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MEN WITH IDEAS: JOHN McTAGGART

IN common with Hegel, John McTaggart held that "the universe is at bottom a spiritual system, and that human reason is competent to discover and to prove many important and paradoxical conclusions about it," but he resembled Hegel in almost nothing else. So writes C. D. Broad, the British philosopher, despite the fact that McTaggart, as long as he lived, called himself a Hegelian and wrote in what he regarded as vindication of the doctrines of the great German thinker.

Why is McTaggart important to know about? First of all, as an interpreter of Hegel, McTaggart came to practical conclusions which were virtually the opposite of Hegel's conclusions, although he believed that he based them squarely on Hegel's first principles. It seems important to recognize that Hegel's principles of objective idealism can lead to the conclusions that McTaggart arrived at, and to understand, in some measure at least, why, when Hegel is world-famous, McTaggart is unknown or almost unknown. McTaggart is not unknown because of any lack of imagination or intellectual ability. Nor is he obscure as Hegel is obscure. McTaggart, says Broad, "must plainly be ranked with Hobbes, Berkeley, and Hume among the masters of English philosophical prose. His style is pellucidly clear, yet he never ignores a qualification or oversimplifies a subject for the sake of literary elegance.... At times McTaggart's writing rises to heights of intense emotion and great beauty, which are all the more impressive from their rarity and their restraint." McTaggart's major work, *The Nature of Existence*, Broad thinks, is worthy to stand with the *Enneads* of Plotinus, the *Ethics* of Spinoza, and the *Encyclopedia* of Hegel. A thoughtful reader of McTaggart is likely to agree with this high praise and to wonder why the influence of McTaggart, in comparison with Hegel, has been so slight; or, if not slight, so unheralded and unperceived.

John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart was born in London in 1866. Except for two trips to New Zealand to visit his mother, and where he met his wife, his whole life was spent in the environs of Cambridge University, where he held a Lectureship at Trinity College. He died of a heart attack in 1925 at the age of 58. When told by the doctors that he could not expect to live, he said to his wife: "I am grieved that we must part, but you know I am not afraid of death." He was wholly unshaken at the prospect of dying and his serenity at this time has been taken as evidence of the thoroughgoing character of his conviction of the immortality of the soul.

It is this intense interest of McTaggart in the destiny of the individual which sets off the disciple, McTaggart, from the master, Hegel. Hegel cared nothing for the individual, while, for McTaggart, the individual was all. Hegel thought in terms of masses of men. He measured progress in the development of social institutions, whereas McTaggart, as Broad suggests, believed that social institutions are for the service of the human members of the community: "church and state and family are no more to be regarded as ends than the drainage system or the underground railways." Accordingly, while Hegel, as McTaggart notes in his *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, "does not appear to have been much interested in the question of immortality," McTaggart is interested in very little else.

Hegel wrote in the nineteenth century, at the time of the full flowering of transcendental enthusiasm and social optimism. He was an idealist who rendered his metaphysics into practical social applications as thoroughly as he could. It is these practical applications which

made Hegel so unpopular in the twentieth century. Nearly every political infamy of the day has been traced by someone to its supposed roots in Hegelian metaphysics. But in the nineteenth century, it was the applications that brought Hegel fame. As Broad relates:

> Most of Hegel's English followers were interested mainly in his philosophical conclusions and his applications of them to politics, ethics, and religion. These they considered true and important, whilst they abandoned with a smile or a sigh, the Dialectical Method by which he had claimed to establish his conclusions. McTaggart used to call this "Hegelianism with the proofs left out." And for his part, he took exactly the opposite view of Hegel's achievements. He thought the Dialectical Method and the purely metaphysical results were valid and important, whilst he regarded all the concrete applications which had been made of Hegelianism as unjustified and most of them as positively false.

Here, we are in the position of having to commit a similar offense in this case, leaving out McTaggart's proofs, not from a lack of interest in them, which are probably as effective as any possible proofs of the conclusions he presents, but from lack of space. Two of McTaggart's views are of the greatest significance for modern thought. They are important taken singly, and even more important when taken together, since they are seldom found associated in either philosophy or religion. McTaggart was both an atheist and a firm believer in human immortality. He was an atheist, that is, in that he absolutely rejected the idea of a personal God. He believed in immortality in that he held that the selves of men are spiritual "substances"—eternal rather than simply immortal—and this led him to adopt the doctrine of pre-existence, more or less as taught by the Platonic philosophers, although McTaggart leaned upon no "authorities" for the exposition of his doctrines. As a matter of fact, McTaggart's thought is peculiarly distinguished by its apparent independence of all extraneous influences. He seems to have arrived at his basic convictions very early in life, and early resolved upon his lifework—that of formulating rational supports for his idealistic and philosophical convictions.

Two of McTaggart's books are worth the attention of the general reader: *Some Dogmas of Religion,* published by Arnold (London) in 1930 with an introduction by C. D. Broad, and *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology,* published by the Cambridge University Press in 1918. *Some Dogmas of Religion* is an exploration of the God-idea, immortality, and the freedom of the will. It begins with a discussion of the meaning he assigns to the word dogma, and ends with a statement of the importance of metaphysical studies. We quote some of these passages to illustrate the quality of McTaggart's writing and thinking:

> By metaphysics I mean the systematic study of the ultimate nature of reality, and by dogma I mean any proposition which has a metaphysical significance. This may seem at first sight a paradoxical definition. For dogmas are held, and disputed, by many people to whom metaphysics are absolutely unknown.
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> But we must remember that a proposition which has metaphysical significance may be held independently of metaphysical considerations. If a man asserts the existence of God because he accepts the argument from design, then his belief in God's existence rests on a metaphysical basis. If he asserts the existence of God because a priest has told him that God does exist, then his belief does not rest on a metaphysical basis, but it nevertheless has metaphysical significance. For it decides, for him, a problem which is unquestionably of a metaphysical nature—one of those problems which must be dealt with in any systematic study of the ultimate nature of reality. . . .
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> . . . if study at present is rarely study of metaphysics, that is largely because metaphysics seems unpractical. If however, people find that they cannot have religion without it, then it will become of all studies the most practical. Its results, indeed, may not be more practically useful than those of some other subjects. For some results of study are, in our present civilization, essential to life, and life is a condition precedent of religion. But elsewhere we can enjoy the results without investigating them ourselves. I can eat bread, although I have never learnt to plough or bake. I can be cured of an illness, though I have never learnt medicine. But if—and this is the case at present—I have no right to rely on any metaphysical result which I have not myself investigated, then the study of metaphysics will be for

> many people the most momentous of all studies. And this may produce important results. For, after all, one great reason why so few people have reached metaphysical conclusions for themselves, is to be found in the fact that so few people have tried to reach them.

That man must learn to think for himself on the most important questions of existence is McTaggart's central "dogma." This conviction probably has much to do with his rejection of a personal God. In the Introduction to *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology,* he writes:

> As a matter of history, no doubt, the doctrines of human immortality and of a personal God have been associated rather than opposed. But this is due, I think, to the fact that attempts have rarely been made to demonstrate both of them metaphysically in the same system. I believe that it would be difficult to find a proof of our own immortality which did not place God in the position of a community, rather than a person, and equally difficult to find a conception of a personal God which did not render our existence dependent on his will—a will whose decisions our reason could not foresee.

Again, it is evident from McTaggart's discussion of the Hegelian idea of "sin" that McTaggart, with Hegel, prizes freedom above the conventional ideas of good and evil. Contrasted with instinctive innocence, he defines "sin" as a good, rather than an evil, for the reason that sin, though wrong, is at least an individual act, requiring the will, and marks the beginning of a movement "on the only road which can eventually lead . . . upwards." Thus the Devil, in Hegel's system, is something of a benefactor. "The Serpent," remarks Hegel in his *Philosophy of Religion,* "says that Adam will become like God, and God confirms the truth of this, and adds His testimony that it is this knowledge which constitutes likeness to God. . . . The serpent had thus not lied, for God confirms what he said." McTaggart comments:

> If this is to be counted as Christianity, then it must be compatible with Christianity to hold that the lowest state in which man ever existed was in Paradise before the entrance of the serpent, and that Adam and Eve, in yielding to the temptations of the Devil, were in reality taking the first step towards realising the truest and highest nature of the Spirit.

In contrast to Hegel's virtual deification of the State, however, McTaggart adopts the view that the so-called "organic society"—which he defines as a society which makes itself the end or goal of human good—cannot possibly be the sort of society in which true fulfillment can come. He argues, rather—

> Indeed, there is a strong presumption, to say the least, that the opposite is true. For when we come to consider what determines the actual relations in which men find themselves in society—the relations of family, of school of profession, of state, of church—we find that overwhelming influence is exercised by considerations which we cannot suppose will have overwhelming influence in that ideal society in which all our aspirations would be satisfied.... And it is perhaps for this reason that the deepest emotions are apt, if they have any effect on society, to have a negative and disintegrating effect, at least as far as our present observation will carry us. They may bring peace on earth in the very long run, but they begin with the sword.

But McTaggart is no political revolutionist. His politics, while republican and equalitarian, are conservative; and he supported the Established Church for curious reasons which the orthodox found horrifying—because, he said, lay lawyers within the church settle matters of dogma on purely secular grounds, and this he held to be a kind of freedom of thought; and because dissenters outside the orthodox fold would vent their bitterness upon the official religious Establishment, having no energy left for persecuting non-Christian minorities. McTaggart was also a strong British patriot, passionately behind the British war effort in 1914-18, which brought upon him, through an inevitable rift with certain of his friends who disagreed, a true tragedy in the Hegelian sense—"a conflict of right with right." He also believed in compulsory military service, which, as Broad suggests, may seem hard to reconcile with his republican principles, if not his philosophical views.

What is to be learned from McTaggart, however, is the extraordinary capacity of the human mind to survey the entire realm of metaphysical possibility, and, by means of reason, to establish for consideration profound philosophical principles and a prospect of soul-evolution that is deeply stirring and ennobling—of which we may say, with Socrates, that if it be not true, then at least something like it is true. And if one is puzzled by what may seem inconsistencies between McTaggart's philosophical and social views, recourse should be had to G. Lowes Dickinson's memoir, *McTaggart* (Cambridge University Press, 1931), for a sympathetic portrait of McTaggart the man. McTaggart was no saint, nor was he a "liberal thinker" in the modern mold, but his principles and at any rate his personal application of them were of a sort that, had they, instead of other principles, been followed during the centuries of European history, the circumstances which eventually shaped our present society, with all its oppressive dilemmas, could not possibly have come about.

This may seem a large claim to make on behalf of McTaggart. His emphasis, however, was precisely upon that quality in thought and life which the social institutions of the present have the effect of ignoring almost entirely. The inner life of the individual came first in McTaggart's thinking. This made him, in his personal relations, seem more vividly alive, a better and more loyal friend, and a more considerate and devoted teacher to those who met him than almost anyone else they knew. Who can deny that a society made up of individuals with this sort of convictions—convictions supported by disciplined philosophical investigation, as well as by natural human inclination—would be a society with far more promise of growth than the one we have?

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—In 1938 a Departmental Committee appointed by the Government unanimously recommended the abolition of corporal punishment for persons convicted of violent crimes. It was no secret that the great majority of judges in the courts dissented from the Committee's findings, and it was not until the passing of an Act of Parliament in 1948 that such a form of punishment was stopped altogether, except for grave crimes committed in prison during sentence. Now, in 1950, there is a terrible amount of violent crime in London and other large cities. The culprits are usually youths and young men armed with a variety of deadly weapons. There have been many cases of women (some of them quite elderly) attacked by hooligans who have beaten them sometimes with serious danger to life. The motive in all cases has been robbery, often of such comparatively trivial things as handbags.

Naturally, press and parliament have debated the vexed question of whether or not flogging should be restored to its place of punishment for crimes of this nature. The Lord Chief Justice (Lord Goddard)—in his capacity as a member of the House of Lords, and not in his judicial role—moved an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill in 1938, to permit courts to impose the penalty of whipping with the birch. He argued that it was necessary to hold this penalty in reserve for use in appropriate cases. In the course of a further debate in the House of Lords last March, Lord Goddard said that, while deploring the abolition of all forms of corporal punishment, he could not demand its reimposition, "because there was nothing worse than continually altering the penalties imposed by the criminal law." He favored longer prison sentences; but he pointed out that our prisons were already overcrowded and under-staffed.

Most people who feel that they share in the responsibility of ensuring public safety may share these views of the Lord Chief Justice, as will many of his colleagues who have to try these offenders. Not many will share the opinion expressed by the late Professor William McDougall, in his work *Social Psychology*, when he wrote: "The fuller our insight into the springs of human conduct, the more impossible does it become to maintain the antiquated doctrine of retribution" (p. 14). Ruling out retribution, equally with human conceptions of expiation, we are still left with the duty of protecting the life and property of the community, and to discover the wisest means to achieve that end. In this view, there is no question of punishing the criminal; it is a matter of protecting the community. In that are obviously involved the whole process of the law as administered, the quality of the judiciary, and, indeed, our basic conception of the community and the individual, with their inter-related responsibilities and duties.

Some recognition of this view (although, oddly enough, far too little regard is paid to the factors of parental and educational responsibilities) is contained in a motion tabled by Mr. Rhys Davies and thirty other Labour members of the House of Commons. It attributes crimes of violence to the result of evil influences and the war. The motion rejects the assumption of the principle that "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" can safeguard modern society from any form of crime. In this, they are supported to some extent by a remark made by Mr. R. M. Titmuss, who has written a volume in the official *History of the Second World War* (Civil Series), just published. He believes that

> perhaps more lasting harm was wrought to the minds and to the hearts of men, women, and children than to their bodies. The disturbances to family life, the separation of mothers and fathers from their children, of husbands from their wives, of pupils from their schools, of people from their recreation, of society from the pursuits of peace—perhaps all these indignities of war have left wounds which will take time to heal and infinite patience to understand.

After all, do we know what education for freedom means? And how far is juvenile delinquency an instinctive reaction to the vast inconsistencies that characterize so many features of our vaunted civilization? Obviously, the discussion of crime will continue so long as we have not made up our minds as to what human nature really is.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
LIBERAL WISDOM

ONE thing that may possibly occur to the reader of Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* (Viking, 1950) is the puzzling conclusion that if Mr. Trilling were actually as wise as he seems to be, his book would be of extraordinary importance; as it is, it is only a very good book. He writes with exceptional discipline and insight; he nowhere pretends to knowledge he does not possess; he can admire and enjoy what is good, suffer what is bad for what can be learned from honest though limited expression; and he refuses to explain away what he cannot understand.

The Liberal Imagination is made up of essays on literature and society which have appeared in various periodicals during the past ten years. They reveal the author as sophisticated in the best sense of the term. This means that he makes no conscious submission to any doctrine, school or theory, but uses all these as a craftsman uses his tools. The book, one may say, contains the distilled essence of the wisdom of contemporary liberalism—which is almost to say, it contains the wisdom of our time, for, as Mr. Trilling points out, today, in the United States, "liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition. For it is the plain fact that nowadays there are no conservative or reactionary ideas in circulation." The author is not here denying the existence of conservative or reactionary "impulses," but suggesting that, with one or two exceptions, these impulses do not "express themselves in ideas but only in action or irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas." Modern liberalism has thus been without genuine intellectual opposition for a generation or more, and for this reason, perhaps, Mr. Trilling, applying a particular virtue of the liberal—that of self-criticism—sets out to discover the weaknesses and inadequacies of his faith as presently practiced. The temper of the book is conveyed by a paragraph of the Preface:

> It is one of the tendencies of liberalism to simplify, and this tendency is natural in view of the effort which liberalism makes to organize the elements of life in a rational way. And when we approach liberalism in a critical spirit, we shall fail in critical completeness if we do not take into account the value and necessity of its organizational impulse. But at the same time we must understand that organization means delegation, and agencies, and bureaus, and technicians, and that the ideas that can survive delegation, that can be passed on to agencies and bureaus and technicians, incline to be ideas of a certain kind and of a certain simplicity: they give up something of their largeness and modulation and complexity in order to survive. The lively sense of contingency and possibility, and of those exceptions to the rule which may be the beginning of the end of the rule—this sense does not suit well with the impulse to organization. So that when we come to look at liberalism in a critical spirit, we have to expect that there will be a discrepancy between what I have called the primal imagination of liberalism and its present particular manifestations.

This book runs the gamut of modern intellectual interests. Under the heading of Writers and Writing, it discusses Sherwood Anderson, Henry James, Scott Fitzgerald, Kipling, Tacitus, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and Wordsworth's *Ode* on *Intimations of Immortality.* Under Art and Psychology, it examines the relationship between Freud and literature, between art and neurosis, and gives the Kinsey Report uncommon and needed criticism. The section loosely titled (on the jacket) Politics and Culture involves a variety of approaches to this subject, most notable of which are "Reality in America," the first essay, and "The Meaning of a Literary Idea," which ends the book.

Mr. Trilling's criticism is unsentimental. He will not make excuses for Sherwood Anderson's failure to grow beyond his first primitive inspirations. He will not admire Dreiser's weaknesses as a thinker simply because Dreiser dealt with a special sort of "reality." The following may be coldly clinical, but it seems not unjust:

> To the extent that Dreiser's style is defensible, his thought is also defensible. That is, when he thinks like a novelist, he is worth following—when by means of his rough and ungainly but no doubt cumulatively effective style he creates rough, ungainly, but effective characters and events. But when he thinks like, as we say, a philosopher, he is likely to be not only foolish but vulgar. He thinks as

> the modern crowd thinks when it decides to think: religion and morality are nonsense, "religionists" and moralists are fakes, tradition is a fraud, what is man but matter and impulses, mysterious "chemisms," what value has life anyway? "What, cooking, eating, coition, job holding, growing, aging, losing, winning, in so changeful and passing a scene as this, important? Bunk! It is some form of titillating illusion with about as much import to the superior forces that bring it all about as the functions and gyrations of a fly. No more. And maybe less." Thus Dreiser at sixty. And yet there is for him always the vulgarly saving suspicion that maybe, when all is said and done, there is Something Behind It All. It is much to the point of his intellectual vulgarity that Dreiser's anti-Semitism was not merely a social prejudice but an idea, a way of dealing with difficulties.

Speaking of the failure of liberal critics to call attention to Dreiser's "showy nihilism which always seems to him so grand a gesture in the direction of profundity," Mr. Trilling offers a genuine profundity of his own which is worth repeating: ". . . with us it is always a little too late for mind, yet never too late for honest stupidity; always a little too late for understanding, never too late for righteous, bewildered wrath; always too late for thought, never too late for naive moralizing. We seem to like to condemn our finest but not our worst qualities by pitting them against the exigency of time."

Trilling, it should be said, is much more than a critic. He has some remarkably moving short stories to his credit—stories which, once read, are virtually unforgettable—and he has the appreciation of literary greatness that all men of imagination feel. In one of his books, the Spanish essayist, Ortega, coined the expression, "to live at the height of the times," and this seems to sum up Mr. Trilling's capacities. The works of his mind have the quality of thorough assimilation of what our times have to teach, making him, by any ordinary criterion, an outstanding success as an artist and a thinker.

Of course, the symmetry of his thought happens to correspond closely to the symmetry of the best in our culture, so that the exceptional quality of his work is in some sense an accident of history. Perhaps, too, he is unruffled, sure, and impartial precisely because he does not attack those major problems of our time for which we have no wisdom at all in our cultural tradition. But our cultural tradition is not inconsiderable, and to be at home in it, master of it—of its self-consciousness and its several disciplines of the discrimination—as he is, is no small achievement.

COMMENTARY
IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

ISAAC NEWTON, when he formulated the Laws of Motion, had no idea that, after two or three generations, learned men would be claiming that he had proved that the world is a machine. On the contrary, Newton took particular pains to say in his book on *Opticks* that the primary cause of physical phenomena "certainly is not mechanical," and he carefully avoided any attempt at explaining the *cause* of Gravitation, which seemed to him undiscoverable. Our "most beautiful System of the Sun, Planets and Comets," he said, "could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being. . . ." But Newton counted without posterity. Before a century had passed, as E. A. Burtt has put it,

> The really important world outside was a world hard cold, colorless, silent and dead; a world of quantity, a world of mathematically computable motions in mechanical regularity. The world of qualities as immediately perceived by man became just a curious and quite minor effect of that infinite machine beyond.

Had Newton been able to look into the future—to anticipate the future reflection of his doctrines in writers like Theodore Dreiser (see Review) or in sociologists like George Lundberg (see Frontiers), he might, like Hume, have hidden his manuscript in a desk-drawer, or, like Diderot, have entrusted it to a friend for safekeeping.

Hegel, likewise, might have been much more cautious in his adoration of the State, could he have foreseen the power which the States of Europe would acquire in the twentieth century, and how they would use it. And Bellamy, who did more to popularize the socialist idea in the United States than any other American, might have composed his *Looking Backward* more after the pattern of Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four,* had he known how centralized power would corrupt the socialist ideal of human freedom. As Bellamy once said to a friendly editor: "If I thought socialism would not insure full freedom for the individual and foster intellectual hospitality in the realms of ethical, scientific, and philosophical research, I should be the first to oppose it."

Two conclusions are possible from such developments. One is that every great discovery or innovation, whether in science or in the world of ideas, is bound to bring consequences that are furthest from the wishes of those who made the advance in science or social theory.

The other conclusion is that we should learn to distinguish between progress which is "symmetrical"—which applies to the whole man—and the trends which seem to be progressive because they correct some manifest ignorance or extensive social injustice.

The Newtonian advance, for example, brought mastery of matter and knowledge of its motions, but added nothing to our knowledge of man, who uses the knowledge of physics. Hegel's idealism, again, was a *mystique* for the mass of the nation, but it needed the balance of a thinker like McTaggart. And the socialism of Europe—now Communism—needed the sort of valuation of individual responsibility that one finds in the philosophical writings of Leo Tolstoy.

While we cannot, obviously, make adjustments of this sort for the past, the future remains unshaped—the future is always, in some measure, unshaped. In view of the past, the greatest need for the future is a better understanding of what constitutes actual progress for human beings, as contrasted to the various illusions which have prevailed for centuries.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

[This week, we share communications from several readers, with our comments added in smaller type.]

EDITORS: As I see it, young children should not be subjected to the "Art" or the "Education" whims of talentedly-earnest adults whose tastes are very often quite ordinary, even though as instructors they may be rich in zest. The worthwhile instructor is possessed of at least a spark of genius, and mere imposed direction fails to arouse the child's own powers of imagination. When to guide, and when to let the child forge ahead on its own—*that* is the problem which taxes the ingenuity and tries the wisdom of the "teacher." Unfortunately, the exceptional pupil may suffer from ignorant enthusiasm of the unqualified mentor. Less imaginative pupils also suffer to some extent, through being subjected to the unimaginative direction of authoritative grown-ups. In short, the established personality of the would-be instructor must be so much more profound than that of the pupils as to be able to appreciate and subtly draw out every progressive trait evinced in the work of the child.

More often than not, nonconformity in a pupil may be the very token of that pupil's superior, yet groping, capacities. I'm of the opinion that if a youngster can manage to express himself in a way that amazes, shocks, or even befuddles the teacher, that child may very possibly be independently "headed somewhere," toward some distinction, perhaps, that will redound to the child's ultimate credit.

All in all, however, well-meaning "guidance" is useful so long as the Planners remember that "easy does it"; and that it is the teacher's duty to remain discreetly in the background, leaving to the striving child the glory of *assertion.* "Bossy" teachers are a disgrace to the profession. They, moreover, can be depended upon to get the *least* out of the children.

We share this general distrust of those who apparently feel themselves uniquely capable of instilling all the Proper Values in the children under their tutelage. It is doubtful whether the greatest educators have ever sought dominance. "Richness in zest," too, is a more suitable attribute for the young businessman than for the teacher—if we mean by "zest" unbounded confidence in one particular method. The businessman gambles his own wealth and prestige, but the teacher, unfortunately, may be gambling with a different sort of capital in the form of the personalities of children.

The advice to "leave to the striving child the glory of *assertion"* is extremely practical. The child, like all of us in the adult world, needs opportunity to generate convictions. Once developed, these convictions can become a source of real learning, whether they are correct or incorrect; they have become a part of the child, and he cannot be indifferent to their fate at the hands of criticism, whereas ideas *not his own* may be demolished and reconstituted before his eyes endless times without causing him the least real concern. Most people have known the experience of having one assertive teacher's values completely controverted by a subsequent mentor possessing fierce opposing opinions—and of being unmoved and unstimulated by all the sound and fury.

Editors: Have you ever encountered the type of child now being referred to as a "psychopathic personality"? That is, a child who seems oblivious to an appeal on principle, who has no innate "moral sense," no particular repugnance for things that, as we say, the ordinary person "never thinks" of doing. The average psychologist, so far as this reader knows, is not prepared to guarantee any success in treating such a personality. Are they giving up too easily? Is there any workable theory of how a child becomes "psychopathic," and is it true that nothing much can be done for them?

This questioner may have read and been impressed by "The Case that Rocked New Jersey" (referred to in MANAS, Dec. 29, 1948), a *Satevepost* article which, incidentally, also presses for extension of psychiatric help in locating and isolating youthful psychopaths.

Without going into the philosophical question of whether or not something besides environment produces instances of what we call a defective "moral

> sense," we can conclude, along with most psychiatrists, that ours is an amazingly neurotic culture. So long as we embrace contradictory values such as peace and warfare, righteous violence and forgiveness, generosity and possessiveness, sensualism and fear of "sin," we certainly encourage the development of all latent psychopathic tendencies. Since we know that the opportunities of environment make possible the emergence of sparks of greatly beneficial creative ability, so must it be that by environments of cultural neuroticism, we further the development of destructive complexes. Those who labor to cure *cultural* schizophrenia will be doing a great deal for the potential psychopathic personalities. Moreover, as and if psychologists join in even more forthright battle against the cherished falsities of conventional opinion, they will probably discover a deepening understanding which may be utilized in continued work for rehabilitation of the individual psychopath.

Editors: In a recent interview between the parent and the teacher of a second-grader, the teacher began by stating that there was "a great problem" this year, for the children in the second grade proved all to be *individuals*, and "they are not supposed to be so until the third grade! "

The consequence is that the "schedule" made out for the second grade does not "fit" and the teachers do not know what to do about it. Previously, they have always been able to find one child that was outstanding, and he (or she) was the "leader" or "example" that the other children "looked up to" and more or less followed. But this year, they will not be either "leaders" or "followers," but are "individuals" with their own likes, dislikes and *ideas*, so that their teachers are puzzled, being unable to deal with these children in the way that they are "used" to. This second grade is at the stage where the third grade "ought" to be, where the pattern fits. A psychiatrist is being consulted on the problem, but his report is not yet in.

> It is no secret that, in a somewhat unaccountable manner children are averaging higher I.Q.'s with each passing year. While no conclusive evidence exists to prove it, one is encouraged by what statistics are available to wonder if we are not here witnessing chiefly the results of an increase of *native* intelligence, rather than increase in richness of educational opportunity and parents' education backgrounds. On such a view, we would have to consider the possibility that intensifications of psychic and mental energy may flow through the whole of the human race in a way analogous to the accompaniments of adolescence with the individual. Perhaps, as Dr. Rhine and his associates of Duke University suspect, man is still to experience a significant growth in mental and psychical powers—which orthodox methods of science can do no more than measure and observe.
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> Teachers, like all other people, adopt conventional methods of classification such as "leader" and "follower." And all classifications of human personality are indeed silly. Yet, of course, teachers are not the only people who have to learn this anew each day.

FRONTIERS

Religion and "Men of Affairs"

ROBERT A. MILLIKAN, dean of yesterday's generation of physical scientists, is said by Albert Guerard in the *Nation* for May 20 to be an agnostic, yet Dr. Millikan's chief concern in the realm of religion, Mr. Guerard also informs us, "is to bolster up the survivals of the pre-scientific age, the orthodox churches."

Now why should an intelligent man like Dr. Millikan show an interest in the welfare of religious orthodoxy? Why should he, along with some other eminent "thinkers," sign a "Joint Statement upon the relations of scientists, religious leaders, and men of affairs"—a statement which, in Mr. Guerard's words, "beats even the Thirty-nine Articles as a masterpiece of wilful ambiguity"?

The only obvious reason why an unbeliever in sectarianism should subscribe to the forms of conventional belief is that he is worried about what will happen to "the masses" if they are left without a faith. This is a point of view widely held by "men of affairs." There have always been those who insist that religious orthodoxy is a great blessing for the people—other people, that is. Thomas Hobbes regarded religion as an important instrument of government, and David Hume (doubtless with his tongue in his cheek) ended his skeptical essay on Immortality with an expression of gratitude for the "certainty" of Revelation, implying that "reason" could not possibly have arrived at the conclusions of orthodoxy. Meanwhile, Hume hid away in a drawer of his desk the manuscript of his *Dialogues Concerning Religion*, in which the God-idea, as a rational concept, is tried and found wanting. "Hume," as Carl Becker puts it, "did not exactly fly to revealed truth; but he refused to publish his *Dialogues*, and never, in public at least, failed to exhibit a punctiliously correct attitude toward the Author of the universe."

The public piety of men who are privately skeptics is often maintained with the best of intentions. Diderot, for one, who believed that "wherever people believe in God, there is a cult; wherever there is a cult, the natural order of moral duties is reversed, and morality becomes corrupted," nevertheless stopped publishing his views when he had matured them to the point where he felt that they might threaten the conventional morality of France. He hated Catholic orthodoxy, but he feared the consequences of his own materialism more. He had no metaphysic for his strong moral impulses, and so he kept silent; or rather, he entrusted his unpublished manuscripts to a friend. Reflecting upon his dream of a great work which would prove the possibility of morality on the basis of materialism, Diderot wrote:

> I have not even dared to write the first line: I say to myself, if I do not come out of the attempt victorious, I become the apologist of wickedness; I will have betrayed the cause of virtue. . . . I do not feel myself equal to this sublime work, I have uselessly consecrated my whole life to it.

Thus Dr. Millikan has numerous excellent examples to follow. Perhaps he believes, with another famous American, Benjamin Franklin, that while a mechanical theory of the universe may be true, it is certainly "not very useful," and regards the orthodox churches as a safer social investment for his support than the cold and disillusioning ideas of agnosticism.

What Diderot may have suspected, but which Dr. Millikan, we fear, has never considered, is that when "men of affairs" embrace or seem to embrace religious doctrines which are an affront to reason, they encourage numerous desperate schisms and extremes among other and perhaps younger and more daring men who refuse to wear two faces of conviction—one for the public and one for their private contemplation. Particularly in science are found men who will always despise the facade of intellectual compromise, even in "the public good," and who will angrily strike out against it. Speaking of the "Joint Statement" on religion and science signed by Dr. Millikan, Albert Guerard says:

> Science does not reject a priori everything that is not material, or materially demonstrable, but science rejects everything which in the guise of religion is actually legendary history or primitive science. Let Dr. Millikan honestly apply scientific tests to the pseudo-scientific aspects of religion, and his episcopal cosigners will be appalled. Science can certainly not indorse the anthropomorphic hypothesis—"If God made man in His own image, man returned the

> compliment." Yet it is exactly this pre-scientific conception that we find in the joint statement. Lucretius knew better than that.

It cannot be *only* an interest in "stability," however, that prompts men like Dr. Millikan to support the churches. There is too much thoughtful opposition to "dogmatic materialism" and appreciation of the intuitive basis of religion in Dr. Millikan's writings to accuse him of mere social opportunism. He is rather open to the charge of too great an innocence concerning the history and morality of institutional religion, and of taking at face value the claim of the churches to represent the "spiritual" side of existence. Dr. Millikan, one might say, knows a great deal about science, and knows also, therefore, that the mechanical theory is not enough; but because he knows very little about orthodox religion, he has been led to hope that the churches have something that science lacks. It is a plausible outlook, and eminently respectable. The trouble with it is that it makes aggressive atheists and amoralists out of other men who, while they may have less "intuition," preserve greater discipline in their thinking.

Vigorous thinkers have little use for institutional religion, and when men like Dr. Millikan let it be understood that they regard the churches as the custodians of spiritual ideas, they help to turn vigorous thinkers against spiritual ideas as well as against the churches. This, in turn, delays the day when it can be recognized that spiritual ideas may be admitted without accepting any of the perversions and corruptions of them by organized religion. If the doctrine of the soul as an independent moral agent, the conception of immortality, and the idea of moral law are identified with organized religion, then the opponents of organized religion will become enemies of soul, immortality and moral law, too. This happened in the eighteenth century, and can go on happening throughout the twentieth century. "Scientific" atheism, in the eighteenth century, was the credo of earnest moralists, and no one can read the scientific press regularly, today, without realizing that the denial of free will and of the significance of moral freedom by contemporary essayists is mostly the defense of a *cause*—the cause of intellectual honesty—with which many scientists are allied. There is a continuous heritage of devotion to human good from the days of Lamettrie's *Man a Machine* to the more sophisticated doctrines of modern mechanism. Whatever defects the machine-idea may have, it offers no justification for the moral condemnations and psychological oppressions of dogmatic religion.

In the *Scientific Monthly* for May, for example, George A. Lundberg writes on the applicability of scientific techniques to the study of man with quite candid disdain "for the great dualistic systems of thought which find it necessary to deal with man in a different framework from the rest of nature." Concerning free will, he says:

> In the scientific orientation, voluntary behavior, to the extent that the category is used at all, becomes merely that behavior which is characterized by delayed response and which is mediated by symbolic (language) mechanisms. As such, voluntary behavior is subject to the same kind of systematic study as any other action.
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> That is, science circumvents the whole argument about free will by simply leaving this metaphysical issue alone and pointing out that the "free will" behavior, including the observed will of God himself, is just as subject to statistical study and prediction as any other kind of behavior.

In other words, scientific observation, in order to be scientific, must be conducted *as if* no free will is possible, even if it should exist (but of course, it *doesn't* exist, and we scientists state the problem this way as a sop to the unsolvable metaphysical issue, and to quiet our humanist critics). There is a sense, of course, in which this view is wholly justified. If the admission of moral responsibility be taken to mean that men have the right to judge one another and to punish one another for their sins—as it were, to play "God" to one another, whenever they can gather to themselves sufficient power to do so—then atheism and morals-denying determinism are certainly superior to spiritual ideas on every count. But this is precisely our point. Atheism and mechanistic theories were not the product of *natural* philosophy, but the reaction of free men to unnatural, irrational religion, and its endless cruelties and injustices to human beings. It is time that our "men of affairs" found this out.