

RACIAL AND CULTURAL MYSTERIES

IT is unlikely that an article on this subject will come to any startling conclusion. At any rate, we do not propose to attempt to "unveil" the mysteries, but rather to discuss them on the theory that mysteries of human differences really exist. Once upon a time there was a little boy—or little girl (any little boy or girl)—who used to like to wander through the neighborhood where the Negroes or the Chinese or the West Indians lived, and to wonder what strange riches were hidden behind those closed doors and shaded windows. What special foods did they eat? What stories did they tell their children? Where else could you find people with rings in their ears, or who had such uniquely rambling and ramshackle houses with curious places to play, and chickens pecking among the weeds right in the front yard?

There is a strong case for the little boy's interest and point of view—much stronger, we think, than the case for the sociologist who writes a paper on second-generation immigrants who fight with their parents; and stronger, too, than the case for the ethnologist who feels he has to add a long footnote of apology every time he uses the word "race." It is not that there is anything wrong with the earnest pamphlets written by anthropologists to convince the masses of their fundamental equality, but only that "equality," at the level of meaning it attains in academic argument, is hardly a thing worth arguing about at all. The "they-are-as-good-as-you-are" sermon never convinced anybody we know of. And the same may be said of most sermons on any subject.

Take the question of anti-Negro prejudice. The energies of a considerable number of people go into combatting it. The methods used are various, but it seems evident that the only methods which really contribute to the Negro cause are those which enlarge the public realization that human greatness is the only thing

of importance about a man, and that in this, the color of the man's skin is a matter beneath notice. *Black Boy*, by Richard Wright, makes you forget, in a way, that the boy is black—although in another way you remember it all the more. For the quality of his writing, Richard Wright's skin-color is of no more importance than the color of his shoes. A lot of the time, the reader would like to have been, himself, the kind of a boy Richard Wright was—to have his courage and his self-respect. For Wright has added to the riches of the human race.

A *Nation* reviewer, discussing Roi Ottley's *Black Odyssey*—the story of Negroes in the United States from 1619 to 1945—names some of the Negro heroes of American history and remarks: "After reading about these people it is difficult to conceive of them as 'Negroes'." The point is, that the more a man lives in his mind and his heart, the more difficult it is for others to think of him or remember him except as a noble human being.

Instead of issuing learned pamphlets on equality and emotional appeals for tolerance, the opponents of prejudice should be studying the causes of human fear and of envy and jealousy, for these are the qualities which make people susceptible to prejudice and the propaganda of prejudice. A neat little leaflet pressing the idea that Negroes have no body odor, or that "science says" their blood is identical with the blood of Caucasians is only an academic exercise—about as effective as saying an Ave Maria to put out a forest fire.

Basic to this problem is the apparently otherwise "nice" individual who betrays an unreasoning and almost obsessive suspicion of some particular racial or cultural group—the Jews, for example. The fact that there are

numerous such individuals is not made any easier to understand by the sort of analysis of anti-Semitism contributed to the Spring, 1946 number of *Partisan Review* by Jean Paul Sartre, brilliant and in a sense devastatingly accurate though it was. The problem of anti-Semitism is not a problem of exposing either the brutality of clods or the paranoid delusions of Nazis, but of getting to understand why so many people—well-meaning, in some ways—can be persuaded to listen to Nazi-type propaganda and, on occasion, to participate in the brutality of clods. Why, in other words, are so many people able to believe that some other racial or cultural or religious group can be inherently evil in nature and intent? What are the differences between them and, say, a man like Walt Whitman, and why do *these* differences among people exist ?

If we can solve this problem, we can also solve the problem of war. It is not the immediate stimulus or the provocative incident, nor even the cleverness of the particular propaganda of the moment, which makes war possible, but the ever-present potentialities for suspicion and hate in the masses of mankind, now active, now quiescent, which are aroused and directed by the makers of war. Even the "good" makers of war have to use this emotional reservoir of destructive energy or give up all hope of winning their war, for people—the great majority of them—will not fight unless they are first made to fear and hate.

In a problem of this sort, there are always two factors which cannot be measured and which vary in inverse relation with each other. One of those factors may be called the factor of simple, uncomplicated barbarism, which may cause a people, a nation or a man to try to take by violence the possessions or to destroy the rights and freedom of another people, nation or man. Barbarism, so defined, is both shameless and fearless. It seems to contradict the idea that war and injustice are simply the result of ignorance and fear. It must be admitted that this barbarism is an ingredient of human nature and that its dominance

over group and individual behavior, throughout history, has varied greatly with time and place. As a tentative judgment in this respect, it might be said that the wars of barbarism, being conflicts which are unrationalized by ethical pretenses, and carried on without the deliberate manipulation of the emotions by modern propaganda techniques, are neither inhuman nor decadent, but simply ... barbarous. A further judgment might be that wars of this sort belong largely to the past. They are abstractions which may figure in mythology, in tales of the Heroic Age, but not in modern history.

But the *factor* of barbarism is present in some measure in all wars. If this were not so, the propagandists would have almost nothing at all to talk about. The propagandist for war is not interested in the appeal to reason or the appeal to human brotherhood, except in order to assert that both of these appeals can have no effect until the irrational force of barbarism has been destroyed or laid away in chains. The propagandist is himself another kind of barbarian, a barbarian who is "civilized" —using this word in its worst sense. He exploits the vocabulary of ethics as a tool to arouse the human emotions in much the same way that an honest barbarian will use a forge to make himself a sword. The propagandist is no more "ethical" than the barbarian, the only difference being that the barbarian does not know how and has never thought of debasing the ethical idea.

To make a definition, then, the propagandist for war is one who exaggerates the factor of barbarism in order to make people who know better adopt barbarous forms of behavior by inspiring in them suspicion and fear. This suspicion and fear—or simply fear—is the second factor involved in the problem of war. And unless the people—all of us—can learn to stop listening to the propagandists, they will never be able to see how small and unimportant is the factor of barbarism in human nature, and how far-reaching the effect of fears which have no real basis in fact.

So the question seems to become: How can people develop an immunity to the propaganda of

fear? But this is not a real question, for the reason that a man who will respond fearfully to an actual, unpropagandized situation will also respond to a pretended threat, if it is cleverly devised. Thus the conclusion is that we dare not fear at all, whatever the "reason." Fear induces a kind of paralysis of the rational faculties, in which the entire universe of normal sensation and perception is shut out from view, and the whole attention of the individual concentrated on the single object that is feared. This response may be appropriate and necessary at the level of biological behavior, in cases where escape is a function of bodily and psychic reflexes, but it is fundamentally bad for peculiarly *human* behavior, which may be called "rational" behavior. Fear obliterates the rational function and reduces man to a quivering animal.

This is of course an "absolute" definition, whereas in actual experience, fear has only a relative empire over human behavior. It is through this half-fearing, half-hoping, half-rational condition of man that propaganda obtains its hold. Basically, propaganda is pseudo-philosophy. Propaganda pretends to explain the origin of good and evil in human life, and how the good may be increased and the evil eliminated. Propaganda depends for its influence on keeping human beings in a half-fearful, half-hopeful state. It is that form of rationalization which both maintains and exploits human uncertainty, by pretending that certainty is possible for man without overcoming fear.

By this time, it should be evident that the most dangerous propagandists of all are the theological propagandists, for their explanations are intended to appear to strike at the root of the human situation. Who are the good people? *We* are the good people. Why are we the good people? Because we believe in the true God and obey his commandments. Who are the bad people? *They* are the bad people. Why? Because they do not believe in our God and they ignore His commandments. What must be done to reduce the evil in the world? Make the bad people

good, by making them believe in the true God; and if they cannot be persuaded to believe, then destroy them, or at least curtail their influence, lest they corrupt the rest.

This is the theological formula, but it is also a cultural habit of mind, among people who have believed it or allowed it to prevail as an acceptable, if nominal, expression of orthodox religious "truth." It is a formula in which endless substitutions may be made, such as "Nation" for "God," or even "Family" or "Business" for God. In each case, the key value, whether God, Nation, Race, Family, or Club or Secret Society, is held supreme, not because of any impartial comparison with other values, but because it is the value adopted and believed in by those in whom this cultural habit has become fixed. This egocentricity is the root of all aggression and feeling of insecurity, carried on and supported in the name of the "highest good." It is the "me and mine" psychology which we have to contend with—the psychology of fearing to part company with the irrational core of selfishness and to meet honestly on an equal footing with men of other cultures and other faiths.

So, by a circuitous route, human susceptibility to prejudice, to fear and hate, is traced to self-distrust, to a kind of moral laziness and at the same time a sense of moral incompetence—an incompetence which we hope that God, General Eisenhower, and Free Enterprise will somehow be able to compensate for if we support them with all our hearts. And in order to strengthen our sense of security in these cultural resources, we often find it advisable to believe in Miracles, too—for how, without a miracle, could even these great Forces of the cosmos accomplish what we hope they will be able to do? And those who have not our Gods—who do not join with us in our customs and beliefs—do they not, with their scepticism and heresies, menace the very substance of our lives? They do.

The reason why we began this discussion with the illustration of a little boy is that children—most small children, at any rate—have not yet been deeply affected by the cultural propaganda of fear, and they express, therefore, a natural feeling of interest, sympathy and wonderment for people who are "different" from themselves. And Walt Whitman was a good man to mention as a further illustration for the reason that he resisted, all his life, the propaganda of fear. In every other human being, he found the promise of some kind of enrichment for himself.

But what about the "differences," themselves? It seems silly to deny, as some eager equalitarians do, that human differences have any existence at all, or if they are real, that they have any significance. To contend against the fact of human differences with a superficial, semi- or pseudo-scientific argument founded more on the moral sentiments than on unmistakable facts seems almost an admission that if the differences *were real*, they would somehow be the basis for branding some peoples as "inferior" and others as "superior." But it does not follow at all that differences necessarily establish human beings in some hierarchy of human excellence. Certainly, physiological differences or differences in psychic and intellectual idiosyncrasy have no direct connection with human excellence. Even differences in what the psychologists call "intelligence" may have no bearing on the qualities of a "superior" human being. As James McKeen Cattell, the pioneer of mental testing, once said in regard to the results of such tests: . . . "we have not settled with the question of clearness of thought, sincerity of feeling, correctness of action. Wisdom, sympathy, righteousness are still further beyond our present reach."

The only possible course would seem to be to admit that all sorts of differences among human beings exist—that some of them are physical, some temperamental, some probably "racial" and some undoubtedly cultural—and that after all these "group" distinctions are admitted, there are

still further differences in human nature—moral differences, they may be called—which create the "mystery" of individual human character, which is much more difficult to account for and to understand. What earthly purpose is served by denying these things? The fact that there are things about people which we cannot as yet explain in terms of cause and effect is certainly not a basis for "prejudice." If it were, the idea of the uniqueness and ultimate moral worth of the individual would have no philosophical standing at all.

The fires of prejudice, so far as we can see, are not fed by the facts of human differences, and will not be put out by denying them. Prejudice feeds on self-distrust, on the lust for security, on the fear of loss of material and social status and of loss of self-esteem. When these weaknesses become characteristic of a culture, human differences are seized upon and made into an excuse for prejudice and aggression. The man of prejudice hates others, but he hates himself most of all.

Letter from SWITZERLAND

GENEVA.—The Swiss, like many other peoples, have been profoundly shocked by the way in which the condemnation of Cardinal Mindszenty has been accomplished, although no one finds it strange that the totalitarian government of Hungary should have crossed swords with Rome. Whether or not it is technically proved that the Cardinal meddled in politics, the very tenets of the Roman Church make it almost impossible for it to dissociate itself from questions of State. The Roman Church claims for itself a temporal as well as a religious power; it maintains its court at the Vatican City and receives and sends out accredited ambassadors. And because the duties of its clergy involve interests other than those of religion, it is very difficult to regard it as a strictly religious body, or to draw a line between its clerical and political activities.

Switzerland herself has had to engage in armed conflicts to maintain the religious freedom of her people. In the nineteenth century, under the protection of Catholic convents and of Jesuit educational institutions, a lively political propaganda thoroughly repugnant to Swiss ideas of the rights of man was carried on in certain cantons. Because of the double role, temporal and religious, of the Church, the clergy was in a position to threaten the democratic institutions of the country. Freedom of conscience was then menaced by the church, as today in Hungary it is outlawed by the State. Sensing the danger of conflict with the rest of Switzerland, the Catholic cantons formed themselves into a *Sonderbund*, or underground movement. But this *Sonderbund*, working for the establishment of religious dictation by the Roman Catholic Church, was a violation of the *Pacte Fédéral* of 1815 which guaranteed freedom of religious opinion and worship, along with other civil liberties, *within the framework of the Confederation's unity*. Vaud and Genève, after internal revolutions which led to the establishment of the Federal Constitution of 1848 (still in operation) —took issue with the Jesuits and the *Sonderbund* in 1846. The ensuing dispute brought into the limelight the danger which had confronted the country as a whole, and to which, one by one, the cantons had awakened. The result was civil war, and it

was not till 1847 that the *Diète Fédérale* was able to order the dissolution of the *Sonderbund* and the expulsion of the Jesuits from Swiss Territory. But unlike the Hungarian government, which in a few weeks settled the question of the church's influence in the person of Cardinal Mindszenty, the Swiss waited long years until the question could be put to popular vote and the final decision taken.

On receipt of the Government's order to disband, the *Sonderbund* "declared war," and was defeated only after a sanguine struggle of 26 days. The Federal forces were led by General Dufour, a national hero noted for his religious tolerance and for his freedom from political passions. What was his first recommendation to his men? That they practice moderation and remember that they were fighting their own people. Had the *Sonderbund* quietly complied with the State's edict, and had the Jesuits been content to leave, there would not have been even this 26 days' fighting. The war over, the Federal Constitution of 1848 was adopted, broader in scope than its predecessor, categorically outlawing all religious interference with the dictates of individual conscience. But the Swiss Government made no individuals the scapegoats of a system. Neither were they deprived of their property. Leaders of the opposition were not sentenced to life imprisonment or sent to the gallows. On the contrary, the Catholics were allowed to remain on condition that they confined their activities to the fields of religion.

Cardinal Mindszenty may have been innocent, or his "confession" may be genuine. It is not this which interests the Swiss. What does interest them are the Inquisitional methods employed at the "trial." The Swiss verdict has been clearly sounded in press, and on the radio where Paul Ladame, the well-known official Swiss broadcaster, characterized the Hungarian Government's action as a flagrant violation of the fundamental and most sacred Rights of Man—and called on the Swiss Confederation to judge it on that basis.

SWITZERLAND CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

BEFORE AND AFTER

LOOKING back at a past war and looking forward to the possibility of—or the possibility of avoiding—another one seem to be attitudes which involve markedly different moral assumptions. *Harper's* for April contains two articles which reflect, respectively, these different assumptions. The first, "The Cold Peace," by David Bernstein, is the author's summary of the prospect for peace, presented in the form of an outline for an unwritten book. The other article is C. Hartley Grattan's "What the War Cost."

Mr. Bernstein weighs the factors which might be expected to precipitate a war, and finds war something less than "inevitable." The level of his argument is indicated by such points as: (1) Russia has been outmaneuvered by the United States because the Soviet drive to elect Dewey (by sponsoring Wallace) failed—the Soviets thought a Republican administration would create an economic depression, here—and the Marshall Plan aid-to-Europe of the Democratic administration will continue; (2) a stalemate of power-politics exists in Europe; (3) another stalemate in the Far East; (4) just as neither side, in the recent war, dared to use poison gas, so, in the next one, nobody will use the atomic bomb—it's too horrible and unpredictable a weapon, and so on.

Some of Mr. Bernstein's reasoning seems fairly astute, some, wishful thinking. His central point is that the stalemate in political power affords "a condition that gives us time to build a true and lasting peace." With the first half of this statement anyone can agree—it is a condition which gives us "time"; but where is the evidence to suggest that this time will be used to transform the stalemate into genuine peace? He seems to neglect altogether the underlying motives and psychological realities which have combined with the general exhaustion and war-weariness of the world to provide the "time" of which he speaks. He writes, in other words, as though the surface-factors of the "cold peace," as he names the present situation, were actually decisive in

shaping human events. He does of course distinguish between this jockeying for position in the international contest for power and "a true lasting peace," but he says nothing at all about how the latter may be obtained. His interest in the modern world situation and the sagacity he contributes are both focussed upon the element of *power*—who has the power, how much, and why. His unspoken assumption, therefore, is that power is closely related to peace. It seems to us that this assumption is a greater cause of war than anything else, for it is the assumption that makes it possible to believe that a modern war can achieve humane ends. It is also an assumption which is typical of most of the thinking, today, about the *next* war.

Mr. Grattan writes with some authority on "What the War Cost." He has specialized in this subject for years. His *Preface to Chaos: War in the Making* appeared in 1936, and he is now at work on a volume which will probably be titled, *The Economics of Destruction: The Costs of World War II*. It is easier, of course, to write on the basis of moral assumptions so long as the discussion is about the past. Moral judgments about the past can remain uncompromised by the plans for action today and tomorrow. Mr. Grattan sets forth the facts and says, by implication, to the reader: "If you want to know what to do about the future, just add up the facts—they tell their own story." They do indeed, but if Mr. Grattan had done the addition and drawn the obvious conclusion, *Harper's* probably wouldn't have printed what he wrote. But in any event, it's better to have his facts than nothing at all.

What are they? First, loss of life. According to estimates and sources available to Mr. Grattan, the total loss of life caused directly by the war was forty million human beings—thirty million of them civilians. The war killed three civilians for every soldier. The total, the author points out, is "equivalent to all the children in the United States under nineteen years of age."

The material costs he estimates at a grand total of four trillion dollars—four thousand thousand million dollars—if that is any easier to comprehend, which we doubt. The war seems to have been primarily an attack on homes, if the results of air

bombardment are taken as evidence. Mr. Grattan writes:

Terror and obliteration air-raids were considered successful almost in proportion to the number of people who lost their homes; for homeless people cannot work well, and production falls toward zero. It was for these reasons that 20 out of every 100 residential buildings in Germany were destroyed, that every fifth Greek was left homeless, that 28,000 houses in Rotterdam alone were knocked down, that the British had 460,000 houses destroyed and the Japanese two and a quarter million. Even in New Guinea numerous native villages were flattened to the ground.

What this wholesale destruction of dwelling space meant in human terms it is impossible even for people with highly developed imaginations to grasp. And with the "space" went the furniture and other equipment and possessions of the millions of human beings who occupied it, often things painfully gathered after hard toil over many years. That man did all this to himself only adds the final touch of irony. . . .

One more quotation, on air bombardment. Mr. Grattan makes it plain that modern war is no longer a merely "military" enterprise, in the old sense, but an attempt to destroy the productive capacities of the enemy nation, which are the sinews of war. But they are also the sinews of life:

As practiced in World War II, air bombardment represents the most systematic effort ever made to destroy the economic underpinnings of nations. In destroying a nation's power to make war, one destroys a nation's ability to keep its citizens alive. This paradox will plague us as long as war exists. This is why it is taking so long to "restore" Europe.

The only practical alternative to ultimate mutual destruction of all the civilized nations seems to be the absolute renunciation of war—not simply as "an instrument of national policy," for we have heard that phrase before, but as a mode of human action, whether national or individual. The modern nation, if it has been willing to use this "instrument" in the past, is most certainly that form of organization which incorporates and exploits the insane aspects of human behavior, and there is no reason to hope that the behavior of "nations" will in any way improve in the future. War must be avoided by individuals as

they would avoid cannibalism and other more unspeakable crimes. This, at least, is the conclusion which arises from considering past wars in terms of human values.

Curiously, one finds in the technical journals of war-making more actual candor in respect to the inhumanity of modern war than in many of the so-called "liberal" papers. For example, in *Ordnance* for January-February (*Ordnance* is the trade journal of the munitions industry), a reviewer of J. F. C. Fuller's strategic and tactical history, *The Second World War*, adopts without qualification General Fuller's view that "strategic bombing" accomplished nothing for Allied victory and calls its advocates "baby-killers." Quoting admissions from official reports that errors of a mile in hitting bomb-targets were quite possible in broad daylight, the reviewer repeats General Fuller's argument: ". . . if, in broad daylight, errors of a mile are to be expected, in the night bombings of military objectives in German cities they certainly cannot have been less."

There is a bluntness in this review which is a tribute to the editors of *Ordnance* and to its readers. The writer, Hoffman Nickerson, concludes:

Well, gentlemen of the U.S. Strategic Air Force—and very gallant gentlemen you are who would not dream of killing women and children on the ground, and would to God that your wisdom were as undoubted as your courage—you are challenged. That wars today can seldom, if ever, be won without air superiority everyone agrees. But in order to gain and keep air superiority must you go in for indiscriminate baby killing? . . .

COMMENTARY **PROJECT FOR AMERICA**

AN amiably persistent correspondent with a scientific (operational) turn of mind keeps writing to us for more specific blueprints respecting some of our editorial suggestions. One such communication poses the practical question of where to begin in putting the Gandhian economy to work in the United States.

How [he writes] raise ourselves by our bootstraps? Your present correspondent will, I wager, go as far as any you can find, with time, energy and money, to begin this research and the action it entails. We haven't *begun*—we are just talking about beginning. . . .

As we understand it, the Gandhian economics starts out with an attitude of mind toward human beings. Then it becomes a new kind of "progressive" education, with the focus on learning to meet the immediate needs of human beings. Then, as the movement grows, it rises to levels of increasing complexity until the more theoretical processes of the Gandhian scheme stop being theoretical and are transformed into actualities.

In India, Gandhi had the inspiration and the "plan," and the Indian peasants had the need. The need was twofold: (1) Bare subsistence and (2) self-respect. Taking the spinning wheel as a symbol of the primary activities of the Gandhian program, it may be seen that spinning *Khadi* served both aspects of this need. Let's not go any further with what has been done in India. What about the United States?

Americans are miserable and don't know why. Avid for sensation, in satiety they suffer pangs of conscience. Then, to dull these qualms, they seek more sensation and indulge the propensity for aggression and finding scapegoats for their inner dissatisfactions. Poverty in America, in other words, is entirely different from the poverty in India. Meanwhile, as the emotional life of Americans is fed on artificial stimulants and adulterants, so their physical life is increasingly

debilitated by unnatural foods and an excess of "doctoring" with shots and all manner of specific palliatives.

In India, the project was for food and for human dignity. Here, it must be for something else. Our view is that America's greatest need is for a *discovery* of the actual emptiness of life as it is lived in the United States, and of the human riches of another sort of life. While there is no formula for making this discovery, there are ways of going about it, which may be described. To try to intimate some of these ways is a MANAS project.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

DEAR OLD FRIEND: Of course I know that you are not *really* so "old," nor am I, but this business of having young ones around does tend to make one express oneself through terms which connote "stability" or "permanence." I suppose this small bit of self-analysis will help to explain why my typewriter keys picked out the above salutation. . .

Following out our intention of sharing ideas and experiences and problems about the youngsters: Don't know whether either of us has said this before, but it seems to me one of our promptings in this is to see if we can bridge the gap between the many "radical" and "revolutionary" ideas we used to be so proud of sharing and our new parental status. Very few have ever been able to make this sort of synthesis, I fear. It is so easy to be "radical" when our own emotional interests are served by unconventional doctrines—and so easy for us to be conservative when the bread is buttered on *that* side. . . . Well, anyway, one of the best testings seems to me to be in what we decide to do about "discipline." I have been thinking about this a great deal, since the lusty childling in this house has unorganized and confused and untrained desires which stumble all over each other—and probably pop out of his ears even when he sleeps. The first conclusion I came to was *not* to attempt any discipline unless I was sure about the method I picked, on the theory that much harm is often done children by parents who are *not at all "sure,"* in using the first means to "discipline" that comes to hand. Now, it seems to me that it is far better for us to let the child get in our hair when we are not sure of what to do about him than for us to get in his. The trouble he causes us is only periodic and temporary—but one wrong method used by us in "bringing him into line" may influence the whole of his life—and to some degree thus affect the whole of society, if

we are going to try to keep our "social consciousness" in mind.

I'm afraid I don't know too much about the Greeks and the classics, because when I had what people told me was an opportunity to "study them" I was far more interested in all the things you used to think of to corrupt my study habits. But I do remember one thing which has a lot of symbolic meaning to me at this time. The worst trouble was always caused by the "Gods" themselves—the dwellers on the top of Olympus rather than by the relatively ungifted souls who lived below. When one of the Gods allowed himself to get deluded, he fell into a chain of action which *brought* in all lesser "human" beings. . . . Now, if we are not relatively in the position of Gods to our children, we can only be regarded as one other thing by the child-mind—as devils. That is, we start out with such a disproportion in capacities that a relationship based upon an equality of reason must require a lot of mutual understanding indeed. That is why we have to work so hard for "equality" with the children, because unless we do *liberate them* from bondage to our superior strength of reason by helping them acquire a separate intellectual integrity of their own, they will always be caught up *in our* mistakes, and reflect the very states of mind which cause *us* all *our* trouble. So the first job of the "Gods," it seems to me, is to "get out from under" this precarious and unfair responsibility as soon as possible. If we can only learn to acquit ourselves fairly as Men, and help our children to become Men, we shall have a much better situation than existed in the interrelationships of Olympus and the lowlands.

Recently I've been trying a little writing on this very matter of discipline. One piece I would like to entitle, "The Failure of Nerve in Parents"—a case of the "Gods" using the big stick because they can't stand the thought of what their children may think of their parents' values if they are really taught to think. Of course, there is much more to it also. There is a humanitarian aspect to the usual

parent's determination not to "let" his children repeat the mistakes which once made him so miserable. But every time I try to write anything on this subject, some kind of compulsion gets to work and I really give the parents a bad time. I hope this isn't just a case of catching on to the tag end of the debunking fad; I don't *think* it is, because the thorough debunker is the man who doesn't stop with saying that the typical parent isn't much good—he goes on to imply that human beings in general aren't and never will be much of anything. And to me the best part of our "philosophical radicalism" to retain is that part which rejects conventional values because they show such little faith in man's capacities. With little faith in Man, the "damned parent" damns the child in turn, and so on. He damns the child by adopting the attitude that only punishment and fear of one sort or another will provide enough resistance against the preponderating human tendency to incline toward evil. Virtue becomes an avoidance of trouble, rather than personal or social creativity. And there, brother, you have the constitutional reactionary.

Well, where do we begin to help the child to see what "self-discipline" is and why he needs it? I tried the other day—by pragmatically taking up the matter of anger, when the little tyke felt as if a nest of hornets had moved into his abdomen because he was nursing a man-sized resentment against some of his little pals. I used a pretty obvious device—we mixed dirt and water, and this was supposed to stand for what he did to himself when he allowed himself to get angry—the water was no longer good for anyone to drink until it had settled, and even that at the very bottom of the glass was of dubious quality. But the thing I thought most important in what I tried to do was to *link myself* to the problem—I even put on a not-too-clever performance of anger myself to try to show him that we might use each other's help in working on a common problem. We *have* to help them lick anger—one of the first and most dangerous aspects of the ever-damning "anxiety-neuroses" of the psychiatrists—but I

think we have to do it without in turn producing apathy. Working on "anger" or anything else which calls for consistent self-discipline must be accompanied by a feeling of creativity. The child, I am afraid, doesn't ever feel he is really going anywhere important if the goal is only to reach whatever state Daddy pretends to have attained. Daddy isn't that good—ever. These infants often have a Gargantuan intuitive faculty. Giving them a negative goal is like giving people in the Middle Ages the Heavenly City to look forward to. The "Heavenly City" wasn't really good enough to get anyone excited. It only stood for a reaching to the state of mind presumably attained by the Fathers of the Church—which is like teaching the child he will do all right if he becomes as good as Daddy, or as good as society. These goals are definitely second-rate.

Well, now *you* tell *me* about discipline. I haven't even worked out satisfactory keys to *physical* discipline (that is, the purposeful training of the body) because I find that you run into the same profound problems of method here, too. I have made some kind of start, though, and the biggest projects are the most rewarding.

FRONTIERS

The Swing To Religion

IF the contemporary return to religion were a wholly rational affair, growing from conscious decision after serious thought and evaluation, it could be welcomed without criticism or suspicion. But the fact is that the new interest in religion is animated in large part by moral desperation—by the feeling that "natural" means having failed the human race, men must turn again to supernatural powers as their last and only hope.

At the same time, a change in the polarity of belief opens the way to independent thinking for those whose minds are relatively free. Every time some popular authority seems to reverse himself and go over to the "other side," another mooring of the fixed ideas of his generation is severed, and undetermined possibilities appear in a region where unquestioned dogmas once ruled supreme.

Something of this sort seems to be taking place in the field of educational psychology. In *Progressive Education* for January, 1949, Prof. O. H. Mowrer discusses the conflict between orthodox religion and the new schools of psychotherapy. In his article, which has the imposing title, "Biological versus Moral 'Frustration' in Personality Disturbances," are more of the elements of synthesis for this controversy than have appeared anywhere else, so far as we know. First of all, Prof. Mowrer sums up the position of the psychoanalysts with gratifying succinctness, but without serious oversimplification, and seems to put his finger on the essential weakness of the Freudian analysis of human nature. This, in itself, is an important contribution for the general reader. Second, he defines the positive needs of modern society in the only terms worth considering—the terms of moral values. It is here, of course, in Prof. Mowrer's proposals, that the defect of vagueness appears. While apparently neutral toward theological and philosophical questions, his use of terms makes it possible for the reader to suppose that a revival of traditional religion might be desirable for the West.

He begins with a critique of Freud, pointing out, first, that the term "neurosis" is illustrative of the modern temper. Its psychological derivation shows that mental disorders are traced to the body rather than the psyche, or moral nature of man, in medical theory. Although admitting the usefulness of some of the Freudian concepts and categories, he says:

. . . the stubborn fact remains that Freudian thinking has failed to generate either a more hygienic social philosophy (thus leading to the more effective prevention of personality difficulties) or a highly efficient curative procedure. There are even indications that Freudian thought has in some instances actually aggravated, both at the individual and social level, the very conditions it is supposed to correct.

Prof. Mowrer confirms the criticisms made of Freud, not with theoretical arguments, but with reference to the massive fact of spreading mental disorder. Freudianism, he observes, contributed to the general medical tendency to "biologize" mental disease. He continues:

Today, Freudian thought is easily the dominant fashion in American psychiatry. But however congenial it may be to the medical mind, we again recall a perdurable reality: personality disturbances are increasing, *pari passu*, with the spread of Freudianism. Whatever its triumphs in other fields, modern medicine has not solved the riddle of the unhinged soul. Today civilized man is increasingly afraid of his anxieties.

The account of Freud's views is both excellent and brief, so that we may quote it entire:

Freud advanced three great assumptions, which underlie the contemporary medical approach to mental disorder. Two of these are sound, the third unsound and misleading in the extreme.

One of Freud's earliest and most revolutionary contentions was that symptom-therapy is futile. He believed that neurotic symptoms are essentially habits which the disturbed individual acquires as a means of reducing or avoiding anxiety. Thus by means of suggestion, authoritative command, or other procedures, it may be possible to make a compulsive handwasher or agoraphobic give up his particular eccentricity, but the underlying problems remain and substitute symptom formation is very likely to follow.

This is a principle which is today almost universally accepted in psychiatry and psychology.

Freud's second great insight was that anxiety, which is a peculiar form of fear characterized by vague dread and objectless apprehension, can be scientifically comprehended only if we posit a process which Freud called "repression." The consideration which sets anxiety apart from ordinary fear is that in the latter condition we speak of being afraid *of* this or that; we know *why* we are alarmed and can usually take more or less effective steps to deliver ourselves from the danger that threatens us. But in anxiety, the situation is very different. We feel baffled, caught, trapped and all the more terrified because our feelings seem so unaccountable. I believe it is again correct to say that all modern students of the problem of anxiety—and some ancient ones, too—accept Freud's proposition that anxiety is simply fear the object of which has been lost from consciousness through a dynamic process known as repression.

But here the agreement ends. Freud went beyond these two generally accepted principles and made a special assumption about the nature of repression. As already indicated, he believed that it is almost always impulses of either lust or hostility that get pushed below the threshold of consciousness and that it is when these impulses press against the repressing forces and threaten to erupt back into consciousness that the experience of anxiety is characteristically felt.

On the basis of evidence which I cannot easily reproduce here, I have come to feel that Freud was in egregious error on this latter score. It now seems highly probable that although Freud was eminently right about the nature of the symptoms and the necessity of repression for the occurrence of anxiety, he was wrong in his assumption concerning the *direction* of repression. Many sources of present evidence indicate that most—perhaps all—neurotic human beings suffer, not because they are unduly inhibited as regards their biological drives, but because they have disavowed and repudiated their own moral strivings. Anxiety, I believe, comes, not from repressed sexuality or pent-up hatred, but from a denial and defiance of the forces of conscience.

Prof. Mowrer neglects the question of *why* the peoples of Christendom have been so beset by guilt complexes and repressions. His article might have been even more informing if he had examined the theological idea of "sin" and the possible reasons for its connection with neurosis. It seems desirable to

exhaust every possibility of the Freudian diagnosis, before proceeding to the counter-theory of a repression of conscience. Quite probably, Western society is afflicted with *both* sorts of repression, involving warped ideas of both the "do's" and "don't's" of moral behavior.

The author seems to make his alliance with conventional religious ideas when he speaks of the decline of the God-idea, adding: "Since conscience is said to be the voice of God speaking in man, it is not unreasonable to suppose that God and conscience have tended to fall into disrepute simultaneously, with an increasing disposition toward anxiety and its sequelae."

He does not, however, advocate a "return to religion," but calls for a "*rediscovery of ethics.*" This completes his diagnosis and sets the question anew. The new departure for psychotherapy which recognizes the independent reality of conscience should be a search for ethical conviction devoid of the fear-breeding tendencies of the personal God of traditional religion. There has been at least one great historical religion—a religion of great ethical power and influence—which rejected entirely the God-idea. The advantage of doing without the God-idea is in the idea of evil which results—evil becomes capable of philosophical definition, and is not simply the consequence of "disobedience" of the commandments of "God." Still another constructive feature of "Godless" religion is the restriction of "sin" to psychological factors of motivation in human life. The "flesh" is not evil, save as men make it so, nor is any "thing" evil, in itself, except as it becomes a source of delusion to men. It is the *codification* of right and wrong, it seems, which creates much of neurosis and tortured conscience in human beings. A genuine psychotherapy, at any rate, will have to take all these considerations into account.