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THE CULT OF YOUTH

BEING young is one thing that most people are pretty good at, while getting middle-aged, then old, and finally dying are activities which hold no promise and are generally regarded as unpleasant tendencies which are not to be talked about except privately, with one's doctor or beauty specialist, and then for the sole purpose of resisting them or concealing their effects. The right way to grow old—the way the advertisements talk about—is to acquire a kind of conservative youthfulness and the money to keep up the appearances of youthful freedom from care.

Here we are, poised on the dizzy peak of progress, with all the latest scientific information at hand, rich in comfort, rich in mechanical genius—so far advanced from any past worth mentioning that we seldom refer to history except for purposes of measuring our superiority—and we don't know what to do with ourselves when we are worn out with making money, or trying to make it. We have a Retirement Problem. We have a Euthanasia Problem. We have an Unwanted Old Folks Problem. We have a Townsend Plan Problem. These are by-products of the cult of youth—problems created by the people who have graduated from success in being young and don't know what to do with that portion of their lives when, according to the *Saturday Evening Post* and Edgar Guest, they are supposed to sit on the porch with their Happy Memories, or line the walls of the country club ballroom, smiling benignly while the young folks have their fun. The aged are supposed to play the part of spectator sports, not just on Saturday afternoons, but all the time. They are supposed to fade out slowly, like pleasant odors, never interfering with actual life, which, now and forever, belongs to Youth.

These things are easy to point out. It is easy to say that when the promise of youth reaches the time which ought to belong to fulfillment, there is nothing but functionless frustration available for the harvest of age. It is easy to assert that people should find some purpose in their lives—that when maturity is so frequently overtaken by personal aimlessness as to create a subject for psychiatric discussion, there is something basically wrong with the commonly held objectives of human beings. But what can be said, after this diagnosis has been made? The capacity to analyze the effects of aging in these terms belongs to the same order of modern "wisdom" as the judgment that wars result from a compound of nationalism, fear and acquisitiveness, or that management and labor must both recognize their common interests and learn to cooperate for motives of intelligent self-interest.

In other words, the kind of understanding that we are able to apply to our social and psychological problems bears a close resemblance to what engineering would be like without the principle of the lever. Men ignorant of how to use a fulcrum, if they wanted to move a tremendously heavy object, could only stand around talking about how it *ought* to be moved. They would give many reasons why the object should be moved, but they could not move it. The theoreticians would draw detailed plans of the obstacle and write papers on its physical characteristics. The propagandists would plaster it with signs and the clergy would compose special prayers for Let-Us-Remove-the-Obstacle Week. Eventually, the obstacle would be accepted as one of the inevitable conditions of life. Popular philosophers would then formulate slogans such as, "The Obstacle is like Human Nature—you can't change it," or, "Wanting to move the Obstacle is as foolish as hoping to eliminate Self-Interest." Social historians would compose monographs on "Attitudes of the Trobriand Islanders toward the Obstacle during the Fifteenth Century," and psychologists lecture on "Perpetual Motion, Obstacle-Moving and Other Utopian Projects."

At this point, someone may say, "But the idea of a lever is so *obvious*—only very stupid people could fail to discover it, even by accident." The answer might be that we seem determined not to discover how to think about human life so that its later years will bring constructive satisfaction and fulfillment, for we make no systematic study of the people who have this kind of maturity.

Such a study ought not to be very difficult. It could begin with a review of the various purposes in

which the old have found dignity and a feeling of moral significance. In matriarchal and patriarchal societies, for example, the elders are regarded as possessing the wisdom necessary to the perpetuation of the species. Often some sort of racial or family mysticism is involved in the idea of the purpose that is fulfilled by the aged, who represent the principle of conscious continuity. This provides them with a basis for self-reverence in contributing to a more-than-personal function of nature. This sort of dignity, however, seems dependent upon an instinct for life and acceptance of its impersonal processes—attitudes that are diminished or lacking among sophisticated peoples whose sense of individuality is more independent of race and culture. It seems a part of the psychic evolution of human beings that their primitive sense of participating in Nature's purposes dies away with the development of the abstracting and generalizing power of the intellect. The more "objective" we become toward Nature, the more power we gain over natural forces, for objectivity is one of the necessities of conscious control; while, on the other hand, we no longer obtain from Nature an intuitive feeling of harmony and self-justification for what we do. The price of self-consciousness, then, is alienation from the instinctive roots of our being, making one of the "natural" projects of increasing self-consciousness the deliberate seeking and discovery of new roots.

It seems quite possible that the tensions which arise out of the need to let go of the old roots while seeking the new are responsible for most if not all of the psychic and emotional disorders which affect human beings. The poles of uninhibited sensuality in the sexual function on the one hand, and flesh-mortifying asceticism on the other—neither one of which seems "natural," whether to animal instinct or to an ideal spiritual development—are perhaps as good an illustration as any of the problems growing out of increased self-consciousness. Similarly, the multitude of religious delusions characteristic of all periods of history can be defined as misguided attempts to find new roots for the human spirit. The main difficulty of modern psychiatry, charged with treating the psychic confusions which result from the human search for meaning, is that it cannot propose where the "true" roots of Life should be sought without becoming a religion, and if psychiatry should become a religion, it could no longer claim to have the "objectivity" of a science.

The curious fact about the sciences which are supposed to deal with man and his personal and social problems is that they—these sciences—all seem to ignore the possibility that there is any kind of evolution besides biological evolution. They talk a great deal about "adjustment to environment," but, quite apart from the difficulty of reaching a good, working definition of any sort of human environment, there is this further consideration: What if the true human environment is not anything which can be catalogued in terms of fixed elements? What if the environment should turn out to be the constantly changing psychological circumstances of the dynamic process of self-consciousness seeking new roots?

To render these abstractions: Ulysses half-way to the Golden Fleece, Jesus in Gethsemane, Gautama two years before he sat under the Bo Tree, Socrates addressing the Five Hundred, Thomas Paine on board ship on his way to America—what are the "environments" of these men? To write about their physical surroundings as though such circumstances had a crucial bearing upon the meaning to us of Ulysses, Jesus, Buddha, Socrates and Paine would be supremely ridiculous. They were not merely bodies, stationary or moving on the face of the earth; they were not only biological organisms nourished by the food of the countryside: primarily, they were centers of moral consciousness moving through a region of moral values toward goals of a sort that have no "objective" definition, as yet. It is doubtful if an ultimate goal can have this kind of definition, or any at all, except in the language of allegory and mysticism.

But what have ex-bookkeepers, office managers, retired professionals and others to do with all this? They have, so far as they know, nothing to do with it, and that is precisely the point. The cult of youth has more or less successfully established taboos which prevent any reflective preparation for age beyond an insurance policy and perhaps a "hobby." Meanwhile, the fierce devotion to the attributes and pleasures of youth has called into existence competitive cults of the alienated aged, such as the Townsend Plan, in which comfort and economic security are the highest good. Finally, there is the non-partisan cult of the funeral parlor, with its cosmetic version of life overtaken by

the immobility of death, its promise of sepulchral security.

Human beings, as they pass from one age-group to another, take on the "interests" of these separate and conflicting cults, adopting, successively, the petty imperialisms of each, until at last death takes over as the Great Negation. Sometimes the old remain in psychological bondage to the young, living vicariously in their children, accepting the ends and using even the vocabulary of delayed adolescence, so that a great confusion results in their emotional lives. People who live in such complete psychic dependence are usually miserable in the knowledge that they may at any time be betrayed.

Age, and not necessarily old age, is indeed haunted by the longing for unattainables, reproducing an anguish from which there is no escape. Martin Gumpert, writing in the *Nation* (Jan. 28) on euthanasia, points this out:

Millions of people today live a hopeless and painful, even a socially useless life, without the benefit of an incurable disease. Should they be permitted to be candidates for euthanasia? Suffering is more easily accepted by the patient who really has a painful disease than by the person who produces his misery and pain by emotional processes. Even the incapacitated, agonized patient, in despair most of the time, may still get some joy from existence. His mood will change between longing for death and fear of death. Who would want to decide what should be done on such unsafe ground?

If the logic of psychosomatic medicine be accepted, to the effect that psychic disorders have an equal or greater reality than physical diseases, then any justification of euthanasia on the grounds of physical pain will apply to emotional illness as well. And from this position it could be argued, in the terms of the cult of youth, that when the vigor and beauty of the body have disappeared, there is no point at all in the continuance of life—a view which is hardly distinguishable from the Nazi defense of the death camps. In point of fact, a medical authority recently stated publicly that the so-called "miracle drugs" are now keeping alive many incapacitated individuals who are useless to themselves and to everyone else, at great cost to the tax-payers.

These are some of the implications which result from the attempt to find a purpose for living in the experience of pleasing sensations and from excessive preoccupation with the activities which are supposed to belong uniquely to "youth." The tree of culture which grows from such roots is a hideously abnormal and artificial plant, bearing only the fruit of despair. Fortunately, there are, all about us, examples of people who have found for their growing self-consciousness another kind of root in another kind of soil. Life, for them, is not a matter of prudent preparation for conditions of age, while enjoying one's youth, but it is rather a voyage of discovery, on which regions of varying experience are reached in the various stages of life. Nor are these regions *essentially* different, to the consciousness of the soul. Life is made up of an infinite variety of "becomings," and human purpose, perhaps, is fulfilled only in this neverending process, which must be conscious, for man, just as it is unconscious throughout Nature. The worst human folly, then, would be to attempt to set some limit or final definition to the goal of life.

For Nature, life is its own goal, its own justification, and the act of living is supported by an unquestioning instinct which forever beckons and drives onward the whole vast panoply of material existence. But if life is rooted in life, where shall consciousness—our consciousness, which rejects the totalitarian insistence of instinct—find its impetus and meaning? This is the question that the gods of myth and the heroes of legend have tried to answer for us. But their answer, it seems, is one that we shall never be able to hear so long as we suppose that the gods and heroes are not ourselves.

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON—If the State were simply the individual writ large, we might expect to find the virtue of Justice exemplified in a harmony and due subordination between the various functions of the body politic. Yet, in truth, a study of modern communities shows successive degenerations from this principle. It is salutary for most of us who live under representative governments to remember that a restored and triumphant democracy took the life of Socrates. It is not necessary, after the known history of the first half of the twentieth century, to labour the point that an unrestrained democracy ("one flock and no shepherd," in Nietzsche's acid epigram) can lead to a lawless military despotism, masking itself under a Führer principle or a cloak of dialectical materialism.

These and similar thoughts come to mind in the midst of a parliamentary general election in this country. It has resulted in the return of the Labour Government with an infinitesimal majority. How long this Government can possibly last is anybody's guess. What is important to some detached observers is the fact that all political parties based their appeal upon the virtue, not of justice, but of a high standard of living, and the evil, not of injustice, but of simplicity and lack of power to enforce one's will, even though constitutionally, upon one's opponents. No one bothered to ask if an irresponsible prosperity might not be an enduring cause of untold ills, both to the class or nation possessing it, and to the members of those communities who may perchance suffer its deprivation. Where is the modern government that has even a glimmering of an idea that self-interest (of individual or country) is *not* the highest good?

Rousseau complained of the British people in the eighteenth century that to bestow complete confidence in a Parliament was to leave them free only at General Elections. Universal experience since then has demonstrated the gravity of the observation. What makes matters worse, of course, is that the device of "political parties" has not led the voters who give them allegiance to espouse political philosophies, as such. The electors still vote in the main for personalities whose names appear on the ballot paper, much in the manner of choosing a "winner." Some good is done, naturally, by an ambiguous form of political education of the electorate, by means of speeches and literature, in the course of the contest. But the issues are necessarily limited, and the personal element abounds especially in the case of well-known party leaders. We have not yet fully realized the truth of a remark by Bulwer Lytton in 1834, when he published a Tract during the first general election after the great Reform Bill. He recognized with singular clarity the implications of that reform for the new electorate. "Remember," he said, "that you are now fighting for things, not men—for the real consequences of your reform."

Certainly, "real consequences" and their recognition betoken a greater sense of responsibility than can easily be associated with modern forms of political warfare. Most of the issues fought out at our General Election this year were of a domestic nature, and appeared to be totally irrelevant to the dangers that encompass the whole world. This country, in common with other peoples, is afflicted with the logical consequences of the ideology that saw natural selection operating throughout nature and the affairs of men—the single cause resulting in a survival of the strongest through a fratricidal and environmental struggle. These ideas have established themselves in political thought as elsewhere. The goal of survival is held to justify the employment of any means, however veiled by polite fictions in the search for power, accompanied as these are so often by a meretricious idealism. Is it too much to suggest that a thorough examination of our political thinking will be needed if present trends are to be halted and the will of the people is ever to be identifiable with intelligent choice. For we have yet to realize in what true freedom and the good life consist, and that these are not gifts from rulers to ruled, but have to be perceived and won by each for himself, in concord with his fellows, and thus, in due time, for the country with which his destiny lies.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
THE FUNCTION OF IDOLATRY

CHRIST STOPPED AT EBOLI, by Carlo Levi, was a strange book, in that it seemed to possess exceptional profundity while dealing with very simple things. Its admirers now have opportunity to know more of the genius or near-genius which is responsible for this quality, by reading a short philosophical and poetic essay which Levi wrote five years earlier. *Of Fear and Freedom,* just published by Farrar, Strauss and Company, New York, was completed by Levi in December, 1939. "There was in it," as the author says in his Preface, "a theory of Nazism, although Nazism is not mentioned even once by name; there was a theory of the state and of liberty; there was a theory of esthetics, of religion, of sin, etc." In 1941, when Levi brought the manuscript to Italy, no publisher could risk printing it. The symbols were "too obvious." The book, however, gains from the omission of a contemporary political vocabulary. It insists upon consideration for the meanings behind epithets like "Nazism" and "Fascism," and thus discloses the actual psychological attitudes which such terms more often conceal than describe, if only because they are always applied to people other than ourselves.

This book is a non-specialized study of man himself and it seems to belong with certain other works of epoch-making importance to the modern world—works such as those by Ortega y Gasset, Ignazio Silone, Erich Fromm, and possibly one or two other writers. The inquiry pursued by these men could be called the Rediscovery of Man. While the conclusions of such an inquiry, when they finally emerge, will doubtless be age-old, there is, in the works of these men, the substance of fresh intuitions of the meaning of the human situation—as though the working wisdom of the human race is brought up-to-date in the pursuit of this inquiry. Further, the reader has the impression that no partisanship or eagerness to "prove" a particular contention colors the quality of their work, and it is this integrity of purpose as much as their subtlety of perception which gives the books of these men what they have in common.

Of Fear and Freedom is not a book which can be "reviewed" by any conventional method. It will be best, perhaps, to consider some of the themes the author develops, for that, obviously, is what Levi had in mind for his readers. The eight chapters are really an introduction to a much larger book Levi intended to write, a thing made impossible by the war. Conceivably, this "introduction" makes a better book than a more lengthy study would have been.

Levi seems to be saying, throughout, that man has before him the difficult task of becoming a god, and that he cannot avoid this terrible destiny. It is "terrible," because to rise out of the undifferentiated mass and to stand independent and free is a course which violates the primeval unity of chaos—this is the "original sin," which cannot be atoned for except by the man who unites universality with individuality.

The function of religion—and by religion Levi seems to mean institutional religion—is to substitute finite images for the inner feeling of universality, thus removing or externalizing the struggle of man to be free. The man who wants to be "saved" by someone other than himself has capitulated to the dark power of chaos; he dreads life while longing for it, and so accepts the idea of his own impotence as the price he must pay for a dependent salvation "in his Savior."

In *Of Fear and Freedom,* Levi seems to find a common denominator for the psychological laws of both religion and politics. The man who cannot save himself is really anonymous—he has no name, no real *being;* and likewise the mass of men ruled by the omnipotent State. Both the Savior and the State represent the undifferentiated, wholly irrational and immeasurable power of Chaos. You can accept this power or you can reject it, but you cannot "reason" with it. It is absolute or it is nothing at all. What individuality the members of the accepting mass possess is given them by the State, and it is only in the form of external labels:

> Wherever the mass is really anonymous, incapable of naming itself and speaking, the sacred language of the state replaces the names, which have lost their meaning, by its own religious and symbolic names: these are numbers, tickets, banners,

> armbands, uniforms, badges, insignia identification cards, ritual expressions of the fundamental idolized uniformity, and of the idolized uniform organization. Where the spoken word is made possible by the very nature of the mass, it is useless to speak about the freedom of speech; the law's intervention may at most sanction the non-existence of free speech, and prevent its possible beginning. Those places where there is speech, the high and low Parnassi of political poetry, solemn or vulgar, the parliaments, debating societies and public meetings, the *salons*, and shops and cafes, lose their functions of giving expression to social relations and disappear. Mass-manifestations cannot be expressive: there is no place in them for diversity and thought—only for oneness of action; not action as freedom, but solely action as passivity, necessity, nature, the weight of undivided numbers: the plebescite. . . .
>
> Art grows into monotonous repetition, into a litany, or else it becomes a desperate and impossible groping for freedom, nostalgia or hope. The sense is lost of living relations, for they are replaced by a single relationship which is symbolic and arbitrary. Cities grow by peripheral progression, like unicellular organisms, and spread through the countryside like a shapeless liquid. Culture, which consists everywhere and at all times of a universal and absolute ability to make distinctions, has no meaning at all, in the indistinctness of the mass. And thus, instead of culture, there stands its religious equivalent, a totalitarian, arbitrary will of confusion, which expands, as matter does, by propagation, and which is valid not as a value, but as a weight: *propaganda*, the culture of the masses.

"Everybody," the author suggests, "is born from chaos, and to chaos may revert; every man leaves the mass in a process of differentiation, and in this shapeless mass may lose himself again." True human individuality is born when "the two contrary processes of differentiation and undifferentiation find a common point of equilibrium and are coexistent in the creative act." Human achievement "blends at the very same moment individual riches and the treasures of universality—differentiation and undifferentiation: an activity most individual when soaring above the individuals, and most universal when intensely singular; born of freedom and necessity at once; understood by all men through man's common indistinct nature; transcending everyone, inasmuch as every man is a distinct, single self; but shared by everyone in the free process of individuation and consciousness."

It would have been helpful if the author had suggested the possibility of there being two kinds of undifferentiation or primordial unity—that of matter and that of spirit. To be "individual" in matter is to suffer a privation of spirit, but to be individual in spirit—wholly self-conscious that is, with knowledge of every possible relationship does not mean the denial of spiritual unity, but participation in it. Levi, however, has forged a vocabulary for his meanings from the utterance of his own mind, and if his shades of meaning are obscured by verbal inadequacy, they at least are free from the taints of theological distinction. It is the vivid joining of metaphysical ideas with the immediate problems of human beings which gives this book its extraordinary appeal. Its obscurity is perhaps the fault of the age, rather than of the author, for any return to first principles, in a time of excessive idolatry, is bound to present more challenges than explanations. War, slavery, love, sacrifice, the idea of blood, and religion are the aspects of human life which Levi relates to his study of fear and freedom—and, finally, to the conception of man as a being who strives after individuality. The book is a small one, but its content pregnant with the germs of future understanding.

COMMENTARY
IF THE WORLD IS GOOD

A READER of a large metropolitan daily recently expressed himself as follows:

> The news in your paper this morning was, indeed, extremely discouraging. Secretary Acheson declared that only a show of strength can meet the Russian challenge. Professor Urey and others spoke yesterday of a secret declaration of war by Russia accomplished by shipping atomic or hydrogen bombs to the major ports throughout the world in the hulls of merchant ships. In addition another article recorded the great and terrifying fear which is overcoming Washington and paralyzing American thinking.
>
> These are dreadful articles to read in a subway going to work in the morning. There can be no doubt about the fact that the world situation is rapidly disintegrating and that the only goal which our present course can achieve is another war and ultimate destruction.

The correspondent then proposes an alternative course: "the development of the United Nations into a world federal government with limited powers adequate to pass and enforce laws in the field of international security."

No sensible person can be "against" an honest and voluntary world federation, but the important question, it seems to us, is how to get it. Most existing governments—and all democratic governments—have come into being in order to realize the commonly held aims of a pre-existing human community. It follows that when there is a pre-existing world community, we shall have legitimate world government, and not before. Today, the countries of the world do not have any genuine common aims: they have only common fears—the fears of one another. Such a "world community" is not even worth talking about.

How are fears to be replaced by common aims? Obviously, the peoples of the world will have to seek and adopt aims that *can* be shared instead of being fought over. What ought to be equally obvious is the fact that people will not be frightened into finding common aims. The slogan, "World Government, or else . . ." will win no real victory for federal union.

About the only sensible thing we can think of to do about the H-Bomb is to ignore it. Certainly, nothing useful can be done *with* it. Meanwhile, there is the rather matter-of-fact comment of Prime Minister Nehru. We know of none better. "If the world is bad," he said, "let the H-Bomb destroy it; if the world is good, let it destroy the H-Bomb."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

OUR expansive comments in regard to the mystic greatness of "Nature" as an educative influence for both teachers and pupils have called forth a certain amount of constructive criticism. It has been quite appropriately pointed out that "boundless" Nature-worship, like any other kind of worship, can easily dull the mind by suffusion in a purely emotional state. One correspondent asks:

> Isn't your "love of nature" somewhat sentimental? Why give so much of your heart to Nature-in-the-raw? You seem mood-brother to a gay youth named Shelley, who, in a "song" (vintage of 1822), declared:
>
> I love snow, and all the forms
> Of the radiant frost;
> I love waves, and winds, and storms,
> Every thing almost
> Which is nature's. . . .
>
> Yet, surely, Sir, these are strange things to "love." Each of them is so strictly elemental, so idly impressive: a man could enjoy them very much even if he had no mind whatever. Their appeal is mainly to the senses. In conclusion, however, I must admit that life in the open is an excellent tonic for jumpy nerves and restless spirits; and is thus the very thing for adolescents. But for adults who are in psychic control of themselves, I'd say that three daily hours leisurely spent in the open is quite sufficient.

These and other comments are primarily insistences that we admit man's noblest life to be that of the mind—an assumption with which we are actually much in accord, having always done our best to popularize the "primacy of mind," in contradistinction to any form of biological or environmental determinism. And we might add that a man's "emotional" life, no matter how inspiring or "beautiful," can never rise above its present level save by redirection to new experiences of the Mind.

But we feel that the apparent disproportion in our emphasis on Nature is due to a disproportion in our civilization. None but a fractional percentage of modern men have even the vaguest conception of what spending "three daily hours in the open" might mean. Most of the really penetrating criticism of modern culture takes time to point out that we are getting farther and farther from the *roots* of life. Ortega y Gasset, in his *Revolt of the Masses*, indicated the extent to which this trend threatens us with the complete separation between creative inventiveness and the mechanisms we use in daily life. And the "back-to-the-soil" proponents, including Gandhi, are in one sense simply going a step further by maintaining that we all need to know *something* of the soil, even though our major life-emphasis may be a specialization which keeps us from continued contact with agriculture or forestry.

Those who have worked with young people's out-of-doors organizations will probably all have noted that city children often show little propensity for enjoying a mountain or forest environment until they become. ..psychically readjusted—yet a final enthusiasm seems to almost inevitably result. And this is the case, also, with the now prominent question of dietetics, is it not? Men whose food has been inadequate and ill-chosen will seldom have a leaning toward the things which would benefit them most, yet if a dietary change is accomplished, the tastes of the body often readjust themselves. To spend a certain proportion of our time away from the forced rapidity and nervous confusion of urban living is simply to make available certain elements which contribute to general emotional health, and for which most men must have the same sort of potential attraction as for good food.

But we have not been advocating that men or children undertake a complete "flight from the city" and bury themselves in blind adoration of the wilds. Never, it seems to us, is it philosophically or psychologically sound to seek a perpetually lonely hermitage. We do not think that men need to bury themselves, but we should like to see more educators make "the natural world" an environment in which they can feel both appreciative and at home.

Today, of course, even if one were to endorse "loneliness," it would be practically impossible to attain. Some of our readers may have happened upon one or more of the Nature-life novels of Roderick L. Haig-Brown. Drawn by many intimate ties to the life of North American woodsmen, he has suffused his simple telling of a human drama with that rather mystical love of Nature to which we feel ourselves addicted. In any case, Haig-Brown's book, *On the Highest Hill*, demonstrates that its author recognized the limitations of any view which places a supreme value on primitive surroundings. The author is an honest man, and therefore discovers it to be impossible for his hero to find escape in a perfect mountain retreat. Tragedy strikes at his life and love because the modern world doesn't allow happiness for those who are unable to cooperate with social situations, and whose emotional leanings are too strongly toward environmental primitivism.

If we compare *On the Highest Hill* with a book called *Timber*, written by the same author in 1942, we may surmise that Haig-Brown's continued emphases finally lead him to a tragic impasse. Ultimately, he seems to be saying, we can go too far in our endeavor to identify ourselves with unspoiled Nature, just as we can obviously go too far in embroiling ourselves in social concerns—so far in either case, that we have little eye or feeling for anything outside our restricted periphery. Either way, to come back to the thesis of our correspondent, the involvement is primarily one of the mind. A man can live in a city and find peace and breadth of mind, or live on a farm and fail to attain it.

We ask no more for children than an opportunity to choose for themselves some proportion between Nature-contact and social-contact. We have no theories, and shall invent none, as to the exact proportion which is ideal for any given individual, and yet we can maintain that neither opportunity can be entirely neglected in a school devoted to the development of whole men.

FRONTIERS

Scholars and Artists

ONE theory of the cycle of civilization runs something like this: At the beginning or "birth" of civilization, its moral philosophers are devoted to impartial truth, its political leaders to freedom, and the people at large to education and self-improvement. Somewhere along toward the end of the cycle, these attitudes are found to be almost reversed. The moralists now engage to support and promote orthodoxy; the politicians seek only power—for themselves and the State; while the people want only to hold on to the improvements (hardly "self-improvements," any more) the cycle has brought—a want we call the longing for "security."

What is civilization, in essence? It seems reasonable to call it the result in aggregate of the efforts of a human community to make manifest the truths of the common life. Truths, for men, are statements about ends. The Declaration of Independence is a manifesto of civilization in that it declares the ends for which men have joined together in a political community, and affirms the principles by which their relationships within that community will be ruled. The arts and literature explore and endeavor to make manifest the best ends for human beings. Industry and commerce have similar objectives. A factory attests to its builder's belief about what is good to do with his capacities.

Civilization also encompasses complex relationships of social function, which, at different stages, exhibit varying degrees of integrity of purpose. These differences make a simple moralistic interpretation of the history of a civilization practically impossible. The Civil War of the United States, for example, grew out of a multitude of differing motives. It was *both* a war to eradicate human slavery and a war to settle the rivalry of the industrial North and the agrarian South, and it was many other things besides. In different epochs, the element of moral integrity appears most evidently in different regions of the social structure. The integrity of man as politician, of man as soldier, of man as shopkeeper, scholar or engineer is never the same as, and seldom even a true aspect of, the integrity of man *as man.* If the statesman is small-minded and the moralist pettifogging, all those specialists—writers, editors, publishers—who have to do with the cultural coherence of the civilization—are compelled to make an important decision. Either they must disturb the "unity" of the culture or sever their integrity into personal or "true" integrity and public or "pseudo" integrity—maintaining independence of mind with the former, and outward conformity with the latter.

Democratic theory, of course, provides for a certain amount of cultural difference and confusion. It proposes a minimum common ground of "unity" in the political constitution, implying that a political entity which cannot survive the differences democracy allows is not worth continuing, anyhow. But when emotional desperation seems to force political leaders to expand that "necessary" common ground to a point where an individual rejection of the thrust for power becomes treason, where disagreement with religious orthodoxy becomes reprehensible as heresy, then democratic forms are little more than dying symbols of a former vigor of the human spirit.

A civilization has many opportunities for self-correction. When integrity dies at the top of the external hierarchy, or when mediocrity assumes power, it is not long before the policies adopted begin to interfere with the integrity of the specialists, who either complain and conform, or denounce and resist. Usually, they conform, as the atomic physicists, by and large, have conformed to the requirements of "military necessity." Interestingly enough, it is the artists and writers who most frequently resist, although usually somewhat ineffectually. Artists and writers, moreover, are commonly regarded as decorative rather than functional elements in

modern civilization. They are not "integrated" with the social system in the same way that businessmen and professionals such as the technologists are bound up with the economic and political structure. Further, the artist's or writer's or scholar's conception of the good is not dependent upon the technological process nor upon the political process for its manifestation. It may take technology to bring the work of the artist before the people, as in the case of the industrial designer, or the artist or musician who works in Hollywood, but the act of artistic creation or scholarly research remains free, capable of intrinsic integrity.

An instance of the contemporary insistence upon conformity in religion is found in recent issues of *Common Cause*, monthly organ of The Committee to Frame A World Constitution, published by the University of Chicago Press. While Miss Jeremy Ingalls' articles on the religious or moral foundations of Chinese culture are not an "insistence" upon the superiority of the Christian outlook in the same way that a Roman Catholic State uses political power to assure and safeguard religious orthodoxy, they do assert that only "ecumenical Christianity" can serve as the basis for Chinese participation in a world political order. This claim is tendentiously repeated throughout articles which are ostensibly "scholarly," but which amount in fact to self-righteous (on behalf of Western Christendom) special pleading.

It is the scholar, H. G. Creel, professor of early Chinese literature and institutions at the University of Chicago, who rises to protest the sectarianism offered by Miss Ingalls in the name of internationalism. He rises on two grounds: first, to point to the folly of hoping to establish world unity on the basis of but one of the religions of the world; second, to defend Chinese civilization against Miss Ingalls' minimizing criticisms and distortions. He writes:

> Those who hope for the achievement of world unity must have been greatly discouraged . . . by the article of Miss Jeremy Ingalls on "Religions of Asia in a World Community," for she repeats again and again such propositions as that "the strong current of the Christ's teachings . . . provides the only enduring argument for free institutions," and that without "effective {Christian} minorities" in the countries of Asia, "constitutions for free world government could as well be folded away. . . . " While she never quite says so, Miss Ingalls clearly implies that before one world can be realized a large part of it must be converted to Christianity, in fact if not in name.
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> This would be disheartening enough, but Miss Ingalls' requirements are even more discouraging. For her it is not sufficient to be Christian. The only hope lies in what she calls ecumenical Christianity. This excludes "Roman Catholicism and Protestant Fundamentalism," although the "'protestant' ecumenical Christian conscience" has, she believes, "continued, despite the rules, in many individual Roman Catholics and Orthodox Catholics." If I understand Miss Ingalls correctly, I happen to feel most sympathetic, among Christians, toward those whom she prefers. But I would hate to think that world cooperation had to wait until the whole world were converted to their views.

Prof. Creel now proceeds to an analysis of the misrepresentations of Confucianism in the articles in question. He shows, although he "never quite says so," that they betray not only bad scholarship but also a zealot's disregard of the facts of Chinese philosophy, culture and history. On virtually every count of Miss Ingalls' criticisms, he offers a comparison of Chinese with Christian culture which is obviously favorable to the former. She had written, for example, that the Chinese regarded themselves as designated by Heaven to lord it over subject peoples, and that Chinese philosophers were lacking in the insight, dating from Christ, of the equal "value" of all humans. Prof. Creel replies:

> With respect to slavery in China, the principal authority on the subject states that "slaves seem to have made up not more than one per cent of the total population even at the time when the institution was most fully developed." The time to which he refers was the first century B.C. In the United States of America, in 1860 A.D., more than 10 per cent of the population lived in slavery. As for China's record as a colonial power, it has a few dark chapters, but on

> the whole China's control of subject peoples has been conspicuously mild. It must be remembered that for at least three thousand years China has been an empire, that she has had neighbors who have more or less constantly harried her borders when they did not invade her territory, and that during those periods when she has tried to hold them under political control she has seldom exploited them economically. Imperialism is seldom a pretty thing, but when all of these circumstances are considered the Chinese record will compare very well with that of most Christian empires.

The rest of Prof. Creel's discussions are as excellent as this one. When Miss Ingalls claims that pre-Christian thinkers were devoid of self-distrust, and therefore prone to delusions of infallibility, he counters with a Confucian quotation: "If a man does not constantly ask himself, 'What is the right thing to do?' I really don't know what is to be done about him." Actually, the people who have followed this Confucian maxim are those who have had the most trouble with the requirements of organized religion. With respect to Miss Ingalls' belief that "religious faith can provide the solution to all problems," Prof. Creel has this pertinent comment:

> It is hard to see how religious faith alone could have solved for Galileo the moral problem of whether he should recant his astronomical theories under the pressure of the Inquisition. A part of the answer depended upon whether his theories were right. In this, and indeed in all situations of moral choice, the answer must depend upon a weighing of all the factors of the unique situation by the individual, in the light of his religious faith, his moral training, and his whole education and experience. It is for this reason that Confucius stressed the importance of education but deliberately refused to set up any dogmatic authority, of a religious or any other sort, which might hamper the individual in the performance of his moral duty.

Today, it is the "public moralists" who declare the need for religious uniformity, while it is the specialists—the scholars and independent thinkers without any status as "spokesmen" of our civilization—who exhibit the intellectual integrity which their powerlessness permits them to express. It would be well if the editors of *Common Cause* could see their way to a thoroughgoing exploration of the follies of sectarianism in any form, as a positive undertaking, instead of waiting for the objections of scholars who find the integrity of their researches invaded by superficial pleas for religious unity.