

flexible and more appropriate to hospital and public health work, thus bringing the computer within easier reach. In addition, the computer is used for processing data on clinical research, for automatic monitoring or statistical appraisals. Put to proper use, the computer performs all sorts of repetitive jobs and relieves nurses and doctors of part of their work on medical charts thus leaving them more time for the patient. At the same time, analytical capacity reinforced by statistical method, probability and operational research, will reform medical thinking.

Computer feeding and automatic processing of medical data necessitates their being broken down into simple and logical elements. This effort alone is often at the origin of worthwhile methodological reforms. From the nurse's point of view, the change will undoubtedly involve an improvement in the accuracy of noting vital symptoms, the observation of patients (particularly in intensive treatment and post-operation wards) and the administration of medicaments. This effort will be largely offset by the release from repetitive and tedious tasks and a certain amount of detailed recording on charts.

War, the imponderable, by René Carrère, *Guerres et Paix*, Paris, 1969, No. 1.

On the road to Thebes, Oedipus was confronted by the Sphinx which he vanquished by giving the right answer to its riddle. His destiny was to continue developing in keeping with the fatality of old or the will of the gods, with a succession of murders and a war against Thebes. Like the course of history, we cannot change mythology which reflects civilizations' awareness of their destiny. All we can do is to formulate a hypothesis of no particular value.

If, instead of proposing a relatively simple enigma, the Sphinx had asked Oedipus a more difficult question: "What is war and what is the reason for war?" the answer would have been more difficult and, in any case, controversial. The Sphinx would have devoured Oedipus as he had done previous travellers. Man would have been vanquished by the Monster, for to define war and its function has proved, over the centuries, to be a matter of chance, as, like Proteus, it assumes various and unexpected forms.

Yet this question "What is war, as a social phenomenon and what is the reason for war?" is capital. The reply has been sought for a long time but never found.

Some twenty years ago, with the threat of nuclear war, a new approach was tried: *polemology, or the sociological study of war, the scientific study of war and peace, in themselves and in relation to each other*. Although, by reason of the subject studied, it is akin to the traditional sciences of warfare (strategy, tactics, logistics, sociological and

military institutions) and of peace (politics, diplomacy, law), polemology is clearly distinct. Its sphere is fairly wide and new enough for it to overlap theirs only incidentally, when it is necessary for it to refer to them.

We must first define this new discipline and its limits. It is distinct from the five traditional approaches to the phenomenon of war-peace: — *the philosophical and moral approach* which, in the absolute terms of conscience and dogma, and in the relative terms of attitudes, opinions and interests, judges war and peace; — *the political approach* which conducts general strategy to meet or avoid war under the best conditions; — *the legal approach* which, through a network of texts and treaties, endeavours to prevent or at least limit the effects of war; — *the pacifist approach* which, as various as its underlying motives, rejects war; — *the military approach* of theorists and practitioners of war who study war as if it were a science, conduct it as if it were an art—a fearful art indeed—and endeavour to preserve peace or win war whose aims are fixed by policy.

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Polemology cannot, of course, ignore any of these traditional approaches and their respective merits. Moreover, it covers part of their particular spheres, but viewing their limits and failures, proposes a new approach to the phenomenon of war and peace, *the sociological approach*, with recourse to all kindred disciplines which may throw light upon the problem.

Why the term *polemology* (proposed by Prof. Gaston Bouthoul)? First of all to confer on this new discipline, by use of a dead classical language, precision and identical significance for all men; second, to make it clear that although its aim is peace, considered as one of the most fragile assets of the city (*polis*), the subject it studies is war (*polemos*); and third, by semasiology, to distinguish the two human trends within any city: the giving of a political and dialectic aspect, both of which run counter to the scientific character (*logos*) which polemology is intended to maintain.

The three aspects of polemology which we shall consider are its discovery explained by the growing threat of war; the definition of its aim, its research method and prospects through the discovery of an original line of thought and conduct; the computation of the probability and scope of its discoveries. This exploration should enlighten us on polemology's future....