

## SCIENCE AND MORALS

IN the as yet unsettled contest between science and religion for final authority over human decision, the most familiar claim of the opponents of science is that science is incompetent to define the ultimate values of existence. Science, these critics say, provides us with a technique of knowing, but it does not tell us what is *worth* knowing. Until quite recently, many scientists agreed with this judgment. So strong was the view that science will lose its high impartiality if it dallies with "moral" questions, that the entire range of modern learning took on a pseudo-scientific indifference to questions of value. Years ago, Lin Yutang exclaimed in the Atlantic:

It would be interesting to study how the professors of the humanities started the rout from their moral fortress and fled in fear of any distinction of good and evil or even moral emotions of any kind; how they came to live in mortal terror of taking sides and trained their minds to see all things objectively as mechanical phenomena, to be analyzed and explained and compared; how they ultimately came to be moral bats disclaiming all judgments of morals and fearing moral platitudes like poison, and eventually had an abhorrence of the human free will and successfully eliminated conscience from their scholarship. . . . Since there is no way of tackling the problems of good and evil by either percentages or statistical charts, the problem must remain unsolved and ignored.

While there is great interest, today, in reversing this trend, the fact is that it is much easier to separate science and morals than it is to unite them. On what basis shall moral questions and science be joined? Suppose that the field in which we try to unite them is penology. Penology, we may assume, is a practical science which has two general objectives: (1) The protection of society from offenders against the law, and (2) the restoration to constructive social life of persons who, from whatever cause, have broken the law.

The most obvious obstacle to the practice of scientific penology is public apathy and prejudice. Scientific penology would probably involve, at the outset at least, a higher cost to the tax-payer. Penology would very largely be delivered into the hands of the psychiatrists and psychotherapists, on the hypothesis that trained doctors of the mind and the emotions are best fitted to deal with the psychopathological behavior we call "crime." Doubtless there would be objection to this, since already there is some grassroots antipathy toward psychiatry, sparked mostly by ignorance, and by the ill-founded suspicion that the psychiatrists harbor imperial longings to run other peoples' lives. It seems likely that this anxiety is fed by secret fears of exposure—that the noisiest enemies of psychiatry are a bit worried about themselves and their own psycho-mental oddities, dreading the day when they might have to answer the questions of an inquiring psychotherapist.

There could also, however, be a kind of objection from the psychiatrists themselves. For example, there is the tendency, of which psychiatrists are themselves well aware, to redefine all disorders of human behavior in medical or psychiatric terms, so that, in effect, no specifically *moral* problems are admitted to exist at all. It is a fair question to ask whether this is really "scientific"! As Dr. Leslie H. Farber, recently quoted in these pages, put it:

We could now regard our moral, intellectual, and spiritual failures with a greater sympathy or indulgence, not to say complacency, but the price paid for this was to define ourselves altogether in medical terms of health or illness—according to the relative presence or absence of neurosis. So if all our sins or crimes could now be excused on medical or social grounds, most of our greatest triumphs and achievements could also be explained, and even excused, on the same grounds of illness. . . . It is for this reason—because everything uniquely human has been translated into medical terms of illness—that the

psychoanalyst is now carrying such a heavy burden of responsibility. He no longer deals with problems of medical ethics, or with the moral problems arising from his craft. Morality has been turned over to him, along with philosophy and religion.

Responsible therapists can hardly welcome this burden; but, supposing them to have it, *to whom shall they give it back?* The patient?

Here is a psychopathic bank robber or a murderer. His case history supplies ample "cause" for his anti-social behavior. Where, one may ask, does his past—the pressures of environment—cease and his personal moral decision begin, in determining his behavior? How do you assess "guilt," or moral responsibility?

The psychiatrist's answer—indeed, the answer of any intelligent man—will be: "We don't know." The force that moves a man's moral decision on to the stage of action, making him triumph over obstacles and old habits is one of the greatest mysteries of human life. It is so mysterious, in fact, that science, in its lusty and arrogant beginnings of the study of man, commonly denied that any such force existed at all. A child of the times in his scientific opinions, Clarence Darrow, the great legal defender of the criminal and the outcast, held that no man is morally responsible for *anything*, that each one is predetermined by his heredity and his environment. Darrow explained that he could not believe in punishment for this reason. Lombroso's theory of criminal types, as we recall, was similarly founded on the mechanistic hypothesis. So, it is against this background that modern psychiatrists and penologists will have to find a place for "moral responsibility." The question is, *what place*, or *who* is responsible?

There is a great difference, however, between theory and practice in psychotherapy, as in everything else. The parent or the teacher or the therapist, in dealing with another human being, learns to distinguish between the automatic responses of "conditioning" and the emergence of authentic human decision. What shall we call it,

this manifest presence of egoity, when it appears? Who is this being who wrestles with his past for his freedom? What is now called "non-directive therapy" is the method of seeking the release of the patient from his confining attitudes. But who will define this presence of the power of choice, or give the rules of its activity? It is the intuition of the teacher which recognizes originality and inventiveness when it appears. The teacher who follows the text instead of learning to be sensitive to the egoic presence of another may easily become a stifling influence upon the intelligence he is supposed to be courting. So, also, with the therapist.

There are, however, some principles which have been learned from experience by therapists. Dr. Charles B. Thompson, long an associate of the late Triggant Burrow, in 1937 reported his experience with recidivists in the psychiatric clinic operated in connection with the Court of Special Sessions of New York City. While Dr. Thompson does not say much about the element of free decision in human behavior, he does describe with particularity the sort of psychological confinements which are suffered by recidivists (repeating criminals):

In this problem of the repeater criminal, that has long puzzled the best of our students, lies a direct challenge to our civilization. The reactions common to the criminal are reactions that are common to mankind generally. In the behavior of the recidivist this observation is equally pertinent. We are confronted not so much by a problem that is isolated in the behavior of a few individuals as by a condition that exists throughout the race of man. Accordingly in our need for a broader approach to our problem we must establish a basis of observation that will encompass the generic factors that lead to anti-social behavior in mankind.

For Dr. Thompson, the key to anti-social behavior lies in the idea a man has of himself:

In the early period of his life each of us as individuals is conditioned to react with a special affective content to the stimulus of the word "you," or, as he himself feels it, "I," and the picture or image denoted by this word comes to have more importance

than everything and every one else in the world.

That which is "good" is to the advantage of this "I" and is to be sought, and that which is bad is to the disadvantage of the "I" and is to be avoided. . . Each one becomes so conditioned that his thought automatically is, "How will what is going on in this moment cause me gain or loss?"

By virtue of the image of himself, which is thus secondarily acquired by the individual, and which differentiates him from all others of his kind, an over-emphasis has been placed upon the individual and he has in turn been given an exaggerated sense of his own importance.

It is sufficient for our purposes in the moment that this conditioned, separative "I" image represents a common denominator for the compulsive egocentric acquisitiveness of man throughout the species, including the reaction of criminals as well as the non-criminals. Getting for one's self at the expense of others is both civilization's outstanding characteristic and its fundamental anomaly.

Our studies in the psychiatric clinic of the Court of Special Sessions show that pathological cases among all our prisoners for the first four years, namely, 9,256, are less than 9 per cent, and indicate that a repetition of crime proceeds from a certain automatic behavior pattern or set-up in the individual organism which will react whenever the appropriate and familiar stimuli are encountered.

Where do the criminals get this pattern? They get it, according to Dr. Thompson, from society itself. Where does society get it? This question would probably take longer to answer, but it seems inevitable that the answer must in some form say that society gets the pattern from the people who make it up.

The value of Dr. Thompson's paper, however, is in the simplicity of his diagnosis. The *idea of the self* determines behavior. What makes some men resist more than others the conditioning influence of a *separative* idea of the self? We don't know. Call it "character," call it innate moral sensibility—call it anything you like, it will still be pretty mysterious.

But whatever it is, it is something we need more of, if we can figure out how to get it.

This is the problem. It is the problem, not only of scientific penology, but of human life generally, and of education in particular. When we speak of a "liberal education," we mean an education which results in humane, sensitive, intelligent, and morally responsive human beings. This means human beings who do not have a "separative," egotistical idea of the self, but an idea of the self which makes them a beneficent influence on their fellows—generous, tolerant and wise.

Now Dr. Burrow, who was Dr. Thompson's associate, and possibly his teacher, had some definite ideas about the kind of idea of the self that should be fostered. He wanted people to return to the uncomplicated responses of the organism, the responses that were possible before human nature was modified by the overlay of intellectualizing and moralizing about human behavior and right and wrong. Those who think that this is a solution which holds promise should go to Dr. Burrow's books, available from the Lifwynn Foundation (*The Social Basis of Consciousness, Our Common Neurosis, The Neurosis of Man, and Science and Man's Behavior*). Here we have borrowed only a diagnosis, in which, doubtless, Dr. Burrow's thinking played a part. The point we wish to make is that every great religion and every great reform in religious teaching has come to a focus on the idea of the self. Further: *If* human beings do exercise control over their lives—if they are in some degree responsible for what they do—then the most effective way of increasing that responsibility is through education in a true idea of self, for actions which spring from a delusive idea of self will obviously be born from confusion and lead only to confusion.

This, then, is the central problem of both science and religion in relation to values, morality, and every phase of the idea of human good.

Where shall we look for a true idea of the self? We have noted that religion has returned various accounts of the self of man. The self is one thing in Christianity, another thing in

Hinduism, and still another in Theravada Buddhism.

Can the answers of religion be "edited" or even replaced by scientific inquiry?

It is doubtful, for example, that the men who have given closest scientific attention to the nature of human beings are ready to issue rulings on the question. Already some of them are preparing to turn the matter over to religion, and heaving a sigh of relief at the prospect. Dr. Farber, in the article quoted above, has this to say:

It is not only his patients who ask him [the psychoanalyst] to solve their moral and religious problems, to tell them what is human. Nor is it only the artist, the philosopher, the teacher, who turns to him; moralists and priests and theologians are now turning to the psychoanalyst for their definitions of man. Needless to say, we never asked for a burden of power such as this, which amounts to our taking over the sole responsibility for the human fate. Yet it is the scientist, and not the layman, who must be blamed for this astonishing situation. For it is the medical man's delusion that psychiatry deals not with spiritual states of grace or vanity or despair—but only with a special pocket of ailments whose cure and cause lie far outside the realm of moral values. So if the theologian applies to the psychiatrist for his diagnosis of despair or sin, it is because he has no idea that he is doing so. He believes he is asking merely for a medical opinion on disease.

Apparently, the psychiatrists—some of them, at least—and possibly a theologian or two, are getting around to the idea that judgments on the nature of man mean sitting uneasily in the *Siege Perilous* of spiritual authority. The theologians—those, that is, who have been applying to psychiatry for help—would like a transfer of some of their burdens to medicine; while the psychiatrist, who is in the process of discovering that emotional ills may be moral instead of medical problems, feels uncomfortable at the presumption laid upon him by the more enthusiastic champions of his art.

The interesting thing about this situation is that, for a generation or more, we have listened to eager advocates of more science in human

decision. We have been told that religion can be saved from superstition by science; that exact knowledge will point the way to intelligent and efficient living. But when we turn to the scientific specialists in human nature, we find them practicing an appropriate reticence—a decent humility, as it were. They are unwilling to echo the proud boasts of their promoters. Face to face with human problems, they have learned the wisdom of being unsure, of leaving open doors in their definitions. And here, perhaps, is one secret of their success. Intelligent doctors of the mind refuse to imprison in final, authoritative decrees the incommensurable reality that hides within each man. The successful psychotherapist, in short, is the most undogmatic of men, and the least reliant on a "believing" way upon the theoretical superstructure of his science. What, finally, is science, and what is art and intuition, in psychiatry?

On this question, then, of the nature of the human self, there is no "approved" source for an answer. And in the absence of external authorities, we shall probably do best to consult ourselves. We are not, of course, left without help in this. There have been other men who looked within themselves, and who would accept of no one else the answer that they sought.

The difficulty with turning to "science" for the answer does not lie in the "inadequacy" of the psychiatric account of man. More wisdom, doubtless, lies in this direction, than in any of the texts on biology to which, a generation ago, the enthusiasts of science would have directed us. The difficulty is rather in allowing the prestige of modern physics—which is very great—to make us think that science must have the answer to this question. What if the self is of a stuff that does not submit to formal definition? What if it is, in essence, sheer consciousness, and *without* form or definition?

How unfair, if this should be the case, to require of science a definition of the indefinable!

It is such troubling possibilities which deter

us from joining with enthusiasm those who declare for a synthesis of science and religion. A religion edited by science would be a religion forever debarred from becoming truly philosophical, should this idea of the self have correspondence with reality.

Then there are all those other matters which quite possibly depend upon intangibles, so far as present-day science is concerned, yet which may be the heart of the matter, so far as religion is concerned—matters like immortality, the relation of soul to body, and so on.

For example, Dr. Julian Huxley, a scientist for whom we have the greatest respect, delivered himself of this judgment some years ago:

Body and soul are not separate entities but two aspects of one organization. . . . Matter and mind are two aspects of one reality.

Now this, for anyone familiar with Eastern philosophy, is a puzzling pair of assertions. For thousands of years men in the East have declared that matter and mind are two aspects of one reality, yet have found no difficulty in maintaining that body and soul can and ought to be regarded as distinct entities, although combined during life in intimate relation. In other words, the broad metaphysical principle that matter and mind are aspects of the same reality in no way interferes with the idea that the soul may be a subtle synthesis of highly refined matter and mind, while the body is another kind of balance between intelligence—*organic* intelligence—and matter. It is not that we are eager to "prove" or "assert" these things, but only that it seems foolhardy to ignore the best conclusions of great civilizations of the past—produced by men fully as intelligent as Dr. Huxley—simply in order to say that now we shall have a "scientific" religion. Why limit ourselves in this way? Why not take only the virtue of science—its rigorous impartiality, its love of truth? Why not leave behind its metaphysical (or antimetaphysical) judgments, which will change from year to year, anyway?

We suspect that no thoughtful scientist would

submit to any such "regulation" of his imagination in seeking to fathom the meanings of existence. The scientist knows that all discovery means taking leave of the accepted limits of human knowledge. It is this daring which is the inspiration of both religion and science alike.

## REVIEW

### DILEMMA WORTH PONDERING

THE *Manchester Guardian* for Sept. 27 printed a letter which we take the liberty of reprinting, as a forthright statement of the sort of problem faced by thoughtful young men all over the world. The letter reads:

Editor, *Manchester Guardian*: I am a National Service officer in the Territorial Army, or on the Reserve (it is not at present clear which). As such I am evidently liable to be called up for a Middle East war which would be likely if Sir Anthony Eden were to try to impose alien or international control of the canal on Egypt. Such imposition would seem to me to constitute aggression, especially if unsanctioned by the United Nations. Clearly my moral duty would be to refuse to participate in a war I believed to be aggressive, or to carry out orders involving bloodshed and destruction in a cause I believe to be morally invalid. Yet I owe allegiance to the legally elected and duly constituted Government, whatever my opinion of its principles and policies.

At what point, morally, does a Government cease to have the right to demand allegiance from those who abhor its activities? Has this point been reached over Suez? And what is the legal position for the many who, like me, would object conscientiously to service in this specific war on political and moral grounds, but who are technically members of the forces already and who have no religious or other objection to war as such, in a just cause?

What are the legal and moral implications of the course of action being pursued by this Government for those who look likely to be called on to fight?  
Yours &c.

St. Catharine's College, Cambridge

Response to this letter from *Guardian* readers proved interesting. As might be expected, one indignant correspondent undertook to "enlighten" the young reservist, suggesting that he "stay at Cambridge until he has learnt the difference between rights and duties under a democracy and a dictatorship." The critic added, "I would also suggest that he keep a copy of his letter to read in twenty years' time as an illustration of how misguided one can be in one's youth. Failing these

I suggest he seek the advice of the War Office."

We wonder whether anyone can be expected to learn "the differences between rights and duties under a democracy and a dictatorship" by reading and theoretical discussion, especially when the issues described by the Cambridge reservist tend to obliterate all nicely worded distinctions. Nor is there much help in the tongue-in-cheek suggestion that "the advice of the War Office be sought." The "War Office" has its job to do, and young men of conscience have theirs—deciding whether to act as if they were the citizens of a dictatorship or the citizens of a democracy. Responsible behavior in a democracy may mean *conscientious* behavior, along with other obligations.

Another letter (*Guardian*, Oct. 4) restates the pacifist position:

Surely the root cause of [the reservist's] problem lies in conscription itself? No doubt he believes war to be necessary but evil. A war over Suez would be unnecessary, and as such he would conscientiously object to it. But the law does not countenance such scruples. They might easily be extended from principles to policies, from a particular war to campaigns and weapons. Many soldiers, for example, might conscientiously object to the use of nuclear weapons to secure an unconditional surrender in circumstances when a satisfactory peace might be negotiated. Conscription into the forces, therefore, involves a renunciation of the right of moral judgment over peace or war. In accepting war Mr. Barder has accepted all wars. If necessary he will have to face courtmartial, and then a conscientious objectors' tribunal, and even then his objection may not be recognized.

What he should have considered, and what others may still do, is whether they may not have a conscientious objection to military conscription as such. The State has a right to our allegiance, but should young men be bound to accept wars which may be precipitated as much by the follies of our own leaders as by the wrongs of an enemy.

The *Christian Century* for Sept. 26 presents a spirited discussion of Christian pacifism which takes up the same problem from the standpoint of a conscientious member of a Christian church. While MANAS readers are likely to be more

impressed by those who formulate their ethical difficulties without reference to a particular religious tradition, it is evident that the differences between independent thinking and neo-orthodoxy in the Church relate directly to the issues of war and peace. Alvin Beachy, writing on "The Draft and Christian Discipleship," combines personal humility with ethical stubbornness:

No absolute insight into the complicated system of human government is claimed by the Christian pacifist. On the other hand, he sometimes resents the implications of the neo-orthodox theologians that he is politically so naive as to be completely ineffective. The Christian pacifist would remind the neo-orthodox theologian that he himself may be in part responsible for this country's present reliance on military force and the threat of force. Notice how difficult it is to get any foreign aid bill through Congress if the passage of that bill does not hold the promise of a temporary military advantage for us. And with the coming of nuclear weapons the Christian church is impotent indeed if all she can do is to say with the neo-orthodox theologians: "We too must have these weapons." Surely the church has a better, more hopeful word than this, for this is nothing more than a retreat into utter barbarism where all distinction between innocent and guilty is wiped out and the lives of unborn generations are imperiled. At least it is a more Christian word to say: "If nuclear war comes, we will rather bear these sufferings ourselves than inflict them upon others."

Quite possibly, the issues of the "war and peace" debate can be clarified by analyzing the dangers of "group opinion." Both Lao-tze and Thomas Jefferson held that the best government is the government which governs least. What this means, in practical terms, is that the creative potential of any society flourishes in inverse ratio to the authority of established ideologies. Most pacifist arguments, we feel, are weakened by the conscientious attempt to substitute a counter-ideology—one in which the refusal to subscribe to armed vigilance might become as "orthodox" as the present wholesale acceptance of the logic of conscription.

Here and there, among pacifists who consistently rethink the contemporary implications of their positions, one notes a constructive

emphasis on individualism. For example, Reginald Reynolds, writing for the September *Aryan Path*, observes:

Sensational and emotional appeals may produce impressive figures, but not effective strength. The increase of this effective strength is still a major problem for pacifists in every country, second only to the need for clearer and more disinterested thinking about main issues.

One thing has long been clear to many of us, though the bulk of British pacifists have yet to be convinced of it: that the old technique of relying primarily on public meetings is quite hopeless.

Reynolds calls for a "more positive and personal approach" than that suggested by "organized" pacifist groups, and it may well be that public inquiries such as that of the "Cambridge correspondent" are much more effective, educationally, than would be the flourishing of Peace Churches and formally constituted bodies. Let's get the *questions* out into the open, without so much worry about organizing phalanxes of "correct" opinion. No one need consider himself a "pacifist" in order to take seriously the questions raised by the Cambridge reservist. And anyone should be able to gain a measure of sympathetic understanding for the pacifist point of view while doing his pondering—which can do no harm.

## *COMMENTARY* **ILLS OF THE MIND**

IT is a constructively chastening experience for the "layman" to read a book which describes in simple language the symptoms of mental illness. It doesn't matter much what the symptoms are—we've all had them, at least in some degree. And after finishing the book, you are likely to wonder what sanity may be like, and wonder if it will ever be achieved!

One curious thing about mental illness is that it is apparently no reflection on intelligence. We once had the opportunity to listen to a youthful schizophrenic speak a little about himself. He was indeed sick—and miserable—yet at least one portion of his mind raced far ahead of most "normal" people! It was as though, although sick, this boy of twenty-one had passed many of the mileposts along the way to "maturity" which other folk are not yet able to see in the distance! One thing seems certain: The schizophrenic is often desperately in search of himself. You might be tempted to say that this is the "philosophical" disease, but there is no room, as yet, for big generalizations in this field.

On the subject of mental illness in general, Dr. Karl Menninger, of the Menninger Foundation, in Topeka, Kansas, has some interesting observations. They should be helpful to the layman, who is naturally puzzled by the elaborate vocabulary built up by the science of psychiatry. These are casual paragraphs appearing in a mimeographed bulletin circulated at the Foundation, under the heading, "Dr. Karl's Reading Notes":

What I believe is that there is only one mental illness. It appears in various forms. It develops to various degrees of disability. It progresses with various speeds. It sometimes yields to treatment and gets well rapidly, sometimes slowly, and sometimes it doesn't get well at all.

I prefer to eliminate the terms "schizophrenia" and "psychosis" from my vocabulary because they continue to imply a specific disease rather than a

degree of illness. If I use the terms, I therefore contradict my own theory to some extent. But if I may use them in the most generic sense, I would say that the natural history of the conditions which are described as schizophrenia and psychosis is for the patient to first demonstrate symptoms of a milder degree which are called "neurotic," "psychoneurotic," "neurasthenic," "hysterical," etc. Contrary to a common delusion held by the laity, mental illness rarely appears suddenly although it may develop rapidly. When it develops rapidly, the earlier and milder stages are overlooked or ignored. When it develops slowly, its manifestations are very apt to be called "neurotic" symptoms. I don't object to this designation if it is clearly understood that it is descriptive and not classificatory. Neurosis is a stage of mental illness, not the name of a mental illness. Fortunately many people never become more than mildly mentally ill, but when they do, the only logical tenable theory is that the severe illness is a continuation of the process represented by the milder illness, whatever they may be called. If we have got to continue to employ our outmoded nosological terms, we must be prepared to recognize that "neurosis" frequently metamorphoses into "psychosis," that "hysteria" often becomes "schizophrenia."

We print this "note" of Dr. Karl's on the theory that it is useful to remind ourselves that the leaders in any field of science are usually those who are most emancipated from rigid terminology and who refuse either to share or to propagate the delusion that carefully named and classified "items" are the bedrock of scientific knowledge.

## CHILDREN and Ourselves

### NOTES IN PASSING

A STORY in *Family Circle* for September is indicative of the current trend—a trend given great impetus by the late Robert Lindner—for pressing the virtues of non-conformity. Asking, "Do Your Children Rule the Roost?", Dr. Robert Goldenson emphasizes the importance of freedom for the young. "Many parents," he writes, "feel that somehow, somewhere, there is a master psychologist who knows what is right and what is wrong in every situation. They search books and articles, not for insights or thought-provoking suggestions, but for directives, rules of thumb, answers. They are trying to 'read the mind of the teacher' instead of their own minds." Dr. Goldenson contends that "well-adjusted" children come from homes where there has been every sort of upbringing:

Is there really so much latitude in bringing up children? A recent research study provides ample evidence. In two parts of this country, Milwaukee and New York City, school principals and teachers were asked to name the boys and girls who seemed exceptionally well adjusted. A list of 261 was compiled, and trained investigators paid long visits to the homes of these youngsters to talk with their parents about life in general and about their views on raising children in particular.

When the results of the investigation were assembled, the researchers were struck by the fact that the homes of these well adjusted children did not represent one special group in education, race, religion, or economic level. They made up a cross section of America. When researchers interviewed families, they made a second discovery. Every phase of child rearing was handled in many different ways. Variety, not uniformity or conformity, was the rule. Some of the parents spanked; others considered physical punishment abhorrent. Some made a fetish of order and regularity; others were relaxed about schedules and routines. They found almost every conceivable approach to the questions of allowances, radio, quarreling, home chores. Even consistency was sometimes wanting, and parents did not always present a united front to their children.

Dr. Goldenson concludes that "there is no

universal 'right way' to handle children's problems. There is, however, one way that will look more promising than others to you—though it may not work out in practice. You may find that way by reading books and articles, discussing the question with those who are more experienced, and talking it over in your family. But in the end you yourself must choose the way that feels most natural." With this we will agree, or, to put the matter another way, "the best method is a combination of all methods."

Elsewhere in this article, Dr. Goldenson suggests that it may sometimes be "natural" for the parent to be too vehement and even somewhat violent in curbing childish desire. It is not necessarily good for children to "rule the roost," and following mechanically a half-taught and half-understood doctrine of permissiveness may have serious effects. Parents should above all be "natural" if they wish their children to learn emotional honesty, and this does not imply that it is impossible for parents to bring an attitude of give and take to conflict-situations in the home. *This* attitude, which does more to solve psychological problems than anything else, should be the most natural thing in the world.

\* \* \*

"Schools without Grades," by Vincent DiPasquale, which appeared in *Better Homes & Gardens* for September, 1955, is an article we have been saving for many months. It presents the results of a nine-year experiment in a non-graded school program. Apparently, the "pilot" school was Emerson Elementary, in Dayton, Ohio, with an enrollment of approximately 1600, which began working on this idea nine years ago. The nongraded primary program was subsequently adopted in twenty other schools in metropolitan Dayton. This is how it works:

In the Emerson plan, we have no grades. A child isn't in the 1st grade or 2nd grade. Instead, he is in the first year of school, second year of school, and so forth. In September, each child resumes work at the level he had reached at the end of the preceding year. No learning is left unfinished just so he can go on to the next "grade."

Just as every child wears clothing in a size that

fits him individually (with no regard to age), so every child must have an educational program into which he is ready and able to fit. Thus, some 10-year-olds in our schools will have to do work of the 3rd grade, or 4th grade, or 5th grade. Yet, all of the 10-year-olds would be in the fifth year of school regardless of the materials on which they are working.

Testing, teacher judgment and experience are used to determine the educational program that best fits every pupil when he enters school and as he progresses in the years ahead.

There is hard-headed thinking involved in detailing the Emerson plan. Mr. DiPasquale continues:

In the graded school, the teacher may have a class of 40, 45—or even more in extreme cases. In a 6th-grade class, she may have children of no less than six different grade levels.

Administrators and professors, from the sanctuary of their offices, tell the teacher that she must make provisions for individual differences. But what are the facts? The principal sends the teacher 6th-grade textbooks, workbooks and courses of study in every subject area.

But let us assume that she is given a wealth of variously graded materials. Is the typical teacher able to meet the needs of her heavy enrollment in each subject area—reading, social science, arithmetic, spelling, English, and so forth? The answer is obvious. The school day is not long enough.

In the nongraded school, however, where she has a group of children at about the same level of performance, she would be able to reach most of the class most of the time with materials they can read and understand.

What is the reaction of teachers to this type of classroom organization? The answer is an overwhelming and emphatic approval. Even teachers who were skeptical of its success have become its strongest supporters.

The "large" school—and this is what almost all schools seem to be becoming, with the prodigious growth in child population—seems to have an advantage over the small school in trying a non-graded program. The larger schools can organize "sections" for classes with fewer differences than would be possible in a small school. For this reason, if for no other, the Emerson plan merits considerable attention.

We have often wondered if it would be possible for a school to alternate between the disciplines imposed by the grading system, and the freedom of a non-graded plan. Imagine, for instance, the Boston Latin School carrying on for one or two years, without any grading system! Or imagine a non-graded school using the rigorous markings of Boston Latin, and the competitive struggle for promotion by way of contrast. After all, both methods are supported by psychological facts, and both are present in the world. Why not let both teachers and students get a taste of each? But the non-graded program is more than an interesting experiment—it is primarily designed to meet two pressing needs, and Mr. DiPasquale should have the last word in explaining them:

If the present statistics hold true in the future, almost half the children now in grade schools will never finish high school.

These are the "drop-outs."

These are the youngsters exposed daily to a curriculum they just can't handle—required to undertake studies beyond their present capacity and beyond their range of experiences and interests. They seem to learn only defeat and frustration. Small wonder many quit as soon as they can get out from under the compulsory-attendance laws.

On the other side of the picture are the brighter-than-average and the gifted students. Bored with work geared to the level of the average student in a grade, the quick-learners loaf, daydream, or think up mischief to pass the time.

They do the required work easily and quickly. The rest of the time—and it may amount to thousands of hours—their mental resources go untapped.

By the time these gifted but unstimulated children reach high school, their interest in learning has been dulled. Some have not learned good habits of work and concentration. They may never come close to the high intellectual accomplishments for which their superior mental equipment qualifies them.

What is needed today and for the future is an educational system so organized that every child can be provided for in keeping with his ability, his interests, and his time-table of development. It's being done.

## *FRONTIERS*

### **The Puzzle of Islamic Culture**

MOST of the articles which appear in MANAS endeavor to offer explanations of one sort or another. The present discussion will simply ask questions. Like most Westerners, we don't have much understanding of Islamic culture. As a writer remarks in a recent Unesco Bulletin: "The ordinary Western reader has usually derived his knowledge of the Islamic world from renderings of the Arabian Nights, which may or may not impart some of the flavour of Arab tastes, but are, in any case, racy, highly coloured stories, mingling wild flights of imagination with sordid details, and conceived originally as light entertainment for the masses."

One of the puzzles of Islamic culture is its sudden rise and spread across half the world. "Its message swept like fire all over the Middle East, and by the seventh century, A.D., only ninety years after the coming of Mohammed, Moslem culture was established in a vast empire extending from Spain to India." It is sometimes argued that Islam was spread by the sword. The Unesco writer, Khaldoun Kinany, however, points out that both Indonesia and the Philippine Islands turned Moslem in the sixteenth century without any weapons being used to persuade them, and that today Islam is expanding in Africa without organized activity. Islam has no enthusiasm for religious missionaries.

The obvious explanation of the rise of Islam is that it offered a simple faith of brotherhood, without distinction of race, caste or color. A second reason for the growth of Islam was its respect for learning. Moslem religion "set the search for truth as the highest aim of human life." From the middle of the eighth to the end of the eleventh century, wrote George Sarton in his *Introduction to the History of Science*, "Arabic was the progressive, scientific language of mankind." One could not be learned, during this period, without knowing Arabic.

What brought the eclipse of Arabian civilization? Mr. Kinany describes what seems to have happened:

. . . the sweeping character of the Arab conquest was in some ways harmful to the development of the

Arabian culture. The Arabs became unable to control their vast empire, especially in the cultural field. In some countries, their culture and their religion were not given sufficient time to adjust themselves to new conditions. These were not only misunderstood by the newly converted masses, but also contaminated by unhealthy thoughts and beliefs prevailing in those countries. Fatalism invaded Moslem religion and the Arabian culture which had primarily advocated free will. The productive scholasticism which, on the basis of the Unity of Truth, maintained a wholesome liaison between scholars and scientists, was hastily substituted by an unproductive scholasticism which put scientists at the mercy of religious scholars. Love for perfection and ideals were overshadowed by love for materialistic existence and the acceptance of daily life without glory or noble ambitions. Unfairness and seclusion were sometimes, and in some regions, the reward of Arab women who fought courageously with their men for the victory of Arabian civilization, and who enjoyed, in Arabia during the first century of Islam, rights and privileges which are not obtained even today by women in some civilized countries. We all know the eventual result of this quick growth and poor assimilation of a huge amount of strange food in foreign climates. The Arabian culture went into a long period of decay, from the thirteenth till the end of the eighteenth century.

The stirrings today, in the Arab world—in Jordan, Yemen, and Egypt—are occurring against the background of this long quiescence. The awakening of Moslems to the achievements of the West began, of course, in the nineteenth century, and has continued to the present, but this awakening has been accomplished through the "Westernization" of a small minority. Literacy in most lands ranges from 10 to 25 per cent. An exception is Lebanon, but in this small country literacy does not exceed 70 per cent.

The enormous gap between the modernized Arab elite and the great mass of the Moslem population is the subject of an article by Afif I. Tannous in *Human Organization* (quarterly of the Society for Applied Anthropology) for the Fall of 1955. The economic division of the people is extreme:

Land, which is the major source of wealth and prestige, is concentrated in the hands of the few. Most of the cultivators, who represent the majority of the people, are landless sharecroppers or owners of

too little land. Between these two extremes there is no substantial body of middle-class owner-operators to provide the necessary solidarity for the national organization. Incomes among these rural families are extremely low, averaging from \$100 to \$200 a year, and their depressed social position is far removed from the high status enjoyed by the elite. The same situation prevails with respect to labor groups. Wages are meager (\$0.50 to \$1.50 per day in most cases), and levels of living are low. Again this contrasts glaringly with the very high incomes and luxurious standards enjoyed by the few privileged, in the absence of substantial groups occupying the intervening levels.

One great difficulty is that the leaders for reform have lost contact with the great mass of the population. Especially where the motive of nationalism is no longer available to bring about an emotional unity are the intellectuals isolated from their countrymen. As Mr. Tannous says:

Strange as it may seem, the problem of the elite is accentuated by the increasing realization that they are, in certain basic respects, strangers to their own culture. To be sure, many of the intellectuals among them are well versed in the Arab cultural heritage as it developed and flourished in previous times. But when it comes to linking this heritage with the culture of the people as they live it today, and to interpreting it in terms of their current attitudes, cherished values, and community organizations, the leaders again find themselves facing the great gap. They just don't belong on the other side, and, at the same time, they know they cannot proceed much longer on the basis of the fallacious assumption that their way of life truly represents the way the rest of the people live or should live. For it so happens (and this is a stunning reality, the significance of which has not yet been fully comprehended by all concerned) that the rest of the people means nothing less than some 90 per cent of the total. Those of them who once belonged to this great majority—the village and tribal folk, and the depressed urban classes—have in most cases severed relations with the past and have been drawn away into the isolated world of the elite, revolving around itself, within narrowly limited horizons.

The problem is to get the people some of that 90 per cent—to *participate* in the reforms. Meanwhile, national programs of development founder on the failure of the peasants to cooperate. Things done *for them* are suspiciously rejected; "people go hungry

and underemployed, side by side with promising resources that remain idle, mainly because no system has been devised to involve the people at the local community in such productive enterprise, for their benefit and that of the country as a whole."

Islamic peoples have in common chiefly Islam. But should modern liberal Arabs abandon the separation of religious and national organization in order to win participation? If they do, how will religious minorities—Christians and others—be affected in the Arab states? And are the members of the Arab elite themselves equipped to assume leadership on a religious basis? These are searching questions raised by Mr. Tannous.

In justice to Islam, one more paragraph should be quoted from the article in *Human Organization*. It should not be assumed that these great inequalities have a religious origin. Actually, they date back to a period before the coming of Mohammed:

. . . this cleavage reaches into the history of human society in this part of the world. It partakes of remote origins, developed and crystallized over thousands of years, under the impact of rising and succeeding empires, from the days of the Pharaohs and the Persians, to the Ottoman regime, down to the present. True, notable movements arose at one time or another, during this long sweep of history, based upon principles of human dignity and equality of all citizens. But these were never able to prevail permanently, as they ultimately succumbed to the stronger influences of the traditional cleavage between the few and the many. The Arab-Islamic wave of conquest and culture is the outstanding illustration of this reality. The socio-economic systems maintained by the Ottoman Sultans over the area for several centuries, and by some of the Arab rulers before them, were indeed a far cry from the truly democratic principles and practices upon which Arab society was organized in the early years of Islam.

It seems a strange thing that a culture that was for so long a civilizing influence on the West should now be the captive of this difficult dilemma. Perhaps the years of the immediate future will throw some light on so puzzling a historical mystery.