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COMING TO TERMS

EVERYONE ought to know, by now, that the horror of war will never become the mainspring of peace. We do know it, in specific connections. We know that Alfred Nobel was wrong in supposing that his invention of high explosives would mean an end to war, and both cynics and humanitarians frequently remind us of his mistake.

Yet such is the impoverishment of contemporary moral intelligence that influential people devoted to peace can think of little else to talk about except the increasing horror of war. We have in mind such unquestionably benevolent persons as Richard Walsh and Pearl Buck, who largely determine the editorial policy of the magazine, *United Nations World.* This magazine is a fitting symbol of the desperation of the modern world—a world obsessed by the thought of all it seems destined to lose. Being liberal and humanitarian, the editors of *UN World* are much disturbed by the prospective loss of human rights, and the disappearance of all that they have long regarded as the essential ingredients of civilization; but, in wanting to preserve these things, they write, first, about the physical threat of militarism, and second, about the institutional mechanisms of international security. *UN World* wants to drive everybody into the corral of the United Nations. The magazine has a storm-cellar psychology. "Just wait," it says. "You think you've been through something. . . . But *we* know that World War II was only an April shower—and a typhoon is on the way."

Fear is expected to make men become good internationalists with strong faith in the diplomacy of the United Nations. "Out there," in the anarchy where the United Nations do not rule, is *Tabun*, "the gas that makes men mad." The next war will be fought with Tabun, which, before it kills you, attacks the brain and makes you a homicidal maniac. Then you go blind, and finally die in a paroxysm of agony. The formula for Tabun is known to all the military establishments in the world. There is no protection against Tabun. It is odorless, and air containing fractions of a milligram will kill.

The February *UN World* has other blighting news for its readers. "Terror," it reports, "is the world's fastest growing business." A former agent in the U.S. Secret Service writes:

> . . . less than three years after the abolition of the Nazi horror camps, there are today more men, women and children in political prisons and concentration camps than at any time in human history. A careful survey I have just completed reveals that there may be as many as fifteen million people in prison camps the world over.
>
> The vast majority of the people detained in them are innocent by any standards of criminal law. Their only crime is opposition to a ruling clique of men some of whom were themselves inmates in those same camps and prisons but a short while ago.

The distribution of these camps is of some interest, indicating that Soviet Russia, while maintaining the lion's share, is by no means unique. In at least fourteen other countries, secret police have accomplished a blackout of civil liberties and operate as a major force in determining national policy.

The anxiety evident in *UN World's* discussion of these portents is enough to show what the editors are *for*—they are for the human values that every person of moral intelligence is for: the rights and freedoms of liberal democracy. But what do they think is possible, and essential, in order to gain, or preserve, these rights and freedoms?

There is a depressing analogy between the methods and hopes of the *UN World* and Mr. Norman Thomas' wartime "critical support" of the policies of the United States. Instead of calling a spade a spade, Mr. Thomas persisted in appealing to the "better nature" of the statesmen in charge of American policy, seeming wholly oblivious to the fact that these men had themselves become very little more than moving parts in the war machine—were themselves as much the victims of the insane logic of mutual destruction as anyone else. There are principles of war and principles of peace, and these two sets of principles except in wholly abstract and non-existent situations are

mutually exclusive. You can't have a decent war nor a half-hearted peace. You must have either total war or total peace, and you have to choose between. Mr. Thomas, along with many other liberals, was willing to put up with a war, but he wanted it to be half-hearted. He disliked the proof of Randolph Bourne's formula: "They fight because they fight because they fight." He thought that the fight should be for "peace and freedom." And so, in the public prints, Mr. Thomas was continually being "disappointed" in our great leaders.

UN World is disappointed, too. It wants us all to be good parliamentarians. It wants us to have faith in the political mechanisms that have been used so long for our common betrayal—not a diabolical and deliberate betrayal, but the casual, routine, and unintentional betrayal of traditional diplomacy. Diplomacy has never worked before—but now it *must* work, because of the horrible things that will happen if it doesn't; and we—we must believe in it, or have nothing to believe in at all.

UN World wants our world saved from destruction, but it is not ready or willing to distinguish between those things of our world which are not worth saving, and the things which are. Further, it will not make any real accounting of the things which have already been destroyed. The tragedy of the *UN World* is the practical abyss which separates its ideals and the means it has chosen to reach them. Its liberal editors have either too much faith in the wrong things or not enough faith in the right things—it doesn't make much difference which way you say it.

We might as well face the facts. The fault is not in our bombs, but in ourselves. Diplomacy can never save a population which can be stirred to action only by fear. There can be no lasting contract of peace among the nations without justice among the nations, and we do not really *want* justice among the nations. We have only pretended to want it, and that pretense has so warped our understanding that we find it difficult to recognize just ideas when they are proposed. Just ideas are the cement of civilization. Human relations, personal and international, are acts of faith—faith in just ideas. But we are men of little faith, and so our civilization is going to pieces. Neither the king's horses nor the king's men can help us. The king's men are too busy getting ready for the sport of kings to think of anything about civilization except to plot its destruction.

War, said Clausewitz, is a continuation of national policy. Today, as R. H. S. Crossman has pointed out, Clausewitz has been reversed, "and policy is becoming continuation of war":

> War the means has become the end. Great powers fight, not to obtain clearly thought-out imperial advantages, but to annihilate their opponents, and peace is a mere interlude between the wars.

Mr. Crossman, we should say, is here discoursing on a book by the British strategist, Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, and it is not entirely clear whether he accepts this analysis, but the point, we think, is self-evident. War, not a "policy" which "uses" war, is the all-powerful factor of national decision today. War now determines the over-all plans of the modern State and even the basic conceptions of the further development of modern industry. Which means, so far as our national being is concerned, that *we live to fight.*

This is not a question of militarism, or pacifism, or any ism at all. It is a question of fact. It is not a question that for long can be evaded. It is a question, simply, of deciding what kind of a world we think we are living in, where it is going, and whether we are going along.

The only way to escape the all-consuming fears of this generation is to eradicate from our hearts every last hope that history will, at the last moment, reverse itself. The Greeks had a word—several, in fact—for the irreversible in history. Sometimes they called it *Nemesis,* the dread goddess of Retribution, and sometimes they called it *Ananke,* or Necessity. The point, of course, is that to liberate ourselves from historic destiny, we have to find that motionless center of being that is somewhere in the depths of every man—a center which remains untouched by either history, retribution, or fear of retribution. Of course, you pay a price for liberation. Liberation is the most precious achievement, in, or out of, the world, that a man can long for or strive after. A few men we know about either reached or came close to the goal. Tolstoy was one, Gandhi another. We can say they attained personal "serenity" and clear consciences, but there is a more fruitful way of looking at these men. They were men who took the measure of their world and separated

themselves, as best they could, from the processes that were eating away what goodness and decency remained for the common man. They had faith in the right things, and they gave no aid and comfort—or as little as possible —to what was wrong. They obtained their serenity and clear consciences by coming to terms, not with our world, but with theirs—their world of ideals. And they found enough idealism in our world to fit the two together. Socrates did the same thing, as long as he could, and when the two worlds wouldn't fit together any more—like Gandhi, he died.

You don't have to start out by being an anarchist to follow the path of Socrates and Gandhi. It takes moral greatness to move the two worlds closer together, the way they did. But any man can begin to practice their principles "right in the corner where you are." Anybody can take the first step—which means you can't place your heart and your hopes in the old world, any more. No man is free if he places his heart and his hopes in anything that an atom bomb can destroy. That is what all the messiahs have taught us, and no matter how many of them we kill, they will go on teaching it. Atom bombs can't kill the truth, and when we begin to realize it we shall begin to be free.

The thing the *UN World* does not face is that we have to have some new definitions of freedom. Gautama Buddha offered a wise account of its meaning. What we know of his teaching suggests that in Buddha's epoch a man could easily cut loose from the personal impediments that stand in the way of truth and freedom. The obstacles, that is, were mostly *within.* But today, the impediments seem more impersonal, or rather, both personal and impersonal. There is a sense in which our German Correspondent is right—in which "no *independent* development for better or worse is possible." For some things, he is altogether right. He, for example, can never see his contributions in MANAS, for he lives in the Russian Zone, and while food may be sent there, all literature is banned. Germans—for a while, at least—can do nothing about that, and nothing about a vast number of other things.

They cannot publish articles about the politics of terror, but then, they do not need to read about the terror. They have lived with it too long. We do not know exactly what the Germans can do, independently. That is for them to discover, and then to define freedom in its terms. And we—we have to consider our own impotence to help other peoples across the barriers of both war and peace. We have to discover how we became so impotent to help anybody, including ourselves. What has made us hostages to *Nemesis?* That is what the *United Nations World* cannot tell us, and what we have to know.

A wise man once said: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Now they are taking our charity away—or have we thrown it away ourselves? The atomic bombing of Hiroshima killed seventy-eight thousand people. But it also tore the roots of charity from our hearts. Of course, it wasn't *our* decision. *They* did it. Exactly. If *we* had done it, we could be sorry and not do it any more—we could have charity. But *they* did it, and we can have neither charity nor its opposite. We can only look on.

Is this a world with which we can come to terms?

Letter from CENTRAL EUROPE

FRITZ'S father has a clerical position and tries to supplement his small salary by spare-time solicitation of subscribers for obscure periodicals. Fritz defrays the expense of his university courses by buying and selling on the black market. Not that he would get mixed up with dangerously "hot" goods. A fellow-student, being a peasant's son, supplies him with a couple of eggs, which he sells at a profit, or an old lady entrusts him to sell her gold watch. The uncle, unable to earn any money himself, lives on the income of his daughter. Luckily, she learned music as a child, so that now she can play the piano in a second-rate night club.

Although the family income seems to total quite a lot of money, they all would have starved long ago, had they lived on the "legal" ration alone. Existing in Central Europe means being able to obtain food not covered by the ration-cards—involving violation of an endless chain of laws and ordinances, but done by everybody who wants to stay alive. And in this respect, mother is always the rescuer. The prices for a piece of meat or some sugar, bought in secret, are incredibly high. A pair of shoes costs as much as father earns in two months. But mother always seems able to find something that can be sold to bring in the needed cash.

The family, augmented by the uncle and his daughter, has just finished lunch. All of them look pale, overworked, disappointed. "Times are alarming," the father says unexpectedly. "The brains of all Europeans seem to be out of action. Apathy and lethargy are leading Europe in the direction of chaos. I have tried for a long time to hope, but I do not believe, any more, that another war can be avoided. Therefore, I have decided to join the Communist Party. . . !"

The others look at each other. Some of them do not take the words seriously.

"I do it for the best of all of us!" the father protests. "No, no," he continues, "you need not shake your heads. Let me explain: The world of the civilian is dead, or at least worn out. Practically, it is immaterial what we believe and do. The United Bureaucrats of Europe do not give us a chance. It is sad, but true—whoever takes the imitative is encumbered by old-fashioned, slow-thinking members of government boards, of assemblages, and of all kinds of unions. Having observed this development during the past three years, it is my steadfast conviction that—after a short period of anarchy—the Communists will rule over the western part of Europe as well as the eastern. We have members of all political colors in our family, but no Communist. We ought to prepare to meet our next 'government.' Therefore, I have decided. . . ."

"Dad," interrupts Fritz, "not everything is lost yet. The youth of all European nations want to build an all-Europe movement as a wall against war. What they lack is a leader, somebody who has influence not only on their reason, but on their hearts, as well."

"Why not let the brains lead?" asks uncle Miky. "The United States of Europe is a brave idea. I should prefer this to most of the other ideals. A central government—no boundaries, no customs officials, no party hatred, but a directorship of trained men.

"It would be nice," yawns Dorette, "but it will never happen, gentlemen. Although the political parties are fighting each other like devils, they would quickly unite to oppose a United Europe, which they fear would end their existence."

A soft knock comes at the door. Mother rises. The conversation stops, while she negotiates with a whispering voice outside.

"These may be wonderful ideas," Father takes up the thread, when she has returned, "but they should have been put into effect two or three years ago. Now they come too late. Until the Marshall Plan becomes a fact, the Cominform will

propagate at least two Molotov Plans. You cannot earnestly believe that the idea of an international Europe, still in baby-shoes, can grow up before the outbreak of the next war. Or, to put it otherwise, that the pan-Slav power will wait until the United-Europe building is finished to the last tile on the roof . . .!"

Mother puts a package on the table. The eyes of all get interested. Butter . . . Mother explains: She exchanged a crystal vase for two bicycle tires, four brooms, a teapot and two cakes of soap, and these again, she bartered for gasoline and ten second-hand gramophone records—and these, finally, for butter.

All look happy, because they realize that their next meals will be prepared with butter. Butter—for the next three or four days. They are used to this living from hand to mouth. Everyone is used to it.

Each, at the beginning of the month, received about ten pounds of coal. They have learned the advantage of assembling around one fire, one hearth, and one pot. They know from practical experience the value of unity—but who can cause the nations of western Europe to think and do alike—to work together? There seems to be nobody who possesses either the wisdom or the authority to call the European nations together.

Will national hatred again destroy millions of Europeans? A United Europe would, of course, be the keystone for the building of a United World.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
SOME RECENT ARTICLES

JUDGING from a letter or two received by MANAS containing comment applying to this Department, there are some subjects which ought never to be explored with any thoroughness—lest "misunderstandings" arise. Friends, it is suggested, may know that MANAS reviewers have no communist sympathies or connections, but—what with anonymity and all that—some readers may be led to suspect an unwholesome preoccupation with "radical" theories, especially if we persist in revealing our admiration for men like Debs. (These letters, incidentally, disclose extraordinary misinformation about Mr. Debs, which is alone a complete justification for writing about him frequently.)

This Department cherishes what seems a likely theory to explain the solid citizen's disinclination to show any interest in so-called "radical" literature. It is, we think, blood-brother to the familiar reflex common to liberals which makes them always nod or brighten approvingly at any measure or proposition which has been widely popularized as on behalf of the "common man." Both are uncritical reactions, and both need intensive analysis.

Another curiosity of human nature is the immunity of the "scholar" to serious criticism of his "radical" concerns. It is popularly supposed—with considerable justification—that nothing ever comes of the talk of professors, who may be permitted to debate even the most "dangerous" of subjects so long as they remain on a high intellectual plane. For example, the Phi Beta Kappa quarterly, *The American Scholar,* in its Winter, 1947-48 issue, presents "The Moral Challenge of the *Communist Manifesto,"* by Edmund Fuller, but neither *The American Scholar,* because it printed this article, nor Mr. Fuller, because he wrote it, will be suspected of "radical" susceptibilities. MANAS, however, had it published Mr. Fuller's excellent discussion, would probably have received letters from several respected correspondents, warning the editors, in terms of friendly anxiety, that they are "going too far." For MANAS stands explicitly for the principle that the end of thought is practical decision, and should, therefore, be "careful" about its thoughts.

Our reply to such suggestions is that precisely for this reason,—the need for being "careful,"—MANAS has every intention of examining the *Communist Manifesto* and other radical classics from time to time, and of adopting whatever may be found in them that seems to be true with respect to the matters of which they treat. The fact that the editors of MANAS subscribe to an entirely different analysis of history from the Marxian one is a very good reason for studying the *Manifesto* for facts that they may have overlooked. Then, there may be a sense in which the Marxists are right—or, to put it another way, there is the distinct *probability* that the Marxian analysis illumines social processes which men with other theories tend to ignore or gloss over because of their essential disagreement with the Marxists. This is a mistake which intelligent people should never get into the habit of making, lest they become, through the tendency to abstract only *agreeable* facts from the field of human observation, as dogmatic and doctrinaire as the Marxists themselves, even if in some other direction.

Returning, then, to Mr. Fuller's article, we urge that it be read in full. There is as great a moral challenge to modern man in the *Communist Manifesto* as the challenge to the modern democratic state in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, although for entirely different reasons. Mr. Fuller is not gentle:

> Tragically, our so-called capitalist society has been so frightened by the economic implications of Marxism with its threat to profits and property that it has fought it with stupid and sometimes shameful methods. We have preferred and magnified, along with a number of undoubted virtues, all the shoddiest and most complacent aspects of our prevalent

> business philosophy which, Bruce Barton dissenting, is simply incompatible with our ostensible Christianity.

Fuller takes the major charges of Marx and Engels against capitalist society, made in the *Manifesto,* and examines them one by one. The criticism is brilliant, and brutally true. We have space for only one more quotation:

> Another charge is of notable interest: "The bourgeosie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-laborers."
>
> What do we say to this, when we have seen an era in which "idealist" is a political epithet, in which "longhair" is a current gibe at the artist or scholar, "intellectual" is a dubious label, and in which "professor" is the ultimate sneer in our Senate's vocabulary of contempt and abuse?

What Mr. Fuller does not suggest, unfortunately, is that we may have to look deeper than in economic theory and practice to find an explanation for the corruption and degradation which Marx identified with "Capitalism" in his flaming denunciation of Western culture. For this reason, we are left without any direction at all by Mr. Fuller, who is obviously under no illusion that Soviet Russia is in any way preferable to the capitalist society castigated by Marx. The value of this article is in its demonstration that instead of an archfiend of economic satanism, Marx was an angry moralist with extraordinary intellectual power. If we continue to ignore the things that made Marx angry, we shall have to deal, again and again, with men like him. This is the truth that seems so difficult to grasp for those who fear communism.

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Before it gets any later, we want to report what may turn out to be the most completely satisfying piece that the *New Yorker* will ever print, which appeared in the issue of Nov. 22, last year: Niccolo Tucci's "The Great Foreigner"—the story of his visit, with members of his family, to the home of Professor Albert Einstein. Tucci is already known to readers of Dwight MacDonald's *Politics.* He writes with the simplicity possible only to a man who has no or few illusions, and yet is not a disillusioned man. The quality of this story cannot be "reviewed," it must be tasted and savored. One delightful bit is Tucci's discovery of Einstein's devotion to ancient Greek thinkers. Learning that the great mathematician spends an hour each evening—tired out or not—reading aloud in Sophocles, Thucydides, and Aeschylus, he remarked, "So you too, Herr Professor, have gone back to the Greeks."

Einstein replied: "But I have never gone away from them. How can an educated person stay away from the Greeks? I have always been far more interested in them than in science."

A week later, Dr. Einstein again appeared in the *New Yorker,* this time in the "Profile" of Al Capp, "creator" of the Li'l Abner comic strip. Mr. Capp's artistry is daily exhibited in about thirty million copies of American newspapers, making it possible for him to boast, "More Americans give me a piece of their day than anyone else in the country." It seems that Dr. Einstein had become aware of this startling statistic, and some time last fall wrote a letter to Al Capp, asking him to tell the public, on behalf of the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists, of the seriousness of the threat of atomic bombings. Mr. Capp, a man not averse to using his strip to help a worthy cause along, noted and mailed it back promising to include a Message to the People in an early "Slobbovia sequence". . . . And so the magic circle is complete: Dr. Einstein hopes he can help the man-in-the-street to escape death by atomic bombs, but he finds that the man-in-the-street has already found "escape" in the zany Dogpatch world of Li'l Abner, invented by Al Capp, and so Dr. Einstein, who is—since Gandhi's death—possibly the greatest man in the world, appeals to Al Capp to tell the people what Dr. Einstein wants to say about *how* they may be able to escape death by atomic bombs.

Current Book-of-the-Month

The February selection is not typical of any special literary tendency. Carl Van Doren's study, *The Great Rehearsal,* is a worth-while historical investigation because it is about worth-while people—a clear and readable account of the making of the Constitution of the United States. This book has a great deal to say to moderns by implication, as for instance regarding the patience and mutual tolerance shown for one another by the political rivals of 1787. By some, *The Great Rehearsal* is being boosted as propaganda for world government, and it is probably one of the most impressive contributions yet made in the service of that particular cause. Readers, however, may find themselves wondering whether the confederation situation of 1787 and the "United Nations" situation of 1948 are significantly parallel. There is a further question concerning *The Great Rehearsal's* use as W-G propaganda: Book-of-the-Month readers, being trained to take their culture easily in capsule form, may be led to think that the making of a "United World" is a relatively simple matter. Our objection to this may be crabbed, but it is persistent: If you let people believe that such things are easy (like saving the world for democracy or "crushing Fascism"), they will never become sufficiently concerned to bring anything important about. This reviewer would like very much to see a "United World," but he cannot escape the conviction that the first steps will entail serious revisions of our own national policies rather than some sort of convention for the uniting of stridently clashing national governments. But of course an occasional selection such as this one does allow Book-of-the-Month members to feel more cultured, just as *Raintree County,* reviewed a while back, enables them to feel more sophisticated. And Book-of-the-Monthers, like other people, have to get to heaven one way or the other.

COMMENTARY

CORPORATE MORALS—AND OURS

THE Department of Commerce reports that during 1947 corporate enterprise in the United States reaped profits of 17 billion dollars, after taxes. That is a lot of money. It is more than twice the corporate profits gained in 1929, as Nathan Robertson has pointed out in the *Progressive.*

What should be said about this? There is of course the argument on how much of this profit is "legitimate," and how much of it constitutes a raid on the public pocket-book. With picked premises, any argument on this subject is easy to win. Mr. Robertson shows with figures that certain large corporations have some kind of guilty conscience about their enormous earnings, the evidence being the statistical devices they employ to conceal their profit record, as based on net worth, from the general public. Mr. Robertson's argument from the industrial guilty conscience is persuasive. If the profits are just, why hide them? No man—or corporation—should be ashamed of just achievement.

For argument's sake, let us say that the whole 17 billion ought to be divided up among the people. (This would ignore industry's need for replacing obsolescent plants and any theory of "fair return" on capital investment.) Seventeen billion dollars spread out among every man, woman and child in the United States would mean about $120 per person.

Now, suppose we admit the corporations are hardhearted and indifferent to our desire for $120 each: how else could we get that much money?

Well, first of all, we could get more than half that much by eliminating alcohol from the national diet. (This is *not* an argument for Prohibition, but a mere comparison, we hasten to add.) The American people spend $65 per person on intoxicating liquors each year. If you add the amounts which go for cosmetics, chewing gum, tobacco, the annual "new look," the construction of race tracks, taverns and the like, it is easy to accumulate a sum equivalent to the individual's hypothetical share of the 1947 corporate profits in no time at all.

We shouldn't forget taxes. Statistically speaking, the federal government collects $286 a year from every American. Local government costs a similar amount. By eliminating the extravagance of war, we could cut the cost of government by more than half—and still be able, if we liked, to deliver a bottle of Grade A to every Hottentot in Africa.

The real "crime" of the corporations is not in the money they take for what they sell; it resides in *what* they sell—and in what the rest of us buy. A *New Yorker* caption tells the story: "Ten dollars' worth of groceries, and not a drop of liquor in the house!" said the indignant housewife to her husband coming in the door, loaded with carrots and spinach.

And how many men care *what* they produce—from bourbon to atomic bombs? Has anyone a moral right to call corporate profits a form of legal theft when he is already accepting the small end of returns from the same irresponsible enterprise?

Our hearts don't bleed for the corporations, but the irrelevance of making them the root of all evil gets tiresome after a while.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A GREAT many things have happened to "the family" during the past hundred and fifty years. The most noticeable changes obviously have something to do with the increasing number of people who have left rural areas to practice a specialized trade and increase their wealth in the city. Sometimes they have been driven to the factories by the fact that as population increases, fewer people can earn a satisfactory living from the land. Meanwhile, urban parents find it difficult to know what to do with their children around the home.

Sociologists have for years been producing worried reports concerning the failure of city children to become an organic part of the family in the same way that they might if their early years were spent in an agricultural district. From a psychological point of view, this is not difficult to understand. In the city, the necessities of life come from a single pay-check. The child is a free boarder, not a part of the economic life of the home. He may be "wanted" as an object of affection, but he is seldom *needed.* He may sweep sidewalks, water a garden or mow a lawn, or run an errand or two, and these activities, in a relative sense, may be useful—but they are in no way directly related to the necessities of living. A man can walk on a dirty sidewalk as well as a clean one; he does not *have* to enjoy the ornamentation of flowers or a lawn in order to exist. But if you live on a farm, you gather eggs and harvest crops so that you can eat. A child can also understand that whether or not his family can afford to buy him a bicycle depends on the amount of the harvest, and *he* is a working part of that harvest. But in the city, the child waits to see if a mysterious "boss" will give his father a raise.

The logic of children is often so direct and simple that parents find it hard to understand, for the logic of adults in the present world is seldom direct and simple. But it can be claimed as a fact that the child will not do anything well, nor learn from it to any worthwhile degree, unless he feels that what he is doing is creative. And a child will always try to be a creative part of something, if only of his own dream-world. His apparently meaningless actions at play usually have a mysterious thread of connection with something significant he is doing in his mind. When he plays Dick Tracy—he may be deriving satisfaction through imagining that he is meeting ingeniously some real situation of conflict.

In the pioneer rural communities, the child played a little of Dick Tracy and Tarzan, but he also did a lot of other things that were both creative and organic to his own life and the life of the others in the family. He became responsible, not through lectures on abstract virtue, but by desiring to act more and more as an adult each day, in doing absolutely necessary things. He knew when another room in the house would be useful, or when another horse was needed for the general well-being, and there were ways in which he could himself help to make things come. Today, this pattern of the child's relatedness to the basic needs of the family is missing in most middle-class homes. Although some parents have endeavored to provide an educative rural background by buying enough land to keep chickens and raise modest crops, the effort is seldom more than a gesture in the right direction—and a gesture is not enough. The crops of a man who farms for a hobby are not crops taken seriously, because they are not completely necessary crops. They afford a basis for common play, but no real basis for bringing the child and parent together on the ground of mutual need.

Is it actually possible to re-create the desirable psychological conditions which once helped children to grow into a mature relationship with the family? Perhaps some families do this by a subsistence program on a farm, especially if the parents wish to write, read, think and talk more than they wish to acquire wealth. In such a

situation the child will come to the realization that his father is not a man who mechanically produces all necessary money, but instead, is someone who will do his part and no more, since he, too, wants all the leisure time he can get. If the child wants to buy something, he has to expect to work for it—since there is no surplus money available. But only a few could follow this procedure in any case, for it is not always possible—nor desirable—to uproot a family and "leave" the city, and among those rashly attempting it, the failures would be many.

If this type of experimentation were ever to succeed, there would have to be a growing number of people willing to apply the same principles in urban life, and to give each other some mutual support. Nor could such an attempt be started at all unless the experimenters were willing to discard the idea that manly virtue consists in being a "good provider." The good provider works on the theory that surplus capital is good for his children and good for himself, that *he* makes the destiny of the members of his family. The radical experimenter, in order to be really radical, would have to believe the opposite. He would have to see to it that he worked only long enough to fulfill actual needs which others could not fulfill. If he inherited money, or if some book he had written during leisure hours as a labor of love miraculously became popular, he would have to be willing to get rid of that money by giving it to some educational foundation in which he believed. In such a situation, it would at least be possible for the child to become responsible by realizing an obligation to earn his own money. His parents would work a certain amount of time, and he, the child, would also work a certain amount of time, proportionate to strength, available opportunities (admittedly less for girls than boys at the present time) and the necessity of school attendance and healthy exercise. Yet parents need schooling and exercise, too. Perhaps less specialization on both sides would bring children and parents closer together, and help the child to feel some rational basis of sharing things with those older than himself.

FRONTIERS

Atoms and The Void

WHAT is often said to be the "scientific viewpoint" began, the histories of philosophy tell us, with the Greek atomists, Leukippos and Demokritos, who maintained that nothing is real except "atoms and the void," and, it should be added, the motion which moves the atoms. While the only fragment of Leukippos which has survived is his statement, "Naught happens for nothing, but everything from a ground of necessity," Aristotle claimed that the atomists made the motion of the atoms "spontaneous," which was interpreted as meaning that their motion is "by chance." Later materialists seized upon this idea, developing it into a pretentious theory of cosmic beginnings. With the Roman poet, Lucretius, it became a weapon for his attack on the superstitions of religion. Cicero gave Aristotle's version of the atomist doctrine an epigrammatic succinctness, summing it up as a "fortuitous concourse of atoms"—a phrase that was widely quoted with the rise of modern scientific thought.

The problem of exactly what Leukippos and Demokritos meant is still unsettled by classical scholars. It is hardly just, for example, to call Leukippos a "materialist," when he was actually the first to say that a thing without a body—such as "the void"—is none the less real, as real as any body. And those who insist upon the "fortuitous concourse of atoms" as an atomist doctrine must ignore Leukippos' assertion, "Naught happens from nothing." Such questions, however, have affected but little the enthusiasm of modern atheists who refer to the Greek atomists with peculiar pleasure, supposing them to represent a fountain of ancient intuition—prescient, if not scientific.

To attribute all origins to "some fortuitous concourse of atoms" plainly asserts that the world can have no explanation at all. The atoms of which everything is made came together "fortuitously," without reason—by chance—the result of completely blind forces. The thinkers who believe this are not dismayed by the fact that all the scientific knowledge we possess is founded on perception of natural law. They meet this difficulty by asserting that "natural law" does not exclude "chance," but, indeed, includes it, and that chance is itself an expression of natural law. So, by swallowing whole a rather obvious contradiction in terms, the modern materialists have preserved the cosmic meaninglessness which they find prefigured in the speculations of the Greek atomists.

Why have philosophers of science clung so tenaciously to the idea of chance? For the same reason that Lucretius, in the first century A.D., elaborately explained how chance might operate to create the entire natural world: they wanted to be sure that no priests would ever be permitted to interfere with the free search of truth. They feared that the priests, as happened in Galileo's time, might declare scientific investigation unnecessary—even impious—an offense to the dignity of God, Who has revealed all we need or can hope to know. Such a God will eternally menace the human imagination, and to get rid of him for good, the scientists postulated that there is *no* intelligence behind the laws of nature. Origins, therefore, and everything else, have to be explained by chance.

Experience suggests that this situation may be put in the form of a basic equation of social psychology: that when religion seeks temporal power over the lives of men, science always becomes materialistic by reaction and in self-defense. Ever since the insistent questions of Peter Abelard, early in the twelfth century, vigorous thought in the West has been anti-dogmatic and anti-theological in tendency. This is not to imply that all great scientists have been outspoken atheists, but simply that the movement of their thought, the implicit logic of their premises, has been against a God that can or might intrude in either geological, biological or human events. The scientist wants his natural

world undisturbed by influences which cannot be assimilated to a body of scientific knowledge. In other words, if science will recognize any God at all, it must be a completely unspecialized, wholly impersonal, non-particular Power that operates in a way that scientists can understand as easily as any priest or divinely inspired religious leader. Any other idea of God would destroy the scientific conception of knowledge—a thing no scientist will knowingly permit.

It is quite natural, therefore, for Prof. H. J. Muller, recent Nobel prize-winner for his work in Genetics, to regard with pleasure the conclusion that research in this field is gradually extending the domain of blind chance over human beings, and reducing the area in which science permits us to imagine that we are "free." Prof. Muller, in his contribution to the recent volume, *Genetics, Medicine, and Man* (Cornell University Press, 1947), makes it plain that he regards the idea of moral freedom as a kind of primitive, "animistic" view of life. The business of science, he thinks, is to jolt this complacent belief whenever possible. Darwin, he says, accomplished such a jolt when he showed that evolution required no divine foresight of the evolutionary goal, but "only a mechanism for blind hereditary variations, sorted out by the automatic sieve of natural selection."

According to Prof. Muller, Genetics must hope to a brief answer on the margin of Dr. Einstein's letter replace all sense of purpose in human evolution by "explaining" it as based on "physicochemical phenomena." Genetics has, he thinks, been able "to forge the central links in the chain of evidence that now binds together our conceptions of inanimate and animate nature into one unified though as yet far from completed whole." And the inanimate world is the world created by blind, mechanical forces.

It would, of course, be a good idea to read this book for a clear statement of the mechanisms of physical heredity. Further, there is value in realizing the scope of genetic science in modern medicine—the bearing of heredity on a number of obscure diseases. But most of all, the book should be read to determine the character of the evidence taken as proof of the old contention foisted on the atomists of Greece—that all this (but not heaven, too), happened quite by chance.

Prof. Muller ought not to have turned his first chapter into a polemic for materialistic mysticism. There are better weapons with which to oppose Jehovistic intruders into the natural world. It is time for scientific authors to realize that the possible explanations of natural intelligence are not limited to an interfering personal god on the one hand, and blind cosmic forces on the other. Both of these explanations are philosophical absurdities, and to adopt one only makes a good case for the opposition. Special pleading in the name of Science is just as bad as special pleading on behalf of God.