

## WHAT IS HAPPENING TO MAN?

THIS question has important meaning only if we take it to indicate the possibility that what is happening is caused, at least in part, by a factor that is unknown or unsuspected, and left out, therefore, of ordinary discussions and explanations of current events. Suppose, for example, that a process of evolution not provided for in the theories of the evolutionists is affecting human attitudes and therefore human affairs. This possibility, while difficult to support, and probably impossible to demonstrate, is nevertheless not unreasonable.

It is in fact so reasonable that a rather impressive array of scientists have voiced speculations pointing in this direction. In 1936, Julian Huxley, England's most eminent zoologist, proposed that "man's so-called super-normal or extra-sensory faculties are in the same case as were his mathematical faculties during the Ice Age." Then, in 1949, Prof. A. C. Hardy, of Oxford, then president of the zoological section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, suggested that our ideas of evolution may have to be altered to allow for the facts of telepathic or extra-sensory forms of cognition. Addressing the annual meeting of the British Association, he declared that no unbiased mind could reject the evidence for telepathy, and added:

If telepathy has been established, and I believe it has, then such a revolutionary discovery should make us keep our minds open to the possibility that there may be much more in living things and their evolution than our science has hitherto led us to suspect.

These quotations promise a somewhat spooky thesis to be developed, here, but we have no intention of following this lead. The value of the quotations is rather in their plain stipulation that radical changes in the lines of human development are well within the realm of

possibility—scientific possibility—and in the suggestion that it may be necessary to adopt a broader view of the evolutionary processes affecting the human species. It is at least conceivable, for example, that deepening ethical perception is playing a part in current history, although without there being much awareness of the change.

There are, however, what might be taken as symptoms of such an awareness. In his unusual book, *The Republic and the Person*, Gordon Chalmers calls attention to the moral awakening which followed World War II:

What we said in the Broadway plays of World War II and the films that followed them, what we said in the editorials and from the pulpits, was that the evils of dictatorship are everywhere implicit in men's thoughts; that they have blazed forth time and again to consume the urbane and the civilized; that because of them fascism and nazism were putting out the lights in the capitals of Europe. No mammoth searching of the soul is performed to perfection, but this confession and self-review was well-supported in this country. We need not boast of it, except to remark that it was better expressed and better received than might have been thought possible.

There had been earlier soul-searchings that followed World War I, with effects that were probably more manifest in Europe, where the war was fought, than in the United States. At about the middle of World War II—the middle for the European contestants—Raoul de Roussy de Sales pointed out that the repugnance felt for war by the French and by other West European peoples had so weakened the strength of these countries that it was a question whether they could ever again be successful in war. He wrote for the *Atlantic Monthly* (January, 1942):

What may turn out to be the most important and characteristic trait of the times we live in is the existence of a universal and deeply rooted opposition to war. This sentiment is so general and so new in

some of its manifestations that it will take the perspective of history to analyze it fully and to appraise correctly its influence on the state of mind and on the behavior of the millions of men and women who are involved directly or indirectly in this war.

What de Sales was saying, in effect, is that if you plan to get into a major war, you had better remain barbarous and morally insensitive to human suffering. Otherwise, your moral ambivalence will betray you into defeat.

But if the world is sick of war, why does the present stand out without parallel as a time of belligerence? Why, if the horror and folly of war have at last become apparent, should we now be preparing for a war whose measureless destruction will blot out all memory of previous conflicts?

Only superficially does this trend seem to oppose the idea of an advance in the ethical perceptions of mankind. To regard it as a serious contradiction is to ignore the fact that much if not most of human behavior reflects conflicting motives; and ignores, also, the tremendous difference between national institutions and the actual human beings who live in more or less subjection to those institutions.

War, we might argue, represents one reaction to an evolutionary crisis for mankind. We might argue, further, that just as there have been biological "crises" in the evolution of animal species, after which either survival or extinction is the result, depending upon how the crises are met, so, for mankind, a crisis in psycho-moral evolution impends. A biological crisis involves the modification of a physical form, or its further development or elaboration, to meet new environmental conditions. But moral crisis involves changes in attitude and forms of *behavior*, to adapt successfully to changed conditions.

Or, to set the problem in another way: When primeval forms of animal life emerged from the ancient seas of our geologic past, they had to

evolve mechanisms for survival on the land; and creatures that sought to live in the air had to develop appropriate mechanisms for flying. Those that failed in such adaptations either died out or remained in their old environment.

War, on this view, and so far as man is concerned, may represent a kind of activity which has no survival value in the direction in which mankind is moving. The choice about war may represent a choice between survival in a higher life, or an atavistic relapse to barbarism (such as the science-fiction writers so often picture), or simple extinction.

The compulsions to war, however, are formidable. The war-making institutions—the State and the military apparatus—were developed during times when they seemed necessary, right, and good. They were brought into being as means of dealing with forces and powers too extensive for the individual to deal with by himself. But institutions, unlike individuals, do not think, nor do they have any moral insight or sensibility to change. It is an old story among military historians that military institutions never keep pace with even the necessities of war—that each war is fought with the weapons of the preceding struggle. Why, then, should we be surprised to find that the war-making institutions of our society remain indifferent to the widespread moral perception that war itself is outmoded?

Instead, we should expect, along with the evidences of moral perception, counter-trends of angry rejection of any proposal for a new way of life, and a sullen strengthening of the institutions of war. This is the atavistic current of motivation, fighting for the only life it knows, and gaining allies among all those who are more responsive to fear of the unknown and the unfamiliar than to the dream of progress.

The present circumstances, therefore, in world affairs, are precisely what might be expected from an evolutionary stimulus in the direction of a higher moral life for mankind.

It will be said, with considerable reason, that the idea of a higher life is really "nothing new," that the religions of antiquity and both Greek and Eastern philosophers have preached these ideals. This, while true, does not seriously affect our proposition, which is concerned more with a general evolutionary crisis than with the counsels of ancient sages. Or rather, we are proposing that the realizations which once belonged only to sages are now beginning to touch the mass of mankind.

One thing that is characteristic of the present, making it a period unique in human history, is the far-reaching scope of modern communications. Technology has given the world unity at the economic level, but communications are slowly making it one at the psychic level. There is a great difference between the oral teachings of wise men and spiritual reformers, offered from mouth to ear to their disciples, and the impact of ideas carried to the ends of the world in a matter of minutes. There is actually a sense in which a new moral awakening may be regarded as climactic to the political development of the past two or three hundred years. In ancient times, it was universally believed that true wisdom could be the possession of only a small, spiritual elite. Caste and hierarchy were regarded as representing the order of nature, and even the idea of equality played little or no part in the serious thought of man. Then, in the eighteenth century of European history, the ethic of equality, which is the ethic of the free individual, was born, bringing a whole constellation of values into being. Beyond the idea of equality, nothing especially new was added to the wisdom of the old philosophers—nothing, that is, except the fact that now the moral law might begin to have visible force. For in the realm of moral order, a law must be understood in order to have full effect.

Thus there is a sense in which the doctrine of equality was also the enactment of moral law, with a resulting "new" evolutionary situation.

The dilemma of modern war, quite possibly, is no more than the crude shell of the crisis that

has arrived with the possibility of new moral perception. Nobody talked very much about "human relations" a hundred years ago. Interest and striving concerned other matters. Today, however, the concentration of the best minds among us is upon the internal wonderings and problems of human beings. It is becoming possible, in short, to take a non-institutional view of ourselves, and a non-traditional view of what it means to be a man.

Freud and Marx are often bracketed as typifying the great intellectual revolutionists who transformed human opinions during the past century. The association seems a mistake. Marx, we might say, was the last of the great system- and institution-builders. He brought the epoch of institution-dominated society to a climax—to logical or rational completion—and in doing so began the cycle of final break-down of the institutional approach to human problems. Marx conceived of a world institution to embody universal economic and social justice. The Communist State is the ultimate institution, under which the symbolic whole is everything, the individual nothing. That is, the development of this State was a consequence of the movement begun by Marx. Actually, Marx was also a philosopher who believed that the State was only a tool, and he dreamed of the day when the tool could be abandoned, leaving mankind to lead a perfect life, unafflicted by coercive institutions. But he believed that the revolutionary institution of a political élite—the communists—could effect the transformation.

Freud's purpose was very different. He sought a simple objective, although it soon grew very complex. He wanted to disclose man to himself. He wanted to get man's inner life out of the shadow of institutional prejudices and dogmas and to examine it without fear or preconception. This was doubtless more than any one man could do within the span of a single lifetime, so that we can honor Freud for his effort and his intent, without complaining about his incomplete results.

In any event, Freud's ideal of a free individual—a self-understanding individual, that is—is entirely consistent with the political ideals which men have been trying to apply since the eighteenth century, and may even help us to turn those ideals into realities.

Psychoanalysis is certainly contributing to the more subtle phases of the contemporary crisis. In principle, psychoanalysis is the tracking down of motives in human life. The mature man is the man who embraces his motives deliberately, without self-deception. This means that the influence of institutions in the shaping of motives is reduced to an absolute minimum, if not eliminated. The mature man, as he matures, needs less and less help in coping with the world. Finally, he gets complete freedom from institutions. He is thus a man without fear and without frustrations. Paradoxically, he is ready for life because he is ready for death. No external event, in other words, can unseat his balance.

Now, this, of course, is what the old philosophers proposed to their disciples. This is the non-attached man of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. This is Lao Tze's sage, possessed of Tao. This is the true *Bhikku* of the *Dhammapada*. So, naturally enough, the students of psychotherapy, once they worked their way through the fog of old institutional delusions, have been coming out into the clear air of antique philosophy—with this difference, that the ideal of the sage, or, as we would say, the mature man, is now conceived as the goal for all men, and not for just the handful of spiritually enlightened.

It is a question, fundamentally, of what men must learn to do to fulfill their own natures.

The issue of ultimate importance is this: Why should we listen to these old philosophers, or to the contemporary thinkers who repeat them? What reason have we to think that the quiet resignation which they seem to advocate is anything more than a flight from the real world? Is there, in short, any *link* between these ancient counsels of perfection and the practical lessons of

human experience? What can be *proved* about all this?

We are, we think, at the merest beginning of a cycle of such proofs, but the demonstrations, as with everything that is worth having, are primarily subjective in origin and content.

A free rendition of the philosopher's contention might go like this: We are, as modern men, forever driven by the Furies to demonstrate that we *are*; that we have identity as individuals, and this we hope to prove by accomplishing works of distinction, which will make the impact of our presence felt. We want to *be*.

But the true being of our nature is independent of anything that can happen in time. The fury of our lives is in our lives, not in ourselves. What we do to throw ourselves up out of the chaos of non-identity only creates a temporary illusion of separate identity, and so we are continually pressed onward by the ceaseless pulse and current of desire to exist.

We are driven by our natures to do these things. We have uninstructed natures which insist upon learning from experience. The crisis comes when nature at large conspires to teach us what we need to learn. And this is the crisis we have been trying to write about here—for we seem to be on the verge of learning how futile are our wars, our self-assertions, our demonstrations of unique identity. In this crisis, we shall have to replace the desire to exist with the desire to know.

A book which seems to typify the synthesis of old philosophy with modern psychoanalytical insight has a passage illustrating the new vision of man. This book is *The Supreme Doctrine*, by Hubert Benoit, a French psychiatrist. Following is a passage from the epilogue:

What takes place in me when I discover a truth, when there appears to me suddenly a relation uniting intellectual elements until then separated? I see clearly that I have not fabricated this new truth with old material; I have not fabricated it, I have received it, it has appeared in my consciousness in a moment of inner relaxation. Whence has it come to me?

From a source within me, the source of all the organic and mental phenomena which constitute me, the Principle of which I am an individual manifestation, from the Principle which creates the whole Universe as it creates me. My truth has come to me from "something" universal. From the universal my truth has taken on, in my individual consciousness, a form, a limitation; it has "enformed" itself in my mind in accordance with my particular structure, in conformity with my personal style of thinking. In acquiring this form my truth has acquired the possibility of being conceived and expressed, but it has also acquired, beside the aspect which manifests the original Reality and which therefore is valid, the aspect which does not manifest Reality and which, in consequence, is valueless. The truth that I have expressed, insofar as it manifests Reality, is of a universal nature; it is, on the contrary, of an individual nature in so far as it does not manifest Reality and is valueless. In other words that which is valid, worthy of consideration, in the truth that I express does not belong to me-as-a-distinct-individual, and has not properly speaking any connexion with my particular person.

It may be difficult to imagine a modern scientist writing in this way, and yet the full discipline of a scientific background is evident in the writer's work, although he would be the last to term it "scientific," in the conventional sense of this term.

This, at any rate, is the sort of thinking that is beginning to affect the leading minds of the West. It may presage the awakening to a new life for man.

## REVIEW

### NOTES ON "SOPHISTICATED" NOVELS

ONE reason, perhaps, why publishers of fiction are forever looking for new authors is that first novels frequently turn out to be the best. As literary technique improves it becomes easier to write without really having anything to say, but, when a writer is not at all sure of his technique—and has not yet been accepted by his peers or the critics—he has to have a stubborn faith that what he writes is worth putting on paper.

Sophistication, of course, is not only a matter of technique. The Sophists of ancient Greece, from all accounts, were fellows well worth knowing—if only because they proved that one could argue any side of a question, no matter what the emotional state or the opinions of the debater. This was a good thing to prove, since until we recognize the natural human yearning for impartiality—until we gain faith that man can have prejudices and still look beyond them—we can never understand the first principle of a "government by laws." The law may require a prejudiced judge to override his prejudices if he is to be true to his calling, and, since overriding prejudices is one of the main Herculean labors of being a man, the Sophists of Greece contributed their bit toward psychological enlightenment.

What wasn't so good about the Sophists—or at least some of them—was that they acquired the reputation of not caring much about anything. In later years, the word became identified with the man who is so worldly-wise that his chief characteristics are disdain and resignation. Although this definition overlooks the fact that a man may be informed and still be a man of unflinching integrity and principle, it is true enough that the "overcultured" are often painful to associate with. This is because they seem to have exchanged the greater portion of their manhood—a manhood which thrills to the possibility of a better world and more compassionate people—for ennui and pessimism.

Yet such generalizations seem to apply only to those among the sophisticates who reveal concern with the *marks* of sophistication, and who somehow accept the very characterization we have been deploring. Albert Jay Nock was a man more than casually acquainted with the ways of the world, and with the bored, negative tone of so much of that which passes for "intellectual" writing. But Nock, though regarding himself in one light as a "superfluous man," a man out of joint with his time, cared for human worth with passion. He cut through his sophistication, being not concerned with its marks, but with the need to break through and beyond pessimism.

All this is a long ride around from an initial intention to discuss the psychological ingredients of certain novels. We had in mind a few disparaging remarks concerning two pocket books now on our desk—Christopher Isherwood's *The World in the Evening* and Calder Willingham's *Girl in the Dogwood Cabin*, with side references to the earlier fictional productions of Aldous Huxley. But hanging a book on a generalization is like hanging a man—as Milton said. It mustn't be done. We *can* say, then, so far as we know, neither the earlier Huxley nor the present Isherwood ever created a character who arrived anywhere, who achieved "growth of soul." Yet these are brilliant men, too, and if one prefers the brash idealism of a young upstart like James Jones (who has ever mentioned these three in the same breath?), this is, at least in part, a matter of preference. Being brilliant men, both Huxley and Isherwood see many small things clearly which others often do not see at all—the smallness of motive which is behind so much of human action. These things we need to see, both in ourselves and in others, but we also need assurance that frailty or degradation is never the whole of the story.

For Willingham, "one of America's outstanding young writers," most people are pathetic, going nowhere, getting nothing. But there is no pathos, no tragedy. Willingham seems to be saying that we are fools to romanticize, fools

to idealize—fools to regard life in any sense as a Big Production. But Willingham is not angry at anyone, nor at himself, and therefore fails to carry even this sort of message. Life, he seems to say, is trivial, and why not amuse ourselves with unmasking the posturing of ordinary people, because these ordinary people are simply ourselves. If *Girl in the Dogwood Cabin* has a theme, it is simply the theme of seduction, rather uninterestingly carried out, and finally reached in a climax of boredom. But Willingham has perception of some acuteness. He *could*, as he proves in the same book, write a novel about a Negro who is prejudiced against whites—whose indoctrination, with however much comparative justification, parallels the long existent Southern White indoctrination against the Negroes. Take this passage, portion of a well-done scene between a Negro baker who answers to the above description, and a minor executive of a boys' summer camp. The baker wants to quit, his ostensible reason being an "Uncle Tom" sort of story told the night before by the aging founder of the camp:

"Mr. Ector, I can't stay here and work in a place where such stories are told about my race as that. I don't see how any reasonable, fair-minded man could expect me to do so."

"Well—" said Ector.

"Allow me to finish, please, sir. I listened to everything you had to say and I think I'm entitled to complete my own statements."

"All right, finish, then," growled Ector. But at the moment he felt his back against the wall.

"Mr. Ector, the problem of racial prejudice and antagonisms is a *deep* problem; it is a pervasive problem, sir. We are united, the intelligent ones among us, in desiring to see this thing, this, this terrible *cancer*, this *malignant disease*, wiped from our shores. It is essential for our democracy. The progress of this country depends on it. And I am sure that you will agree with me that the only answer to this dreadful disease in our midst must be *education*. There isn't much that can be done about the older generation. No. People who have been brought up to think in terms of Rastus and Nicodemus will naturally continue to think in terms of Rastus and

Nicodemus. Our hope must lie in the education of *the young*. It is the *new* generation that counts, Mr. Ector. Now, because of these reasons, I can't lend myself to a venture that deliberately educates the younger generation to *hate* and *mis-trust* and *despise* my race."

How very true! But the young Negro is not thinking about a specific situation. He is posing, as so many white Southerners have posed, reading the label on the bottle and neglecting to sample the contents. This Negro is theoretically right, but he is also preposterous; a nearly senile old man can hardly be judged in terms of an Uncle Tom story, nor the Boys' Camp he founded. Willingham deftly conveys these insights, so, as we say, he *could* write a novel about a character like the baker—and perhaps he could inject into the story a measure of heroism, and something as well of pathos and tragedy.

Isherwood, we find, is particularly hard to discuss. Having acquired something of a reputation in regard to Eastern philosophy and religion—he did the foreword for the Religious Classics paper-back of the *Bhagavad-Gita*—he may possess the capacity to see through much of the sham of our people and our culture, and on a much more ambitious scale than that attempted by Willingham. Yet the characters of *The World in the Evening*, like those of *Goodbye to Berlin*, are so many goldfish, swimming incessantly in circles. Again, as with Willingham, no one "achieves." The simpler novels have people achieving all manner of things, some of them quite improbable, but, as often before remarked here, a good Western novel by comparison probably does something to buck up the spirit. Another puzzling thing about Mr. Isherwood—and characteristic of others of like ability and like negative bent—is that indications of rather profound psychological penetration are in evidence, so that the reader legitimately wonders why at least one character cannot become enlightened—or gain some kind of fulfillment and happiness?

The most satisfying character in *The World in the Evening*—and Isherwood seems a bit dubious

even here—is a woman author. Her efforts at self-conquest and self-understanding are sensitively described, as in the words of her letter to an old friend:

I realized I had inside me a terrified animal, a creature absolutely blind and deaf and senseless with fear. No use arguing with it or getting angry. No use trying to beat it into submission. Violence would never make it budge.

It was then, Mary, that I suddenly knew what to do. I gathered the creature up into my arms, as it were, ever so gently, and nursed it, and soothed it. I don't really quite know what I mean by this, because I don't know exactly who the "I" was, who did the nursing. But it *was* done somehow, and that's the only way I can describe it. And the doing of it made me feel, to an intense degree, the distinction between the physical part of me and the—oh dear, how I *hate* that word "spiritual"—let's call it the higher, or deeper will. I was two quite distinct people at that moment—that much I know—and one of them tended the weakness of its animal sister and carried it into the bathroom, where it vomited. And then—utter, utter relief! The creature wasn't frightened any more; it was far too busy relieving itself. And I felt touched by its weakness, and amused. I actually began to laugh, between the spasms. . . .

Yet this is only a by-blow in the pattern of Isherwood's story, isolated from what happens to her and to the others. Situations pick the people up and set them down, and there is an end to it. We'd rather have improbable heroes who die in a blaze of glory! Or characters who demonstrate that they have finally learned something about themselves important enough to work a transformation in outlook.

It is unfair to close our brief remarks on Mr. Isherwood, however, without also noting that he includes a good theoretical defense for his characters. In the words of the same woman writer—some of whose thoughts are clearly Isherwood's own—"human beings can be anything and everything." She continues:

Isn't that, perhaps, the Original Sin of novelists—that they've tried to persuade their readers, and themselves, to see human beings as "characters"; beautifully complete three-dimensional wholes? Oh

yes, the novelists pay lip service to the idea of the fourth dimension, which is time and change. They often let their characters "grow old." But it's only a masquerade; as if a make-up man were to powder an actor's wig and draw a few wrinkles on his face. Novelists daren't accept the fourth dimension with all its implications, because if they did, their characters would blur and dissolve, and the whole novel would disintegrate. Characters have to have characteristics; they have to be "well-rounded," as the reviewers say. But human beings can be anything and everything. They're full of contradictions; and they have no shape, rounded or otherwise, only a general direction. This lie of the novelists is a sin because it encourages the belief that you can treat human beings as characters; that you can know them fully, and possess them—in the same way that one can know and possess Emma Bovary or Alyosha Karamazov.

Again, why not let the "anything and everything" human beings can be include successful striving toward self-transformation? Isherwood's moral neutrality is tiresome.

## *COMMENTARY*

### A QUESTION OF MOTIVES

A CLOSE reading of this week's *Frontiers* article suggests to us that nothing less than a change in the motives of businessmen and of the designers of tax systems will satisfy the writer!

Time was when a critic of Capitalism—and MANAS is certainly that—could easily point to remedial measures and argue either for reforms or a complete new deal by way of a revolution. But when you talk about *motives*, you outreach either a reform or a revolutionary program. In short, for many people, talk about motives is much the same as saying that "nothing can be done."

This, at any rate, is often the response of the man who believes in political action—who does not feel he can wait until the people in power adopt new motives. It is a response calculated to make those who are concerned with social improvement as well as the problem of motivation feel uncomfortable, and even ineffectual. Well, it *does* make us feel uncomfortable.

The alternative, however, seems worse. For if you decide that an effort toward the design of an equitable tax system is worth making, you are up against one great problem right at the start. This is the matter of power. Taxation represents the civil power of government. If you restrict the power of the government to tax, you weaken the central authority of government. You weaken, in short, the capacity of the government to arm the nation for war. Now power for war must be arbitrary power. There is no way under heaven for a modern government to prepare for and, if need be, conduct a modern war without a great deal of arbitrary power. Arbitrary power comes from money and money comes from taxes. And taxes come from the authority to tax. Arbitrary power also requires arbitrary authority. We don't see how you can limit the power of government in some directions and not in others. The requirements of war-making are too far-reaching and too demanding.

In other words, we take the view that the people of a major war-making society can nibble at but can never really alter the authority of government to do whatever it decides is necessary.

The basic motives of the people who live in a war-making society determine everything else.

## CHILDREN and Ourselves

Editor, Children . . . and Ourselves: MANAS is a philosophical endeavor and naturally should strive to discuss matters of basic philosophy and their relevance to the social scene. But at times it appears that discussion of philosophical principles does not come to grips with the real issue, nor lead to profitable discussion. Not long ago I was discussing with a friend a paper distributed by a large teacher's union. This paper outlined the cure (as it saw it) for the serious discipline problem in the public schools. Both of us being teachers in the public schools, we naturally agreed that *in principle* the paper was correct on the seriousness of the matter and that something should be done. However, I attempted to pin down my colleague as to the *specific nature* of a discipline case (how many did he have in his room, what constituted a discipline "case," what kind of act should be considered a serious breach of discipline, what was to be done, were discipline cases psychological cases, etc.). At this point he was not disposed to further discussion.

Almost every teacher I know admits the *general problem*, but few, if any, have specific proposals and it is very difficult to get a specific definition and specific solution as applied to a specific situation the teachers are familiar with. In some field such as mathematics, generalization is of central importance. According to Whitehead, it is this capacity for generalization that gives mathematical reasoning its power. How fruitful is this method in social science and how valid, in particular reference to education, which is art as well as science? Many student teachers complain of the inapplicability of the generalizations they were given in classrooms. Some even doubt their validity. Even MANAS has occasion to cite the meaninglessness of generalizations growing out of conferences of "educators."

The issue I am raising is not that generalization is invalid as a method but that too often the level of discussion stays at the general level when it should be dealing with particular situations and the values of those involved. There are so many generalizations on "the child" that obscure rather than clarify. I have observed teachers and principals explain away poor student performance and behavior in terms of that individual's "IQ," "home life," "social class membership," "community standards," "group performance," "method of teaching," "interest level,"

"stimulation," and so on. These same concepts or generalizations may be useful in understanding an individual, but their use may be beneficial or harmful depending on the original goals, values and standards of the individual applying them. It is not the sophisticate in method or educational philosophy, but the teacher with focus, well-defined policy and directness, that achieves anything positive. Generalizations on method and philosophy are not likely to stir up a hornet's nest. But neither will they provide a plan of action, because by their very nature they miss the particular value system of the individual, and it is this value system which gives meaning to method.

It would be more satisfying to see your column elicit responses from teachers *now* in the classrooms of public schools; interesting to see how they sum up the critical problems *and* their possible solutions.

While we should be happy to receive contributions from active teachers, discussion of specific situations without reference to principles is no sort of satisfactory communication—because, for one reason, the referents in widely scattered localities are so very different. This, we think, points to the fact that each problem of discipline within the classroom—or without—demands its own unique treatment.

The statement that "the best method is a combination of all methods" is a good one to bear in mind, and it is only by a consideration of general philosophy that we are able to isolate the good in each "system."

For these reasons we confess to a sympathy with our correspondent's colleague, who found it impossible to make definite statements about "what kinds of acts should be considered a serious breach of discipline, what was to be done," etc. As we see it, the beginning of general classroom discipline is the understanding, on the part of both pupils and teacher, that some sort of practical contractual responsibility obtains. The teacher has a job to do—the obligation of discharging the duties of an instructor in return for a livelihood, and we are not of the opinion that children should be left in ignorance of this fact. A "discipline problem," beyond a certain point, is beyond the

scope of the teacher to handle, and must be passed on to someone else in the school administration who earns *his* livelihood as an administrator or a psychologist. This is not to say that the teacher should be indifferent to everything which might be considered a breach of classroom discipline, nor that he should consider himself unable to solve all but the most amenable cases in his direct dealing with his particular pupils, during or after hours. But the children themselves need to understand that the teacher's first task is to teach, and that if a pupil obstructs the teaching, he must go. Nothing personal in this, just a part of school life.

On the child's part, when he enters the classroom he becomes a party to the contractual agreement. His parents are regarded by law, and in general, as responsible for his attendance at classes. The child who fails to come to school is not the teacher's responsibility, even if the teacher is a bore, and the corollary of this is that the teacher is not obligated to persuade his pupils to enjoy every moment of class work. Cajolery or pampering obscures the reality of the situation, nor would it be necessary to state these obvious facts of the classroom situation, were it not for the fact that the general counsel of "permissiveness," the recommendation that teachers adjust to the preferences of their pupils, has left many instructors with such overwhelming responsibilities that they don't get on with much instruction.

However, after stating the obvious, it is time to proceed to some of the subtleties. The teacher, besides being an instructor, is party to an *individual* relationship with each pupil in the room. To the extent that he comes to know each particular individuality, he will regard the learning process as demanding a somewhat different method of communication for each child—or a "system" for each one. Further, the efficacy of a certain approach will vary with the changing mood and attitudes of the child. If this constitutes a "well defined policy," well and good, but the "plan of action" must be extremely flexible if the

teacher is not only interested in fulfilling his first obligation of daily instruction, but also in stimulating *the desire to learn* on the part of the child. The most successful classrooms are like the most successful groups of human beings in any field of endeavor; morale or group enthusiasm must prevail. The most successful classes are able to be the most informal, and require the least attention to "discipline cases" as such, but this may not be because the instruction was begun with an emphasis on permissiveness. A good teacher will often show an extremely firm hand in respect to maintaining classroom decorum until a greater latitude of expression has been earned by the pupils.

For all these reasons, we have often felt that teachers would do well to take their noses out of the "system" books and spend time reading accounts of unusual success in different sorts of pupil-teacher relationships. Two volumes reviewed in MANAS afford such perspectives, and were selected for attention because the two English educators who produced them not only thought up their own system as they went along, but created a new one each day for each specific need. These books are *The Problem Family*, by A. S. Neal, and Homer Lane's *Talks to Parents and Teachers*, both published by the Hermitage Press, New York. Lane took over the instruction of delinquent children in England, superintending a self-governing reformatory called "The Little Commonwealth." Discipline was mandatory but the spirit and attitude in which discipline was imposed was the key to Lane's success. Lane was particularly good in helping the children to see that *he*, the superintendent, had problems, also, and was constantly confronted with all sorts of situations for which he did not at once know the right solution. If he became strict with a given child, the child seemed to know that Lane was doing the best he could, and much preferred to skip "punishments" entirely—yet could not let this inclination lead to interference with the progress of the school as a whole. From reading such as this one gains the realization that the best teachers

deal with their pupils as individuals—and also insist that they, the teachers, be recognized as individuals with problems of *their* own. The man who is immersed in the details of a system, or is simply trying to improve its efficiency, or follow a recommended "line" because of an inability to strike out on his own, finds it very difficult to achieve this psychological result. The teacher needs to be impartial, but he needs to be "there" as a person or individual, and when, in a discipline case, he strives to embody impartiality, the pupils need to know that this is often an effort for him. After all, the teacher has his likes and dislikes, his dreams and disappointments, as does everyone else, but must get on with teaching, too.

This may seem to be remote from the sort of discussion our correspondent invites, but we are trying to build a bridge between the "too much abstract theorizing" of which he complains and the practical problems of classroom discipline. As he remarks, it is the "value system" of the individual teacher, and not the fixed values of a system, which become critical in furthering the development of human personality. But discipline problems, we maintain, can be met without invoking fear of authority. Authority is threatening largely to the extent that its basis is not clearly perceived, but left unexplained, as a general menace. Even in our day, recourse to unexplained authority plays a large part in the classroom, at least at those times when the teacher is so harassed that his patience fails. But an explanation of the basis of authority is always worth attempting—a talk of the practical meaning of the classroom situation, and of the obligations imposed upon the teacher by his employment by a school system. As Nathaniel Cantor puts it in *The Teaching-Learning Process*, "we may believe that the *individual* is sovereign, *up to a point*. Teachers are authorized representatives of community values *and* professional educators devoted to developing the individual differences of the children. Where are the points to be determined, how are the balances to be achieved? The answer, in general, is to be found in the *way*

in which teachers (or parents) help the child to balance social and individual needs. The approach depends upon the teacher's understanding of the role of authority and the expectations and defenses it creates in the life of both teacher and pupil. The teacher is, in large measure, responsible for the atmosphere of the classroom. It is the *way* in which the teacher uses her responsibilities, her authority, and her spirit that encourages or inhibits the learner's genuine participation in the teaching-learning process."

## *FRONTIERS* Morality at the Post

THERE was a time when we felt that the desire to approve an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* was a symptom requiring a careful examination of our conscience. This was our reaction, more than twenty years ago, when Garet Garrett wrote for the *Post* "The Great Moral Disaster," a discourse on the abandonment by the United States of the gold standard. Mr. Garrett's point, as we recall, was that the inscription then found on dollar bills, "One Dollar in gold payable to the bearer on demand," just wasn't true any more. The Government had broken its promise to everyone who had those dollar bills, and this, Mr. Garrett insisted, was dishonest.

The justification for going off the gold standard, again, as we recall, was that it was all right for the Government to break its promises about paying in gold if this would make it easier on the millions who didn't have very many dollar bills anyway. The Government, it was claimed, could make new rules of morality so long as it acted benevolently—"the greatest good for the greatest number." Well, we were impressed by this view, but it still seemed that Mr. Garrett was right. We didn't care much for the ideas of some of the people who used Mr. Garrett's argument; their great love of "morality" seemed pretty one-sided; and yet, there it was—Mr. Garrett was right.

Now comes another article in the *Saturday Evening Post* which produces much the same effect. In the *Post* for July 14, Cameron Hawley, author of *Executive Suite* and, more recently, *Cash McCall*, declares that "Our Tax Laws Make Us Dishonest." Like Mr. Garrett, Mr. Hawley is right. Our tax laws do make us dishonest. And they make ineffectual men out of experts in the actual production of goods, while heaping great rewards on men who are clever financial manipulators and experts on tax law. Mr.

Hawley's point is forcefully put in two short paragraphs:

Why do we have a situation in this country where it is so often more profitable to sell a company—yes, even to destroy it by liquidation—than to go on operating it as a useful and productive entity? And why, on the other side of the coin, should it be so desirable for other companies to make corporate purchases and effect mergers that are so obviously a violation of common sense? Why should a wrecked and mismanaged company be more valuable because of the loss it has piled up, than as a sound and going concern? Why do we have men like Cash McCall? What circumstances produced them?

The single answer to all these questions is, I'm sure, quite obvious. The situations suggested, and hundreds of others no less pertinent, all arise from a common source. They are the surface symptoms of a malignant growth upon the social body—this cancerous thing that we will call the Federal tax structure—income, estate, et cetera.

The rest is illustration and detail. Examining, for example, the minutes of the directors' meetings of the board of a large concern, Mr. Hawley found that, during the past several years, "almost every move had been substantially affected, if not primarily motivated by tax considerations." He comments:

It is a frightening thing.

We Americans have risen upon more than one occasion to fight off threats of governmental planning and state control, but I submit that no scheme of master planning dreamed up in this country even proposed to go so far as the tax structure has already gone in its restrictive, warping, distorting effect upon sound business management. The result is no less noticeable upon the life of any materially successful individual.

There are times when I think it might almost be better if we had some Government planning, because most of the worst aspects of what we now have are the plain result of a lack of planning—this cancerlike wild-cell growth of law and pseudo-law so obviously unguided by any policy or principle.

We cannot quarrel with this thesis, nor with the proposal, joined in by Mr. Hawley, for a total revision—"rationalization" is probably the word—of our tax laws. The evolution of the tax laws has

obviously been an opportunistic process devoted to getting back from business the money it has made throughout a long term of growth which was equally "unguided by any policy or principle." We doubt, in other words, if the business community really deserves a better system of taxation.

Businessmen, or spokesmen for businessmen, when they address themselves critically to national problems, usually sound as though all other interests should give way to *their* interests. A kind of secular "messiah complex" seems to afflict their thinking. Businessmen and manufacturers, one can only suppose, are naturally inclined to conduct their affairs according to a capitalist *mystique*, while the Government's bumbling efforts to keep track of and to regulate industrial enterprises, through taxes, becomes, in symbolic terms, a frustration of Nature's Plan. Mr. Hawley undertakes to articulate the intuitive righteousness of the business community.

What we don't like about Mr. Hawley's article, and what we didn't like about Garet Garrett's "Great Moral Disaster," is the neglect in both discussions of what were and are the underlying causes of the conditions which businessmen dislike and uproariously object to. The neglect is understandable, since an investigation of these causes would probably lead to the conclusion that both the free enterprisers and the economic reformers share the same set of values, and are after, therefore, the same things, although for different beneficiaries.

In short, the *Saturday Evening Post* morality, while superficially "sound," is shallow and for the most part futile, since it fears to ask the questions that need to be asked, and pretends, moreover, that such problems do not even exist.