

WHO ARE THE REACTIONARIES?

FOR a century or more, the word "reactionary" has been synonymous with blind conservatism in politics and economics. It is a term of extreme condemnation applied to those who resist any kind of change—good or bad—in the social order. It describes what may be called "political immorality," as distinguished from other offenses, and comes into popular use only when human welfare seems largely dependent upon an economic system which needs the power and support of government to make it work.

The Reactionary, therefore, is the Enemy of Economic Man. As seen by the social reformer or revolutionist, he is far worse than the burglar or the murderer, for he represents, in person, the kind of society which drives men into crime. More, he justifies that society with a theory of human nature in which crime, or the tendency to crime, is said to be inevitable. Thus the reactionary is a kind of cosmologist with a set of "truths" about the nature of things. He also has a host of timid followers who feel lost unless united—if only at the fringes—with the Powers that Be. If there is an established Church, they are of it; if the New Order comes, they will cheer it; and if told that only a great war can preserve their freedom, their fortune, and the virtue of their wives, they will fight it—to the last man.

The reactionary is really the Satan of the economic myth of salvation. Drawn by countless millions of heated words, his portrait is unmistakable. He is a man who is persuaded that his mind is inhabited by immutable truths. He identifies the social customs and economic practices of his time with the eternal laws of Nature. He has no gospel of progress. According to him, we have Arrived. He does have a theory of Reality, however—a reality made up of what we, or rather *he*, has got in the way of possessions

and power. The reactionary tells you what the facts of life are and invites you to let them alone.

It has been the thesis of both radicals and liberals that the stubborn blindness and selfishness of the reactionary are the principal foes to human progress. Starting in 1848—when the *Communist Manifesto* was first published—this theory of the origin of evil grew in influence and power over men's thinking until it finally became a virtual dogma of social belief.

Both radicals and liberal social reformers describe the good society in economic terms. The radical—the traditional Marxist radical, that is—believes that the reformer is a fuzzy thinker who supposes that the reactionary can be displaced from power by education and ballots. The liberal thinks the radical goes to unnecessary extremes. Both, however, believe that human behavior is most fully described in the language of politics and economics. Both believe that political economy is the sphere of essential change.

They both agree with Thomas Huxley that man is an animal, and agree with him also in saying that the Cosmic Process must be overcome, that a law of human brotherhood must conquer the law of the jungle, and they have plans for instituting this fraternal regime. They, like the reactionary, claim to know something of the laws of Nature, but they draw quite different conclusions. They say that the human world, the world of organized society, can be made plastic to the will of man. They are passionately convinced, some of them, that the economic arrangements of free enterprise, competition and private property and their attendant disorders and human tragedies are not the only arrangements possible for man. They maintain that the "system" can and should be changed, while the reactionary maintains that it

shouldn't and is willing to use guns to back up his position.

It is a fact worth noting that both those who want to change the social order and those who want to keep it the way it is have certain beliefs in common. Both want a world in which freedom means easy access to conditions of material well-being. The reactionary wants that freedom for a few, the reformer wants it for all. Both want a world in which they control other men; the radical, to manage things for the common good; the reactionary, to suit himself. Both have vested interest in their social—or anti-social—philosophy, one because he thinks it is the truth about human progress, the other because his sense of identity is deeply involved in the "possessions" which his philosophy defends.

Two things may occur to a man who reflects upon the struggle against Reaction: first, that men of good will, if they ally themselves with either side, ought to choose the side of those who work for the common good; but the second impression is that a kind of artificiality pervades this entire analysis of the human situation. It is quite possible to find both men and societies in which neither radical nor reactionary tendencies are dominant traits, according to our present definitions. A study of history shows the same conclusion. In other words, the Class Struggle may not be a fundamental fact of social relations, but an effect, a passing phase, perhaps, of other and probably more basic realities in human life. If this were true, it would help to explain why the average man does not become consciously involved in the Class Struggle except in moments of social crisis, and even then, when he stands on a lonely picket line, or meets a charge of mounted police—or even is killed by soldiers enforcing "martial law" in a strike-ridden region—he is still no doctrinaire, but only a man caught by the forces of history and upheld by the emotions of the hour. He is not *very* different from some of the men who fight against him.

The fact of the matter is that the average man does not naturally conceive the good and evil of his life in political terms; he is not "socially conscious" in the sense of theoretical texts, and perhaps he never will be. This average man, therefore, is the despair of the radical who, having integrated his philosophy of life around carefully thought-out political and economic values, is determined that the masses shall know and profit by the truths he has discovered. In theory, the radical identifies himself with those masses, but in fact, the more he exhorts and inflames them, the further away from them he gets. He becomes impatient at their political immaturity, for "history" will not wait. Instead of their teacher, he becomes, often unconsciously to himself, their manipulator—a kind of political priest. In the end, if his plans are successful, he rises as their dictator, in physical victory but absolute moral defeat. He has made, not the system, but *men*, malleable to his will. He has not overcome the Cosmic Process, but succumbed to it, and now the system begins to mold him as its slave. Worst of all, he has assumed the likeness of the Reactionary he used to despise and adopts his methods in the name of Liberation. His new system is now rigid with frozen polemics and half-truths that have cooled since they poured with molten intensity into the conflict that was to make men free. His hopeful and aspiring theory of the Good has become a dogma fixed in justification of the institutions he has created.

How shall we explain this sequence of social history? It is easy enough to account for it in abstract terms, but always, when this is done, the meaning of the explanation creeps away and hides behind some misty generality. What we want is a society without reactionaries, and about all we have learned from recent experience is that you don't get rid of reactionaries by killing them off. Nor is a "return to religion" the answer. We spent the Middle Ages under the rule of religious authority—a period of reaction so all-powerful and destructive of personal freedom that the Western world has been deliberately materialist

ever since, and only now is beginning, somewhat shyly, to speak intelligibly in moral terms.

It comes to this, that at the political level we need a series of categorical "don'ts" which will at least define what no reformer or revolutionary should ever contemplate doing in the name of justice, freedom and the common man. If, after setting down these don'ts, it becomes possible to develop from their opposites an affirmative social philosophy, well and good. Thus, to make a start:

1. There is a sense in which the differences among men ought not to be erased, and another sense in which they should. Social and economic organization which obliterates the opportunity for distinctive, individual human expression is inevitably fascist and contains the root of reactionary thinking. This is a "don't" which, unless admitted by the radical, transforms him into a reactionary.

2. We cannot be too careful about dogmatizing on the "laws of nature" in all cases where supposed "laws" can be made to justify doing things *to* other men. This is the philosophy of "purge," "liquidate" and "sterilize." When "scientific" utopians go into politics, reconstruction usually begins with decrees and ends by making political execution an infant industry.

3. Finally, the objective of social change ought to be defined in terms of the *quality* of man we seek, not in terms of certain conditions that we claim will create the desirable quality. And the quality of man is measured by his ideas. The radical is a "dangerous" man, not because he is poor, but because he *thinks*. The radical hates the articulate reactionary more than any other, because he expresses self-justifying *ideas*. Ideas are the primary forces in human history, for better or for worse.

This third postulate, of course, amounts to a categorical rejection of the basic appeal of every historical revolution since the Reformation. It minimizes the emphasis of every political speech

and deflates the intensity of every campaign to establish "security" for the world's millions. Nevertheless, it is affirmed as the only principle that can protect mankind from endless cycles of reaction. It is founded on the ancient proposition that man does not live by bread alone; it asserts that revolutionary failure, through the centuries, is the perpetual indigestion caused by ignoring this proposition. No great leader, no great reformer, no great revolutionary—not even Marx—was moved merely by personal concern for his own material welfare. The assumption that others must be lured on to a better world by promises of physical things sets those others apart as a lesser breed, as men incapable of the self-sacrifice of their leaders. This, we submit, is a Luciferian arrogance, a final negation of the equalitarian principle and a mockery of the dignity of man. It is, at root, the contention that man in the mass is soulless and unfree. It is the basic fallacy of our time, which all free men should deny and continually protest.

Letter from **INDIA**

AN important choice is before the people of India, and, in varying degree, before all peoples of the world. Shall man live as a "subject" whose mode of life and of labour is determined for him by the State—as in Communist Russia? Or shall he live as a thinker, himself determining his responsibility to his fellow men, purifying the existing forms of democracy of vitiating dross and elevating them to the stature of truly cooperative communities? Because democratic forms of government have not wholly succeeded in the United States, Britain or France, and because these countries have become involved in terrible wars and now face economic and social disaster, Democracy is no longer a glowing ideal for the youth of the world. As a consequence, here in India, the lure of Russian Communism is strong.

However, an increasing number of thoughtful men perceive that the failure of democratic states to uphold liberty and enhance culture should not be interpreted as the failure of Democracy itself. Democracy is a spirit, not a State; its true life springs from the hearts and minds of men who have grasped the principles of self-government and who recognize that full realization of the democratic ideal must depend upon education.

Education is rightly said to be the friend of liberty. But he who has liberty often uses its power and influence in a wrong way, thus endangering not only his own future liberty but the very Cause over which the Goddess presides. From this point of view, Adult Education is of greater importance than even education of children. India's greatest man, Gandhiji [the suffix, "ji," bears a meaning of reverent endearment], has been labouring for years to educate the adult population to reshape its life. His philosophy is a moral individualism. As more and more individuals reform themselves, they will finally create, as if by a miracle, the new order of noble minds. This is Gandhiji's objective. Every evening he speaks to immense crowds and the effect of this unceasing labour is an influence as great as it is invisible. But Gandhi is a revolutionary with respect to social irresponsibility. To give but one instance: speaking to the Meos, regarded as a criminal tribe, he appealed to them to make an all-out effort to reform themselves. Others, he said, should not be left to do the work of reclamation. His advice to the Government was this: "Even if the allegations regarding the Meos are correct, that is no reason for sending them to Pakistan. Meos belong to the Indian Union and it is the

Union's duty to help them to reclaim themselves by providing them with facilities of education and establishing settlements for them to live in."

The spirit of this idea, as it applies to India's broader problems, was aptly put by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on December 14. Addressing an enormous public meeting at Allahabad, he said:

. . .the battle of our political freedom has been fought and won, but another battle, no less important than what we have won, still faces us. It is a battle with our own selves. We have to bury communal feelings; we have to organise ourselves; we have to remove social evils and make our country great and prosperous.

"Battle with our own selves." This appeals to the Indian temperament. Centuries upon centuries of our traditional upbringing finds ready response in the breasts of our millions—to fight the demons of lust and anger and greed and pride. Pandit Nehru naturally referred to "communal feelings." The curse of communalism and creedalism has manifested in such a pronounced manner during the past four months that India is compelled to recognize its evil. Carnage has been so awful as to strike the imagination of many, and where imagination is really struck, a way to better times may be confidently expected. [On Jan. 13, Gandhi began a fast "unto death" in protest against the bloody conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Two days later his physicians said Gandhi's life was in danger.—Eds.]

For long years, Gandhiji has been labouring to create that revolutionary force in the life of the individual. The blood baths in more than one region have clearly revealed that neglect of his advice and instruction has brought ruin and disgrace to India. While some have questioned the value of any religion, and look to the West for guidance, not a few are seeking anew for that Religion which, as a Way, and not a creed, would produce peace and enlightenment for all.

INDIAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

BOOKS ON INDIA

THE India of Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah is a very different sort of place from the India of Kipling, in which most Americans made their acquaintance with the Mysterious East—and a Hollywood revue of elephant boys, Gunga Dins and thrilling skirmishes with fanatical "heathen" riflemen in the defiles and gorges of the Khyber Pass have not helped to bring us up to date. People interested in the work of the Christian missions have at least gained a broader view of India's problems from books such as E. Stanley Jones' *Christ of the Indian Road*, but the great majority, who make no special effort to inform themselves on the subject, have supplemented their Kiplingesque impressions with little more than newspaper and occasional magazine articles.

Present-day India represents the interplay of powerful religious, political and historical forces. Understanding India means understanding these forces and their origin, even though this may involve inquiry into the distant past. It is important to realize, for example, that political and economic jealousies probably play a greater part than religious differences in the strife between Hindu and Muslim; and that while India's revolutionary struggle appears to have been simply a fight against British imperialism, a subtler conflict, more far-reaching in consequence, has also been going on within the Indian mind, where the opposing principles of Eastern and Western civilization can find no resting place until one or the other side conquers. It is equally important to study the play of these forces as expressed in the lives of India's great men, who are by no means mere "products" of their time, but creative thinkers of power and originality.

A beginning can be made by reading Gandhi himself, whose autobiography was published by Macmillan in 1931. It may be, as some have said, a poor book, according to literary canons, but a book about himself by a man who has largely affected the history of 370 million people ought not to be ignored. Gandhi pays no tribute to the Gods of self-esteem and conventional respectability, nor is it easy to find out precisely what "God" occupies the highest place in Gandhi's thinking—probably, none, according to Western conceptions of deity. But Gandhi is

nevertheless the leader of a practical revolution in religion—the sort of religion which has immediate consequences for both personal life and politics. Gandhi "put sincerity into politics," as an Anglo-Indian paper bitterly opposed to his movement was forced to admit. He has shown, by personal example, that individual morality and political morality can be the same thing: this, we submit, is a world-shaking innovation in public affairs.

This book reveals the simplicity of Gandhi's life, the intensity of his convictions, and his constitutional inability to live in any way counter to his principles. The "practical" act is always the act issuing from moral judgment. It has been Gandhi's genius to be able to convey this idea of human conduct to millions of Hindus.

Critics of Gandhi usually attack what they believe to be his rejection of the benefits of modern civilization and his apparent unconcern for the findings of science. What these critics ignore is the unique power of Gandhi's life, which is based on principles which lead him to take the position he does regarding such questions as birth control, the manufacturing methods of modern industry, and the alleged advantage of Western over traditional Eastern education. It is always fair to ask, If Gandhi has a kind of knowledge which is dramatically lacking in the West—and his extraordinary *power* is certainly evidence of knowledge of some kind—should we not consider both his principles and the way he applies them, without prejudice, or even impatience?

It is quite impossible to understand either Gandhi or India without first grasping the principles on which his religious and social philosophy is based. One cannot admire the "good" Gandhi has done and is doing and at the same time condemn certain of his ideas as mere superstitions. Gandhi is too intelligent a man, too integrated in character, with too many years of intensive thinking behind him to be dismissed in this manner.

Gandhi's *Hind Swarai* (Indian Home Rule), a small paper-bound book, is invaluable for knowledge of his motives. Even if you have to send to India for a copy (to G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, publisher), this book should be read for its lucid development of Gandhi's thinking. Then, for his later life, read Krishnalal Shridharani's *Mahatma and the World*.

(Louis Fischer's *A Week with Gandhi* is a recent portrait through sympathetic Western eyes.) Shridharani, however, illustrates the tension between Eastern and Western ways of thinking in the minds of many educated Hindus. While devoted to Gandhi, Shridharani obviously wishes to "apologize" for or somehow to "explain" his leader's failure to adopt certain conclusions of modern science. Shridharani is a good journalist rather than a philosopher, and his book is no substitute for Gandhi's own writings. Those wishing to be familiar with Gandhi's utterances today should subscribe to *Harijan*, his weekly paper, published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai, Navajivan Press, Kalupur, Ahmedabad, India (\$3.00 a year).

Jawaharlal Nehru is India's greatest man of divided mind—divided between East and West. One book of Nehru's, *Toward Freedom*, is a necessity, although the others may be enjoyed. *Toward Freedom* is the extra-ordinary testament of a strong, completely honest and unusually intelligent man whose life, fortune and many talents have been wholeheartedly given to the cause of modern India. The struggles, sacrifices, consecration and faith of millions live in its pages. This book was written in prison, like so much of the literature of modern India, and India's future flows from the drama of *Toward Freedom* as much as from the inspiration of Gandhi. Nehru, however, loves Gandhi as a strong man can love a great one; even in disagreement with him, Nehru never forgets what Gandhi has accomplished. Nehru realizes that Gandhi represents the awakening soul of India. He is too wise to deprecate those aspects of Gandhi's life and mission which he does not understand and personally support. Anup Singh's *Rising Star of India* is a good, brief biography of Nehru.

For more than a century, Western students were dependent upon European orientalists for translation and discussions of India's ancestral philosophy. Today, however, one of the world's leading thinkers, Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, occupies the Spaulding Chair of Eastern Philosophy and Religions at Oxford, and has published his authoritative *Indian Philosophy* in which scholars may find personal conviction linked with precise and thorough exposition of the profound moral and metaphysical themes of India's great religions. The rare quality of Radhakrishnan's thinking may be briefly sampled in an article in the *International Journal of Ethics* for October, 1922. A

volume of his essays, *Religion and Society*, was issued in 1947.

Those who enjoyed Lin Yutang's *Between Tears and Laughter* will do well to visit the library and read Rabindranath Tagore's "Nationalism in the West" in the *Atlantic* for March, 1917, an equally searching piece of wartime writing and far from "dated" today. And while at the *Atlantic* file, read also "The Destiny of India" in the December, 1930 issue—by Charles Johnston. Surveying India's civilizing influence on the Western world, Dr. Johnston—a translator of the *Upanishads*—shows that the birth of Western science may owe to ancient India the key idea of the heliocentric theory in astronomy. He also reminds us that the *zero* in mathematics was an Indian invention. The so-called "Arabic" numerals actually came from India—"The most matter-of-fact merchant makes obeisance to the Rishis when he adds up the totals in his cashbook. He uses symbols borrowed from India every time he writes a check." India's greatest contribution, however, has been her philosophical riches. Schopenhauer obtained his primary inspiration from the *Upanishads*; Thoreau and Emerson were steeped in Eastern thinking, as Carpenter has proved in *Emerson and Asia*, and Christy in *The Orient in American Transcendentalism*.

Finally, two books on the countries surrounding India are highly recommended. *Peaks and Lamas*, by Marco Pallis, is a classic on the borderland country where India and Tibet meet. A cultivated man of English education, Mr. Pallis went to India to scale Himalayan peaks, but stayed to enter into the life of Tibetan Buddhists, to admire their ways and to study their religion. His book is a revelation in understanding of the East, and a challenge to the West. *The Soul of a People*, written much earlier, by Fielding Hall, a British Army officer who participated in the conquest of Burma and remained there as an official, relates the conversion of the author to the religion of the Burmese and gives his good and sufficient reasons for submitting to this "conquest." No other book conveys the sense of reality of Eastern religion in the minds of its believers as this one—and no other book makes so searching a comparison between the religious beliefs and practices of East and West, unless it be, perhaps, *The Creed of Buddha*, by Edmond Holmes.

COMMENTARY

LABELS AND THE MAN

FAR too many of us are under the sway of words whose sounds—certainly not their meanings—show a potent magic for separating men from one another. The recklessness with which such words as "fascist," "communist," "reactionary," "radical," "labor-baiter" and the like are hurled about betrays a lack of thought equalled only by lack of vocabulary.

We are coming to evaluate other human beings solely by their supposed position in regard to one or two narrow issues which commend our special detestations. For some reason which is obscure, but certainly not to our credit, we do not as willingly label men as friends because of equally limited expressions of *agreement*. It thus comes about that our sole valuation of an individual is often on some issue which is minor in his own personal life; the major part of him thus becomes non-existent to us.

Were the truth seen, the unknown areas of agreement might frequently be greater than the known areas of disagreement. Men seldom label one another face to face. We adopt attitudes of rigorous enmity toward men we know only fractionally—through a small segment of their "opinions"—seldom recognizing that we have as easily passed over or condoned equally "detestable" opinions in friends whom we have learned to esteem for other reasons.

Facile use of the language of stigma tends to break down the discrimination of those who develop this "skill," until the words lose whatever rational meaning they once had. Examination, for instance, of the use of the word "fascist" by communist papers and speakers shows its application to men and ideas to be so wide that its only logical meaning is "that which is noncommunist." The use of the word "red," on the other hand, is about on a par. When we reach this frame of mind about an "ideology," nothing else about the "enemy" has any significance; his actual or supposed enemy affiliation, being wholly bad to our minds, makes the *man* wholly bad—to *us*. There could be no better device for the creation of universal hatred than this stupid misuse of words. Even the personal characters of those who use such epithets are hardly ever narrow enough to fit into similar pigeonholes.

A great though unconscious contempt for human nature and its incalculable complexities is involved in these classifications. The nature of an animal can be sufficiently defined—or, what is the same thing, its reactions under given stimuli can be sufficiently predicted—to justify classification into fixed species, but human character is more elusive. Slogan classifications ignore precisely the things that make man human—his mental versatility, his unpredictability and moral changeability.

The political and economic thinking of any intelligent man perforce changes throughout life with growing experience. Ideological "labels," however, tend to stick. While it is true that many, in order to enjoy the companionship and support of some "sect" of social theory, voluntarily accept its partisan ideas, the classifiable individual is never the whole individual. No true advance in human affairs is ever brought about by classifiable men, nor, we may add, by the habit of classifying them. Classifiable men advance social dishonesty, through their "necessity" of concealing thought in order to keep their friends, their possessions and their "security." And condemning them with slogans confirms their weaknesses by creating the need in them for self-defense.

Only one label fits any human being—*man*.

Editorial Experiment

Response to the early issues of MANAS gives promise of friendly and often enthusiastic support from many readers. We shall not as a rule print letters, but from time to time will extract and summarize the content of correspondence that is of general interest. Thus far, a few have remarked upon the fact that MANAS articles are unsigned and that the editors remain unnamed. Briefly, this is part of the paper's project in independent thinking. We are experimenting with anonymity as possibly a policy of fruitfulness for the sort of journalism we have set out to practice. Ideas, we hold, are more important than personal identities, and our policy is a test of this belief. The paper itself, as an editorial and corporate entity, assumes full responsibility for all unsigned statements which appear. Perhaps our experiment won't work, in which case we'll try another policy. Meanwhile, we make this explanation for those who are interested.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

FAIRY tales and other imaginative narratives of old-fashioned lore are no longer popular with children. Dick Tracy and Superman have taken their place—yet in no real way have taken their place at all. The new characters move in rigid routines amid the familiar surroundings of our mechanized world, which is still the world we know and accept too easily, peopled with the usual sorts of Bad Men and Good Men. The old legends and fairy stories gave opportunity for the child to enter another world—one created and appreciated by an unfettered imagination. The old stories perhaps, will never become popular again, because new imaginative forms are demanded by cultural change. But this demand is not met, and today we are producing generations without imagination—or, at least, without the capacity to imagine anything, except within stereotyped limits.

The customary method of stunting the imagination of our children is this: We give them too many answers and ask them too few questions. It is as simple as that. We apparently do this because we wish them to have a "mature" view point as soon as possible. This is more than a little curious, for at other times we all admit that if maturity means sanity, nothing in the modern world *is* very mature. In the fields of both science and political affairs, we are becoming less sure of ourselves. *Life* magazine, for instance, illustrating the current "failure of nerve," is now proclaiming its belief in God. Paradoxically, many of our ideas of God are, perhaps, weirder twists of imaginative logic than anything Grimm ever created. We know nothing, really, of "God," yet we talk to our children about Him with confidence. What we are not sure of for ourselves, we seem to be very sure about when we address the young. This can be only because we feel that we must instruct them in the cultural heritage as soon as possible, so that they may "fit" into the modern world. But suppose, in the first place, that it is

psychologically healthier *not* to be able to fit into our world?

Another of our common unfairnesses to children comes from the cynical certainty with which we tell them not to expect very much from anyone. If the child believes this, he will surely expect little of himself as well. Ours is a skeptical age, but the child, as child, is more inclined to believe in many miracles—among them the miracle of an always shining hope and endless expectation. Even if we are two-thirds right and the child largely wrong, the "rightness" of his optimism has more human value than our pessimism. Is it really so foolish to expect that life can fulfill the dreams of a child? How can we tell? It happens now and then.

Then there are the questions that border on ultimate matters of philosophy and religion, like "Where did I come from?" Do we *know* the answer to this, or do we just repeat to children the things said by "other people," who have become too disillusioned to think and to imagine. We can tell our children where their bodies came from, quite naturally, and, we hope, without embarrassment, yet to imply that the whole child is created by a biological process is to pretend that we know more than we do.

And then there are those first things we tell children about what is "good" and "bad." "Bad" thoughts are usually those which are not in conformity with the parents' religion, the parents' notions of "democracy," of morality, etc. But since pressure exerted against a child's idea produces in him the reflex of hiding many thoughts from parents—and from everyone else—parental optimism that the child subsequently may become an inventive genius or a man of exceptional mind is apt to be wishful thinking. This is not to deny the fact that parents often encourage many kinds of youthful original opinion—yet if originality regarding fundamental ideas is taboo, it matters little what the child thinks about other things.

Such criticism will perhaps be classified as merely another generalization about allowing children "freedom of expression." But this should not be confused with what we have said. Simply to tell a child to do what he wants is not necessarily productive. A great many things influence his choice of actions besides considered thought, and the habit of acting thoughtlessly is almost the worst habit you can get. Encouraging the child to think *why* he wants what he wants is different.

The development of an original idea, no matter how strange, has to do with the development of a life of the mind. Something more is involved in the production of any youthful idea than simply personal desire. Thinking about an idea—any idea—raises the dimension of the quest for truth before the child's eye. For the mind will ask a certain question about an idea—the question, "But is it true?"—while the mind does not usually question in the same way the thing one desires. Abstract thoughts of the child, no matter how peculiar and apparently valueless to parents, should be drawn out and developed by questioning. Unless this is done, there is actually no way of knowing whether or not some important truth is buried in the original formlessness of the thought. This especially applies to all matters touching morality and religion. The wondering child, stopped short by a well-meaning parent, may never quite know what he would like to believe. He never has a chance to find out.

Real communication between parents and children, which after all is the goal to be reached, demands that the child be encouraged and helped to develop his own original points of reference, no matter what they are. Suggestion and helpful discussion can follow in natural sequence. The modern child is apt to grow up with strong and definite personal *desires*, but with only partially formed *ideas*. Communication on this basis between parents and children becomes only a

clash of wills, not a blending of complementary or contrasting ideas.

It is impossible to do harm by asking a child too many questions about what he thinks, while entirely possible to give him too many answers.

FRONTIERS

The Pattern of Life

NEARLY ninety years ago, the French chemist, Pierre Berthelot, announced: "The objective of our science is to banish 'Life' from the theories of organic chemistry."

Before considering whether or not Berthelot and his followers were successful in carrying out this purpose, it is worth while to inquire how and why it originated. What did a great chemist of the nineteenth century have against "Life" as a factor in the relationships of organic matter, and why did he think that organic chemistry would make better progress by eliminating mention of "Life" from all its theories?

Actually, Berthelot's objective was the same as that of Laplace, the French astronomer of a previous generation. When Napoleon asked what part was played by God in the Nebular Theory, developed by Laplace to explain the origin of the solar system, the astronomer replied, "Sire, I have managed without that hypothesis!" Like Laplace, who felt that astronomy could get along without God, Berthelot wanted organic chemistry to get along without Life.

Many of the scientists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were of the same opinion as Laplace. Their reason? On earth, the men who spoke for "God" were unfriendly to science. According to some scientifically inclined thinkers with an acquaintance with history, the "men of God" were also unfriendly to mankind. The two most eminent atheists of the eighteenth century, Lamettrie and d'Holbach, were both convinced that freedom from religion was of the first importance in the battle to liberate man. Both wrote treatises against God—that is, against God as the arbiter of human destiny.

So there were both humanitarian and scientific reasons for the opposition of scientists to the "God" hypothesis. As Bertrand Russell put it, "The materialistic dogma has not been set up by

men who loved dogma, but by men who felt that nothing less definite would enable them to fight the [religious] dogmas they disliked." No scientist could put the will of God under a microscope to see how it worked and determine what laws it obeyed. The will of God was a law unto itself, and Science refuses to recognize any such anarchist principle as a force in nature.

The struggle between Darwinism and the doctrines of dogmatic Christianity, which began in 1859 with publication of *The Origin of Species*—and still continues with a windy unreality in Fundamentalist forums—was another great chapter in the scientific campaign against God.

But what about Life? Life, certainly, had threatened no man with eternal damnation. Life had no established church with sinister black-robed priests and intoxicating rituals. Used to the modern irreligious vocabulary, we easily forget that life, like everything else under the sun, was once believed to be the gift of God. It was "imparted" by God—a kind of mystic essence—at the moment of creation, and was ever thereafter responsive to God's will. Even for unorthodox thinkers such as Paracelsus and Stahl, life was an incommensurable power—something not subject to scientific measurement and without any discoverable relation to the working of Galileo's world-machine.

Life, said the mechanistic scientists, looking back on their tender-minded predecessors, is just an excuse for our inability to explain organic processes in plain, mechanical terms. "Life" is a handy gremlin we invoke to cover up what we don't know. The true investigator will never say "Life," like a savage muttering a charm, but will find out the real explanation and state it with scientific clarity. Certainty, not ecstasy, is what we need. And so Berthelot wanted to banish "Life" from the language of science.

Now, after nearly a century of subsequent biological research, it is possible to say that the attempt to get rid of the concept of "Life" by explaining all vital processes in either mechanical

or analytical terms has been a failure. Instead, contemporary research is beginning to suspect that vital processes will require a scientific vocabulary all their own. A few years ago, a leading biologist, R. E. Coker, said: "My vision of the future encompasses no conceivable state of biological and chemical science when all or any biological phenomenon will be reduced to chemical terms."

Last December the American Association for the Advancement of Science elected as its new president for 1948 a botanist, Prof. E. W. Sinnott, of Yale, who has for years been carrying on a dignified campaign for what amounts to Dr. Coker's principle—a principle opposite in implication to that proclaimed by Berthelot. There is no question about the scientific standing of Prof. Sinnott, nor, for that matter, about the revolutionary significance of his research. Prof. Sinnott, of course, is not on the side of scientific gremlins which may be summoned whenever the investigator comes up against things he can't explain, but he does stand for the willingness to set aside any method of research that, in the nature of things, cannot be applied to observable facts.

The question Prof. Sinnott years ago set out to answer was this: What lies behind the forms of living things? What holds them together, guides their development, maintains the extraordinary complex patterns of organic structure? He seeks resolution of the "fundamental paradox" of all the life sciences:

. . . That protoplasm, itself liquid, formless and flowing, inevitably builds those formed and coordinated structures of cell, organ and body in which it is housed. If dynamic morphology can come to the center of this problem, it will have brought us close to the ultimate secret of life itself.

This quest is not merely a matter of "pure" research, pursued out of a laudable but academic curiosity. Cancer, which kills one in every seven persons in the United States, is a protoplasmic growth-pattern gone wild. Paul Ehrlich, after

studying the disease of cancer for fifteen years, said in desperation; "Until some fundamental discovery has solved the mystery of life itself, our knowledge of cancer will not advance a single step." We know more now, perhaps, about cancer than Ehrlich was able to find out, but cancer nevertheless takes more lives today than it did in Ehrlich's time. We still don't know enough.

The major discovery of Prof. Sinnott is that the growth of living things is more than the addition of one cell to others, like brick piled on brick. Growth is controlled by some unseen patterning power which rules the entire organism and acts independently of cell division although in harmony with this process. A finding of this sort suggested that study of the formative power of protoplasm should become a study of *fields* of life.

Within the past fifteen years, numerous other discoveries have pointed in the same direction. Investigators at Yale, working on the cancer problem, declared that wherever there is life, there is electricity." They had found, in short, that the fields of living things in which, according to Sinnott, all growth proceeds, are in reality, "electro-dynamic fields," and that they extend to a measurable distance beyond the limits of living bodies, and under the proper conditions will create a flow of electric current—in other words, every organism is a living generator of electricity. The workers at Yale believe it is "inconceivable that such a widespread phenomenon should be a by-product of life, for it is so intimately bound up with fundamental biological processes that it disappears at death." Which is to say that in this electro-dynamic field they have come upon the operation of life itself.

Biologists are now hard at work to determine to what extent and how the various vital processes of organisms are affected or governed by this electro-dynamic field. Instead of the machine theory, they now have a field theory—in close analogy to the great discoveries of the past generation in modern physics.

And so Life, once the obedient servant of an omnipotent God, then an unscientific pixie anathematized by Science, has finally been reinstated as a respectable resident of the natural world, its return being sponsored, not by "God," but by rigorous scientific observation. Life is now a kind of electric-dynamic "ghost" which pervades the living organism and seems possessed of a limited but active intelligence that guides the growth-processes of the forms it animates.

Of course, the scientists don't call it "intelligence," but there it is. Aristotle called it the *entelechy*, and Driesch, a scientific philosopher of some two thousand years later, revived the term to apply to similar discoveries. Cautious men like Prof. Sinnott prefer to say simply that on such questions, scientifically speaking, "very little is known." With that we can all agree.