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THE REAL ISSUE

THE most encouraging sign of these times is the fact that many of the leading specialists of our society—the scientists—are no longer acting and speaking only as specialists in their relation to the public good, but also as citizens and men. Atomic physicists like Harold Urey and Leo Szilard are grappling with international problems—"The peace-time applications of atomic energy are of no importance whatever unless the danger of atomic bombs is banished from the earth," says Urey. Late in 1945, Samuel Allison, one of the physicists in charge of the New Mexico phase of the bomb's development, declared that certain atomic scientists would "begin an elaborate study of the colors of butterflies" unless free research and publication of results were once again allowed. Otto Hahn, winner of the 1944 Nobel Prize in chemistry, refused throughout the war to help the Nazis with his knowledge of nuclear physics. Hahn was the German scientist who, in 1939, discovered the secret of uranium fission, the basis of the bomb's reaction. Prof. M. E. Oliphant, British physicist, declared that scientists who worked on the bomb (himself among them) were more horrified than anyone else at the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some of his colleagues, he reported, were unwilling to have anything to do with atomic bomb research. In America, in 1946, Prof. Norbert Wiener, an eminent mathematician, denied an aircraft corporation access to his research in a field bearing on guided missiles. "The practical use of guided missiles," he wrote, "can only be to kill foreign civilians indiscriminately, and it furnishes no protection whatsoever to civilians in this country." Wiener added: "I do not expect to publish any future work of mine which may do damage in the hands of irresponsible militarists."

The epoch of the supremacy of specialized knowledge and subdivided intelligence is over, and these men have realized it. They are looking for the keys to problems that are not solved by specialized research, and which give no promise of ever submitting to such "techniques." These problems, they see, will be solved by men, thinking and acting as moral agents, and in no other way.

They see this on two counts. First, it is evident that the law of diminishing returns has set in with respect to any future increase in military destructiveness "for defense." One atomic bomb, dropped off-shore in the Atlantic, could drown all the people in New York's subways and wash the rest away.

Second, there is this question: Why should scientists—men who, as a rule, are naturally humanitarian—continue to explore the secrets of atomic power, when they know that in wartime, and perhaps before, they will be dragooned and segregated like so many sacred animals, and expected to produce weapons of hideous destruction with the regularity of slot machines fed the proper quantity of slugs?

The intelligent scientist knows that the days of "pure" research are gone, that he is his own man no longer. The quiet laboratory is now a place for military conferences, where statesmen and military experts ask the question: How many can you kill? . . . How soon?

History has changed the background, the foundation and the scene of scientific enterprise. A whole philosophy of scientific progress has gone aglimmering with the shotgun (atom bomb) wedding of science and national military policy. The world is coming apart, and atomic physics knows not one single secret about how to put it back together again. The confident utterance of a generation of scientific thinkers—"All we have to is to apply scientific method to social problems"—

echoes emptily in a world where mob emotions and propaganda determine who shall have power; where fear and self-interest guide major national decisions. The familiar scientific rejoinder—"We cannot be held responsible for the misuse of our discoveries"—is likewise acquiring a hollow ring. It begins to be the same as saying, "If I give a lunatic a gun, I will not be responsible if he shoots me." The time-honored theory of the limited social obligations of the scientist turns out to have unforeseen qualities of the boomerang.

This is no time for science "as usual," business "as usual," or anything "as usual." The "as usual" methods of our collective behavior, we are finding out, are mutually destructive—which means, in the "one world" we talk so much about, self-destructive. Fortunately, the revolt of the specialists against specialized solutions is not limited to atomic physicists. Other scientists are rejecting the materialistic assumptions of conventional thinking and education, not as the result of some startling discovery, but from the pressure of world events. The "usual" method of education in modern universities and its "usual" effects were well described a few years ago by a university undergraduate in an open letter to the President of Yale.

> You [this student wrote] learned that man is distinct from animals, and yet our biology courses now conceive of man as one species of animal. . . . A logical inference from every psychology lecture we have ever attended would be that man's least thought and act can be wholly explained in terms of cause and effect; that every choice is dictated by a million strings of deterministic factors leading back to the dawn of time. . . .
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> If men are but animals, why not treat them as such? An animal has no rights. The law among animals is the law of the strong. If man is a slave to determinism, incapable of a free choice, what is the value of the ballot, trial by jury and civil liberties in general? . . .
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> Isn't it palpably obvious to you that at the root of the trouble lies an apparent contradiction between the implications of our studies and the ideals we are expected to revere ?

That, briefly, is why eminent scientists are seriously discussing religion. Disturbed by the multiplying evils of "secular" society and of education with animalist definitions of man, they want to reverse this trend. They want a new definition of man. In order to get it, du Noüy, author of *Human Destiny*, was willing to revive the old definition of God. His book, therefore, was in a sense progressive for science, but atavistic for religion. He found the scientific universe big and free enough to accommodate a spiritual conception of human beings, but it would take a modern Dante to fit the traditional image of the Christian God into the modern scientific universe. Of course, du Noüy did not himself advocate belief in the traditional theological divinity, but he implied that people ought to turn to the Christian Church for religious inspiration, which is the same thing. He gave no metaphysical structure for his spiritual yearnings, which means that the du Noüy version of religion has no "theology"—no principles, that is, but only a warm feeling for the religious idea.

What actually happens in this book is that the prestige of science is used to rehabilitate the reputation of organized religion. Writers who do this have found out that the quick and easy way to affect human behavior is through familiar habits. They believe that if habits verbally identified with "righteousness" can be reinforced, righteousness will itself come into being. But when the habits are bad, there is no quick and easy way at all to affect human behavior for good. Belief in irrational dogma is a bad habit, and reinforcing it can only make our confusion more profound.

The works of du Noüy and other men with similar intentions are nevertheless important as representing a clearly defined tendency among serious thinkers to seek a moral foundation for human life. If this tendency can become independent of sectarian tradition, it will mark a great forward step for the twentieth century. But that, of course, will mean the development of specific relationships between the scientific idea of

man and metaphysical and moral ideas. Anything less would be mere religiosity. When the concept of moral law has a definite place in the theories of clinical psychology, it can then be said that science is evolving a new definition of man. When the idea of free will is integrated, openly, with factors of "conditioning," and cultural inheritance, then sociology may be regarded as having reached a synthesis with religion which is more than an expedient compromise with existing institutions. When anthropology is willing to grant factual reality to the moral intelligence which differentiates man from all animals, then there will be some meaning to the claim that science and religion have finally united, and that there is no longer a conflict between them.

In the meantime, the movement toward independent, non-specialized thinking may slowly create a new world of moral and intellectual values for the coming generation to live in. Not only scientists are participating in this movement. Newspaper editors like Manchester Boddy (Los Angeles *Daily News)* are studying and expounding philosophical sociology; a college president like Robert M. Hutchins has forsaken administrative desk and class room to crusade for a popular renaissance in disciplined thinking, through Great Books seminars all over the country; Arthur Morgan, engineer and educator, has left these professions to place his idealism and social inventiveness at the disposal of the small communities of America; thoughtful radicals like Dwight Macdonald are deserting party and political fraction to rethink the entire social question and to attempt to evolve new principles of personal and social morality.

Today, the real issue is Man, and his nature. After three hundred years of preoccupation with other questions, this problem is pressed upon modern civilization by forces converging from every direction. So far, only a few individuals and small groups have seen the issue and grasped its significance. But the idea is in the air, it is the fertile germ of a new philosophy, the only promise we have of a humane life in tomorrow's world.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

UNLESS an unfortunate possessor of inherited wealth, a young man or woman will at some date discover that he is accorded esteem for what he *does,* and for what he gives of himself—instead of being "loved" and "respected" simply for being present upon the scene. A parent, then, should "like" or "love" his child only when that child expresses the attitudes and performs the actions that would merit the parents' approval when manifest in any other human being.

Any other sort of love is possessive in nature. The argument, "I am completely responsible for you; therefore, you should conduct yourself in the following manner," is both specious and potentially vicious in its effects on the child. There is another way of presenting the matter: "My willingness to undertake the temporary care of a child has put both you and me (child and parent) in a unique situation. Since you are comparatively helpless and since your mother (or father) and I knew you would appear in the small world of our family in this condition, we are endeavoring to cooperate with your primary needs as a child. It is necessary for you to cooperate with our needs as parents in the same way. We will cooperate to the extent that you will, for we and you are under unwritten contract to each other until such time as you may desire and be able to enter into a different 'contract of cooperation' with another person or persons, or decide to live alone. I will not punish you when you have a tantrum simply because I can't bear to think that *my* child has tantrums—but I *will not* show love or tenderness to you when you act in such a way as to disturb the thoughts and activities of others. When you are old enough, I shall always give you a choice between the wishes of your own that I consider harmful, and the continuation of my efforts to meet constructively your needs and desires. You do not *possess* my love. If you wish it sufficiently, you can earn it, partially through acquiring the same sort of understanding of my needs as you expect me to maintain in regard to your own."

Obviously such abstract and subtle reasoning is not communicable in this particular form to even half-grown youths, still less to infants in cradles. However, the ultimate philosophy of relationships which the parents make their basis for action in dealing with the problems of their children may exert a strong influence upon the child simply by its presence in the parent's mind. This is not altogether an indefinable transmission of feeling and thought to the plastic intelligence of the child—though a great deal may be accomplished in just this way—but arises also from surety in respect to basic principles of parenthood, which will modify every specific movement that the parent makes in relation to the child. The child locked in a room as punishment for the creation of considerable disturbance in the neighborhood (and consequent embarrassment for the parents) will be greeted in an entirely different manner by the parent upon release than would be the case if the parent removed the child from the family circle simply and solely because the noise of waiting unfairly interfered with the activities of too many other persons. In the latter instance, the child would be released because it was no longer creating the disturbance, not because sufficient "punishment" had been applied.

The habits of Christian nations can well borrow some enlightenment from Buddhist educators. In Burma, for example, completion of any punishment wipes out all social remembrance of the original offense. A child would never be both punished and reproached. The punishment is regarded as simply a necessary adjustment required by a given situation, and not as "punishment" at all.

It is unfortunate that parents habitually evidence more concern about their children when they are behaving in a distressing manner than when they are behaving "well." Such response is unnatural and leads directly to childish demands for attention through the creation of disturbance. The parents should be most concerned with the child *when* it is learning and growing in some area of human expression—because *all* human relationships merit love or concern to the extent that they reflect a feeling of growth by the parties involved. On such a view, the child becomes, not "my child whom I love," but "the child whom I love when he makes himself lovable to me." This may be offered as a psychological basis for education, which allows the child to be treated as much as an adult as possible—or, indeed, as a soul on equal terms.

REVIEW

PERIODICALS IN TRANSITION

THERE was a time—say, ten years or fifteen years ago—when a man could naturally turn to a particular magazine for discussion of a particular subject and bring himself up-to-date. For developments in science, he could read the *Reports* of the Smithsonian Institution and the *Scientific Monthly*. For political and international affairs and liberal opinion about them, there were Oswald Garrison Villard's *Nation* and Bruce Bliven's *New Republic*. *The Christian Century* kept him abreast of the best in contemporary religious thinking and *Harper's* and the *Atlantic* gave coverage of literary trends. He could find practical information about commerce, industry and finance in *Barron's*, *Business Week*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. In *Fortune* the romance of Big Business was chronicled by the best American journalists. For terse news of the day, *Time* was incomparable, and the *New Yorker* added sophisticated humor.

One who read these papers, or others like them, could count himself a well-informed man. And he was, in a sense. He had touched all the important bases for knowing what is going on in the world. His facts were compiled by expert reporters, and he had the counsel of trained specialists in forming his opinions. He was satisfied with the services of these publications, which seemed quite equal to all his intellectual and moral needs.

Today, these papers are still being published, and doubtless most of them are making even more money for their owners than ten years ago. Editorially, some of them are changed, and some are the same, but none of them is equal any longer to the extraordinary needs of the modern reader. Those who think they are, are like the militarists who fight each war with the weapons of the last one, for this period of "peace" is vastly different from the years following 1918.

Of all these journals, the literary and financial magazines have probably changed the least. The *Atlantic* is again a paragon of "good taste" and cultivation, and a little sleepier, if possible, than ten years ago. *Harper's* has its usual brave-new-worldish daring, and the articulate and subtle Bernard De Voto. Oswald Garrison Villard finally left the *Nation* to its State liberalism in 1940, and Henry Wallace now has the *New Republic*. *The Christian Century* evolved the discovery that War is a Tragedy and for four long years cried out the common guilt of Everybody while bravely supporting the war, not in the name of the gentle Jesus, but in the name of Necessity—a Deity which was better understood by the ancient Greeks.

Ironically enough, it was *Fortune* which first declared that something fundamental had gone wrong with the way of the world. This was in 1940, when the *Fortune* editors undertook to reproach the Church in the United States for failing to provide any spiritual leadership to the American people. The January editorial described the "problems" facing humanity as "titanic," and argued that "if these matters are left in the hands of the laity, to be solved on basically materialistic grounds, a gradual devolution will set in, and civilization, instead of going forward so breathlessly, will seem to recede." The Church, the editorial hinted, if it continued to preach "relative and secondary values" instead of absolute values, would "merely hasten this process of disintegration." Whether or not one is suspicious of the religious motivation of Mr. Henry Luce, publisher of *Fortune*, it is difficult to discredit this judgment of organized religion. *Fortune*, in the years following this editorial, entered upon a cycle of deliberate moral and philosophical investigation. Willard Sperry of the Harvard divinity school debated Julian Huxley in its pages; John Dewey attacked, and Alexander Meiklejohn defended, the Great Books idea in modern education. Jacques Maritain presented the Neo-Thomist synthesis of modern Catholicism. Quite

evidently, *Fortune* is trying to do its part. For the magazine of Big Business, it does well enough.

Only the *New Yorker* showed any real imagination in the moral crisis created by the atom bomb (perhaps we should also include the *Saturday Review of Literature* for Norman Cousin's "Modern Man Is Obsolete"). As everyone knows, the *New Yorker* gave an entire issue to John Hersey's brilliant report on the aftermath of the bomb in Hiroshima. But as several critics pointed out, the intensely particularized reporting of Mr. Hersey, while vivid and memorable as no big generalizations could be, somehow relieved the reader from making up any conclusions of his own. Drenched by the *feeling* of the tragedy, its meaning never became clear. The *New Yorker* had measured it for him. And the *New Yorker* itself, having made all the serious magazines look stodgy and apathetic, went on to other things.

The scientific press is on the whole too conservative, too closely connected with institutional thinking, to change at all except in reflecting the gradually altering emphasis of scientific convention speeches and speculative essays by individual contributors. The scientific press, as such, never had any initiative, and we shall probably be told that it was never intended to have any. One striking exception to this rule is the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists,* issued by the Atomic Scientists of Chicago. But the *Bulletin* is a runaway, non-academic venture in active citizenship, rather than "scientific" journalism.

During the war, two papers gave promise of filling the moral vacuum in the periodical field. One, *Common Sense,* founded in 1931 by Alfred Bingham and Selden Rodman, was almost the sole voice of sanity after Pearl Harbor. But *Common Sense* succumbed to the inflationary process in January, 1946, about two years after Alfred Bingham left the masthead to learn how to be a gauleiter for American Military Government in occupied lands. The other, the *Progressive,* after heroic efforts to survive as a weekly, was forced to turn monthly (as of January, 1948), and was able to do this only after raising some $40,000 in gifts from subscribers who felt they couldn't get along without Morris Rubin, Milton Mayer, and John Haynes Holmes.

The popularity of *Time* magazine is too important a fact to be exhausted in a paragraph. Those deftly turned phrases on who got how drunk and what he did and what he thought about it afterward, and on matters of similar enlightenment, tell more about the "decline of the West" than anything Mr. Spengler ever composed. This is a subject to which we shall return, for *Time's* capsule philosophizing and anything-for-a-gag spirit have their own special place in our lexicon of dislike. With all its mastery of the techniques of efficient and colorful journalism, *Time* coarsens the public taste and makes the accomplishment seem a triumph in sophistication. This, we submit, is a nasty enterprise, however gaily undertaken. Now and then some very good thinking and writing appears in *Time,* but packed in with trivia and clever stereotypes of editorial opinion, it is soon forgotten. The serious things in *Time* need not be taken seriously, for Time marches on, and those eighty pages are difficult enough just to read through—if you thought about what you read you'd *never* finish it.

Looking over the field, it is hard to find any popular periodical worth "reading through," these days. However, we have a little list, and we're going to keep looking.

COMMENTARY
REVIEW POLICY

STARTING with this issue, MANAS will go to a number of book publishers, the reason being to attract books for review. To avoid the editorial and stenographic labors of writing them all letters, we take this opportunity to state our review policy.

We shall praise only books that we think ought to be read. We have no interest in furthering the commercial prosperity of the book trade. We find the idea of the book *trade* offensive in itself. According to our "high-flown standards," publishing is a calling, a vocation, not a way to make money. A publisher has hardly more justification for the acquisitive motive than a preacher. (We feel the same way about the practice of law or medicine.) If a man wants to make money, let him traffic in goods and material services. People who deal in ideas might find the quality of their thinking easier to maintain if they would be content with modest incomes—which means that they, both writers and publishers, should stay away from Hollywood, and let the comic book authors write the scripts. What has a writer to do with "Box Office appeal"?

Besides the books we think are good, there will be books—lots of them—we think are bad. If bad books seem popular, we shall take particular pains to explain why we think they are worthless, or even vicious, and try to explain also why they are popular. Some books will be dealt with simply to prevent readers from buying them. Other books will be reviewed because they seem to represent a typical current in present-day thinking.

We shall like and declare excellent books which disclose a grasp of what we understand to be the several essences of the human situation—books which bring the mind of the reader into close relationship with some basic problem of life by dealing directly with the dynamics of personal choice and human growth. We shall not admire books about human "creatures"; if creatures are to be written of, we prefer them to be ants or bees or some other sub-human species. Esthetic refinements we leave to those who have a higher opinion of their importance than we have.

In short, our appreciations and criticisms of books and magazines will be guided by the same editorial ideals we have set for the magazine as a whole; we shall expect from other writers and publishers, not "agreement," but an equal devotion to their principles, whatever they may be, on the hypothesis that one who writes or prints should have something to say, and that what he says he should believe in. Words and ideas, we think, are not salable commodities, but forms which the movement of the human spirit takes. We invite books and other material for review, on this basis.

Letter from
CENTRAL EUROPE

VIENNA.—A correspondent of a Central European News Agency who visited the United States during the last months of 1947, after his return published some notes from his travel diary in one of the leading Viennese papers. His remarks about the ignorance of the average American regarding conditions in Central Europe created somewhat of a sensation amongst his readers. For instance, he tells that in the course of conversations, he asked people of all classes the same question: "What do you know about Austria?" The results were amazing. The accountant of a small firm maintained that the "king" of Austria had made the mistake of cooperating with Germany and Italy during World War II, and must therefore be held responsible for the destruction of his country. A student declared that Austria forms a part of the Eastern Bloc and is situated behind the Iron Curtain. A shoemaker remarked that Austria, in his opinion, was "somewhere between Rome and Berlin." A bank manager called the Austrians "Asiatics" and his secretary said shyly that the only fact known to her was the blueness of the eyes of Austrian girls.

The sensation was caused not so much by the peculiarity of the answers as by a sudden conviction on the part of the readers that they had, all these years, greatly over-estimated the knowledge of the Americans, and consequently had exaggerated ideas of their education and desire for learning.

I spoke to some of those who, shaking their heads thoughtfully, simply could not get over the ignorance of the Yankees.

"Wait a bit," I said. "What do you know about Panama?" "About Panama . . . ? There is the Panama canal . . . and . . ."

"Never mind Panama," I said—"What do you know about Pennsylvania . . . Michigan . . . California . . . Massachusetts?" Most of them admitted that they knew nothing about these states. Several confessed that they lacked even the faintest idea of how to spell the name of the last state mentioned. One man expressed the opinion that to know nothing or only terrific nonsense about Austria must be regarded as more shameful than to know nothing about "those funny, little American states." I pointed out to him that some of those "little" states are both geographically larger and have greater populations than Austria.

Curiously related to this problem is a recent happening in another part of Europe. A few weeks ago, the French Department of War announced that 173,000 of the 300,000 German prisoners of war still in France have decided of their free will not to return home. When they are released, according to schedule, during 1948, they will sign contracts as free artisans, mechanics or labourers and stay on another two, three and even five years.

What has happened? The French invite their mortal enemies to remain? And the Germans, hating the French for centuries, agree to do so?

The simple explanation that France needs hands, while the Germans are not too keen to return to their devastated and down-trodden fatherland, will not do. In France, there is little hope of luxury for them, or for anyone else. Another nearly unbelievable fact opposes the obvious "economic" explanation: the mutual understanding between the French and the former German invaders has grown to such an extent that many of the latter live like old friends with the families for whom they work, especially in the rural areas. Actually, the petitions of French girls to be allowed to marry German prisoners reached such proportions that the French Government had no choice but to grant, recently, a general permission.

Again: what happened?

Although the French and the Germans have lived in bordering countries since the forming of their independent nationalities—for centuries, that is—they have known each other only from books. And not at all from the best ones either. Mostly, they learned about each other in school-readers—books in which the Germans accused the French of having started all the wars on account of their hatred of Germany, but maintaining that, nevertheless, the German armies had usually knocked the cowards down, while the French, in their readers, repeated opposite but similar contentions.

Very few Germans have ever settled down in France, while still fewer Frenchmen have lived in Germany. French business men would visit Berlin or a German fair once or twice a year; but even they were

outnumbered by the German artists and industrialists who found Paris very attractive. None of them had a look into the daily life of the middleclass of the other. French magazines drew the German women as old-fashioned housewives—always "sweeping"—whereas the German papers pictured the frivolous girl of Montmartre as the typical French woman. This sort of thing went much further. The military propaganda on both sides took advantage of the fact that the two nations had mistaken conceptions of each other. The German militarists told their youth that France was planning a war of revenge, while the French spread the news that the Germans, should they conquer France, would not hesitate to kill French babies and consume them.

World War II broke out. The Germans attacked. Two months were sufficient for them to force France down. But they did not kill and eat children.

The ordinances of the Commander-in-Chief of the German occupation troops did not turn out to be soft. But the German soldiers, living in French civilian quarters and getting slowly used to the customs of their hosts, did not remain the attackers. After a year or two, thousands of French families were fond of "their" soldier, while the "warriors" felt quite at home amongst their "enemies."

During the second half of 1944, the conquerors themselves became the conquered. But that did not seriously affect the growing friendly relations. A large number of Frenchmen, having been prisoners of war in Germany or having worked as civilian labourers for the German armament machine, returned to their homes. Having been in contact with Germans and possessing therefore a subtle understanding of their singularities—or rather, having convinced themselves that there was no extraordinary difference between an honest German labourer and themselves they became friendly with the Germans in France as well. These Frenchmen, too, have endorsed the idea of changing the status of German prisoners of war to that of independent labourers. Similarly, many GI's, formerly instructed by books and propaganda to regard the Central Europeans as wicked, now, in the occupied zones of Germany as well as Austria, get on together nicely with the peoples of these lands.

I dare to assert that the lack of knowledge of one another is largely responsible for the outbreak of past wars, and will probably be for the next ones.

If nothing else, World War II seems to have had at least one good consequence: the fact that millions have met, and come to know, and—no miracle for the psychoanalyst—have started to like, each other.

It is something less than "funny" that people in the United States know nothing or only sheer nonsense about the Central Europeans, and that these, in turn, know nothing about America; it is, as a matter of fact, sad news.

It is superficial to suppose that the transmission of nourishment and clothing to Central Europe will alone turn the receivers into patented democrats. There must be, on both sides, a kind of spiritual Marshall Plan, too.

Every well-meant attempt to give true enlightenment about Central Europe and Central Europeans, in the, United States, and about the United States and its citizens to those in Central Europe, will be a grain of sand for the mortar of Peace.

Ali, the Arabian camel-driver, wished that the New Year would bring a new hamper for his beast, good lungs for himself, and pestilence to the flies.

Nor do the Central Europeans expect more for the present.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

FRONTIERS

Is Immortality Important?

DOES it matter what people think about what happens after death? Does it actually affect their lives, making them better or worse people, or is the idea of immortality without any real importance? One thing is certain, the idea of immortality has *been* important to many millions in past centuries. In the East, the doctrine of transmigration of the soul profoundly influenced human conduct for thousands of years. A complicated system of spiritual rewards and punishments is characteristic of both Hinduism and Lamaistic Buddhism. The believer in these religions is convinced that long cycles of his future existence, in or out of a body, will be spent in either misery or happiness, depending upon his present behavior.

Lecky, the great nineteenth-century historian, thought that the indifference to human suffering which prevailed throughout the Dark Ages of European history could be explained by the beliefs of the common people regarding the state after death. The Christianity of that period was scarcely superior to the dark Moloch-worshiping faith of an earlier age, the difference being that Moloch demanded the sacrifice of the living, while the pitiless Jehovah condemned to eternal torture in Hell the *souls* of the dead. This was the unending theme of the priests of the Christian God who damned so many, and would "save" so few, and the people believing in such a cruel deity became cruel themselves. That, at any rate, was Lecky's conclusion.

Taine, in his history of English literature, has some remarkable passages on the morbid lives of Scottish Calvinists who believed they had been predestined from the beginning to the inescapable damnation that was a cardinal tenet of their religion. Today, a similar fear haunts the minds of Catholics who become preoccupied with their "sins" and doubt that divine Grace can ever become accessible to people as wicked as themselves. The Jehovah's Witnesses are persuaded that exactly 144,000 of the world's two billions of people will enjoy immortality at the right hand of the Father, all the rest being doomed to spiritual as well as physical extinction. No one who has had experience with a proselytizing Witness can have doubts about the influence of religious belief upon the lives of the members of this sect. With them, conviction breeds a stubbornness that sometimes means martyrdom. Thousands of youthful Witnesses served prison sentences during the war, nearly all of whom have been denied Presidential amnesty because of their uncompromising attitude.

In England, many thousands of the war-bereaved have been won to Spiritualism by such ardent leaders as Lord Dowding, RAF commander-in-chief in the Battle of Britain. A look at the spiritualist papers issued in the United States is enough to prove that Americans are far from immune to the appeal of "proof palpable" of an after-life. Even institutions of learning are not above quiet investigation of the claims of mediums. In 1937, Duke University awarded a Ph.D. to a man who wrote his thesis on alleged spiritualistic communications from his departed wife.

It is of interest that attitudes toward death and immortality which can so easily be "catalogued" or described are usually of slight moral significance or represent little more than phases of degrading belief. Human excellence which seems related to the idea of immortality can hardly be tabulated at all, except in the most general terms, probably because excellence never flows from the "contract" theory of morals. Human excellence is not the product of bargains with God, nor of threats of His punishment. Fear does not make men good, it only makes them negative. Men who fear a punishment after death may abstain from specified offenses, but such men will never be inspired to moral greatness by this sort of belief in immortality. About all that can be said concerning the beneficence of the idea of

immortality is that it is a familiar accompaniment of the good life. Belief in immortality is a consequence of the ethics of Plato, not the source of inward moral compulsion. Socrates gave his belief in immortality as a reason for his serene dying at the hands of the Athenian city-state, but he was moved in life by an inner oracle that dealt, not in rewards and punishments, but in the spiritual will to know and to act justly, whatever the consequences.

So there are two ways to regard immortality. There is the book-keeping view suggested by "prudence" or self-interest, and there is the philosophical doctrine of an enduring soul which has no traffic with either fear or self-interest. Theologies conceived to regulate—or to exploit—human weakness elaborate the first, while teachers who appeal directly to the moral intuitions in man are primarily concerned with the second view.

The difference between these views has long been recognized by intelligent men of religion. The Southern Buddhists, for example, refuse to admit any personal immortality at all for man, probably in order to discourage a selfish attachment to a future life. The Ceylonese Buddhist is told: "The world will inherit your good and evil actions—are you a man to degrade or improve the conditions that will surround coming generations?" Stoics like Marcus Aurelius taught the same. Present-day scientific moralists found their objections to the idea of immortality on similar critical motives, largely ignoring the more important question of whether or not immortality can be regarded as a natural fact.

Perhaps such enemies of the idea should consider the statement of H. T. Buckle, one of the earliest—and greatest—of the scientific historians. "If immortality be untrue," said Buckle, "it matters little whether anything else be true or not." Wordsworth had similar intimations, and so did Emerson. Why did they and many other great men feel this way about immortality?

A world so sick at heart and bewildered in mind as ours might well find new hope in this ancient idea. To cease from unbelief does not necessarily mean that we become credulous fools. It is the *kind* of faith in immortality that counts; help will not come simply from some doctrine that promises an effortless salvation. The modern world has so little charity in it that we should ask ourselves if charity is possible without intelligent faith and the hope it inspires. Immortality may be of the greatest importance to us. We should at least give the idea some reflection.

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READING AND WRITING

AN article like *Life's* "The Failure of Marxism" by John Dos Passos (Jan. 19) raises a lot of ghosts. Not that there is anything especially wrong with the article. So far as we can see, it relates facts of history. And no intelligent man can quarrel, for example, with this conclusion:

> We must realize that from the point of view of the well-being, of men and women the contradiction is not between "capitalism" and "socialism" but between the sort of organization that stimulates growth and the sort that fastens on society the suckers of sterile vested interests.

The close of the article is equally good: "Socialism is not the answer to the too great concentration of power that is the curse of capitalism. We've got to do better than that."

What is annoying about the article is what it leaves out, and *Life's* pleasure in presenting it. Mr. Dos Passos, the editors inform us, has been closely identified with "socialist causes." In other words, this wayward enthusiast has seen the Light. Maybe he has. He admits that back in the 1920's he and some others "were caught by the illusory belief that revolution would install utopia."

But is there no difference between the truth of the disillusionment of Dos Passos and the "truth" that *Life* magazine would have his article convey? It seems an unhappy coincidence that so many disillusioned radicals now have a message in which the commercial press delights.

"We have to do better than socialism." Well, what is better than socialism, and how do we begin to get it?

After the first World War, Marxian socialism gathered to itself many thousands of men of good will. For about ten years, now, we have been reading their recantations and confessions in books and the periodical press. We know what all these gentlemen are *against,* but what are they *for?* They ought to be for something—even organic gardening would be a help. Nobody should make a living just writing about the Kronstadt Rebellion and the Moscow Trials. These serial revelations about "how wrong we were" get a little tiresome. Rich people put up missions in the slums where you can go and hear confessions all day long. Confession is not a career.

One thing that is certainly worse than any kind of socialism is fearing and hating it. Communism, as a modern educator has said, must be studied, *lest* we accept it. Furthermore, Marx was not the only great socialist. There was Edward Bellamy, who was first a humanitarian, and a political theorist second. It would be foolish to ignore Bellamy's contribution, or the contribution of Eugene Debs, simply because a mechanical theory of history and of human nature has proved itself false. Such men had values that the majority lacked and lack today. What are they?

Another ghost invoked by Mr. Dos Passos is the familiar liberal preacher who tells you, in passing, "I've been a socialist for years," and then goes on to his *real* interest. The quite earnest man of God has felt that being a socialist "looks after" the economic side—a little like the business man who goes to church on Sunday to take care of "the spiritual side."

But now socialism is no longer the Right Department for looking after the economic side. Max Eastman and John Dos Passos have left a lot of nice people without a guide. Of course, there's always Free Enterprise. Even James Burnham has said that perhaps we can't have Freedom without the competitive minorities of a capitalist economy. Maybe he's right, too, considering the state of public morality.

What we're really objecting to is the common practice of arguing political economy as though it involved the truths that will make men free. An argument is there, and one that needs discussion. But listening to *Life* and Mr. Dos Passos, you get the idea that effective criticism of Marxism is the Last Word. It isn't.