

## UNFINISHED HISTORY

IF we can depend upon the authority of Thucydides, the culture of the Athenian city-state was well described by Pericles in his Funeral Oration at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. The citizens of Athens had gathered to mourn the dead who had fallen in the first skirmish of the war with the Lacedemonian Confederacy. The city was then at the peak of its imperial power, and the military prowess of the Athenians was matched by equal achievements in art and literature, and in what we might today call "gracious living." Pericles made the event of the funeral oration, prescribed by law, an occasion for expressing pride in the attainments of Athenian civilization. He reminded his hearers:

Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighboring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favors the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences; if to social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he need not be hindered by the obscurity of his condition. The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbor for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty. But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. . . .

If we turn to our military policy, there also we differ from our antagonists. We throw open our city to the world, and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning or observing, although the eyes of the enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality; trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of our citizens; while in education, where our rivals from their very cradles by a painful discipline seek after manliness, at Athens we live exactly as we please,

and yet are just as ready to encounter every legitimate danger. In proof of this it may be noticed that the Lacedemonians do not invade our country alone, but bring with them all their confederates; while we Athenians advance unsupported into the territory of a neighbor, and fighting upon a foreign soil usually vanquish with ease men who are defending their homes. . . .

Seldom, if ever, has an apparently "just" war found so able an advocate as Pericles. One follows his arguments with growing admiration for the skill with which he presents the issues of the war in just the way that the Athenians themselves wanted to hear them. Nor were the other Greek leaders lacking in the same sort of brilliance. They spoke of the glory of their traditions, of the sacredness of freedom and the righteousness of their cause with such abundance of reason and conviction that a withdrawal from the war, by either the Athenians or the Spartans, must have been quite inconceivable. The very genius of the Greeks seems to have compelled them all to rush deeper and deeper into the morass of mindless slaughter, until the glory that was Greece became no more than a memory.

One searches the historical record in vain for a Saving Remnant—for *someone* who felt, even if he could not articulate, the dread augury of the Peloponnesian War. The only suggestion of impartial judgment comes from Thucydides, and he is no philosopher, no man of moral action, but a passive observer. He is the type of the modern historian, impersonal, unconcerned with anything but the "facts." He chronicles the decline of what, by all accounts, was a great civilization of the past, but he has no explanation for the decline. He does not say, nor does he seem to have any interest in considering, what the Greeks might have done to avoid their mutual destruction. Perhaps no one, in the days of ancient Greece, had ever thought that such an inquiry was possible or worth pursuing. The Athenians, it is true, were

given to long discussion and weighing of issues. "We Athenians," said Pericles, "instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling block to action, . . . think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all." They talked a great deal about how to avoid enslavement by their enemies, but they never discussed the possibility of being enslaved by a historical process which they, in company with the other Greek city-states, might be creating.

From Thucydides, then, we may learn at least that the Greeks made no real effort to resist their destiny. The speeches of Pericles, and of Archidamus, the Spartan leader, instead of warning against that destiny, collaborated in bringing it about.

In our time, in the midst of what some have termed our own Peloponnesian War, there are many voices raised against the folly of mutual destruction, and this may be the chief difference between the wars of antiquity and those of today. The voices may be ineffectual, their number insufficient, but they are raised. A contemporary historian, or one who looks back on the twentieth century, will not be able to ignore the fact that while the Greeks had nationalist principles and high resolve, we have internationalist principles, but almost no resolve at all.

The Greeks destroyed themselves without knowing what they were doing. We do not have this excuse. As Albert W. Palmer, a Pasadena minister, said recently in a letter to the press:

The common people of America had no part in dropping the first atom bomb on Hiroshima. They knew nothing about it until the deed was done—not even that the bomb was in preparation. The responsibility for using this first bomb rests upon the government in the eyes of the world and in the judgment of God.

But it will not be so with the hydrogen bomb. The military have urged it. President Truman has approved it.

But it may never go into production, and it will certainly never be used, if the moral conscience of all humane and far-sighted citizens can be aroused to

register a tremendous heart-throbbing protest with Congress and the President. If we fail now to make our moral judgment known, however, we shall all share in the guilt for any future use of this horrible weapon of ruthlessness and terror. (*Pasadena Star-News*, Feb. 27.)

On March 1, Drew Pearson reported a "last-ditch, emotional plea" by David Lilienthal, Atomic Energy Commission chairman, against the hydrogen bomb, urging that an appeal be made to the Russian people, over the heads of the Soviet rulers, for an agreement to outlaw atomic war. Mr. Lilienthal, Pearson said, speaks for "a tormented group of atomic scientists who made the atomic bombs used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and who agreed—somewhat against their better judgment—that the bomb should be dropped on enemy cities." Drew Pearson also revealed that the scientists of the Manhattan Project were sharply divided on the question of the atom bomb's use. One group did not want the bomb used at all; another group wanted it dropped as a warning on an uninhabited area, while the third group, including Robert Oppenheimer and Harold Urey, approved what was done. "But when," Pearson continues, "the photographs of the seared flesh and the medical reports from Nagasaki and Hiroshima came back, these scientists went through the tortures of the damned. Their souls were on fire, and they started a burning private crusade against the hydrogen bomb that has divided the Atomic Energy Commission." They plan a public crusade among the people, now that Mr. Lilienthal has resigned from the Atomic Energy Commission. Thus the people will at least have the facts; they will have been warned.

Athenian diplomacy was radically different from ours. When the Lacedemonian colonists of the island of Melos refused to submit to the Athenians, a delegation of the latter, backed by strong military power, went to confer with the Melians. When the Melians raised the question of right and principle, the Athenian envoys replied:

For ourselves, we shall not trouble you with specious pretenses—either of how we have a right to our empire because we overthrew the Mede, or are

now attacking you because of wrong that you would have done us—and make a long speech which would not be believed; and in return we hope that you, instead of thinking to influence us by saying that you did not join the Lacedaemonians, although their colonists, or that you have done us no wrong will aim at what is feasible, holding in view the real sentiments of both; since you know as well as we do that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.

The modern diplomat would be practically incapable of making representations of this sort. He might believe these things, but he could not say them. He would argue, not that his country is the more powerful of the two, but that his country stands for the Right, and, fortunately, has the power to enforce it. He would say that the preservation of free institutions (or the establishment of "economic democracy") all over the world makes the "cooperation" of the lesser powers absolutely necessary. Modern diplomacy is internationalist and humanitarian in profession, and covertly imperialistic in practice. By contrast, the Athenians were admittedly imperialistic, and defended their policies on the grounds of political realism. When some Athenian envoys who happened to be in Sparta, just before the war began, were given opportunity to state the case for Athenian policy, they explained to the Spartan assembly that Athens had more or less "inherited" her empire as a result of winning the war against the Persian invaders:

. . . it was not [they said] a very wonderful action, or contrary to the practice of mankind, if we did accept an empire that was offered to us, and refused to give it up under the pressure of three of the strongest motives, fear, honour, and interest. And it was not we who set the example, for it has always been the law that the weaker should be subject to the stronger. Besides, we believed ourselves to be worthy of our position, and so you thought us until now, when calculations of interest have made you take up the cry of justice—a consideration which no one ever yet brought forward to hinder his ambition when he had a chance of gaining anything by might. And praise is due all who, if not so superior to human nature as to refuse dominion, yet respect justice more than their position compels them to do.

So the Greeks, with their refreshingly candid devotion to self-interest, went on to engulfing disaster in the Peloponnesian War; and we, with our high principles, and our low or indifferent practice, are going on to whatever our destiny may be. We are better than the Greeks, in that we have our principles, but worse than they, in that we do not practice our principles, but only talk about them. Because we have principles, as Robert Oppenheimer says, we have known "sin," and having known sin, we feel guilt. The Greeks were free from sin—were free, at least, from a sense of "sinning," and as a result, their disaster had a kind of wholeheartedness about it. As Thucydides puts it, after describing the decisive defeat of the Athenian army and navy at Syracuse:

This was the greatest Hellenic achievement of any in this war, or, in my opinion, in Hellenic history; at once the most glorious to the victors, and most calamitous to the conquered. They were beaten at all points and altogether; all that they suffered was great; they were destroyed as the saying is, with a total destruction, their fleet, their army—everything was destroyed, and few out of many returned home.

Our chroniclers and historians will not be able to say, with any seriousness, that our wars have been great achievements. We hate and despise war, and are drawn into it with fear and loathing; and when the war is over, we are sick at heart and ashamed. We know better. There are consciences all about, telling us to be better. We want to be better, but we are afraid, and we don't know how.

The destiny of the West, then, will probably be a mixed and confusing destiny, instead of the destiny of total destruction. It will be the destiny of a civilization that played Athenian politics while preaching the Kingdom of Heaven. The politics will not get us peace, and the preaching will not get us into Heaven, and our destiny will doubtless remain confused until we move wholeheartedly along one or the other course. And meanwhile, we shall continue to be punished for our hypocrisy and indecision.

## *Letter from* INDIA

BOMBAY.—The World Pacifist Meeting, which held its sessions in December last year, first at Santiniketan and then at Sevagram, was certainly an unusual gathering, and a memorable event for this country. The fruit and fulfilment of the independent conceptions of Tagore and Gandhi, this informal and *ad hoc* Conference was not composed of "national delegations," but of sincere individuals coming from many countries in the cause of human brotherhood and world Peace. The main purpose of the Meeting was to consider what ordinary men and women can do to solve the urgent problems of our time and how non-violence as an active force can be applied on all planes of life. And, for many of those who came, their visit was an inspiring discovery of the soul of India today, and the true message of its Father, Mahatma Gandhi.

The Meeting was attended by 62 delegates from outside India, 28 from India and two from Pakistan, altogether representing 34 different countries. These men and women belonged to all the great religions of the world and were drawn from all walks of life. It is significant that such a varied and cosmopolitan company of soldiers for peace should confer on the soil of India almost two years after the assassination of Gandhi. While efforts were made to render the gathering as rich and representative as possible, it was deeply regretted by all that none from the Soviet world and hardly anyone from the Mediterranean countries came.

The delegates deliberated upon several long-term and immediate issues—the problems of political tension in Palestine and Korea, South Africa and Kashmir, the Soviet Union and the West; the ills and evils of largescale mechanised industrialism, of poverty and servitude, homelessness and discrimination; conditions in war devastated areas and in occupied countries, the persecution of pacifists, war resisters and

conscientious objectors, and the formation of powerful "Peace" Brigades; above all, the adoption of a thorough-going revolutionary and constructive programme, along the lines of Gandhi's Basic Education, Village Uplift and Passive Resistance Movements. Three Commissions were set up to study and report on: (1) war resistance and immediate preventive measures, (2) ways of life and work to remove the occasion of war, and (3) spiritual and cultural forces underlying all effective peace-making. The entire proceedings were underlined by the unifying conviction that peace, like happiness, is the offshoot of a state of society flowing from a condition of mind; that the macrocosm of gigantic world relationships is reflected in the microcosm of individual human relationships; that in short, peace *without* is unattainable unless there is peace *within* oneself. In the apt words of Mr. Horace Alexander who presided over the second session, "The fault lies not in our stars (or leaders) but in ourselves, not in the wickedness of politicians, but in the stupidity of ordinary men and women. But the ordinary man and woman will respond to extraordinary qualities of courage and integrity. A few men of extraordinary courage and integrity are not enough. Organisation of the good is required to fight against organised evil . . . Peace is the by-product of a society from which the worst elements of selfishness and lust for power have been eliminated."

The Conference, then, was not an "old dame's business," passing pious resolutions about war and peace; there was an authentic awareness of the need for everyone to undertake a thorough discipline of mind and spirit, an effort of self-education leading to self-enlightenment. Living and practical issues as well as stupendous problems of human conduct were faced in a manly and responsible manner. Yet all left happier and more hopeful than when they came. The accession to each delegate's "faith, hope and love" conferred by the Meeting was not its only gift. Much was learnt by overseas visitors about what manner of man was Gandhi, and the secrets of his

extraordinary power. The importance of Basic Education and the connection between pacifism and villagism or the decentralization and community movement were clearly recognised. Besides, a constant sense existed of a fascinating unity amidst the astonishing diversity of those assembled. The necessary reorientation of vision required from those who came from East and West alike will have been, in itself, one of the most valuable features and results of the Conference.

This memorable meeting of world pacifists has a message of encouragement for all men and women who desire to incarnate universal ideas and common ideals in their own lives. For, the world today is not in want of new systems and schemes, more isms and "plans"; it rather needs men of mettle who can contribute their own note of excellence to the collective wisdom of Society. We must cultivate an attitude of spiritual simplicity amidst the prevailing ideological chaos, a universal and timeless attitude to life. To come to terms with oneself and one's environment in Society, to be *en rapport* with the splendid, orchestral symphony of the whole universe, and to reflect its harmony in the tangled web of human life—that is the task of the true pacifist, and the message of the Conference for all.

INDIAN CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### REBELS WITH A CAUSE

AT about the time that Robert M. Lindner, psychologist in the employ of the Federal Penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, was putting the finishing touches on his book, *Rebel without a Cause*—the story of his "analysis" of a young convict—several other young men, also convicts, were gathering material for another sort of book—an analysis of the prison system instead of the men in prison. These young men happened to be rebels *with* causes—they were conscientious objectors to war who had been convicted of violating the 1940 draft law. Dr. Lindner's study was widely reviewed and praised as an important contribution to the understanding of the antisocial individual. *Prison Etiquette*, a book by former inmates of the federal prison system, will be widely ignored as a far too understanding analysis of the anti-individual society.

*Prison Etiquette—the Convict's Compendium of Useful Information* is edited by Holley Cantine and Dachine Rainer, of Retort Press, and printed by them from handset type on a foot-power press. It has a preface by Christopher Isherwood, and recommendations by Aldous Huxley and A. J. Muste on the jacket. It is badly printed and stiffly bound with a nondescript cardboard cover—but who cares about that? It may be purchased—and it ought to be purchased—from Retort Press, Bearsville, New York, at \$2.50 a copy.

The importance of this book could be urged in various ways, but the most pertinent observation seems to be this: No penologist or criminologist, no sociologist or psychopathologist can possibly know as much about prisons and their effect on human beings as the authors of this book. When one of the latter, Lowell Naeve, told Louis Lepke, one of the better known racketeers whom he met in the New York Federal jail, why the Government was sending him to prison, Lepke, after puzzling for a while over Naeve's explanation, exclaimed: "You mean they put you

in here for not killing"—and he laughed and laughed. At that time, Lepke was wanted by the New York State authorities for the chair at Sing Sing, and he probably regarded the West Street Federal Jail as a pretty safe place. The point is that the fourteen contributors to *Prison Etiquette* were not sent to prison for any of the usual reasons, but for extraordinary ones. They never succumbed in any final way to either the fears or the petty blandishments of the prison system and what they have to say about it is the product of exceptional moral and intellectual integrity. What they say is also uncompromising in outlook—a quality that is almost nonexistent in published discussions of penal institutions. Perhaps the best way to disclose this quality is by quoting from a letter by one of the contributors—William H. Kuenning—to someone who sent him a questionnaire about prisons to fill out. Kuenning had refused to fill out the questionnaire, and wrote the letter (reproduced entire in *Prison Etiquette*) to give his reasons, some of which appear in our quotation:

I think that answering such questionnaires, if it has any effect at all, does more harm than good. . . . No prisoner has any confidence that the immense amount of data which is collected on him will be used for his benefit. Most prisoners know that the subtle pressures constantly put upon them have nothing to do with their welfare but much to do with "prison security" and with the job security of the penologist. The prisoner's need to live and the system's need to live for him (and off him) can never be reconciled.

*The justification of this system of authority rests upon a previous moral judgment of the man's action.* Almost as often as not this "moral" judgment is based on a system of law which has little to do with any concept of ethics. . . . I know little about the statistics of convictions, but I should say that a large number of convictions are . . . ethically questionable. . . . But whether they are or not, the important point is that they are based on a *judgment*, in which the prisoner did not participate. He is in possession of a complicated set of subjective and objective facts which the judge did not, and to a large extent could not, take into consideration. He will probably either feel that the judge was completely unaware that these facts existed or that he was downright vicious.

Consequently he will consider his view far superior to that of the judge, and with good reason. Prisoners understand many things that judges do not.

. . . I hope it is clear why I don't fill out your questionnaire. What difference does it make what were the traits of a custodial officer? Custodial officers cannot be judged by traits. What interpretation can you possibly put on my telling "what was most commendable" about custodial officers, when I say that the only commendable thing was their tendency, once in a while, to act as humans and fail to enforce the rules of the institution?

If you want to understand the prison system I suggest that you go out and commit a "crime" . . . Thus you wouldn't miss the full flavor of the experience of going through the courts and the prison. . . . In the meantime you might try to emancipate the criminologists themselves. They will be emancipated when they cease being criminologists—when they are no longer paid servants of the ruling classes, and when they regard men not as cases but as equals. You don't have to throw all psychology over board in order to treat a man as an equal. But you have to give up having him hauled into your office by a policeman, sitting him in a chair—even an easy chair for an interview, and giving any other impression than this: that you're going to work this thing out together. You can be just as damned hostile as you like—I don't care—but try to have a little respect for the man! He will have little enough respect for you. . . .

Even "tolerant" readers who get this far in *Prison Etiquette* may remark to themselves—*Well*, no wonder the conscientious objectors have so much trouble with the Authorities!—which is a remark with truth in it, but, we think, little pertinence. The real question is whether or not Kuenning's analysis of the prison system is founded on the right principles, and if it is, whether or not any attempted solution of the problem of "crime" which ignores those principles is worth considering at all. It is fair, too, for a man to ask himself if he really wants to feel superior to some people, and if the mechanisms of the courts and prisons which help him to feel superior to convicts are an important part of his psychological well-being. If he finds that he does want that sort of help in maintaining his psychological security, he had better stop fooling

himself into thinking that he believes in the "reconstruction" and "rehabilitation" of the people who are sent to prison.

*Prison Etiquette* drives its readers to this sort of self-analysis. It makes one wonder how much of himself is reflected in the prison system, and it is, therefore, distinctly uncomfortable reading. But it is worth reading, if only to find out how uncomfortable you can get, and then to figure out why.

## COMMENTARY

### ARGUMENT FROM DESIGN

ACCORDING to a story told of a famous nineteenth-century freethinker and a famous preacher—friendly enemies who argued endlessly about "creation" and the existence of God—one day, in the preacher's study, the atheist noticed an orrery that had recently been given to his friend. (An orrery is a mechanical model of the solar system, illustrating the positions and motions of the planets in relation to the sun.) The orrery was exceptionally well made, and the freethinker turned interestedly to the preacher, asking, "Who made it?" This was what the preacher was waiting for. "Nobody," he said, casually. "It's just something that happened by

While this version of the "argument from design" did not turn the freethinker into a true believer, it is generally felt, even today, that the idea that the wonders of nature *must* have had some sort of "designer" or "creator" is about the strongest argument that can be found for the dogmas of religion. Lecomte du Noüy's *Human Destiny* is largely an elaborate development of the argument from design, and the enthusiasm of religious reviewers for books which use this argument shows that the modern advocates of religion place an extraordinary reliance on the "evidences" afforded by the natural world.

Philosophically and morally, however, the argument from design seems almost wholly beside the point. A proof that the world is the product of creative intelligence is not proof that the intelligence is "personal," and it gives no support to the Christian or any other theory of salvation. Nor does the argument from design meet the freethinker's objection to the simultaneous goodness, wisdom and omnipotence of the supposed creator. "Human Destiny" was really a very bad title for Dr. du Noüy's book. His arguments have little or nothing to do with *human* destiny, but relate to the origin of the natural world. He may persuade us of the extreme

improbability that the world was formed by blind forces acting on inert, dead matter—but what has that to do with the tragedy of human suffering and the mystery of human aspiration?

Actually, extravagant emphasis on the argument from design proves little more than the materialism of those who use it on behalf of a particular religious doctrine or faith. If divinity is a part of life, why should the evidences of it have to be sought in test tubes and geological strata? Are the morals of modern religion so weak that religious physics and religious biology offer better arguments for religious truth?

Another instance of this weakness is apparent in the sudden popularity of the new book, *Worlds in Collision*, by Dr. Immanuel Velikovsky, in which the Bible along with other ancient scriptures is made to yield up confirmation of a strange theory of the birth of the planet Venus. Dr. Velikovsky's volume doubtless has its merits—despite the epithets of "nonsense and rubbish" applied to it by numerous scientists—but to hope that a renewal of the religious spirit will arise from this odd union of scientific speculation with scriptural legend seems a rather desperate clutching at straws. While the book has been greeted by laymen with praise for its "scientific" imagination, there is also strong "I-told-you-so" flavor, implying that Bible statements, formerly regarded as "myths and fairy tales," now have the support of thrilling new scientific discoveries.

Why do the admirers of dogma try so hard to convert the rest of us? Is it because they have to—because the dogmas are so hard to believe?

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

OUR previous attempts to suggest the probable minimum requirements of an "ideal school" have involved us in a predicament. The listing of school environmental conditions, presumably appropriate for correcting the failings of our remotely controlled and specialized modern living, may seem to imply that we hold the theory that arrangements of environment are deciding factors in education. We actually do not believe this at all. Our primary viewpoint, which we had hoped readers by this time were taking for granted, is that a devotion to the principles of truth on the part of the founders, an appreciation of "metaphysics" as a road to the assessment of ultimate values, and an unprejudiced study of the problems of psychology, must precede the birth of every good school just as of every good home. To borrow from a recent MANAS article, only this emphasis is putting "First Things First." But there is also the important area in which we must *join* a consideration of philosophical and ethical principles with the necessity for improving environment, supplying the missing elements.

We have spoken in the past of three men, in particular, as great educators: Socrates (he is always being mentioned—almost, but not quite, we hope, *ad nauseam*—because he is such a clearly grasped symbol), Bronson Alcott, and Tolstoy. The personal life of Socrates is by no means an open book, and we are not competent to review his failings—if any—as a teacher. Bronson Alcott and Tolstoy had some teaching failings—the latter, perhaps, considerably more than the former, for Tolstoy's thoughts are less a coherent whole. But all three of these men had one thing in common at the times of their greatest educational impacts—profound philosophical convictions. How do we recognize profundity in philosophy, and is it not presumptuous and careless to single out particular individuals as profound philosophers? In one sense, perhaps, it is, but not

on our definition of profound philosophy, which would require a feeling for the Wholeness, the interpretation, of man and Nature, in some manner which reduces all human experience to facets of a working-learning process of evolution—and which does not require a specific picturization of God as a supreme labor-leader.

The reason we leave God so summarily out of consideration is because the people who resort to the God-symbol seldom feel obligated to rest their convictions on a hypothetical base, or to depend primarily upon reason in championing their beliefs. The process of education requires that teachers have an open sort of mind; only the open mind can show children and adolescents the value of opening their *own* understandings to the perspectives of new horizons. Yet both teachers and learners must always work for at least the tentative establishment of First Principles. Thomas Paine's reputation for invoking a great principle for any decision of the moment, "as if a woodsman invoked the law of gravity whenever he set axe to a tree," made Paine an excellent educator.

And so, to us, philosophy will always be First in the educational equation. We have talked much of the value of "nature experience" in education, but the sharing of Nature-experience between pupils and teachers can only take place when the teacher possesses something of that "sense of wholeness" we have linked with being, in a sense, a metaphysician. Community enterprises, growing first for the child out of a close relationship with the simplest natural forces and phenomena, similarly can be inspired only by a *metaphysical* rather than by a purely "practical" objective. When we talk about "metaphysics," philosophy, and psychology we do not mean to imply, therefore, that practical self-reliance and community cooperation are to be left out of account, but only that these should be rightly regarded as the proving grounds, and the check points, for the former.

It has obviously been our assumption that Nature herself can provide the essentials of learning as well if not better than can "the cultural tradition"—and give more of that which one needs to make him feel Whole. Yet somewhere we must come, also, to the means of actual *study* of philosophy and religion, and we think that this should begin with kindergarten, and not with the collegiate years. A study of philosophy really means learning how to think in philosophical terms, how to phrase one's pondering of ultimate questions, and how to work gradually towards tentative conclusions as to ultimate human purpose and destiny.

Almost every collegiate course in philosophy is little more than the perusal of a "Reader's Digest" type of condensation of the thought of past thinkers. Tests are based upon an ability to follow these other persons' thought processes, from the establishment of *their* premises to *their* conclusions. But the philosophy we need to teach to children must grow from what they *personally* think, themselves; the youngest of children, for instance, ought to have time and encouragement to phrase their thoughts and feelings about even the apparently imponderable meanings of birth and death, the meaning of dreams, the meaning of attachment and detachment to objects of sense.

Every teacher in an ideal school would teach philosophy, because he would encourage the most outlandish and peculiar conjectures of his pupils, and never allow derision. He would, of course, have convictions of his own, but if those convictions were sufficiently profound to recommend him as a teacher, it is probable he would be able to find some connecting link between the naïvely expressed formulations of children and his own matured principles. And he should be able to show children, whose native conceptions are often very different, some bond of unity between their apparently contradictory ideas.

The most obvious beginning for education in philosophy is for young children to ponder just what "right" and "wrong" mean. From here they

must go over their opinions as to *why* some things are right and others wrong, and then to the establishment of some conception of "the natural order of the universe" in respect to reward and punishment.

A truly fine teacher will never "set a child to rights" on philosophical questions. Many readers who are partial to the example of Buddha may remember that Gautama, who believed in the Soul above all things, refused to give a definitive answer to his pupils as to whether the soul exists or not. And this was very logical, for if the soul is real, its reality can only be expressed by the awakening of its powers *within* every man. Formulations and rigid definitions tend to close the mind, and, if there be a soul, it must discover its own being at first hand.

So this, it seems to us, is where the teacher of philosophy must begin. It is only the beginning, for, as we shall see, the children we meet in school are already conditioned to some extent by the philosophical and religious prejudices of their elders. And nearly all elders, in turn, are conditioned by the generally prevailing opinions of their particular age and social situation. The teacher of really workable philosophy must create a context *out of time* and immediate circumstances, so that some perspective may be evolved from which all current predilections may be weighed. Too, the teacher must be able to find different sets of terms for philosophical investigation for each occasion and classroom, never relying habitually on any particular formulations.

## *FRONTIERS*

### The Not-So-Incredible Psychic World

THE most impressive thing about *This World and That*, an "analytical study of psychic communications," by Phoebe D. Payne and Laurence J. Bendit (London: Faber, 1950; 10s. 6d) is its uninsisting quality. The writers, a practicing psychiatrist and his wife, obviously do not care whether or not you "believe" what they have to say. They are not writing for people who are either believers or unbelievers in psychical phenomena, but for that growing minority of persons whose interest in "another world" arises from some deep if cautiously exercised wondering about the hidden side of human life.

Dr. Bendit and Miss Payne make a team that amounts to something almost completely unique in the annals of modern psychic research. Miss Payne (Mrs. Bendit) has been psychically sensitive since childhood, while Dr. Bendit, in the course of his psychological studies, came to recognize similar if less extensive capacities within himself. As a result, their jointly written volume has, at the level of its conception of psychic reality, a matter-of-fact sort of certainty which means either that the authors are dealing with facts, intelligently interpreted, or that both are quite mad. This Department does not think they are mad.

However, no conscientious reviewer of such a book can avoid a strong feeling of ambivalence about what ought to be said concerning "psychic investigations." Only a fleeting recollection of the "psychic" section of a modern newsstand is enough to suggest that even the most carefully restrained reports of psychic studies will sooner or later be pirated by the irresponsible writers and publishers who fatten on the gullibility of the fans of pseudo-psychic "science." In ancient times, persons known to be "psychic" were usually placed in the care of the initiates of the temples, where they could be protected from the ravages of psychic infection, to which they are peculiarly vulnerable, and the secrets of psychic power—called "magic" in those days—were hidden from

the multitude by the inviolable rules of the Mystery Schools. The religion of the Mysteries, however, was the *Gnosis*, as distinguished from miraculously revealed dogmas, and the idea of psychic or "occult" powers had not yet been degraded into a jumble of pretentious superstition. Today, it seems likely that an intelligent cultural reticence concerning psychic wonders will have to await the gradual restoration of practical knowledge concerning the psychic and spiritual aspects of human beings; and that, in the meantime, those who are unsuspecting casualties to the misuse and abuse of psychic information will have to be regarded as part of the price our civilization must pay for its irrational religion and its irreverent materialism.

From this point of view, then, the appearance of a book like *This World and That* may be taken as a first step toward practical synthesis between the realities of first-hand psychic experience and the theories of modern psychotherapy. And if, in consequence of this union, there seems to be born an extraordinarily intuitive philosophy of human nature and human purpose, it may be set down to the fact that the Bendits are fearless pioneers in a field from which scientists have been barred for generations by the sheer force of traditional prejudice. Actually, for those who have never accepted the scientific denials of psychic phenomena, this study by the Bendits will be far more interesting as a treatise on philosophy and psychology than as an account of psychic wonders—although the wonders are extremely interesting, too.

The book begins with prefaces by both authors. Mrs. Bendit's point of view is intimated in the following:

As is usual with the child who is psychic from birth, I did not talk of this other world, or realise that my perception of life was different from that of other people. It was muddling and it bothered me a great deal. There was, for instance, the question of good manners and courtesy. Why, for instance, was it polite to greet people who entered the house by the

front door, while others who arrived, perhaps through the wall, were entirely ignored ?

All this, and many similar things made a surprisingly difficult childhood. Later, in my teens, when I awoke with a bad shock to the fact that I was unusual in this respect, I immediately began to seek for the reasons for this difference. From that moment until now, I have been searching for the laws which govern the psychic life and its phenomena.

Dr. Bendit's attitude toward psychism is that of a patient, sympathetic observer who has recognized that the psychic tendencies of human beings have two polarities—one negative, the other positive. The one leads to mediumship and loss of psychic independence, the other to an extension of the region of normal perception and a heightened discipline in personal life. As this distinction has never before been made by a psychiatrist, in connection with the problem of psychic sensitivity, it represents the great advance of an inclusion in modern psychological theory of *moral* principle in human behavior.

Finally, the Bendits have no doctrinal axe to grind, no cult to promote nor organization to join. They have convictions, it is true—convictions which reach beyond the limits of what is presently verifiable scientifically as "public" fact—but the wish to convince their readers of anything is hardly in evidence at all. They present an "approach" to the psychic in human experience, rather than "beliefs" about it, and judgments as to the meaning of psychic happenings are always in the form of suggestive proposals with alternatives.

Some readers will naturally wonder about the value of a book which is bound to be ridiculed as completely incredible in some quarters. This brings up a basic question, for it seems to us that the author who does not worry about whether you believe him or not is far more reliable, both in his facts and in his method of presenting them, than one who is anxious to persuade. The tendentious writer, the propagandist or the sectarian is always afraid of having his thesis upset. The more he claims, without solid foundation, the greater his nervous insistence, his dogmatism and even

willingness to indulge in a bit of pious deception. These are the marks of insecurity in authorship, and they always appear when the writer's "facts" are made to seem more important than his method of reaching them. The "facts" assembled by the Bendits, however, seem to be mere by-products of a basic serenity in investigation, and this, if nothing else, is evidence that their work proceeds on the basis of a sound theory of knowledge and of human growth.

The chapters of *This World and That* cover the following topics: Ghosts and haunts, Spiritualism, mediumship, seances, "spirit" guides, psychic communications, psychic healing, obsession and possession. Philosophically, the Bendits seem to be convinced of some scheme of soul-evolution, and incline in the direction of the theory of reincarnation as the *modus operandi*. On the question of immortality, they emphasize that, while psychic research offers evidence favoring human survival, "there is no scientific proof of survival, no matter what spiritualists and psychical researchers may say." Their own view is this:

. . . it may be that *personal* immortality is indeed a myth. But *individual* immortality is one of the deepest truths of life. For the personality, made up of mental and physical characteristics of a person, belongs to the changing world of time, whereas the individuality consists of those enduring qualities which belong to the spirit of man and of which, as the word itself tells us, the personality or mask-self is only the outer garment.

Perhaps the most interesting portion of the section on Spiritualism is the way in which Mrs. Bendit found herself able to determine the character of a seance. She explains:

The writer accidentally discovered that, when she got tired of the uninteresting generalities of the medium, she could make something happen by thinking it. She would for instance focus on one member of the group and imagine some special incident connected with that person, such as the death of an elderly man of a particular appearance. Almost immediately a message or description would be given that was a duplicate of the thought she had

constructed . . . It was such a blow to the group that they decided to abandon the experiments.

. . . when the head of the group was told about the experiments, instead of accepting them in a scientific spirit, he was very angry. To be unwilling to face facts of this order is one of the reasons for the continuing confusion among *bona fide* spiritualists.

As a psychiatrist, Dr. Bendit strongly warns against the habit of frequenting mediumistic circles. Nearly all the methods of these circles, he says, "tend toward a less clear-cut control of the personality—a form of self-abdication rather than self-control." In many psychic disorders, he adds, the "cure, in general terms, lies in discontinuing all negative psychic practices such as sittings, automatic writing, planchette, or even fortune telling for amusement, as well as in trying to find a positive psychological integration."

A final evidence of the value of this book is its refusal to identify the "psychic" with spirituality. "The true spiritual healer," the authors say, "may not himself be at all spiritually inclined. He may be the person who, because he gets angry and swears at you, shocks you out of your rut, and starts you off towards a new attitude of life." Quite possibly, *This World and That* is the best book on psychism that has appeared during the twentieth century.