

THE REGION OF WHOLENESS

TWENTY years ago, an inquiry into the reasons for the now prevailing sense of human impotence and indecision would not have interested very many people, for not many people felt that way. Today, however, there is no need to argue in favor of such an inquiry. No one can say that the present outlook for human beings, whether individually or collectively, is bright and cheery; and while a basis for optimism and confidence may lie under the surface of experience, we, the people, have not discovered it.

In the modern vernacular, one basic question would be: Is the human race considerably off the beam? The question is worth pursuing, and the fact that it is most effectively stated in the vernacular shows where the vitality of thought is greatest in our time. To say that there is a "beam" for human beings to follow is to say that the way, the truth and the light really exist, and can be lost and found. It is to say that there are both healthy and diseased conditions of the human spirit—that there is a "right" and a "wrong" way for people to live.

What, then, might be accepted as evidence that there is a true philosophy of life? The fact that many people, perhaps the majority, are miserable for most of their lives may be evidence of something. It could mean that these people worship the wrong gods, or no gods at all. It could mean that they have too few of the things they want—or too many. Or it could mean that they don't understand "happiness," or that they do understand it, but are prevented by circumstances from attaining to it.

In any event, the determination of a guide for living—the description of the "beam"—is a problem of great subtlety. There are certain decisions, however, which may be made simply by studying the problem. First of all, is it a problem

of changing our circumstances, or changing our attitude toward our circumstances, or both? Doubtless, it is both, for no man can change his circumstances without having an attitude toward them—he will have to think that they are important, and that they *can* be changed, in order even to attempt it. But if he thinks that happiness or fulfillment lies wholly in better circumstances, he is probably the victim of serious self-deception, in view of the fact that large numbers of people are unhappy in what are commonly judged to be the best possible circumstances, while others get along pretty well under opposite conditions.

To put the problem in another way: Can a man be absolutely defeated by circumstances? Or, as Socrates asked, "Which should we fear, the evil that other men may do to us, or what we may do to ourselves?"

Judging from the condition the world is in, we are pretty much defeated by circumstances. This, of course, could be the result of believing in the absolute power of circumstances, so that it seems necessary to bow to what we believe in. Or perhaps circumstances really are all-powerful. Thus the question becomes: Are we contesting with delusions or realities?

But the question is still more complicated than this, for while we sometimes *say* that the power of circumstances is not absolute that Goodness, Truth and Beauty are more important—we most of the time *act* as though circumstances were the reality and our ideals delusions. We excuse this inconsistency by pointing out that, after all, men must be practical. We say that the temple to truth, goodness and beauty has to be erected upon a solid, circumstantial foundation; and every time we say it, all the newspapers agree.

Anyone who argues against this position is

likely to be accused of believing that Don Quixote and the Lone Star Ranger are real people instead of characters in fiction. In other words, only half-hearted idealists are permitted in our society. A principle is only good for as far as you can see that it pays off. We forget that the less chance you are willing to take on a principle, the less you can see how it operates at a distance. People who work out their lives according to this standard of judgment finally get to the point where they have no principles at all. Right now, of course, we frown on this extreme—we haven't got there yet, and we still like to talk about the Good, the True, and the Beautiful; just as we frown on the other extreme of a completely principled life—we haven't got there, either.

Why aren't the Good, the True, and the Beautiful enough to believe in? All the other questions have been preliminary to this one, for the answers to this one lie far out on a philosophical limb. You can belong to any Church and vote for the Good, the True and the Beautiful. Or you can play golf or go to the beach on Sundays. To believe in them really costs you nothing in religion. Science is not against them, either. Science does not argue about what is good, true, or beautiful.

Only human beings care about these qualities, and Science long ago defined the real as the non-human. You will get into trouble only if you start in deciding what explanation of life is true, which forms of behavior are good, and why some things are beautiful, and talk about what you think. For to have any real opinions on these subjects will require you to define the "beam" you think human beings ought to be on, and when you do this, you will be in competition with all the Churches and will be invading a territory which Science—officially, at least—says does not exist at all.

Suppose you come up with convictions something like the following: That the life of man is a spiritual odyssey; that the riches and variety of human existence arise from the original creativity of human souls; that an environment of what we

call good and evil is the inevitable accompaniment of moral evolution; and that growth into self-dependent serenity is ruled by a law of compassion. That this, in short, or something like it, is the meaning of human life.

If you so declare your convictions, you will have almost no institutional support at all. The churches won't like you and your convictions because you give evidence of getting along without them. Church people will say that there have always been churches. The church people will naturally say this because they belong to churches and like to think that churches are necessary. You will find some church people saying that wars are necessary, too, in the sense that inevitable human sinfulness brings them about.

Church arguments, however, are not very important these days. The argument that makes most people too timid to have real convictions about the meaning of their lives comes from the entirety of our modern, technological culture, of which the churches are but one submissive division. It is the argument from specialized knowledge.

Ours is a culture which refuses its members any secure philosophical foundation for believing in the Good, the True and the Beautiful, on the assumption that a philosophical foundation is neither possible nor needed. This assumption, we propose, is making men into mice.

The biologists and the evolutionists tell us that man is an animal—*essentially* an animal. They can't find out how a human being ought to act from studying gorillas and chimpanzees, but they nevertheless insist that man is an animal. They are silent on whether a tortured conscience can drive a man mad, or whether the secret of atomic fission was locked in the genes of some fossil ancestor. They smile at people who say that man is a soul with a transcendental destiny. But they will try to bring their daughters up to be good girls and obey the rather confusing moral sanctions of a college town in the United States.

The historians say with great sophistication that history *may* have a meaning, but that historians can't find out what it is—not in this century, anyway. And they stick critical pins into any heretic who claims to have found a meaning. He doesn't obey the rules of the union. He wants to have his own understanding with life. But private understandings are prohibited by the union.

"Master patterns" of meaning are naturally at a discount, these days. The sort we have had experience with have been very bad ones. Hitler had one. Marx had one. The Inquisition had one, and so did Napoleon. But we ought not to forget that Buddha had one, too. There is reason to think that Jesus had one, but one that has been so confused by theological argument and institutional corruption that it seems almost impossible of recovery.

It is the fashion, these days, to complain about our technological society. Such criticism often appears in these pages. Its real basis, however, probably ought to be stated as lying in the technological theory of "truth"—a theory which, in the interest of precision and certainty, settles for less than half of the truth that may be possible. Beyond the truths of technology—the facts of the biologists, the mores of the sociologists, and the cycles of the economists—is the region in which we actually live our lives. In this region we make or break our partisanships, construct or betray our loyalties. Here we come face to face with birth and death, with love and hate. Here we balance pleasure with pain, try to reach definitions of duty, and shape our hopes and our credos. And this is the region for which no orthodoxy offers any living guide.

The hunger for a natural life grows out of the failure of modern civilization to meet the needs which are encountered in this region. It is not really the soil that we long for, but the self-sufficiency which seems to arise within a man who lives close to the soil. It is not the family we love, but the depths of understanding that are touched

in the midst of harmonious family life. We want the untaught lessons, the undogmatized truths, and we want them with a yearning that comes from long malnutrition of the spirit.

The wholeness of ritual religion has a siren appeal that gathered in the millions at the time of the disintegration of the last great civilization of the West—classical antiquity. But wholeness achieved through the abdication of the part—of man, the self-conscious moral unit—is the wholeness of intellectual oblivion. To accept this sort of wholeness would indeed make a squirrel-cage of history. We want our wholeness without death—even a death in the odor of sanctity—of our moral independence. And we want it without a return to the spinning wheel and the hand-plough. These are only the symbols of independence—the tools of a former competence as whole human beings. We cannot construct wholeness out of symbols, even though the symbols may help us to find what they represent. Truth may come to men born in stables, to men who get their hands dirty, to peasants such as Tolstoy knew, and to physicists like Einstein. But truth is not in stables or in physics; it is in men.

The facts which are available suggest that men who run their own lives usually build their own philosophies, and that these philosophies are likely to have more truth in them than the ideas of men who accept dependence upon either God or the Big Battalions. Which comes first—the independence or the philosophy? If we knew this, we could open schools and teach philosophy, or tear down the schools and teach anarchism. But we don't know, and nobody knows—for the reason that what a man is and what he thinks and does are inseparably blended realities of every human being—they only *seem* to be separated in behavior.

But when we are thinking, the philosophy, surely, comes first. And if we are to make our own philosophy, and put it to work, we shall have to think about human independence—the kind of freedom which a man can begin to exercise under

any sort of circumstances. A philosophy of moral independence, surely, will have to seek its first principles in exactly the region that is ignored by the technologists—by all our modern authorities—and to do so consciously and deliberately. It will have to obtain a sense of personal destiny and of moral being without the aid or blessing of the biologists; develop convictions about the sort of progress concerning which evolutionists say nothing at all; and finally, establish principles of human relations which sociologists and psychologists studiously neglect.

Only men with views of this sort will ever ask themselves, personally, what *they* should do, before musing upon what other men ought, or ought to be made, to do. There is something very dead about all books which tell how people behave as a result of surrounding conditions, as though all human behavior could be predicted in the same way that the path of a projectile can be predicted. No man thinks of himself as a complicated missile hurled into life by fate, bounced around for a while, and finally bounced out. Only technologists who deal with living phenomena as though life and consciousness were unreal describe the actions of human beings in these terms, and even they themselves *live* on an entirely different basis.

It is too soon, perhaps, to talk about a "science of life." There can be no science without first establishing common sense on principles, and, in the region of practical human decision, our common sense lacks principled foundations. This is different from lacking common sense. We have some of that. Without common sense, we should have no suspicions of atom bomb wars, total conscription, the absolute collectivist State, and all the threatening forces which attack our sense of moral well-being. But we need to found our common sense on principles, lest it grow weak and die; lest it give way to the mechanist logics of the technologists. A death camp is a supremely logical affair, technologically speaking, for a "victor race." And an atom bomb is the "liberal"

answer made by the technologists of a race of master mechanics.

If men find no principles in the region of wholeness, that region turns against them, spawning all the horrors of external compulsion and intolerable fear. This, then, is one explanation of the sense of impotence now possessing large portions of the human race. Without principles, men turn to the compulsive worship of the gods of force and destruction. Either man has an internal destiny or an external one. Either he is a soul, answerable to moral law and his own perception of it, or he is something else, to whom the ideas of soul and moral law are deceptive chimeras. This is the choice we have to make, without aid from science and without benefit of clergy. It should not be a difficult one, once it is faced.

Letter from **SOUTH AFRICA**

JOHANNESBURG.—A statement often seen in articles on South Africa appearing in overseas journals is that the white people stole the land from the black man whom they now treat as an alien in the land of his own inheritance. While the acquisition of land by the white people was often conducted by means of practices little understood by the blacks, who consequently at a later date felt themselves to have been defrauded, the accusation of "stealing" is, as a generalisation, unsubstantiated by history.

White settlement in the Cape began in the middle of the seventeenth century and at first was local to the region of the Cape peninsula. When the stock-farmers began to penetrate inland in search of grazing, they moved across the Cape to the east rather than to the north, as that direction was blocked by hostile Bushmen, a tribe of little men later largely exterminated by the Bantu. (Bantu is the name given to the black races found today in South Africa.) The land to the east was open, owing to the scourges of smallpox among the Hottentots who had inhabited it. Only when the Fish River was reached in the eastern province near what is now Grahamstown were the Bantu people encountered in the form of the Kosa tribes. These tribes had invaded the country from the north at about the same time as the Dutch had arrived to settle in the Cape. Agreements with regard to territory were made with the Kosas, the Fish River being taken as the boundary, but the frequent infringement of these agreements resulted in the Kaffir wars during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The present Free State, Transvaal and Natal were opened up for white settlement by the Voortrekkers (as Dutch pioneers were called) a little over one hundred years ago. Again they found the country sparsely inhabited, this time owing to the extinction of whole tribes by the warlike Zulus, under their great chief Chaka, and

by the offshoot of the Zulus, the Matabele, under Chaka's rebel chief, Moselekatse. It is reckoned that two million people had been annihilated during the tribal wars. Piet Retief, the Voortrekker leader in Natal, sought peaceful agreement with the Zulus, but he and his entire party were treacherously murdered during the truce for negotiations. Their murder was avenged by a small body of Voortrekkers against terrific odds in the battle of Blood River, now annually commemorated by a public holiday in accordance with a vow taken by the Boers before the battle. This day, December 16, is known as Dingaan's Day, Dingaan being the chief responsible for the murder of Piet Retief and his friends, and whose warriors were defeated at Blood River.

There is much in the history of South Africa, as indeed there is in that of most nations, of which its inheritors cannot be proud, but the early chapters written by the Voortrekkers are far freer from cause for moral condemnation than some of the later ones. The world at large today may feel outraged by South African native policies, but it is to be hoped that fair-minded men all the world over will join with South Africans in paying honour where honour is due to the heroic qualities of the Voortrekkers; qualities of courage, determination and endurance, which, in a burning conviction that they were fulfilling God's will, carried them through untold hardships and suffering. These surely are qualities which command universal respect.

SOUTH AFRICAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

DISREPUTABLE MORALIST

THE HORSE'S MOUTH (Book-of-the-Month Club selection) by Joyce Cary is not the sort of fiction we would normally feel an obligation to summarize or discuss for MANAS readers, but the book's popularity is perhaps significant. The leading character is a fabulous, almost incredible artist whose career would be regarded from most conventional perspectives as wasted, sordid, confused, tragic and ludicrous. But the man who goes through all these experiences—a past-sixty indigent named Gulley Jimson—nevertheless finds life worth enjoying. While he periodically wrestles with himself to fight down an incipient hatred for art dealers, Town Councils, and the British Government, he succeeds in "never letting anything get under his skin and eat in."

Everything happens to Gulley, from having his favorite wife desert him, to bigamy charges and prison terms, plus seizure, theft, and destruction of his artistic creations. But Gulley is such a successful individualist that nothing curbs his appetite for living nor his enjoyment of the inspiration of the moment. He is even able to cherish and appreciate the company of the now shapeless ex-wife-model who deserted him many years before—because she is still "all alive-o" in her mind.

Here is Gulley, commenting on a typical clash with High Authority:

"If I wasn't a reasonable man," I said to Nosy, "I should get annoyed with Governments and the People of the World, and so on. I should get into a state. . . . I forgive 'em, Nosy. And Tomorrow I shall forget 'em. To forgive is wisdom, to forget is genius. And easier. Because it's true. It's a new world every heart beat. The sun rises seventy-five times a minute. After all, what is a people? It doesn't exist. Only individuals exist—lying low in their own rat holes. As far apart as free drinks. Further because nothing can bring them into the same space. And what is a government individually, a hatful of prophets and murderers dreaming of bloody glories and trembling at the grin of the grave. . . . I forgive government,

with all its works, because it can't rise out of its damnation, which is to be a figment."

"That's rather strong," said a gentleman in shammy gloves, opposite.

"A figment," I said. "A specter living among a spectrous world—a satan in a mill."

The people who like this book, probably like it not only when they are annoyed by "Government," but also when they perceive that they, whatever the tragedy, must manage to keep "all alive-o," out of the peculiar and inexhaustible reservoirs of the human spirit. It is evident that nothing can touch Gulley Jimson because, even at the moment when someone may be getting ready to amputate both his legs, he is apt to be suddenly struck by the most creative idea of his life, and consequently relegate all environmental tribulations to the category of incidentals.

Gulley is too busy to be afraid about losing his security, because he has also been too busy to create any security—except the security of an attitude. And he prides himself on being too intelligent to hate anyone. Therefore, despite all his quirks, he puts in a bid for being one of the best psychological risks imaginable—he is literally incapable of fear in any damaging sense, even though he is, at times, a rather timid soul.

And so, many in England and many in America have responded to Joyce Cary's novel, and will indubitably buy more of the same. Like many another book which yet possesses some immediately relevant psychological significance, this is not a great novel; it may not be even a particularly good one, but its reception is interesting, and, in a way, encouraging.

It Isn't Necessarily Murder

To anyone who spends a few reflective moments on the *raison d'être* of mass-reading tastes, the penchant for buying endless murder mysteries provides a problem. They come in all sizes and qualities, from the mass-production of Erle Stanley Gardner (you can find five or six of

his in every drug store in the country) to the rather sensitive and involved writing of Dorothy L. Sayers. It occurs to us that mass-consumption of murder tales stems from something more than that unfortunate sordidness of the psyche represented by the crowds who gather around every gruesome accident scene. Famous jurists and professional men are frequently addicted to having a supply of mysteries on the bedside table.

For one thing, of course, a book saturated with the sort of suspense that threatens violent death tends to make one prize whatever life he leads more than he might otherwise. And there is also a fascination in feeling oneself poised on that precarious tightrope that separates life from death during the suspense-interval of the novel. But why is the attraction so strong?

All in all, we have a very sedentary and humdrum civilization. Often the men receiving awards for valor during World War II had done no more than respond to accurately conditioned reflexes to mechanical obligations. The very *sense of personality* was most often submerged during the times when death was most imminent. But the reader of a murder mystery may do at least something himself—a little subconscious *reflecting* upon life and death.

There are, today, so few obvious "life and death issues" of a personal or individual sort that the murder books may offer a crude substitute for the dangerous, solitary adventurings of other epochs. Murder mysteries are undoubtedly not good for people, especially in the brutal and crude form which is most common. But they, like all other phenomena of our culture, have understandable causes.

Returning for a moment to Dorothy Sayers: this writer is one of the few who perform a decent human obligation to their readers. Her amateur detective who eventually apprehends the criminal is a man who feels keenly his own personal involvement in bringing a man to the gallows. The responsibility weighs upon him heavily, and the thought that, but for him, a certain hanging

would not take place is at times almost enough to drive him out of his mind. He constantly reflects upon the peculiar destiny which impels him to proffer his services in crime detection. He is a sensitive man, a man of letters and poetry and deep affection, and because he *is* this sort of a man he is a reproach to all those who view the taking of human life callously.

In case these notes be taken as a left-handed endorsement of murder-mystery reading—which they are not meant to be—we will at least tie ourselves down to one specific suggestion: If people are going to read murder mysteries anyway, we would like them to try Mrs. Sayers' *Busman's Honeymoon*. It is a long one, as it has to be to replace blunt instruments with subtlety. And it has a constructive if over-sentimentalized love story as an antidote for the intrusion of a corpse.

COMMENTARY THE BASIS OF TRUST

WHILE there is nothing new about the idea, the simple trust of men in one another has never seemed more important than it is in these days of mounting suspicions. Fortunately, trust in men is not the same as trust in governments, although it sometimes appears that men have become so subordinate to governments that the willingness to trust a man as a human being, apart from his government, is hardly worth thinking about.

Genuine trust, of course, is possible only among men who do not fear, who feel that they have nothing to lose—nothing, that is, that anyone else can take away from them. Are there such men? Not very many, if you take the actions of governments as representing the attitudes of human beings. The behavior of governments, these days, seems to reflect little more than the overriding fears of men inclined by both habit and training to believe that the most precious things in life can be taken away from us by force. Surely, the expenditure of by far the greater portion of the resources of modern nations in preparation for war means that war threatens what is held most precious by most men.

War can take life and it can take riches. Some men say that honor is at stake in war, but this is hard to believe, for the reason that more dishonorable things are done by the nations in wartime than in peacetime. The limits of honor are strained beyond the breaking-point by war. So it seems quite wrong to say that war is a means of defending honor.

In every war, however, there are men who gain honor rather than lose it—men who *choose* to serve something more important than life or riches. They may die when they could live, or give up their wealth or opportunity for wealth.

Such men are called fearless; and such men, we might add, are not likely to be the cause of wars, because they do not care enough about the things for which wars are fought.

Some day, the fearless men of the world are going to learn to understand one another. Some day they are going to refuse to place their fearlessness at the disposal of the obsessive suspicions of the impersonal mass. Then there will be peace.

If virtue, as Socrates said, is knowledge, then heroism is a kind of facing of the facts. We are not sure that *all* the truth about virtue is in this saying, but there is enough to make the discovery of facts of the greatest importance. The basic fact about trust, it seems to us, is that no trust which is vulnerable to fear of death or loss of property can be of much service to human beings. This, we suggest, is the fact that heroes have recognized and faced—the fact that could mean the end of war and of fear of war, if everyone could recognize and face it.

Perhaps we are not ready to be heroes, yet. But we ought to be willing to examine the fact which heroes admit and other men ignore. If we refuse to do this, the time may come when we shall have to lose our lives and our property without even an opportunity to be heroic about it. And then, although the obsession of fear will pass, its place will be taken by another—the obsession of intolerable regret.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

"Children—and Ourselves" for Jan. 4 raises a question concerning the work done by Col. Ford-Thompson in Madras: "He discovered, for instance, that the children invariably preferred an unequivocal punishment to equivocal lectures by authorities, especially when the latter left them in doubt as to their real status. When they violated a simple rule and received a simple punishment, they completed a process, full circle, and became as much a part of the community as before." It seems that, in this country, the moment one is actually punished he becomes a marked man. A certain stigma attaches to him and, no matter what is done in the way of retribution, he still carries the "aroma" of his "disgrace." In view of this, it is difficult to see why a child would *prefer* actual punishment rather than just "a talking to," which does not place him in a different category from the rest of society. Is the attitude of the people as a whole in India psychologically different from our own in this regard?

As we have implied, a child's preference for a simple punishment—when and if "punishment" is inevitable—is based on a simple desire to know where he stands. Col. Ford-Thompson had long been exploring a line of psychological investigation somewhat at odds with the modern no-physical-punishment trend of educational theory. He became convinced that one's love or concern for children is by no means accurately reflected in a decision "to never lay hand upon a child." To some educators, he may sound reactionary on the subject of discipline, but his record with children does not correspond in any way with the sort of record one would expect a reactionary teacher to make.

Whenever it becomes popular to handle discipline problems in some particular way, we must remember that the person using this method with the child may be influenced considerably by the desire to have others think well of him. If a parent wishes to be "modern" and "progressive," and *for this reason* disparages all physical punishment as an *a priori* evil, he must be sure that when he nobly refrains from physical

chastisement, he harbors no persisting internal annoyances or accusations against the child.

The hidden and real reason for a child's preference for physical over mental punishment may be that he at least becomes a party to—and in that sense participates in— physical punishment, whereas "mental punishment" still leaves him the equivocal *object* of disapproval. Col. Ford-Thompson is an outspoken opponent of "mental punishment." He feels that the child may be precipitated into an unhealthy psychological condition if his minor wrongdoings make him feel separate—regarded as morally inferior by parents or teachers. Physical punishment, on the other hand, he contends, *can* and should be accomplished without infringing upon the psychological security of the child. Physical discipline, on this view, may be considered as a sort of "pay as you go" method of equilibrating the child's transgressions of rules of social agreement in family or school. (Readers who have developed sympathy for a "contract theory of education" will appreciate Col. Ford-Thompson's feeling about this view of the disciplinary procedure he recommends.)

It now becomes necessary to defend our own previous rationalizations about the need for letting the child know that he is not fully "loved" except when he is fully "lovable." Our case was built upon the assumption that it is possible for a parent or a teacher to *always* manifest genuine concern, plus a constructive desire to help the child, even though he cannot *always*, to the same degree, feel the spontaneous enthusiasm we call "love"—when the child has manifested some peculiarly destructive motivations. Perhaps this is splitting hairs, and perhaps teachers and parents ought always to do their best to provide the child with the feeling of constancy and continuity; yet, on the other hand, it is apparent that the child must sometime recognize that love has to be earned—re-created each day by his own thoughts and acts—and that "love" is not something which is "owed" by a parent as an inexhaustible birthright

of the child.

Psychologists will probably continue to expose the frequent hypocrisy of parents, and, quite rightly, castigate accordingly. Our present mores condition us to be both startled and affronted if someone suggests that a parent's *unchanging* love for a child is apt to be more a hypocritical profession than an actual fact. Such hypocrisy does exist, though it must be granted that it is usually meant to serve a worthy end, and is the expression of a parent's desire to be a "good parent." Whatever the motivations behind misrepresentation, however, we may have to realize that *any* misrepresentation has powerfully detrimental effects in human relationships. In this instance, for example, if we allow a person, young or old, to feel that he possesses an emotional security which is actually not there, we prepare conditions for the loss of psychological confidence at some later date. If, too, a child is brought up to endlessly repeat, "I love my father and my mother," he will have a hard time realizing what the constituents of love actually are—and it will be easier for him to grow up into the sort of individual who thinks that he must love his wife and that she will love him *simply* because they are legally married. Certain it is that we cannot institutionalize love, and with this we feel sure Col. Ford-Thompson would agree.

Although our correspondent's last question is not directly related to this issue—"Is the attitude of people as a whole in India psychologically different from our own?"—it is an interesting subject in itself. Many years ago, an English army officer, Fielding Hall, wrote a book about the Burmese people, based on his experiences while stationed in Asia. In this book, *The Soul of a People*, the author devoted considerable attention to differences of attitude in respect to crime and punishment, emphasizing the fact that the man who served a sentence for a crime in Burma was subsequently free from stigma. This was apparently due to Buddhist tradition: Buddhists never concerned themselves with punishment in

the manner of many self-righteous representatives of Christian civilization. The Buddhist believes that man rewards and punishes himself, and that the social contract is never more than a thing of secondary or minimum importance. In the Christian tradition, however, it is but two logical steps from a belief in God's wrathful and righteous punishment of humans to the punishments inflicted by Church, State, or society.

So, this issue is a complicated one, involving much more than whether physical punishment is "better" than mental punishment. Children will often prefer physical punishment *if* they are able to believe that its completion fully reinstates them in their family or social group. If, on the contrary, they instinctively realize that the worst punishment meted out in our society is psychological—based on a punitive attitude—then there will be literally no point to a physical *addition* to the psychological punishment they must expect to encounter in any case.

We must remember, also, that a sort of grandiose complex is involved in most lengthy reprimands, and this can bite into the psychological nature of children as well as of adults. Many of our criminals resent their prison experiences chiefly because, in a thousand different ways, it is borne in upon them that they are considered inferior beings. The parent who sets up a definite disciplinary procedure, with the agreement of the child, does not need to evidence such an attitude. In a sense, it is the child's business to choose what he chooses—and to choose the punishment that goes with violation of "social contract." A parent's moralizing can then be relegated to its most useful function—that of talking to the child about the problem of contradictory desires, about "conscience" and about "guilt feelings," whenever the child is puzzled and shows some desire for advice and instruction.

FRONTIERS Myths In Conflict

WHAT determines the form and quality of human society? During the twentieth century, a fundamental change began in the sort of answers men make to this question.

Centuries ago, it was believed that God dictated the forms of social organization to his prophets, who thereupon devised the practical patterns of human relations. Kings and peasants, poets and priests obtained both their nature and their status in society by divine appointment. It was the business of the priests to explain the appointments, of kings to enforce them, of poets to celebrate them, and of peasants to support and endure them. The revolutionary epoch changed all this. Not God, but Natural Law, discovered by Science and explained by Reason, now became the arbiter of the social scheme. And, since the eighteenth century, two or three other theories of social causation have been added to the older doctrines, modifying and qualifying them.

Today, however, another type of explanation is emerging, a psychological explanation, in which, not the actual causes, but what men *think* are the actual causes, become the determining factor. It seems logical that in an epoch when propaganda is recognized as a weapon of major importance, primary causation in human affairs generally should be explained in psychological terms. This is the "pragmatic" approach to the problems of social science, concerning itself, not with what is "true," but with the consequences of believing that something is "true."

Perhaps the discovery by scholars of the ease with which entire civilizations embrace as "truth" what seem to us delusions has led historians to prefer the study of error—or, at any rate, systems of "belief"—to the candid pursuit of truth itself. And perhaps, too, acceptance of this psychological approach is a necessary part of our cultural education, before there can be any real security in the pursuit of truth. But if we are to use the psychological method of historical analysis, it seems important to know what we are doing—to realize

that a primary emphasis on the psychology of belief often assumes that truth itself is either nonexistent or unknowable. A man may take this position—many scientists do—but he ought to take it consciously, and to take account, also, of the philosophical implications of the step.

One fruitful psychological analysis of social structure and social change is contained in Francis Delaisi's *Political Myths and Economic Realities* (London: Noel Douglas, 1925). The "myth," in this work, is what men believe about their society. It is the "ideal" in their minds, which their society is supposed to approximate. In a stable society, for example, no one has challenged the myth as an ideal nor has seriously questioned its realization in the prevailing social institutions. Here we find citizens living in a climate of relative freedom—freedom under limitations which are accepted because they are a part of the "myth." Delaisi calls this mental picture of the "social order" a myth, for no citizen could have much more than a symbolic concept of the complex institutions which make up his society. In the United States, the myth presently subscribed to is that the American Way of Life sifts and sorts men according to their "worth," under the laws of God, the law of Nature, or the laws of the Founding Fathers.

A society remains stable until inconsistencies appear between the myth and social reality. If, in America's relatively stable society, it was observed that the sifting process no longer worked very well—if the civil service, for example, were found to be selecting the poorest instead of the best men for public service the myth would suffer a practical betrayal. When this occurs, reformers emerge to correct the departure from the ideal. The reformers, according to Delaisi, are the first of four classifications of men who determine the quality and character of a civilization. He writes:

Their purpose, to begin with, is not the overthrow of the regime, but the elimination of its abuses. . . the two parties, that of reform and that of the *status quo*, speak in the name of the same myth. . . . The reformers are compelled to defend the authority of the myth against those who are invested with it.

But perhaps the reformers are unsuccessful; in this case, the myth itself may have been corrupted.

At any rate, it does not work. When this point is reached, the reformers have done their job. Once the myth is under suspicion, then the man in the street—for whom the myth is the only understandable symbol of the whole society—gets into the fight. In Delaisi's phrase, "the collective unconscious is broken," and some men find themselves defending abuses in the name of order, while others have the vague feeling that attempts at change may bring even worse disturbances. Eventually, the myth loses its absolute authority and its psychological identification with security. Then the way is open for a new idea, or myth. As the second type of men who mold civilization enter the scene, things move more rapidly.

It is the era of mystics and martyrs, humble folk, reviled by their contemporaries, treated as madmen, anarchists and visionaries, but to whom statues will be erected later on and who will be honored with the names of hero, saint and precursor by the sons of their tormentors.

Out of the ferment a new myth arises, and then, as it gains acceptance, comes the question of how to adjust the new myth to the old institutions. Now, Delaisi says, "cold calculating men are required, intelligent and with a sense of reality, capable of distinguishing what should be retained. and what should be destroyed." After these decisions have been made and acted upon, the hour of the fourth class arrives.

. . . when the process of adjustment is completed, the regime definitely established and accepted by all. . . the machine runs, so to speak, of its own accord. The risks are small for the pilot, the task an easy one and the advantages considerable. The signal is given for the arrival of mediocrity, of vulgar and rapacious ambitions, of the crowd who seek the responsibility of authority, not to ensure the triumphs of a great cause or the realization of a great design, but for personal aggrandisement and profit. . . .

It is the era of the politician and of corruption. . . . There even comes a time when *in all good faith* the authorities take their own particular interest to coincide with the public interest. . . [Our italics].

This, of course, is the time when the myth has again been separated from reality; when the questioners begin to question, and the reformers, mystics, statesmen, and again, the mediocre, succeed one another in the new historical cycle.

Naturally, anyone who reads Delaisi will want to attempt to locate his own time and culture somewhere along the curve of this analysis. But how would a "mystic," for example, make use of Delaisi's scheme? The mystic is proclaiming what seem to him to be ultimate values—values which Delaisi predicts that statesmen will freeze into a "practical" system and which mediocrity will exploit and ultimately corrupt. The mystic in every man will resist the "fate" aspect of Delaisi's analysis, while the statesman must become almost an opportunist—at least a benevolent Machiavellian—in order to apply its sagacity. Some essential *human* ingredient seems lacking in the reinterpretation of history as a procession of "myths."

As is the case with so many analytical minds, however, Delaisi has his own positive convictions, amounting to a new myth, although it is not proposed as such in so many words. He draws a word-picture of "The Geon"—or unknown God—which is, in fact, the world itself:

. . . a living being with its vascular system of railway and shipping lines, its nervous system of telegraphs and cables, its organs of transformation (industrial centres) and of reproduction (banks), its nervous centres (local exchanges) placed under the control of leading exchanges and issuing banks—which, like the brain, coordinate the movements of all the members.

Speaking to the world in the voice of the "Geon," Delaisi concludes his book:

The cause of so much confusion lies within yourselves. Unwilling to recognize that interdependence which binds you to each other, you were wounding yourselves [this is applicable to either "great war"] when you thought you were striking at your neighbors. Thus it will ever be so long as you do not fully realize your economic solidarity. If reason and self-interest be not enough, the mere interplay of irresistible forces will compel you to see the light.

Until then, you will not be left in peace. So long as your economic apparatus, which is your common patrimony has not been subtracted from the dominion of your ancient gods, you will be driven to contradictory measures and to ruin. From strikes to bankruptcy, from unemployment to famine, from economic crises to social upheavals, from wars to revolutions, you will be scourged—until your dis-crowned nationalities bow down before the majesty of facts.