

Book Review

AN IMPORTANT PROBLEM OF OUR AGE

Cirtautas, K. C., **The Refugee**. Published by Meador, Boston, 1957. 166 pp. \$3.00.

While reading the essay by Dr. Cirtautas, this reviewer was vividly reminded of a minor but rather significant incident that occurred in May 1945 in a little northern German town near Luebeck. On a sunny afternoon three young American soldiers were given the order to extradite 14 Lithuanians to Russian troops stationed a few miles east of that location. The GIs were rather surprised when these individuals refused to board the truck. The people were put on the vehicle, but one middle-aged, rather stocky individual kept jumping off the truck thus delaying the departure. After repeated unsuccessful attempts to keep him on, one soldier became impatient and hit the man (who happened to be a famous Lithuanian writer) rather severely. Though obviously hurt and bleeding in his face, the man continued his efforts to stay off the truck. This strange behavior puzzled the young soldiers, and, although language difficulties presented considerable barriers in the communication, the Americans tried to determine the motives for such behavior. When told that these people did not want to return to their homes because of the Communist regime, the Americans could not quite grasp the meaning of the explanation; one soldier simply suggested that if they did not like Stalin and his party, all they had to do was to go home and during the next election vote for somebody else and thereby change the political situation. However, even this democratic argument did not persuade the refugees to go back, and, still puzzled, the GIs reported the problem to the officer in charge. After considerable discussion it was finally decided not to force these people to return.

Do we need a better example of the lack of real understanding of refugees and their problems? It must be pointed out that such lack was and, to a considerable extent, still is a rather common phenomenon. Any attempt to explain and communicate these problems meaningfully is to be commended. Dr. Cirtautas certainly deserves praise for his efforts to describe the psychological aspects of the refugee, who, according to the foreword by prof. P. A. Sorokin (Harvard University), is to be considered as one of the most important problems of our age. Many a reader will find valuable information in this publication. Those well informed about the statistical, political and other aspects, will derive abundant data of human interest and consequently have a better understanding of relevant personality characteristics; those less informed will definitely gain some insight into the basic refugee problems; and many an interested reader will be stimulated to further thinking on this subject. For instance, the author points out very clearly the various linguistic problems which a refugee faces and the feelings associated with these difficulties (p. 50). Few, if any, individuals, who did not share the fate of a refugee, are aware of such problems, and readers will certainly become interested in as well as be stimulated by many such aspects.

The author, who has defined his essay as dealing with homelessness as a psychological, social and religious phenomenon, has subdivided his book into a preface and five chapters. The first one is devoted to the cause of homelessness, and herein the uprooted, the refugee and the expelled are described. The world of strangers is discussed in the second part, while the third chapter analyzes the world of morality and characterizes the despondent, the indifferent and the determined. The future is visualized in terms of the decadent, the cultured and the blessed, and this description composes the fourth chapter, while the last section of the book covers such topics as the process of assimilation, homelessness as world destiny and other relevant aspects.

As can readily be seen, the author makes continued attempts to classify refugees into types. His typological efforts are influenced by time and hierarchies of value as determining and classifying factors of the types described. A psychologically trained reader will find this typological system rather unusual since none of the types is based on the frame of reference of customarily accepted and widely known psychological schools of thought. This observation, which may even be considered as a criticism, is warranted since such an approach may easily lead to rationalizations in classifying psychological aspects. The delineation among types as well as their definitions do not necessarily provide the reader with an exhaustive or even mutually exclusive classification system, and thus the types may appear to be somewhat arbitrary. On the other hand, however, the selected approach to typology does not limit the author to empirically assessable aspects of personality only. Considering the fact that Dr. Cirtautas also covers social as well as religious characteristics, his classification system becomes more justified. It is interesting to note that the first four chapters were originally written in German, and the fact that these creative efforts were initially intended to inform Europeans, will make this approach even more understandable; Europeans find such methodological attempts much more acceptable than their American counterparts.

Essentially, the author has chosen the phenomenological approach in dealing with the refugee problem, and limiting himself to phenotypical descriptions, has not attempted to draw genotypical conclusions which might have given this creative effort a more distinct dimension of depth, especially with regard to underlying motivational forces. It must, however, be emphasized that within his selected frame of reference, the author has done a commendable job of describing and analyzing the refugee.

If we assume that scientific efforts either lead to the discovery and formulation of hypotheses or to the testing and verification of the already formulated ones; we may readily assign the creative efforts of Dr. Cirtautas to the first category. He suggests numerous isolated, specific formulations, and his types may also be considered as rather broad, general hypotheses. Indeed many a thesis of the hypothesis testing nature (and it seems that the current trend in American graduate schools favors this type of scientific endeavor in psychology to an almost exclusive extent) could be written on the basis of the observations, suggestions and formulations made by the author. We would, for instance, certainly be interested in the answer to the question whether educated people find it more difficult to adjust themselves to life in a new country than people with relatively little schooling. This list of interesting topics could easily be a rather long one.

Although it is very difficult to determine whether the author is psychologically sound with regard to his attempted formulations of hypotheses, existing evidence seems to point out a correct analysis of the subject matter. The reviewer's empirical study of the change of avo-cational interests in refugees, for instance, verifies the speculations of Dr. Cirtautas with regard to assimilation (p. 110), and other studies most probably will also substantiate and support many a statement or formulation made by the author.

American readers will certainly be surprised to find no quantitative findings in this book. The author does not make any attempts to determine the relative frequency of any of the given types, nor is he interested in any other numerical comparisons. Will the reader find this to be refreshing or will he tend to be critical? — the answer, of course, will depend on the individual. Some people will certainly miss the commonly used psychological terms. Restlessness (p. 109) may, for instance, be considered as, and therefore called, anxiety, but the author could certainly not describe all the phenomena studied in psychological terms used by a social scientist in this country.

The author uses a style that signifies incorporated value judgment. For instance, his phrase "seeks the company of undesirable women" (p. 80) certainly manifests an intrinsic evaluative connotation, which is rather infrequent among empirically oriented social scientists. The writer's style reflects an ideology, and readers, who are aware of this fact and can identify themselves with the basic assumptions of the ideology, may find this style acceptable and even gratifying, yet others, who do not accept these assumptions, may be confused or even somewhat irritated. The reader should know, that the author himself is a refugee, who has received his education in Europe, and this fact may shed some light on the author's style. An excerpt of the essay on pp. 56-58 provides the reader with an opportunity to acquaint himself with the thinking and his style. The author is most successful in his analytical thoughts and formulations, but does not always convincingly succeed in his descriptive efforts.

The contribution of Dr. Cirtautas is a very valuable one. His essay significantly enriches the available literature on refugees and their problems, and herein lies the substantial value of this publication.

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