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OUR FRIGHTENED UTOPIANS

THE nineteenth-century utopians were intent upon remaking the world; present-day utopians, if they can be called that, write about how horrible the world may become, and about escaping from it. The nineteenth-century utopians hoped to make the world over by applying science and brotherly love. The world that men like Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*) and the late George Orwell (*Nineteen-Eighty-Four*) think we are going to get is a world made intolerable by science and human distrust. Meanwhile, other writers, preferring to anticipate a pleasanter fate, are exploring the possibilities of interplanetary travel. They pursue this theme somewhat light-heartedly, wanting to be sure that no one takes them too literally—as literally, for example, as a multitude of radio listeners took Orson Welles' Martian invasion back in 1938—but the science-fiction trend has enough ominous undertones to suggest that such fantasy-making has a serious inspiration as well.

When both the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *New Yorker* publish stories suggesting that our own world is about played out, and that other spheres may have been more successful in the cosmic experiment of Life, it is fair to conclude that the trend is established. Of course, Mr. E. B. White's "The Morning of the Day They Did It" in the *New Yorker* (Feb. 25) is considerably different in tone from the more "wholesome" *Post* stories, but the result is about the same. The reader gets the idea that the planet Earth is either going to wipe itself out or be purged by some committee of Celestial Sanitation that has had us under observation for some time, now. The *Post* writers leave the future uncertain, but Mr. White goes ahead and blows us up completely, leaving only a single survivor who wakes up on an unknown asteroid where the people, being lazy and unambitious, "escape many of the errors of accomplishment." Mr. White's approval of this cosmic hide-out is registered in the words of his hero: "I like the apples here better than those on earth. They are often wormy, but with a most wonderful flavor. There is a saying here: 'Even a lazy man can eat around a worm'."

Mr. White never fails to be amusing, and the *Post* never fails to be engaging, but while they are having their fun with the predicament of the world, other people are asking questions which the Spokesmen of our culture consistently ignore. These other people are wondering why men like the *New Yorker* and *Post* contributors never try to challenge the pattern of futility to which we seem committed, but only embroider it with the clever stitches of sophistication.

We have a letter from a MANAS reader that illustrates the sort of thinking or questioning that seems to be forbidden to all but people without power, without access to millions of readers through the pages of national magazines. The letter is as follows:

> The last issue of *Life* magazine, emblazoned with a striking cover, was so disheartening, it seems no rallying around for any worth-while ideal is possible today. Instead of positively encouraging the idea of peace, to an already fear-ridden world, it implies so negative a future as to make faith or hope meaningless words. By what right does a publication with such an enormous circulation dare to lead into further despair its millions of readers? What must be done to make individuals, organizations and publications see that their responsibility is not to urge upon the people the necessity of "preparing" for war, but to help make dynamic and desirable (and inevitable, unless extinction is preferable) the need for genuine peace?
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> When will the world heed the few voices in the wilderness, instead of flocking to the inflammatory demagogues who urge self-destruction? If adult individuals are prepared to destroy the world, what of the responsibility they bear to the children of the

> world? It seems as if Evil has magnetized the nations so that the powers that rule achieve some vile pleasure in refining new and ultimately final means of ghastly destruction. What does one do to pluck the evil and fear from their hearts?
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> By what right did President Truman authorize the H-Bomb without directly consulting the people by direct vote? . . . What are we to do to try to save ourselves? Or is there no salvation but death? Where are the priests and the ministers and the rabbis and all the men of God? Are they too afraid of the loaded word "Communist"? Where are the bearers of children, why are they silent? Are the harborers of life also hypnotized by the idea of lifelessness? Where are the educators—where are the wise men—where are the creators of music, of painting—where are the writers of fine words—why do they not all weep for the end of Creation, or why do they not arise, all over the world, and destroy the wicked men who so lightly hold our lives?
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> Do men like Drs. Urey and Oppenheimer sleep well, now that they have opened Pandora's Box? And Dr. Hutchins, did he know his fine school cradled so much of the work leading to the Atomic Bomb, or was he busy with Thomistic philosophy? And is Stalin the Anti-Christ?
>
> Do you have the answers?

To make a bold beginning, we think that we have some of the answers, or we would not have started a magazine of the sort that MANAS attempts to be. But at the outset, let us say that we do not know which are the wicked men who ought to be "destroyed," nor do we think that anything is to be gained by trying to seek them out, for the reason that they do not, in our opinion, exist anywhere except in desperately Epimethean imaginings. It may be recalled that Pandora, who first released the evils which haunt the world, was the wife of Epimetheus, and Epimetheus was so constituted that he could do nothing new, but only look back upon the past.

The modern world—the world of which this correspondent despairs—is obsessed by the Epimethean outlook. Its only hope—the hope that was left in the bottom of Pandora's Box—is the hope for a miracle. Things happen to Epimetheus. That is his life, a life very like our own. Now either we have made our lives into what they are, or someone or something else—God or the blind forces of nature made them. The Epimethean view is that someone else made them, or that, whatever made them, we can do nothing to change them, which amounts to the same thing.

At any rate, the life we have and the helplessness we feel as part of it are what compel the present-day utopians to write about our future doom instead of our future paradise—what force our sophisticated humor to sound like a trilling accompaniment to the death-rattle of mankind, and what allow great masses of people to go on "reading" picture magazines which dress up the major insanities of the time to look like the march of progress. These are the habits, the attitudes, the "culture," of people who can see no alternative.

While "simple" explanations are always hazardous, there seems to be one simple thing that ought to be said about the terror, or the constant uneasiness, felt today both by individuals and by man in the mass. It is that we have stopped thinking of human beings as though they can do something about their lives—as though they are beings who can cause things to happen. It is worth noting that whatever moral energy the world has known has come from people who believe that men can cause things to happen. The particular set of beliefs involved is unimportant. The idea that a man can deal with his environment—any environment—is the sole source of moral inspiration; at least, there can be no moral inspiration without this idea. Make up any beliefs you like; if they are wrong, experience will straighten them out, so long as you act on the theory that a man begins to be human when he decides what is worth living for and starts in to live for it.

The hopelessness of our time arises, then, from thinking that the failure of our world is the failure of a world made for us, not by us. How can we fix a world made for us?

It is just as easy to believe that we made the world as to believe that someone else made it. It is just as reasonable to believe that there are secret potencies in our own being as it is to believe in the potencies of Jehovah or Allah. The difficulty we find in believing in ourselves lies in the responsibilities we must embrace as originating and *causing* beings. It is a fact that a man can be brave and courageous and wholly admirable in *any* environment, but if this fact were acknowledged, then we should have to admit that most of our fears arise from dislike of the idea that we might have to get along in some other environment. We want to hold on to *our* environment because we imagine that we don't know how to make one for ourselves, and so we are terribly afraid of any sort of change.

A man who believes in making his own environment is never afraid—he is not even afraid of death, because he feels, as Socrates felt, that death can be no more than the portal to new fields of environment-making activity. What a pitiful spectacle the world makes of itself, fearing death, which is inescapable at last, and fearing poverty, which is the lot of nearly everyone on earth, anyway, and fearing an "enslavement" which, however unpleasant, is bound to be unsuccessful except for the already craven, and which could not possibly be so disastrous as the psychological bondage to fear that already prevails!

Of course, to believe that a human being is a causal agent—that what he decides to do can mean something important to himself and others—is to possess the core of a faith about the nature of things entire. It is to believe in the soul, to believe that human intelligence is soul-intelligence—something that does not die out, is not lost or wasted when the body dies. The idea of immortality is wholly consistent with the idea of man as a creative power in life, and the moral attitudes of men who behave as souls amount to a practical declaration of immortality. If the soul and the soul's immortality be taken as the foundation for human life, then there is some hope of a larger meaning in our brief existence—a meaning in which that existence is but a single episode, one, perhaps, among many.

An immortal man can stand alone, he can stand without fear, and without the sense of incalculable folly with which mortality must always regard resistance to overpowering odds—and if he does, there will be others to stand with him. Why should we not admit openly what we have known all along: that only the men who stand against odds have our real respect, and that in this very admission lies the evidence of something in every man which makes him want to stand alone, too?

We thought we had security in religion. Then came men who insisted upon standing alone, and they, in the progress of their inquiries, created another form of supposed security—the institution of science and the vast catalogue of what we call modern knowledge. Such securities come to us through men with faith in themselves, and they go, through men without it. All of these men have died, and most of them have been poor, but the men without fear died free, while the men with faith outside themselves—in the powers of a world made for them, not by them—lived and died in fear and trembling.

There is no faith at all, really, except in man. The faith in the churches died out because of religious pretense to power greater than the power in men. The churches were wrong about the laws of nature—about the sun and the stars and the planets—and when men found this out they left the churches. Now the sciences are proving wrong—wrong in the things that matter to human beings—and another faith is dying, and dying fast.

Wherever there are men with faith in themselves, there will be found the movement of history. Millions will follow a man who believes in himself, hoping to feel the glow of his grace, to absorb something of his indomitable spirit. And when few have inquired of themselves the meaning of their lives, even a madman can lead

the multitude, can make them feel what the heart longs for. Both Hitlers and Gandhis can lead.

The dogmas of religion and the denials of science can blow away in the morning breeze when the hearts of men are no longer in them—and that can happen, too, to the terrors of war, if men will give their hearts to other things. We are living, today, among the shells of dying faiths, living more by habit than by conviction. Our policies are shaped by fear and our literature is dictated by desperation. It is a time, therefore, when new faiths will certainly be born. If they are born only to the few, they will probably be the faiths of madmen, for who but madmen will think themselves able to compensate for the dull lethargy of all the rest?

New faiths, then, must be born to the many, and this must begin with a faith in themselves. "What," our correspondent asks, "does one do to pluck the evil and fear from their hearts?" We have tried to answer this question. And if the answer is not enough, that, too, is a part of the answer which we must all of us learn to face without fear.

Letter from **GERMANY**

HAMBURG.—Proposals to grant Hamburg's amusement establishments large subsidies have been unanimously accepted by the city's administration. The Hamburg State Opera House will receive 1.8 million marks, the Hamburg State Orchestra 460,000 marks, the Hamburg Playhouse 675,000 marks, and the Hamburg Thalia Theatre 237,000 marks!

Considering the fact that the average German citizen cannot afford to attend such places at all, these subsidies for the entertainment of only a few of the still so-called "better classes" are rather discouraging to witness, especially in a country which forwards endless pleas for help to those who have had the misfortune to accept appointments as Germany's Marshall Plan providers. Meanwhile, very little attention is being paid by German authorities to the miserable condition of the unemployed, or to the needs of those old and helpless people who have been cheated out of the "immediate help" promised them some time ago. Proposals, plans and statements concerning payments of better and higher rents and pensions to militarists and professional officials seem to be not only the main topics of the German press, but also the main concern of our authorities.

Germany's sorry housing problems cannot be solved by the lavish financing of opera houses and luxurious theatres, nor by the change of address of a senator. After his election, the good German Senator Neuenkirch moved out of his working-class neighborhood flat, and into a district more "suitable" to his taste and office. It wouldn't of course do for a Senator of a country which can afford to waste millions for the upkeep of amusements to live in a neighborhood of common working people, even if those workers were good enough to cast their votes for him while he lived among them.

The results of the recent election in England have been more disappointing to right-wing or nationalist factions in Germany than the lack of interest of German voters in previous German elections. The reason for this German militarist disappointment is obvious, and has not been kept as secret as people abroad may be inclined to believe. Still not comprehending the democratic character of the British people, Germany's "blood and iron" promoters banked on a total victory of those opposed to the British Labour government. It was expected and hoped that a victory of the anti-Labour factions would give Prussian-German militarism the chance of a speedy comeback. Being certain of an overwhelming defeat of the British Labour Party, Germans of a more or less Bismarckian and Hitlerian colouring no longer deemed it necessary to camouflage their true sentiments, which they were able to hide so successfully during the times when Nazism was rightfully regarded as a criminal activity of political swindlers. True to their much propagated slogan, "National-Socialism is not dead!" they staged vigorous comebacks by giving loudmouthed imitation Adolfs and Himmlers the chance to attack not only democracy in general, but also the Jews, who are naturally opposed to a regime which tortured and murdered hundreds of thousands of helpless men, woman and children in German extermination camps.

Activities of German pro-Nazi and terrorist groups became quite lively during the past months. It remains to be seen to whom they will turn now for a support of their medieval doctrines of the right and might of the mailed fist. In the meantime, they seem to get enough encouragement from "American" papers like *The Broom, The Flag and the Cross,* the *Buergerzeitung* of Chicago, and other megaphones of Jew-baiters and "blood and iron" promoters.

Herr Dr. Adenauer has not much to say concerning the outcome of the elections in England. He only stated that he should not wish

to be minister in an English cabinet. It would be like sitting on a tottering chair! However, those in Germany who know and like the British people, and who believe in the establishment of real democracy, are not so sure that Herr Dr. Adenauer would have been accepted by any British party as a candidate for any office. Besides that, we are afraid that our own ministerial chairs are not made of everlasting material!

At any rate, there is decidedly too much waste, and too little democracy in Germany, today. Even slow-thinking Germans are beginning to ask themselves (they seldom dare to ask others) whether or not the waste practiced in Germany is intentional. Is it meant to supply the reasons for the much desired "failure of democracy" in Germany, and to make the revival of Prussian state totalitarianism, and the "timely" arrival of another fuehrer, appear to be necessary?

GERMAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
PHILOSOPHY IN EXTREMIS

IT is with considerable interest that we call the attention of our readers to *The Wall* (Knopf, 1950), John Hersey's second great documentary collation, and compare it with his *Hiroshima.* In a sense, Hersey's monumental task in editing the chronicle set down by Noach Levinson, one of the last Jews behind Warsaw's Ghetto Wall who fought against the Nazis, is an outgrowth of Hersey's earlier effort to present a tragic historical event in the terms of its personal impact on a few individuals. The diarist or chronicler, Levinson, adds another dimension, for he was interested in what was happening in the *minds* of his friends, rather than in what happened to them.

Hiroshima claimed attention because Hersey's pen lifted human beings out of the statistical results of the A-bombing and showed what the bomb meant to the people on whom it fell. When the bomb altered the pattern of life in an entire city, and Hersey told how, he wrote living sociology. When he moved one step closer and told what the bomb did to the lives of individuals, it was living social psychology. In *The Wall,* Hersey takes us still another step closer to the heart of man, in our opinion, for he gives us a record of the last days of the Warsaw Ghetto by a chronicler concerned primarily with the fundamental beliefs and attitudes of his compatriots. Levinson tells of the mood of men and women who, utterly exhausted from an attempt at escape through the sewers of Warsaw, find that they cannot leave the nauseous tunnel at its termination. Will they die there, too weak to return to the supplies of their last stronghold, or will friends finally open the tunnel and tell them the trucks are waiting? The drama is intense:

> There was no hurry. Indeed, the problem was to lean our shoulders against the hours and roll them along: now and again I had a panicky feeling that time had stopped and that we were all doomed to squat for eternity in that echoing, evil-smelling cylinder. Rapaport had a watch. I kept asking him what time it was.
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> As I talked with one after another of my friends, I began to realize that there was a pattern to our talks. It was not conscious or systematic; nor was it ever explicit. It was indirect, oblique, shadowy.
>
> We were all talking about one question: What has made our lives worth living?
>
> I asked some amazing questions in those hours, but I never asked that one. No one ever said to me: *This* is what has made my life worth living. Nevertheless, I can see that that was what we were talking about.

Levinson kept his meticulous record of the last events of the Ghetto's defense primarily because he refused to surrender the human capacity to be an intelligent observer—even of his own sufferings. And the fighters of the Ghetto helped him with respect for what he was doing —his humble presence and persistent work upheld the importance and sanctity of Reason. *The Wall* is not a horror tale. Levinson did not attempt to dramatize the sadism and systematic butchery of the Nazis. Instead, through the eyes of a man who fled from bunkers to sewers to wood, we see the Nazis as human beings caught in a maze of basically tragic confusion. Levinson does not write of political events as a Jewish nationalist, but as a man who sees ultimate human possibility in being able to rise above all nationalisms in time of ultimate crisis. A conversation between Levinson and Zilberzweig, a "professional Zionist," will help to convey the philosophical quality to be found in *The Wall:*

> Zilberzweig:—What has really happened is that I have decided that nationalism is not enough for a man to live by. The "strength" or "hardness" these people thought they saw in me, before, that was artificial: that was my nationalism.
>
> N.L.:—This surprises me. Aren't you a Zionist by profession? Isn't nationalism your career?
>
> Zilberzweig:—Zionism has been my only profession. I guess you can say that my "strength" and "hardness" have been professional with me most of my life.
>
> Note. N.L. I cannot say whether Zilberzweig is, as he claims, more a man than he was before he got out of his nationalistic costume, but this much I can say: I used to see in him, and dislike in him, a deliberate, professional pleasantness; his eager smile was one of the tools of his trade. That is gone now. He is pleasant when he feels pleasant; he is rather

ugly when he feels morose. I like him much better. This does not necessarily make him a better man, but it makes him more tolerable.

* * *

N.L:—*You* said you decided to search for the emotions of a universal man. Did you find them?

Zilberzweig:—No, Levinson. Not yet. It is rather hard to find universality within a ghetto wall.

N.L:—True. You are a failure, then?

Zilberzweig:—So far. But I can say that I am trying.

Levinson's diaries comprised much more than the 600-odd pages which Hersey presents. Many of these pages are unimportant, and, perhaps, at a less dramatic conjunction of events, Levinson would have written some history of pure trivialities such as may be obtained on the campuses of scores of colleges. But the best of the hunted and persecuted Levinson is very good for men to read, and for this reason we are glad to see every sort of commendation for the book, including that of the Book of the Month Club judges who selected it.

Reluctant Metaphysics

Jean Paul Sartre's *The Chips Are Down* will not qualify its author for even an honorable mention among the growing number of modern dramatists and story-tellers who endeavor to blend fiction with authentic metaphysics in relation to states after death. J. B. Priestley used ancient religious teachings about death in his *Johnson Over Jordan,* and Basil King's *Spreading Dawn* is concerned with the actual psychic processes of dying and what may be the condition of the soul immediately after. Sartre's play is different, for Sartre seems to be using death only as a device to emphasize a conception of life. To continue the activities of his characters after their death is perhaps his way of trying to make what he has to say about human beings irrevocable by any force in heaven or on earth.

If we do not misinterpret the theme of *The Chips Are Down* (now showing in a film version in the United States), it is that the dauntlessness of human beings is the one great and admirable fact of existence. They strive after a noble end—to create meaning out of the meaninglessness of the world. For meaninglessness is the other half of Sartre's credo. It is a stoic attitude, this declaration of nobility without a supporting metaphysic. "To love and bear," wrote Shelley, "to hope till hope creates from its own wreck the thing it contemplates." Sartre speaks only of loving and bearing—of standing against the tempest until one is blown over.

Perhaps a brave despair is all that can come out of modern Europe. But perhaps bravery is even more fundamental than hope. It seems so, for *The Chips Are Down,* in which only one little girl is happier at the end than at the beginning of the play, while telling of hopes which are not realized, reveals bravery which cannot die.

Why does Sartre, the sophisticated existentialist author, write a play concerned with life after death? Is it because, in the twentieth century, all "naturalistic" situations suffer from emotional exhaustion?

In any event, Sartre's leading characters in *The Chips Are Down* become protagonists of an unintentional transcendentalism—their personal defeats and failures result in an impersonal victory, a victory for the human spirit. Sartre has no reward for this victory hiding behind a fluffy cloud of celestial drapery. The play ends in a climax of ironies, yet it has the atmosphere of life, not of death. You know that these people, given an opportunity, would commit their splendid folly again. It is almost as though the play reaches to a truth that M. Sartre does not believe in himself. Perhaps he is a better artist than he is a philosopher.

COMMENTARY
OLD AND NEW ROOTS

ASTRONOMERS and geologists and such-like people who deal professionally in millions of years have an irritating habit of calm in the face of human disaster. When the chips seem very far "down" to ordinary humans, the astronomer will explain that, after all, ours is a very young planet, and things are bound to get better during the next million years or two. The biologist, also, may add his mite of encouragement by pointing out the extraordinary tenacity of life. Wars come and go, he may say, but the human germ plasm will go on.

Granting that these academic counsels are cold comfort, it is nevertheless true that constructive forces are at work, and that even while the old roots of our civilization are cut away by skepticism and distrust, new ones are finding nourishment in the soil of a more natural life.

It is of interest that the cultural attitudes which are gaining strength, these days, are almost entirely non-ideological. They deal, that is, with the practical functions of intelligent living—with the restoration of the soil, with healthful diet, with natural child-birth. People whose primary interests are found in such directions are more or less unaffected by the doctrinal disputes of both religion and politics. Their religion is largely a spontaneous and unrationalized mysticism, while their politics has reality only at the practical level of getting along cooperatively with the other members of the community.

The lives of such people will of course be interrupted by any great disaster, such as war, but so will the lives of everyone else, and there is less likelihood of a loss of emotional balance in the case of persons and families that have found new roots in a conscious effort to live at unity with nature.

It seems likely, further, that whatever rebuilding is to be done, now, or after great disturbances in the future, will be done by people who are able to live natural, non-acquisitive lives—by people who need no nourishment from the things men now compete for in business and in war.

This is entirely reasonable—that the future lies with those who have an intelligent interest in the basic life processes, in contrast to those who contend that both freedom and survival depend upon mastery of the basic death-processes. In a world of nature, surely, it is only the insane devotion to death which cannot survive.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A NEW YORK *Times* book review (Jan. 8), in commenting upon two recent volumes on child psychology, summarizes the reviewer's admiration for the contribution of psycho-analysis to the understanding of children:

> The literature of psycho-analysis has not only brought adults face to face with their primitive drives, Oedipus complexes and various neuroses, but has forever shattered the concept that individuals enter this world cooperative and unselfish, considerate and gentle. That the young child is a self-centered, greedy, demanding organism that needs assistance in developing an interest, appreciation and concern for others is substantiated by the writings of Dr. H. J. Pearson and Dr. and Mrs. Donald A. Laird.

There have always been optimistic people in the world who believe that children are closer to heaven than to hell, that the feeling of beauty and human warmth evoked by children flows from their capacity to be kind, unselfish and disinterestedly loving. But this has always been a minority opinion in Western civilization. The primary assumption of medieval theology was that of original sin. No baby was born "innocent," but instead and inevitably, with the primal curse of fleshly nastinesses, "Evil" was thought to be woven into the very fiber of its being.

Whenever the dominance of medieval psychology was subsequently broken by philosophic rationalism and by the poetic utterances of the Romanticists, children began to be regarded in a less morbid light. But the pendulum swung once more; to whatever extent modern psychology has identified itself with materialistic behaviorism, the child's basic moral inferiority (or amorality, according to psychological theorists) has been reaffirmed.

It seems important to point out that passages like the one quoted above not only re-establish some medieval attitudes, but tend to make us, in everyday living, look for "evil" in our children much more than for "good." We shall have to grant, of course, that there are many reasons why modern psychologists feel obligated to bring adults "face to face" with those imperfections of the child-mind which can only be denied by willful delusion. Over-valuation of moral capacity can be just as confusing, if not as harmful, as under-valuation.

Here, we enter again into that area of difficult consideration involving a parent's love for his children. Psychologists often feel that an unswerving love, in its fullest emotional sense, is impossible between any two humans, and especially so in relations of parents to their young. And sometimes psychologists go to unnecessary extremes in arguing the case. As an example, here is a passage from *Father of the Man*, by W. A. Davis and Robert Havighurst:

> Perhaps this may be a good time, therefore, to clear the decks of the sentimental obstacles to a realistic view of parents and children as emotional human beings. Family-life stimulates and depends upon love, and patience, and loyalty. By the very nature of human emotions, and by the severe responsibilities placed upon parent ant child, however, the family also stimulates resentment, anger, and revolt in both child and parent. The newspapers and courts furnish us with daily examples of workingclass parents who attack or neglect their children. Although they do not reach the papers, similar examples of cruel and vengeful treatment of children occur in many middleclass families. On the other hand, we know that most young children at times express anger, hatred, and even murderous desires toward their parents. Any hardpressed mother occasionally experiences these emotions toward her own children. If she is realistic, she will laugh at herself, and, as a result, will understand better the revolts of her children against social controls. But only an incurable sentimentalist will claim that such passionate conflicts do not occur even in the most conscientious parents and children.

In the same volume, the authors argue that each child "should receive complete *love* from his parents." Davis and Havighurst have apparently not tried to reconcile this contradiction, and a big contradiction it is. How, in the name of sanity, can parents sometimes "express anger, hatred, and even murderous desires" toward their children and

still give them "complete love"—that is, love that is endless and unvarying?

We feel that this question can only be resolved, first, when we adopt a determination to regard children as our *moral equals*—neither inferiors nor superiors—and second, when we grant a potentially high moral capacity to all human beings. If we allow ourselves to feel that children are more bad than good, either because we believe in the doctrine of original sin or in the primacy of selfish animality in babies, we shall expect them to be less capable of "moral" concerns than ourselves. And if this is our fundamental attitude toward children we are certainly encouraging the very traits we suspect and deplore. The humanitarian advances in modern penology have demonstrated conclusively that we often *make* habitual criminals by treating a law-breaker as if he is congenitally predisposed toward crime; it hardly seems sensible to prevent children, as well as law-breakers, from enjoying a happier valuation. The inspired educators we are always talking about are invariably men who have no interest whatsoever in assessing either the heavenly or the devilish propensities of children, but instead possess a burning conviction of *every man's* moral or "soul" greatness.

If it were possible for us to choose the circumstances of our birth into this world, as Plato once suggested, we should unhesitatingly favor being born among parents who were conditioned neither by Christian theology nor by Freudian psychoanalysis. It is simply too much of a handicap. It would seem far preferable to be born in a Buddhist home, or among a tribe of American Indians. For in both these environments each child is invested with a sort of inalienable dignity, thought to be endowed with a birthright capacity for both great and gentle deeds. No man judges the new "soul." He makes his way in the world without prejudice or suspicion, finally proving himself to be whatever he is able to be.

So if there is any time to assert the reality of the "soul" concept, it must be whenever this question of moral capacity is discussed. Free, hopeful and helpful human beings can never emerge from a childhood enveloped by the stigma of either criminality before God or animality before man. So let us assume the Moral Self, and recognize that the problem of loving children is precisely the same problem as that involved in loving anyone else. From some children, we may learn much of generosity and unselfishness that we never knew before, and from others we may learn the extent to which callous egocentricity may be carried.

Parents often tend to one extreme viewpoint or the other, either insisting that the child is a lovely thing, always worthy of our love, or that the child's motivations must be held suspect until we have successfully conditioned them to fit the mores of the social situation. Is it not wiser to form *no* opinions, either as to our capacity for being constant and loving towards any *particular* child, or as to his fundamental predispositions towards either selfishness and sin, or heavenly grace?

FRONTIERS

The New Skepticism

LET loose a fun-loving man with little faith like Anthony Standen among the theories and facts of modern science, and you get a book like *Science Is a Sacred Cow*—an extremely irreverent volume solidly packed with common sense. Quite evidently, Mr. Standen is a disciple of the Great Books. His own book is an excellent illustration of why great books are of enormous importance to modern education—in school or out—and it shows, further, that the spirit of intellectual and moral inquiry which the great books represent has already had a profound effect on contemporary thinking.

Science Is a Sacred Cow (Dutton, 1950, $2.75) makes a devastating attack on the scientific ideology. It is fair to speak of the scientific ideology, as distinguished from science itself, for the reason that Mr. Standen's book makes it quite plain that most writers on science— and scientific educators in particular—assume that science involves a "way of life" and points the way to human progress. Mr. Standen's book also makes it plain that science does no such thing.

It is probable that the reaction against science, typified in this book, will go too far. Most reactions go too far, and uninstructed reactions always go too far. Both the French Revolution and the Congress of Vienna were uninstructed reactions and they went too far. The scientific reaction against medieval theology went too far, not in opposing and then ignoring theology, but in denying any meaning at all to the ideas which in theology had become the shrivelled mummies of ancient truths. Therefore, as we reject the concepts and denials of twentieth-century science, we must take care not to repeat the same mistake. The first great scientists, of course, were not mechanists and determinists who thought that a slide rule could eventually compute all human destiny. It was the technicians coming after, the inheritors of the methods of the first great scientists, who transformed the scientific approach to nature into an ideology with tyrannical implications. Similarly, men like Dr. Hutchins of the University of Chicago and Mr. Standen of the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn are not obscurantists who are determined not to measure the measurable. They acknowledge and urge that the business of science is to measure the measurable, but they also urge that the business of philosophy is to distinguish between what is measurable and what is not.

One more question should be raised before we talk about this book. Is there any reason to think that the Great Books critique of the theory and practice of modern science may also over-reach itself, becoming guilty of excesses similar to those of scientific materialism? Mr. Standen gives us reason to wonder a little about this. In a chapter on mathematics as "the only true science," he presents Plato's idea of the Intelligible World, where really important knowledge lies, and then seems to equate this knowledge with knowledge of "God." "The first purpose of science," he says, "is to learn about God, and admire Him, through his handiwork." Not much else is said about God in this book, but a statement like this one can cover a multitude of omissions. It is far from clear what Mr. Standen means by God, but until further notice we shall assume that he means, not a personal creator, but the realm of ultimate values, which by no means depends upon a God that needs to be called "Him."

Science Is a Sacred Cow begins by exposing the ridiculous claims of some scientific educators—to the effect that training in science imparts to students a broad, tolerant spirit, freedom from partiality, and "absolute honesty of mind and love of truth." These qualities may be the natural endowment of great men who are scientists, but a mild indoctrination in Biology I produces no magic secretion of saintly virtues. Mr. Standen divides science students into three classes: (1) those who dislike the subject, and look

back on their science classes with depressing memories of cutting up dead animals and of "doing" experiments not too successfully; (2) those who enjoyed the smattering they got and wish wistfully for more; and (3) the ones who go at the subject voraciously, supposing "that because science has penetrated the structure of the atom it can solve all the problems of the universe." The members of this third class, who often go on to be professional scientists, are Mr. Standen's special target

> They most decidedly are not set apart from the others by their integrity and faith, and their patient humility in front of the facts of Nature, as their teachers would like to have us believe. They know the last word about the electron, and they seem to think that they are entitled to pour scorn on other subjects from a very great height. If you want to talk to them about poetry, they are likely to reply that the "emotive response" to poetry is only a conditioned reflex, depending on the associations established for various words, and that the thing to study is thermodynamics. They become technocrats. They propose to solve the problem of war by having a committee of sociologists apply the scientific method to the differences between nations. They eat concentrated vitamins. They psychoanalyze every remark you make until it has no meaning. They are uneducated, in the fullest sense of the word and they certainly are no advertisement for the claims of science teachers.

There is plenty of rhetoric in *Science Is a Sacred Cow*, but it is good rhetoric, and well illustrated. Mr. Standen is no arm-chair critic of science. He took honors in chemistry at Oxford University, obtained an engineering degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and was for nine years a chemist with Imperial Chemical Industries in England. He was on the faculty of St. John's College from 1942 to 1946 and is presently engaged in editing a chemical encyclopedia. He writes, therefore, with considerable personal knowledge of scientific procedures. Physics, Biology, Psychology and Sociology are the sciences he examines in some detail. The early chapters are largely devoted to brushing aside furbelows and pompous pretense; by the time he reaches psychology, the author is thoroughly warmed up, as in the following passage:

> It is typical of psychologists that although they have very little to say about the duties of man, they are strong on his wants, desires and needs. They enumerate these with great care. One such list gives eight of them: food, clothing and shelter; activity; effective effort; beauty; sex; security; prestige, and something which is quaintly called "service," meaning "to be of service to others," not, as one would obviously suppose, the sort of service one gets in a service department. There are other lists that differ somewhat from this one, but this, and many others, have an enormous and glaring gap, for they make no mention of one tremendous need felt by everybody, the craving to know. It is amazing that this particular list was taken from a book on *educational* psychology: the author must find his teaching very uphill work if he does not recognize, in himself and in his pupils, the basic need for Knowledge, for Certainty, the drive behind children when they continually ask Why?, the craving that religions have been satisfying for men since before the dawn of history, and incidentally, the motivating force for science itself.

Mr. Standen's basic complaint, and one that seems thoroughly justified on his showing of evidence, is that science pretends to possess, or to be able to obtain, eventually, the answers to questions that philosophy has sought throughout human history. To put the matter simply, science, as presently constituted, is concerned with facts, while philosophy is concerned with meanings and values. The enthusiast of science supposes that if enough facts can be accumulated, the right values will "emerge," whereas Mr. Standen says they will not. Science, for example, may teach us about our environment, and may provide the tools for changing the environment, but it will not tell us what to change into. Those who claim that science can tell us the right direction of change are referred to the history of science—to the facts which were "scientific" yesterday, but are discarded as mistakes today.

As a scientist with close familiarity with the pitfalls of scientific method, Mr. Standen takes pleasure in exhibiting the false certainties of

yesterday's science. It is commonly said, for example, that "Science has proved there are no such things as ghosts." The author examines this idea:

> Suppose, just suppose for the sake of argument, that ghosts can occasionally appear when the psychological conditions are just right, and suppose, what might well be true, that one necessary condition for the appearance of a ghost is the *absence* of a scientist: well then "Science" (that is to say, scientists) would go on investigating ghost after ghost, and would "disprove" every one of them, and yet ghosts would continue to appear whenever the scientists are not looking.

There are some psychic researchers who would confirm this apparently jocular analysis, as being very close to what actually happens in some phases of the investigation of mediumship.

It is not science as the dispassionate study of Nature that Mr. Standen accuses of all these follies, but science as a substitute for reflective philosophical judgments. This book is really saying, on every page, that there can be no escape, through science, from the responsibility of being a human being. If the author would make it equally clear that religion can suffer the same misrepresentations as science—that the hope of an outside salvation by God is as futile as the hope of a scientific utopia on earth—his book would be even more important. The truth that we need to realize, after all, is that *any* sacred cow, scientific or not, can never help us.