

THE LEAGUE OF ANXIOUS MEN

WHAT do you do about anxiety? This is an obviously important question, since anxiety is a major affliction of the modern world. According to the dictionary, anxiety is "painful uneasiness of mind over an impending or anticipated ill." The present anxiety, unlike more tolerable kinds, is complicated by the fact that the "anticipated ills" are so undefined that they constitute a sinister threat of the unknown. The sense of insecurity, which smears the horizon like an all-encompassing smog, is probably the closest we can come to describing the cause of our anxiety.

But what do you do about it? More clearly caused difficulties have manifest or historically established solutions. If the trouble comes from a bad relation with government, there are ways of changing either the relation or the government. The importance of history, from this point of view, is in its record of the remedies men have found god successfully applied to their problems. But before a remedy—or rather, the *right* remedy—can be applied, the problem must be understood. And this is precisely where we fail—in understanding the problem.

There are of course a lot of particular explanations for the anxieties of the modern world. It is characteristic of them, however, that they all need other explanations, and so on, until we are obliged to admit that the particular, or scientific, approach to the problem of general anxiety is not very satisfactory. It might be better, as we propose here, to attempt a *general* explanation, and then see what can be done with it.

Our anxieties may spring, for example, from a bad relation with life. The man who grossly misconceives his existence will inevitably find fault with nearly everything that happens to him. Often such people spend most of their energies in a

fruitless struggle to alter the circumstances which surround them, but since the trouble is with themselves, and not in the circumstances, no change can ever help them, so that their frustration and anxiety become chronic—their "natural" condition. When this happens, normal constructive processes seem to be quite useless. Patriots cannot help men who are their own enemies. Revolutionists cannot lead forward men who are already in flight. Educators cannot instill the spirit of discovery in those whose chief interest is to find a place to hide.

The terrible thing about a bad relation with life is that it distorts every prospect and shrivels every hope. Anxiety is a form of fear, and fear brings a paralysis of the organs of discovery and invention. The anxious man has no time for the search for truth. He wants first to feel "safe," and he insists upon defining safety in the terms which promise an antidote to his anxiety. The motives of anxiety are like a counterfeit currency to which Gresham's law applies. The motives of a good relation to life are not recognized in the presence of anxiety. They are the signs of a forgotten love which no longer stirs the heart.

The remedy, then, for anxiety is most difficult to prescribe. Perhaps the ill must run its course, which means that the "painful uneasiness" will increase until some deeper response than flight is evoked from the psyche—either a response of self-defense or a response of self-respect. Both these responses are possible, since we are human beings.

In these terms, anxiety becomes simply a special case of the problem of pain, or, as Buddha named it, Sorrow.

Now Buddha, as we know, differed radically from both religious and political reformers of the West in his solution for human sorrow. The

religious teachers of the West assigned man's woes to a bad relation to God, and peace of mind and happiness were to result from a correction in that relation, which had been awry ever since the Original Sin. The political reformers, on the other hand, set out to change man's relation to his environment, and this was to be accomplished chiefly by changing the environment, in its several aspects of political, social, and economic.

Buddha had no teaching about God, and he said little or nothing about changing the environment. In fact, until quite recently the teachings of Buddha attracted little attention in the West for precisely these reasons. Buddha's neglect of God is inexcusable to Fundamentalist Christians, and his apparent disregard of socio-political arrangements made him seem "naïve" to the political reformers.

Today, however, Buddha's essentially psychological diagnosis of human sorrow is gaining attention in the West, mostly for the reason that every conceivable "relationship with God" has now been tried, in terms of one or another of the theologies evolved by sectarian Christianity, and because we have come practically full circle in the round of experiments in political economy. Here, however, we plan no capsule exposition of Buddha's teachings, which are easily available. Our present point is that Buddha contended that pain and sorrow result from a bad relation *directly with life*. What we feel and suffer in experience is not dealt us by a god who judges our merit and rewards or punishes accordingly: what we feel and suffer is the reaction of life itself. We are paid in our own coin. An ignominious fate is the outcome of ignoble behavior. If we feel contempt for life in any of its forms, instead of the reverence that we might have shown, life jeers back with an endless series of ugly dilemmas.

To speak of an "approach to life" is to risk sounding both pompous and tiresome, yet how else would you speak of it? Some species of jargon might be less offensive to sophisticated

minds, yet this very wariness of the sophisticated in respect to basic conviction may be a leading symptom of the disease which afflicts us.

As a matter of fact, we are forever putting off a serious examination of our "approach to life." A simpler form of the inquiry would be to say: "What do you want?" Everybody understands this question, yet few men undertake to answer it for themselves. In gladsome days of security and prosperity, it is generally assumed that men long ago found the right answer. The social institutions of the day have codified all the "right" replies and properly spaced the mechanisms available for giving us "what we want" throughout a long assembly line of practical arrangements. In times of anxiety, the very thought that the answers we have been relying on may be wrong is enough to frighten most men from making the inquiry more than halfheartedly.

Our world is a highly complicated, organized world, with both first- and second-degree anxieties and frustrations to offer. The first-degree frustrations come in the struggle to play the game of life according to existing institutions. In simple terms, the ideal course is from rags to riches, from bootblack to millionaire, while any loyal American boy can hope to become President. For the man working his way along this course, all the old-line virtues are a spur. He is happily able to believe in the institutional slogans of his time and he has a relative immunity to the deceptions and hypocrisies which dishearten more worldly-wise types.

The man confronted by problems of the first degree understands and prizes the "challenge" of human life according to rules which he has inherited from his forefathers. If anyone questions the rules, he becomes indignant. Let those who don't like the rules, he says, go elsewhere. To question the rules is to question the meaning and validity of his life, to intimate that his ends and motives may be futile or unworthy. But if the rules *are* inadequate, and if, for example, the noisiest advocates of the rules he has been taught

to admire turn out to be people like Senator McCarthy, then a new kind of anxiety, followed by dreaded confusion, may supervene. Then comes the horrid suspicion that the *system* has gone bad. This is an agonizing thought to men who, until now, have been able to trust the system.

This is the kind of disillusionment which threatens large numbers of people, and has already made many miserable.

The second-degree frustrations and anxieties belong to the men who try to understand the meaning of life, independent of institutional solutions, while at the same time meeting the practical problems of the first course. These are the "intellectuals," of whom it may be said that they attempt to live life first-hand.

Manifestly, the situation for both groups is enormously complicated by dishonesty in low and high places, by demagogery, and by multiple compromises. It is easy to see why a strong nihilist current appears periodically at times of unrest and revolution. Simply to contemplate the complexity of an institutionalized society, with its pretended answers and pseudo-wisdom and its cosmetic versions of the good life is enough to explain the fury of those who, upon discovering this psychological maze, are ready to do almost anything for a chance at a new beginning.

But we have had our nihilist revolutions, our "new" beginnings. We have had both "individualist" and "herd" theories of human excellence. We have had both belief and unbelief. What we haven't had is a view in which life is an end in itself—in which it is lived without an ulterior motive.

It is an old story that the philosophers want all men to learn to be philosophers—a story that has had many vigorous retorts, yet, as we read the record, no one has ever proved the philosophers wrong. We are indebted to Dr. Raymond Adams, professor of English at the University of North Carolina, for some quotations from Dante's

Convivio, in which the role of the philosopher is defined, and which we now borrow as a text for what remains to be said in this article. The quotations are taken from Adams' Phi Beta Kappa Banquet Address at Chapel Hill, in May of last year. They are all from the third book of the *Convivio*:

We are not to call any man a real philosopher who is friendly with wisdom in some direction because of some certain delight; as are many who delight in composing odes, giving their zeal thereto and who delight in the zealous study of rhetoric and music, but who flee and desert the other sciences, all of which are members of wisdom. . . .

We are not to call him a real philosopher who is a friend of wisdom for profit, as are lawyers, physicians, and almost all the members of the religious orders, who do not study in order to know, but in order to get money or office; and if anyone would give them that which it is their purpose to acquire they would linger over their study no longer. . . .

Philosophy considered in itself, apart from the soul, has as its subject understanding, and as its form an almost divine love of the thing understood. . . . The goal of philosophy is that most excellent delight which suffers no interruption nor defect, to wit the true blessedness which is gained by the contemplation of the truth. And thus it may be perceived who this my lady now is, in all her causes and in her constituent principle, and why she is called philosophy, and who is the true philosopher and who is the philosopher incidentally. . . .

The wisdom that seems quick and penetrating from this reading of Dante is the conclusion that no man should settle for a life that is less than the life of a philosopher. We say this on the ground that whatever is bought with the currency of thought that is less than philosophy, turns, in the end, into the nameless anxiety which afflicts the modern world.

Philosophy, in the sense Dante gives it, is the only good relation that a man can have with the flow of life. What happens, for example, to a society in which the most intelligent men "do not study in order to know, but in order to get money or office"? We have such a society.

We can think of no more terrible indictment of modern society than a special publication entitled *Harvard 1956* issued by the editors of *i.e., The Cambridge Review*. Here is a hundred-page paper-bound book written by four undergraduates of Harvard, in which America's "greatest university" is tried and found woefully wanting, according to Dante's standards. But let us not mistake: Harvard has not put its stamp upon America. Rather America has put its stamp upon Harvard. It is ironic, if altogether natural, that these four young men have probably done more real thinking and philosophizing during the past year than the entire Harvard faculty. And it is ironic, if natural, that Harvard will probably be the last to admit it. We can supply only a brief sampling of the work of these men—urging, meanwhile, that readers send 35 cents to *i.e.* (P.O. Box 145, Cambridge 38, Mass.) for their own copies.

The section on "The Undergraduate" begins:

The Harvard undergraduates' most striking characteristic is their inability to define any clear attitudes toward each other. This is a baffling situation. You have a community that cannot in any philosophic sense be called happy, which suffers terribly from doubts about almost everything it does, and yet in which no one speaks out. The existing situation is never described or discussed. Undergraduates rarely speak to each other. They confuse directness with confession and shoulder-weeping. For one reason or another they find it impossible to criticize each other face to face, though at the same time a good part of them gossip endlessly behind each other's backs. Similarly the undergraduate lacks any general attitude toward Harvard and toward what he is doing at Harvard. In discussing the University, he will always talk of budgets, of the great problems of expansion—everybody at Harvard talks like an overseer. When we asked one undergraduate to write up his thoughts about Harvard, or rather when he volunteered to do so and we accepted, we got a manuscript which we all mistook for a long quotation from one of the University's bulletins. The doublethink and newsspeak of Orwell's *1984* seemed to have taken over the writer's mind—as we said, we mistook it for some official announcement about the aims of Harvard College. It typified the acceptance of an

unfelt intellectual superstructure which crushes the thought of the great majority of students as soon as they are asked to say what they really feel.

One key to this monstrous inhibition lies in the actual aims of the University. Harvard cultivates vanity of the worst kind: the exhibitionistic gratification of prestige. Harvard does not cultivate a respect for the intellect, *veritas* is at best a minor interest. The students exercise their sensitivities on primarily social distinctions. They do not attend to the real community of problems which is theirs. Somehow the youth of this generation has sold out to the material world very early; as soon as possible the undergraduate becomes an official "realist," and thus "matures." This means keeping the mouth shut tight. (*Life* called us the silent generation.) Official realism means accepting the fact that things are the way they are the way they are, etc., and that only the neurotic and immature could protest or even dream of any improvement. This phony realism and fake maturity is a simple introjection of the nonsense that adults are always feeding their children. They always tell their children they are wrong and that when they grow up they will change. The poor children soon begin to want to grow up, to want to be old as possible as quickly as possible. For young men, our group at Harvard is singularly anxious to prove that they are no longer youthful. This tragic rejection of the chief jewel in their crown denies at once their power and the natural capacity for enjoyment and spontaneous action. All this potential grace and zest is pathetically stymied: look at the over-formal dress, the impossible put-on accents which prevent simple expression of feeling, which make modulation and smoothingness, sympathy and encouragement, and for that matter insult, impossible. Look at the wanton judging of others that passes under the veil of outwardly harmless, that is "objective," gossip, the destructive wishes that are merely reined in, without eve' being exhausted. Look at the unacknowledged rivalry that lives parasitically alongside most undergraduate friendships. Look at the armed peace that is maintained everywhere. There are very few friendships, just as there are very few gentle love affairs—but there are plenty of roommates and plenty of marriages. In theory this kind of academy ought to help emotion to free itself; more often the institution impedes this process. It may be that youth, when it revolts against its environment, is revolting against this institutional denial of the lithe, natural movement of thought and feeling. The striking thing about the undergraduate at Harvard is his acceptance of those very institutions, which is the logical result of his

accepting his elders, who are for the most part corrupt compromisers.

The quality of the analysis in these commentaries protects their authors from the cheap judgment that they are disgruntled students who did not become "popular," or some silly thing like that. The writing may be uneven, here and there; the spelling may slightly disturb; but the thinking is alive. It is the kind of thinking Dante had in mind when he spoke of studying in order to know. It is the kind of thinking which is so rare that, when you come upon it, you at once recognize it as revolutionary. And it is one of the few symptoms in America of people who are trying to establish a direct relation with life—who are not living in order to get rich or achieve status or win a wet or go to heaven. It is thinking without anxiety and in the act of vanquishing frustration.

It is our contention, here, that what in Dante's time was a deplorable pretense on the part of scholars and professional men has now become a psychological disease which has been given hospitable quarters in our minds while it steals the blood of our hopes for nourishment. This is no longer only a philosophical issue, but an issue of social and psychological health, possibly or ultimately of actual survival. The questions—What is our relation with life? What do we want?—are becoming matters of life and death.

REVIEW NOTES ON NOVELS

IT'S tough to be forced into psychological maturity, and the instruction provided by war gives encouragement to all the cynics of the world; but a surprising number of modern novels suggest that the legendary hero-in-the-making, beset by demons, is often an Ordinary Joe of the twentieth century. The leading characters in two popular novels, Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and Joe David Brown's *Kings Go Forth*, are unpretentiously outstanding. At least, as with Ulysses, bravery and integrity are accompanied by sensibility, confusion, and despair. Both were participants in the battles of the last war, and both become "professional" as soldiers because they accepted the Nemesis which placed them in their respective positions.

Tom Rath has difficulty, when back in his gray flannel suit, in forgetting that he had killed seventeen human beings; some of the faces were too easy to remember. Nor does the new kind of peacetime professionalism he must learn—if he is to have a larger family and bigger home—seem much better. In or out of uniform, the "system" doesn't encourage Rath to think for himself.

Discussing his new job with his wife, Rath indicates what may be the price of his "success." He explains how a well-advised young executive will react to a first draft of a speech for the boss:

Tom laughed again. "There's a standard operating procedure for this sort of thing," he said. "It's a little like reading fortunes. You make a lot of highly qualified contradictory statements and keep your eyes on the man's face to see which ones please him. That way you can feel your way along, and if you're clever, you can always end up by telling him exactly what he wants to hear."

"Is that what they do?" Betsy asked. She didn't laugh.

"That's what they do. For instance, I'll begin by saying, 'I think there are some *wonderful* things about this speech. . . .' If Hopkins seems pleased, I'll finish the sentence by saying, 'and I have only the most minor improvements to suggest.' But if he seems a

little surprised at the word *wonderful*, I'll end the sentence with, 'but as a whole, I don't think it comes off at all, and I think major revisions are necessary.'

"Is that what you're going to do?" Betsy asked. She wasn't even smiling.

"As I say, its standard operating procedure," Tom replied. "The first thing the young executive must learn."

"I think it's a little sickening," Betsy said bluntly.

"Damn it, have a sense of humor. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing's the matter with me. I'm just interested in knowing the answers to a few questions. What do you really think of that speech?"

"I think it's terrible," Tom said. "My business education, you see, is not complete. In a few years I'll be able to suspend judgment entirely until I learn what Hopkins thinks, and then I'll really and truly feel the way he does. That way I won't have to be dishonest any more."

In a short burst of free verse, Mr. Brown indicates in *Kings Go Forth* why it is that "the professionals" come out best in wartime:

Things go better when,
Finally,
Men learn that it is only a trade
(A stinking, filthy trade)
And learn to use their tools
And avoid
The occupational disease.
But before the pros take over
The best
And the worst
Have to go.
They go quickly
And, oddly, it always seemed to me,
At about the same rate;
The best
Because they were the bravest;
The worst
Because they were not quick.
The longer a man fights
The shorter his odds,
And he knows he has to be efficient.
An efficient workman is the best workman.
You learn to mistrust volunteers
In the Army
And men who are fighting another war
Within themselves.

Sam's commanding officer sees behind his lieutenant's tough façade. Sam wants to remain sensitive and hates the fact that he must fight against it to "get the job done."

You're a hard man, Sam.

I didn't say anything.

He looked at me seriously.—You're a first-rate officer, Sam. If you weren't so tough, you'd be a great officer. The rest of the men just think you're tough and let it go at that. I know better. I found it out that time we lost O'Hara. We were sitting there in the ditch beside him and I suddenly realized you were furious at him. You hated his guts, Sam, because he got killed. I understood you then. My father was like that. He was regular Army, all his life, but the only time he ever barked at my mother or us kids was when we got sick. I was grown before I realized that was just his reaction when he found himself helpless—when he met up with something he couldn't cope with.

—That's the way you are, Sam. You didn't start the war. You can't chip off a little piece of yourself every time a man gets killed or wounded. You can't bleed for all of them. Don't be too hard on them when they worry you. No matter how much military training a man has had, he's still an amateur until he gets shot at a few times. They've all got to learn. It's not your fault if some of them get killed in the process. Just be glad they keep coming. These kids we get—tramping through mine fields and getting their tails blown off—they're our greatest asset. Did you know that? An army's just as good as the reinforcements it gets from home. As long as we get healthy, eager-beaver kids we don't have to worry. Once we start getting men who are too smart, or too civilized, or who are afraid—well, then, we can fold up and go home. We burn up these kids fast, but that's what keeps us locomoting.

The problem for both Tom Rath and Sam, the lieutenant, is that they are "too smart, too civilized." And, we are happy to say, for the sake of those who are tired of having their heroes die in degradation, that both of them struggle through with honesty and integrity intact. The point of bracketing these novels, aside from the fact that they are better than average, lies in the comparison of war in war with war in business. It might even be said that some kinds of integrity are

easier to come by when the issue is that of physical combat. The preservation of courage and honesty in peacetime requires a more complicated philosophy.

COMMENTARY PHILOSOPHY OF YOUTH

TO speak of a "philosophy of youth" is probably a mistake, since truth cannot possibly alter in any significant way with age-groups. If it did, there could be no communication between young and old, and without communication between young and old, education becomes impossible.

On the other hand, it is certain that the activities of youth differ substantially from the activities of age, so that a common principle of wisdom will find widely differing applications within the gamut of a lifetime. It follows, then, that a view of life which causes the young to ape the emasculated attitudes of their elders is a philosophy for neither young nor old, and is distorting to the life of both.

But a philosophy which has a "program" for different ages would be even worse. The truth of philosophy lies in general ideas, and wisdom consists in the capacity to relate them to human experience. When anyone attempts to establish this relation for another, he makes philosophy sectarian and deprives that other of the opportunity to make philosophical discoveries for himself.

Not many men are successful in becoming philosophers. The majority look back upon their lives with feelings of guilt, regret, and the sense of having compromised. Self-justification, therefore, becomes the principal drive of the majority in education, with the expectancy of guilt, regret, and compromise in regard to the young. This is a terrible thing to do to the young, for they are left without an example of wisdom in action—even a wisdom which is different from their own, or what might become their own.

"Maturity," in these terms, gains its only acceptable definition from the conditions of moral failure, and youth, feeling the deception, and being unable to cope with it, may resort either to anarchic rebellion, to two-faced conformity, or to mere lethargy.

This is how one generation corrupts and disarms the next. It is a process, as the young men at Harvard have discovered, which always proceeds in secret, its phenomena being given a series of misleading labels which perpetuate the secrecy and the sham.

How can this vicious cycle be broken? Only, we think, by young men and women who obtain, somewhere, somehow, the capacity to think honestly for both generations, and so establish a new relationship between them. Socrates tried to induct a generation of youth into responsibilities of this sort, and was murdered by the State for his pains.

What, in our own time, can educators do to help bring genuine awakening? They can, initially, concede that without original discovery by the young, there is no wisdom possible for the young. They can admit that unless the old labor to create conditions under which original discovery is both possible and encouraged, the maturity of the old is forced and artificial, their wisdom a pose and a fraud.

Wisdom is the usufruct of unmediated transactions with the flow of life. Philosophy is deliberation concerned with safeguarding those transactions. All else is mere preparation, mere confirmation.

This is the test of education. It is also the test of love. What good is a love which refuses to risk exposure when the integrity of youth is at stake?

Failure is never intolerable unless it is complete, and it is complete only when the failure is kept hidden.

A philosophy which throws no gentle and friendly light on failure is a philosophy of hate for man. This is the kind of a philosophy we have, for in nothing that we do is there the energy we spend in hiding our failure and keeping its dark secret from the young.

We have only to tell them the truth to stop being failures.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THERE are times, we think, when the knowledgeable and busy parent of the twentieth century should stop being so knowledgeable and busy himself with the vaguest of projects—that of wondering and philosophizing over just what quality in life is really the most worth attaining. Only those of "impractical" bent, of course, will want to give such an inquiry the protracted expenditure of energy it needs; and one soon learns that any account or version of primary human values is good only for a time. Words such as "honesty," "strength," "devotion," or, in more current expression, "capacity to love," may mirror profound insights into what we idealize, but a word or phrase can reflect only a limited range of insight. We can tie the whole of a philosophy or a religion to any of these ideas, but the knot loosens when some other term seems more truly representative of the highest quality of soul. However, in the process of pursuing such thinking, we nevertheless learn a good deal and are apt, somewhere along the way, to leave seeds of thought which may fructify in the minds of the young.

At the moment, we should like to explore the meanings of the word "poise," not alone because few have fastened upon it as an ultimate expression, but also because it seems to suggest some meeting ground between the ethical and the esthetic. No one will argue, we think, that poise is not a necessary element or accompaniment of physical beauty. Not the face or form, but how these are worn and carried, makes beauty unforgettable. Poise implies strength, suggests conservation and control of energy. We sense that one who is poised is ready for life in any of its aspects. The man of poise is also the man able to perceive—and if necessary to dispense—justice. His mind, like the balance point of a scale, rests "poised" in impartiality. The man of complete poise is the great man, because he is able to stand

in the midst of strife without himself becoming a part of it. Whether the scene be a battlefield or a forum where great issues are decided, he, we say, "keeps his head" while others fall into confusion.

The tranquility of the sage—what is this but poise? And if we imagine that the sage must be either so venerable or so ethereal that all passion has long ago been spent, we should remember that revered examples of man's spiritual life have sometimes been young and vigorous. Not spent passion, but passion controlled, harnessed and used—this is another aspect of poise. Among those we know, we see something of the value of poise in the man who can keep his temper—who, much more important than this, has achieved so fine a balance in his own nature that he will never harbor hostility toward any living being. Such a man faces and knows himself, and, being no longer frightened by what he himself is, feels no need to punish others for tendencies distrusted in himself.

So "poise" is a great thing. If we were to understand this quality well enough, we might also understand how to get more of it, and be able to pass on the atmosphere of poise to our children—which is often pretty close to being all we can pass on to them, anyway.

What are the ingredients of poise? Well, this is a big subject. We may have a half-way explanation when we say, as some people still do, that "a man must have a philosophy of life." While "a philosophy," in this sense, all too often means a predetermined set of rules and values, there is no doubt that the calm man is the one whose decisions flow with some kind of rational continuity. Perhaps we don't need and shouldn't have rules and predetermined values, but it is impossible to have an affirmative attitude toward distressing experience unless we can relate what is happening to us with a conviction that we are learning and growing. Religion is not adequate, on the whole, to provide a sense of growth, for orthodoxy demands simple compliance rather than thinking.

One is not apt to gain an affirmative attitude toward distressing experience without taking the time for quiet thought, and this is why we are bound to associate the Sage with contemplation and meditation. We all have to fight ourselves—not so much, perhaps, in terms of the "base instincts" the religionists have always worried about, but in terms of inadequate and immature attitudes—and this sort of fighting must be done in solitude. A parent who perseveres in contemplation, regarding its practice as a primary obligation, will gain in poise, and his children may learn to prize the quality from observing its presence.

There is much in Eastern thought which associates itself quite easily with contemplation. Take for instance the assertion, found alike in the *Upanishads*, the *BhagavadGita*, and the *Dhammapada*, that the fundamental law of human learning is the Law of Cycles. Periodicity, according to these profound texts, is universal. The time-cycles into which Hindu chronology divided the experience of the human race—the yugas and manvantaras, the kalpas and the cycles of individual rebirth—are all integral to the view that man should never feel himself lost in *any* single cycle, since he is destined to last through them all. Many heartaches are, on this view, outgrowths of the particular age in which one happens to live. Each form of suffering bestows its gift, for, ultimately, everyone must learn everything. The time in which one lives is not oneself, and, knowing this, the wise man always stands "poised" above the things which happen to him at any particular point of time.

We can go a long way with this "doctrine of cycles." Another aid to the development of poise is the compassion of true tolerance, and this, in turn, is encouraged by the thought that *each man is in his own cycle*. What we expect of ourselves is not what we may expect of any other living being, for we do not possess the measurements for the cycle which is presently his, and could judge him only if we did. He, and we, will each take

care of our own problems, as Emerson insisted in his Essay on Compensation; reward and punishment are inherent in the quality of motivation which inspires every thought and act. We initiate "cycles" every moment of our lives, throwing out lines of causation in every direction, and draw to our personal periphery the people, ideas and events with which our motivations have affinity. As Buddha said, "Ye suffer from yourselves; none else compels." So, if suffering is great, the suffering is simply a facet of our own inadequate personality. Knowing this, says Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the wise man does not grieve. All events are the same to him.

And all human learning is cyclical. Seldom do we learn anything from first contact with experience. We see one face or side of an experience, idea, or person. But we come to *know* only through repeated contact. The wise man is poised, not because he is sure he knows everything, but because he is sure he doesn't. Nor is he unhappy in the conviction that he never will know *everything*—that each wonderful attempt, however bright and shining, will in time reveal its imperfections.

Time out, then, from Gesell. The parent who from time to time loses himself in the vastness of life, who star-gazes or reads philosophy, may be preparing a precious gift for his children—the gift of living with a person whose cycles of thought are too far-reaching to permit utter dismay from *any* cause.

FRONTIERS Theories of Soul

A GERMAN reader and an occasional contributor to these pages, Heinz Kraschutzki, of Berlin, writes to comment on the article, "Is a Life after Death Possible?", by Prof. C. J. Ducasse, which appeared in MANAS for April 21. This article, readers may remember, considered the possibility of immortality by means of cyclic rebirth, or reincarnation, and we have since received much appreciative comment on it. Mr. Kraschutzki found it impressive and was stimulated to continue the discussion. His contribution appears below.

* * *

I will first tell you of an observation which can be found in a German book, *Der Atem Indiens (The Breath of India)*, by Hans Hasso von Veltheim Ostrau. I compress the report a little.

On Jan. 17, 1944, a girl called Shanti Devi was born at New Delhi. When at the age of learning to speak, her parents tried to teach her what her name was, she soon began to insist that her real name was Anned, and that she lived at Muttra, being the wife of a man called Ahmed Lugdi.

The parents were worried by this, as Ahmed is a Muslim name, and they were Hindus. By the age of seven the girl could describe exactly the rite of a Muslim ceremony, though she had never seen it. The parents accused her of lying and finally called a Brahmin to their help. This man was soon convinced that Shanti was not a liar. He brought in some professors of the universities of Delhi and Benares and the girl were thoroughly observed and interrogated. It became evident that she knew all about the man Ahmed Lugdi. Finally, Ahmed Lugdi was called to New Delhi, from his home in Muttra. Sitting in a room together with fifteen other persons, he waited for Shanti, who, when led into the room, immediately went to him and said she knew him, and that he had been her husband. Ahmed, a man of fifty, nearly fainted, as

he thought he heard the voice of his late wife, who had died on Oct. 25, 1928.

A long conversation between the two followed, about things which only two people who knew each other intimately could speak of. All those present were deeply impressed.

Ahmed went home. Shanti was later brought to Muttra and led to a square and then asked to find her former house. She did so, and on her way spoke to several people who had been living there in 1928 and whose names she remembered. She also met her father-in-law, going with him into his house, where she knew every corner.

It is really remarkable how similar the case of Shanti Devi is in many details to that of Katsugoro, the Japanese boy described by Lafcadio Hearn, and referred to by Dr. Ducasse.

A few days after having read the two reports, I had the chance to observe another case myself.

I spent an evening in the house of a friend of mine, quite near my home, in company with twenty-five people. There I met a girl of whom I had already heard. Her name is Julia Oswald, a typical German name, but her countenance is Indian. She has worn a sari since several years. She performed Indian dances with absolute perfection, and as I myself have been in India, I can say that the dances were authentic. Several of her dances were accompanied by singing, one in Urdu, one in Bengali, and one in Singhalese. Indian music is entirely different from our music—the intervals between the tones are smaller, as there are twelve tones of the "octave" instead of eight. This is why Indian music sounds very strange to us, but I remember very well having heard it in India. It is very difficult for a foreigner to learn Indian music, but Julia Oswald knew it perfectly.

Here is her story: She has never been in India, in this life. But at the age of six years, she began to learn Urdu; later she studied Hindi, Singhalese, Bengali, speaking all these languages, as well as English, fluently. She also knows a little Mahratti

and Gujarati. Then she learned the Indian way to dance, and was subsequently examined here in Berlin by a famous Indian dancer, so that she now has a diploma as a temple dancer. The Indian dancer has said that a talent such as Julia's is very rare, even in India. There are only about ten women in India who have an equal skill. Last year Indian dancers from the Bombay opera performed every evening in Berlin (East). Julia fell in love with one of the best Indian dancers, and is going to marry him and will perform with him in India. He is from Ceylon, speaking Singhalese, but of the old Veddah race. She is waiting now for her visa to go to India.

Having been in India and having a keen interest in the Indian way of life, I talked all evening with her and her mother. She knows much more about India than myself, although she was never there. I said to her mother that the only explanation for all this—for a girl beginning to learn Urdu at the age of six—was that in a former life she had been in India. Her mother replied that she had never doubted it.

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Mr. Kraschutzki closes his communication with a suggestion that, quite conceivably, has a bearing on other puzzles, such as, for example, the matter of Bridey Murphy. He writes:

As far as I know, the ancient Indian assumption is that spiritual qualities, like material elements, are immortal, but that a man's spirit at his death dissolves, the same as his body. The spiritual elements later may form a new mixture and join with the body of a newly born child. But as the spirit of that child is composed of elements derived from more than one human being, the child will not, generally, remember the previous life. It may be that such cases as that Japanese boy, the girl Shanti, or this girl here in Berlin, Julia Oswald, are exceptions, where all spiritual elements come from one single person, and that this enables them to remember the previous life.

This is an idea that just came to me, but much can be said against it and I am anything but an expert.

We cannot pose as authorities, but it is our

impression that the term immortality may be properly applied to the higher or "spiritual" qualities, but not to matter, which may be said to be "indestructible." Fundamental to these considerations is the problem of *memory*, of which, indeed, we know very little. Years ago, a writer in the *Proceedings* of the London Society for Psychical Research (1927, XXVI, 393-413), G. W. Lambert, called attention to the importance of "making a theory of human personality the groundwork of . . . theories of survival," and Mr. Lambert found the ideas of Plotinus, the Greek Neoplatonist of the third century, of value in this respect. Lambert wrote as a Spiritualist, discussing the significance of information obtained in a séance from a communicating agency which could reproduce the "characteristic mannerisms of speech" of a deceased person. "Plotinus," Lambert says, "would never have accepted these as proof of the survival of more than the body-subconscious soul 'compound,' in which habits of all kinds are registered. They would not necessarily prove the continued activity of the 'higher soul'."

Here, quite possibly, is an explanation of the extremely low-grade material which emerges in the guise of "spiritual" communications, making investigations of this sort rather ridiculous, from a philosophical point of view. "Ghosts," as C. E. M. Joad remarked some years ago, after a fruitless foray into Spiritualistic methods of inquiry, "may have souls, but they certainly have no brains!"

At any rate, we are grateful to Mr. Lambert for suggesting Plotinus as a source of suggestion on this subject. Plotinus, we find, after some reading in the *Enneads*, was of the view that there are at least two "souls," a higher and a lower sort, and each soul has memories appropriate to its nature. Thus, as Lambert says, the production of mere personal idiosyncrasies, reminiscent of the deceased, by a medium would never be taken by Plotinus as evidence that the medium is "in touch" with the *spirit*: Such phenomena would mean only that the medium has some kind of contact with the

grosser *psyche* left behind by the soul in its progressive liberation from earthly affairs. Perhaps we had better quote Plotinus directly:

To which soul, however, does memory belong? To the soul whose nature is more divine, and which constitutes us more essentially, or to the soul that we receive from the universal soul [the rational and irrational souls]? Memory belongs to both; but in one case it is general, and in the other particular. When both souls are united, they together possess both kinds of memory; if they both remain separate each remembers what concerns herself and remembers less long what concerns the other. That is the reason people talk of the image of Hercules being in the hells. Now this image remembers all the deeds committed in this life; for this life particularly falls to her lot. The other souls [by uniting within themselves the rational part to the irrational] together possess both kinds of memory. They yet cannot remember anything but the things that concern this life, and which they have known here below, or even the actions which have some relation with justice.

Plotinus, we see, was no sentimentalist, longing for easy "proofs" of immortality. The best evidence, for the Spiritualists, and for the Bridey Murphy enthusiasts, would very likely turn out to be the worst, according to Plotinus. A lot of detail about a former life on earth would for Plotinus be no more than a mechanical recital made by the irrational soul—concerned, moreover, with matters to which the real soul gives little heed.

Hercules, in the above passage, is the type of a human being. Hercules in hell is but an image a simulacrum, but a simulacrum with memory. Hercules in heaven is another fragmentary Hercules, still not the true man—"Hercules [in heaven] may well vaunt his valor; but even this valor seems to him trifling when he has arrived at a region still holier than heaven, when he dwells in the intelligible world, when he has risen over Hercules himself by the force manifested in those struggles which are characteristic of veritable sages."

Memory, then, is a source of confusion, as well as of "evidence," in problems like these. A

Bridey Murphy memory could be some kind of record read off the sensitive material of an old psychic "image" by the subject of a hypnotic trance. Even a Shanti Devi could be taken possession of by a constellation of psycho-physical memories, and make accurate report of events in a supposed former life, without having herself *been* the actual person who accumulated those memories. This is at least a possibility for those who choose to follow the guidance of Plotinus. And Plotinus is attractive by reason of the elevation of his thought and his high regard for the dignity and quality of what he terms the *rational soul*. A self-respecting "rational soul" would never let itself waste time at a seance, nor dabble in hypnotic demonstrations which prevent rational activity. The rational soul has more important things to do.