress. This is at the root of every effort of the New Man in the New World.

The third point to note is that this vision of man existing between himself and nature draws the whole world into uniformity. Universalism today is the result of the fundamental scientific proposition that all valid scientific dogmas have a universal acceptance on the basis of logic. This is applied practically on a universal setting in view of this vision of the progress of the whole of the human race on a sound realistic basis.

On this basis, we have to deal today with a new kind of evolution; one which should not be limited to the genesis of living organisms, as men believed in the last century, through a long automatic latent process of evolution. The new kind of evolution implies the involvement of man, cooperating, collaborating, using nature's possibilities with a final goal in mind. This goal is in this world. It is not a vision of a transcendental God, but a vision which coincides with the effort of the human race to attain continuously the maximum welfare possible. These are good principles of evolution. The new man does not have the materialistic world-view of the past. A mutual effort is being made by all men who respect human dignity, freedom, equality and human personality. All the progressive evolutionary principles belong to the New Man. There is however no longer any reference to any ethical standing principle. It is rather a kind of social agreement, a working together towards the creation of the best possible man in history based on purely humanistic and realistic principles. The ideal of uniting the whole world, by bringing all peoples together as one, is a very high-minded ideal, but it contains no reference to any notion of, let us say, the fatherhood of God or redemption. Science today informs us that it is certain that the earth is a small satellite, that it came into being some billions of years ago, and that the human race, or the period of "homonisation", began some 500.000 years ago. Everything is reduced in this world to a reality which makes part of a tremendous whole. Eternity is no longer beyond this time. Five billion year! Try for a moment to imagine this. Now where do you still look for eternity outside this material world? Can you imagine galaxies existing at a distance of some hundred thousand light years away? For the human mind, eternity is just this confined in this natural world of ours. In this way, this world is enormous physically, but man is returning to himself, limiting his vision to this real world without searching for metaphysical realities. So nature, the world, the new world is a continuous dynamic process of man exploiting the tremendous possibilities of this world. It is evident that a new humanism is springing up in our days. The New Man, thinks in universal terms, always seeks communication, is always anxious to find the supreme reality in his relationships with this world, and makes no reference to anything which goes beyond this intimate relationship which takes place in the realities of this world.

Let us now examine a few of the details of this new world. Is it really new? Is it something entirely different from what has been happening up to now in history? We, as Christians, must be very careful at this stage of things. (I say this as a parenthesis, as I promised not to speak theologically). We, as Christians, must not immediately oppose this new world. We must not underestimate its newness. Technology has meant that there has been more progress in the last 100 years than ever there was in the 2000 years before. Over the past hundred years there has been a threefold development; which has meant a revolution in technical progress. The steam age, the age of the locomotive and electricity, and the atomic era are three stages of development which have in the last 100 years profoundly changed the face of the whole world and to a certain extent the orientation of the New Man of the 20th century.

We are living in a world which in the last 30 years has been subject to mass education and mass media. Everything that has to do with the welfare of mankind, either in America or in China or in Australia, has to be measured on a universal scale and based on items and means which are common all over the world. Mass media disregard the traditional pattern of a local environment, so that it does not matter

whether one lives in Paris or Beirut. Mass media do not acknowledge any special, national, local or traditional principle, but operate on the basis of commonly accepted patterns of social and international life. You can see this in the type of advertisements we have in the world today. In Broadway, in New York, I saw the advertisement "Drink Coca Cola" and in a small village outside New Delhi I saw exactly the same advertisement, with the same colours and the same form of letters. We are united everywhere not by principles of human personality but by external indications which appeal to us all in the same way. There is a homogeneity of propaganda which imposes a similarity of social relations. This is not a slow latent process, but something that develops very quickly. One is mystically fascinated in front of a television set. There is snobbism in the way in which we say, "Oh, this mass media", but you come back to it because it is something that attracts you and which has to be accepted, otherwise you miss something and your life in this new world is not yet fully realized. Once you have been influenced by this mass media it is very difficult to reject it. There is no way out. It is no longer possible to retire into your own background again.

Poverty is no longer the major problem of many nations of the world. The major problem is to have an equal share of the benefits of the technical civilisation. If you have a bicycle, you must have a car as soon as possible. In between you may have a lambretta, but this is not sufficient. Why can he have this and not me? It is not a question of becoming more worldly, it's simply that you have to be like that. If you do not behave as everybody else does then you are excluded from modern society because you are not a man who shares in the achievements of the new world and you are not contributing by your work to furthering the progress of the human race. This, of course, results in an optimistic vision of the new world. The new man in the new world is outwardly a smiling happy man, even if he has to face the most tragic events. We should not, as Christians, try to question the happiness of the modern man, by seeking to play a pastoral role. As you know, he will only laugh at you. Nobody is asking you to solve his problems especially by means of a speculation or a theory. The objection is: Why make things complicated, dramatic and tragic? I shall never forget the occasion when I took part in a television discussion in Chicago with four people whom I did not know at all. They all had different professions and none of them were committed Christians. One of them was president of the governmental committee for the production of robot computers. In his optimism the man went so far as to say "The day will come, in the next generation, when neither Kennedy (who was then alive) nor Kruschew (who was then President of Russia) will have any problems to solve. They will give their problems to robots and sober, mechanical answers will be given, which transcend nationalistic and psychological influences. They will be free from their responsibilities and the machines will answer". I asked him what kind of knowledge he was speaking of, whether it was a descriptive kind of knowledge based on data, a reflective, a discursive or a psychological kind. He laughed, for he had never thought about the different aspects of human knowledge. He lived completely in his laboratory. He was working towards gathering given data and forcing a result from them, and he had never thought of a deeper problem in the realm of knowledge. He was totally absorbed by the machine as something that exists between the world and himself. The machine was "between" to challenge him to further progress and make him more efficient, more direct and more positive.

Problems exist today, and will continue to exist until the moment that they are measured, defined, and used for furthering the progress of man. It is not necessary to create a problem by asking oneself what “man” is or why one does such and such a thing. Whenever you act, it is yourself in action and it is done in relationship with the world which has provoked or asked you to do this. You cannot not act, for if you do not act, then you do not live in this world. Sacrifice therefore, means being active in service to this world; it is no longer self-denial or withdrawal from some aspects of secular life, which would be an abnormal decision.

Now what is man? What is the New Man in this New World? How then can we define man in this situation? This man has no inner-static permanent being. He has not a self to which he himself, an existing being, can refer. When Jean Paul Sartre, some 20 years ago, wrote that existence precedes essence, everybody thought of this as a great revolution. But today, 20 years later, we have gone much further ahead. This question should not be discussed at all. Today, there is something that precedes both existence and essence of man, and this is the man as acting phenomenon in the process of evolution. Man is defined according to his acts, not according to his essence. There is no notion even of existence. Sartre is very conservative compared with some modern anthropologists. Man is in a continuous process of development and in no respect resembles the image of a static God. Man is changing in action, position and ethical behaviour every moment in a new and changing world. Ethics, of course, exist and they are always at the root of human society, but ethics mean the possibility of readapting oneself to one's environment. Ethics mean conformism to the surrounding world.

Here I am approaching a very crucial subject: The New Man has no standing point, nor does he belong to one country only. Man has a double existence, for he belongs to one and at the same time to many worlds. There is always a tendency to overcome the boundaries of our local, national situation. Look around in your countries, is it not true to say that no one of us can limit himself to his own local situation? The New Man is a man who has the very difficult task of living in given social and hierarchical structures, and at the same time in a world of new cultures, new opinions, and knowledge of new values imported into his area, which go beyond the pattern that he has inherited from previous generations.

We live in two separate realms at the same time without understanding either of them. This means that as far as ethical behaviour and vision towards the future are concerned we live with a double personality. It is difficult for modern man to be consistent and honest with himself. He is always tempted to imitate this movement towards the outside world. The question is always how do I remain loyal to my background and my tradition? How can I combine criticism and loyalty without abandoning the fundamental basic principles of personal ethics?

In this situation, modern biology accentuates the problem. I chose biology from among the sciences only in order to illustrate the new man, for in biology there are no longer two worlds, organic and inorganic. If you read modern biological books, you will be surprised to find that they have definitely abandoned this division, and both things are to be found in the organic. The cell structure of the human body is full of dynamics which consist of mind, skill and matter, and these are inseparable. Biology is no longer concerned only with molecules, but with chromosomes which

are at the root of the molecule. At this moment a series of experiments is being carried out with chromosomes to try and produce, by special synthesis, all the compounds of the human body in a laboratory. Thus, it may be possible in the future to produce a superman without hereditary characteristics, with no bodily or mental deficiencies, who will be better equipped to contribute to the welfare of the human race. Biology opens the way to and offers the explanation for a new mechanical and functional understanding of the new man.

Further the idea is to reduce work to the minimum. We are already on the way to producing machines which correspond more and more to human skill and replace men. Instead of 90 hours work a week, which was the case early in the century, one now works only 40 hours a week. The time of leisure has increased and this creates another problem. Bernard Shaw defines Hell as a place of perpetual holiday. We are moving towards the age of absolute mechanisation of human life, with mechanism in the image of human skill and the human body.

Having given this picture of the modern world, I want to spend a few minutes saying how we, as faithful Christians, and especially as Orthodox, are placed in this new world. Very often we go back to our old methods, but let us keep to a realistic picture. You will immediately say, yes, this world is changing but something remains unchanged: A standard of values and principles, on which everything hangs.

A false platonic explanation of the world, based on the world of ideas, is of no help. Our whole education must be changed in order to overcome the fear that Christ is lost. We must not be afraid of the rise of the secular. It is also evident that there is the doctrinal ethical position of the Gospel which tries to define what this means for the modern man in such a way that the redemption of Christ finally loses its own meaning. We often kill the impact of the Christian faith, in the very place where it can act in the most dynamic way. We are taking a position which prevents the modern man from looking at the dynamic elements of Christian faith and understanding this world really renewed from within.

We Christians are affected by the nostalgia of a past classical ideal of the Church but this is only a nostalgia, a romantic feeling for the past which we like to preserve today as we face the new world.

On the other hand in some Western countries theologians are trying to face the modern world with a strange kind of theology. They say that Christ is no longer in the Church; He has moved outside it. It is in the world that Christ works in a dynamic way, in the process of evolution, helping man to acquire his full humanity. The spaceman is an indirect manifestation of the presence of Christ in the universe, because without the Bible this technical civilisation would not have been possible. Christ is present wherever man is making progress. This new theology, which shows a tendency to disregard the evil in history and the tragic element in it, tries simply to affirm this technical evolution of the world and the New Man in the process of achieving his full "hominisation".

I personally think that the dialectical appreciation of the world in the Orthodox tradition can be maintained. Today, we can understand our tradition in the best possible way. We must accept the world as the Orthodox Fathers did, through a

cosmic Christology and say that Christ died for the whole world and that his resurrection filled everything with light (as we sing in our liturgy on Easter Sunday). We must refuse however, to identify Christ with this world: While accepting that God is present in this world, we should not say how his presence is to be understood. It is one thing to affirm that God is present but the Orthodox Fathers maintain that God, who is present everywhere, has to be known through a personal relationship, because he has known us first.

In this changing world, a Christian is placed between revolution and reconciliation. He always tries to take a position which will renew the world by reconciling it. He tries to accept the presence of God, but refuses the identification between God and the world. The Christian is in this world but is not of this world. The world has a dialectical meaning for the Orthodox. We should adopt a flexible position. We cannot separate the Church from the world, but at the same time, we should not identify it with the world. We always try to see the special prophetic element of the Church, and at the same time keep her in solidarity with the world. Identify yourself with everything except with sin. This sin is not to be regarded as a sin of others. Here I am touching on a very difficult subject: We are living in a period where the world and the new man are living between technical development and risk. We know today that every step forward in the technical civilisation brings with it more and more risks. The New Man is a man who takes risks in order to achieve greater progress. With this motto of the modern man, our behaviour is becoming relative in all respects. You don't take a risk only when you are continuously flying in an airplane, you take far more risks when you enter into relationships with all kinds of people over and over again. Everything in modern life is a period of testing. Young men and women in particular have to pass through this testing period of intimate relationships. Thus the sexual relationship can become a functional operation in a mechanised world.

Following these trends in modern life, entertainment becomes an "explosion". It is more a delirium than an amusement, not only for the actors but also, and more so for the audience. It is a combination of a mechanical dance and a machine put on the stage; it becomes a provocation for all sexual instincts and at the same time, a great risk. The younger generation certainly finds it very entertaining. It is a kind of collective hallucination by which the whole of humanity is taken in. Perhaps you read in the newspapers that when the Beatles were performing their program in California, 30 young people were taken to the hospital, and five of them to a mental hospital.

We have to understand the sins of our fellowmen and practise reconciliation towards them, but we must be very strict with ourselves, otherwise as Orthodox we can never exist in this world. Reconciliation does not mean identification. Try to be preachers of a new era, because you yourselves bear the marks of the most fundamental Orthodox principle, that man regenerated in Christ can withstand the strain of evolution, not because he has a particular ontological essence in himself, but because of the energy of God in him. The same thing must happen in the political realm. Always try to combine not only order and welfare, but also order in justice and freedom. Do not be unilateral in all the political movements of today, but try to find out what is behind them and what the underlying causes of the troubles are. The prophetic task of the Christian in a given situation demands re-adaptation for the sake of the human race and the whole of society. Do not hesitate to identify yourselves

with any kind of political trend, whether it be right or left. But do not become identified with any kind of revolution merely for the sake of a revolution which will end in anarchy. Try to be revolutionary by reconciliation, try to contribute to the justice of the world by being a real factor for progress within your country and your society. Change what is old and sterile and what requires to be readapted for the sake of social justice and freedom. Speak of peace in the world but proclaim at the same time the prophetic word where freedom and social justice do not exist. What do you expect from peace when it is a peace which has nothing to do with the dignity of man and social justice? Colonialism no longer exists, but economic exploitation of nations exists. There are free governments, but you are not free to be a citizen of all realms. You have democracy but you are not free, for you are exploited by this democracy. The world bears the marks of sin that tortures it from within. The world in its progress increases these marks and makes them more explicit. The Christian is always the man who discerns these marks, who reads them very carefully and in a special way. The freedom that a Christian proclaims is not an individualistic freedom. The freedom that we proclaim is the faith of the whole world. We are bound to have the faith of others. When we say in the liturgy, "I believe", we say that only as a member of a praying community. We separate ourselves only at this moment in order to proclaim our personal agreement with the faith of the whole church. We know that some of the terms we use are outdated but we affirm by them that we believe that we are one, though we are many, living in many different countries and in many different cultures and situations. This freedom is not a freedom of emancipation, but a freedom of communion through the Church, by which the whole world is transfigured.

Young people need a new cosmology today, through the Holy Spirit, in order to understand what the cosmos is. In order to see, through the Church, how this cosmos is progressing, in the Holy Spirit, from a centre (that is the Church) we always have to move from the event to the periphery. This is no longer a retrospective or introspective movement, but a movement which starts from the centre and moves towards the outside world. This I would call a new understanding of the modern world, on the basis of our tradition. Orthodoxy means the participation of men in the new creation by the Spirit of God. Alongside this we need a new anthropology, a new understanding of the Holy Spirit, regenerating Man in the Church. These two things can give us the basis of personal ethics and can make us understand the new man in this world.

Abraham, the father of faith, when God called him, was ready to get up and go without knowing where to: "Thy will be done, O Lord." Trusting in the promises of God, he led the people of God to a new land. This for St. Paul is the image of the Church. This world is an imitation of Abraham's journey to the promised land, made in faith by the people of God. Our life in the modern world, experienced in the Church, is the recapitulation of the history of Israel and the story of the Red Sea, "Go and I am with you, do not be afraid of anything that will happen. You will die from hunger, you will be bitten by snakes, but I am with you till the end of time." In this respect no one belief of modern man, which is contrary to the Gospel, can appear to us as being hostile to it. Everybody is potentially included in the ecclesial community of God. Unbelief is the pre-requisite for belief. Today the atheist is the alternative to the Christian. The marching and wandering of the people of God in the modern world must be a manifestation of a firm faith in the Church; Not simply in ourselves, but in something that transcends everything - the ecclesial communion. God's people are

invited today to march on the path that he has prepared for them and which governs history. He will lead them to the greatest possible relationship with the world, for it is for this that the Church exists.