VOLUME I, NO. 22
JUNE 2, 1948

A BRIEF ACCOUNTING

IT may seem round-about to go to Nagasaki for an illustration of one of the things this article is going to discuss, but a better illustration would be hard to find. Along with other items of democratization in post-war Japan, a couple of years ago the Americans sponsored a beauty-contest in Nagasaki, the winner of which was styled, not Miss Cherry Blossoms or Miss Lotus Eyes, but "Miss Atom Bomb, 1946."

The fact is that in the twentieth century, vast numbers of people can view agony, death and mutilation with frivolity, and inevitably reflect this growing coarseness of spirit in their common speech. The symptoms are all about. A social psychologist recently called attention to the laughter of an audience of children at what is probably the most brutal scene ever filmed—the murder of a defenseless woman by a paranoiac gangster in *The Kiss of Death.* Great Books enthusiasts who have attended a seminar on Dean Swift's *Modest Proposal* know that cannibalism can be an uproariously funny subject to a middle-class gathering, and practically all American parents have a second-hand familiarity, through their children, with the underworld vocabulary of violence and crime.

What is responsible? Two great wars and the accompanying raffishness in morals and manners have had something to do with it; also, along with the continuing revolt among men of letters against mere "niceness" in literature, the deliberate espousal by certain popular writers of the cult of "realism"—the "real" being, for them, the animal side of human nature. The almost complete dying out of the old ideal of a classical education has also played a part, for whatever else may be said about the classics, they enrich and support the inner life of the mind, as contrasted with the externalization of human values which results from the emphasis on science and the techniques of scientific inquiry.

Persons—and families—of cultivation and sensibility have never been numerous in the United States, nor has the ideal of the cultivated man ever had a fair chance of being understood. This is not said mournfully, but as a fact to be recognized in connection with the general debasement of taste that now prevails. It may be admitted that the American people have been engaged with more important matters than refinements of speech and manners and that culture is more amply conceived here than anywhere else in the world. But having conceded this initial claim of the democratic spirit, it is inane to suppose that because the base of American culture is broad, it cannot possibly be low.

It may be admitted, further, and even urged, that the traditional association of cultivation with wealth, and sensibility with leisure, have doomed these minor graces from the start, and that we are well rid of their exclusive pretensions. In all this levelling, however, we may overlook the fact that ten-year-olds now conventionally call one another "rats" and converse in the cynical jargon of mutual distrust and violent reprisal almost as a matter of course. The "I'll bop you" school of parenthood has contributed its unintentional flattery to the same gods that the movies, the comic books and the radio thrillers implicitly praise.

Critics have recently pointed out the moral distance which separates the detective story of the early 1900's from the "objective" brutishness of Dashiell Hammett's or Raymond Chandler's latest. "Raffles," thief though he was, never broke with the kindly instincts. Today, the writers of murder mysteries revel in psychopathic horror, throwing in killings as casually as salt in a stew. Someone has said that football games and prize fights have

taken the place of the gladiators, in modern culture. It is rather the detective story, as impersonally callous as any combat between professional killers, which plays this part in our age of abnormal psychology.

Then there is sex. It is hard to know what to say on this subject. We suspect that the truth about sex is very much like the truth about religion—a highly individual affair. In general, it appears that modern civilization now regards sex in about the same light that the Middle Ages regarded religion, with the belief that endless discussion will make everything clear. Instead of blueprints about finding God, we now have blueprints about the ultimates of sex. It is hardly debatable that there is a deep connection, both organic and psychological, between the creative function throughout nature—sometimes called "God"—and the procreative function in man, and quite conceivably the one will not be understood without knowledge of the other. In either case, however, the method of diagrams and formulas may be suspected. At present, attitudes toward sex participate in the general externalization of thought and of values. We are getting rid of all the old standards and making up new rules only after we are sure we need them. Or, as the Kinsey Report implies, we are giving up the pretense of believing in the old rules. There is a gain, perhaps, in candor, but an uninhibited collapse into animalism, nevertheless, which is associated with, if not caused by, the rejection of traditional taboos. Here, again, is something inevitable about this disintegration in custom, as though the time has come when men and women can no longer rely on social sanctions to keep them "moral," but must now find out what morality is in principle. It is an inevitability akin to the compulsion of history, heralded by the Atom Bomb, which insists that human beings define patriotism, brotherhood, freedom and peace for themselves, instead of expecting the State to do it for them.

The upshot, actually, of all this is that the people of the United States are acting as the agents, although hardly, as yet, the witnesses, of the destruction of their inherited culture, and at the same time are inaugurating, however stumblingly, a new cultural epoch. The difficulty, of course, is that a culture appropriate to the twentieth century cannot be born unconsciously. If it is to be worth while, it must be in some measure a deliberate undertaking. It is for this reason that men like Arthur E. Morgan and Robert M. Hutchins are of such great importance to the future of the United States, and why they deserve all the support they can get.

Both of these men—although they seem to have little in common—recognize that the good life is a life founded on principle. Dr. Hutchins, as protagonist of the Great Books, contends for the subjective life of moral judgment by the individual. He realizes that without individual moral judgment there can be no culture, no civilization at all. Dr. Morgan is a practical campaigner for conscious moral responsibility in the concrete circumstances of human relations. Hutchins hopes to increase the human capacity for principled decision, Morgan to increase the habit of thoughtful, considerate action. Both are crusaders who have gone to the people with their ideas. They are, therefore, among the deliberate founders of tomorrow's culture.

There is plenty of evidence that America's future culture will be a culture for the masses. Since 1870, although the total population has only tripled, the high school population in the United States has become ninety times larger, and the college population thirty times larger. Of necessity, certain essences of the tradition of learning were lost in this sudden expansion of education. Other things, equally disturbing to the traditional culture, have happened since 1870. Several sets of "certainties" have dried up and blown away. The Theory of Evolution vanquished theology and usurped its authority in the field of education. The advent of the Power State reduced the liberal tradition to verbiage. Then, finally, the Atom Bomb called into question

both evolutionary "progress" and the concept of "power" as the means to peace. There are really no general theories left in which men can wholeheartedly believe.

For all of these reasons, it is necessary that men begin to think deliberately and intensively about the values in human life. History seldom affords the opportunity to live in a dogmaless world, a world where new beginnings, as today, are entirely possible. It may seem needlessly iconoclastic to say that even the "good" habits of western culture that have come down through the centuries ought to be examined and tested by some basic standard of evaluation; but we live in a period when *any* custom whose support in reason is obscure is likely to be discarded simply because it belongs to the past. Whether we like it or not, time no longer honors, and the structure of tradition is undermined to its roots.

One explanation of why the crude, the raw and the harsh exercise so great an influence over so many people is in the appeal of vulgar honesty. Men feel that with all the pretense and hypocrisy they have suffered, these things, at least, are "real." This, we may suppose, is the primitive response of masses of men who have been more or less betrayed by the makers of the culture that is dying. When the intellectuals of a society unite in coteries to speak a private language among themselves, when artists adopt the subjective vocabulary of abstraction, the masses find their strength and their refuge in barbarism and vulgarity, and all celebrate the mutual contempt.

These are tendencies about which no one can do anything—quickly. They are also tendencies for which collectivist methods afford no solution at all. Only thorough appreciation by individuals of what has happened to the world, and to the United States in particular, can meet and transform these tendencies into something else. And only a conscious determination to set going new currents of the inner life, to establish new patterns of culture, founded on the same essential honesty that is destroying the old, but at a level of the common humanity in man, instead of the level of the common brute, can form the nucleus of a civilization in which men of all classes and nations may recognize an ideal worthy of their faith.

Letter from **ITALY**

NAPLES.—The Lateran Pact signed by Mussolini and Pope Pius XI in 1929 is now part of the Italian Constitution. [The Lateran Pact is a concordat between the Holy See and the kingdom of Italy, establishing the Vatican City as an independent papal state within the city of Rome.] Many people, including most of the Italian intellectuals, are against this pact, because it interferes with the sovereignty of the Italian State. And this circumstance is evident to whatever person handles Italian currency, on which are printed the "four freedoms." But what the foreigner doesn't often consider is the support on which the Roman Catholic Church grounds her instructions and her claims: the faith of part of the Italian people. Further, the Vatican is a "State" of long standing, *i.e.,* a complex of institutions which has material interests throughout the whole world. The examples of this concrete attachment to the goods of the world are endless.

We can say that the violation of the rights of men are included in the title of "His Holiness" and in the promulgation of any "dogma." But Vatican policy is very elastic. It draws back into its *turris eburnes* of "spirituality" if the times are hard; it stretches its hands over everything when the clouds are dissipated. We now see evidences of medievalism which fill the hearts of intelligent people with disdain and anger. Some specimens: A week ago I received a card from Assisi with the reproduction of an angel of bronze, "who since the 10th of February, 1948," I am assured, "moves and breathes"; two weeks ago, *Risorgimento,* the first Italian daily newspaper printed in liberated Naples, which now is in the hands of the Monarchists, brought the news of the corpse of a man who showed no sign or odor of decomposition fourteen days after death; two or three months ago, a nine-year-old girl had conversation with the Virgin herself, and has monthly meetings with Her in the same place. . . . The list could continue. . .

Officially, the Catholic authorities take no stand on such questions. They wait. If the "wonder" shows itself to be "vital"—and the vitality is in direct relation to the number of the visitors and of believers—it becomes acceptable, "real"; if not—the Church has kept silence, and may mark the miracle as "autosuggestion."

But where the Catholic Church will make every effort to gain exclusive control of Italian youth is in the school, and, if possible, in the University. Her main foe is always the teacher of Philosophy, or History, two subjects which man can understand only with a free mind, a sensible conscience and a fearless heart. Our freedom of thinking will not vacillate even if we are compelled to make a prayer before the beginning of the lesson. I remember the furious hate against priests and religious institutions in old Austria, when young people, not very firm in the Catholic faith, were obliged to go to mass and to confession and communion. Irony is the weapon of free teachers in such circumstances. One teacher, compelled to expound the fascist doctrine during the last years of Mussolini's reign, let his pupils read the most bombastic speeches of The Duce: the method was infallible . . . the pupils laughed.

An American friend has asked about the "ruthless persecution of all dissenting priests of the Roman Catholic Church." I can answer that I personally knew Ernesto Buonainti, who lost his place as university professor and died two years ago, refusing the plea from bishops and other dignitaries of the Vatican to return to the bosom of the holy church.

Two words yet about Togliatti's intervention in favor of the famous or infamous Article VII of the new Italian Constitution. A friend of mine, a Communist, explained to me why the Communist Party united its vote with that of the Christian Democrats supporting Article VII. The purpose was to chain the Christian Democrats to the

Constitution, which is quite republican. The Communists feared the Christian Democrats would swing to the rightist parties (monarchists, fascists, liberals) if the Article VII were rejected. The Communists believe the Article VII is not a *cosa seria* (a serious thing), and in the future, if they obtain a majority, will take no account of it. Communists are materialists and would meet the Macchiavellianism of the Vatican with the Macchiavellianism of Lenin and Stalin. That is the aim of the Communists. May friends of freedom and peace check the invasions and intolerance of clericalism of every kind.

ITALIAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
MEN LIKE GODS

You don't expect to find religion in a western story, and yet you do find it, although in unconventional form, throughout the entire output of Max Brand, the western-story writer whose fabulous popularity was equalled only by his volume in words—some 25,000,000 in all, before he was killed during World War II by a bomb in Italy. According to a survey published in *Common Sense* for August, 1945, the pulp magazines and the comic books together have an audience totalling about one hundred million readers, a fact which makes it of some importance to understand the fascination exerted by this type of "literature" over so vast a majority of the population of the United States.

MANAS readers may be even less acquainted with Max Brand's stories than with other categories of western and adventure stories. It may be pointed out, therefore, that Mr. Brand was a specialist in the naïve enthusiasms which sophisticated writers avoid like the plague. He offered a carefully edited version of manly idealism for people who neither feel nor can understand the tired cynicism of the professional intellectual—people for whom what we call modern "literature" contains almost nothing of interest. In this sense, the Brand stories are a more powerful drug to the depressed and harassed people who read them than the usual stereotyped chronicles of adventure and romance. But illusion for illusion, they seem far less offensive and morally disintegrating than the pseudo-realism of *Tobacco Road* themes, and more honest in their unabashed hero-worshipping fantasy than the implausible happy-endings of other light fiction. The question of "literature" hardly enters this comparison at all. It is rather a matter of child-psychology versus decadence and middle-class commercialism.

There is a poor man's magic in these stories, an alchemical blend of words and mood which helps you to believe the unbelievable. All the conventional types are quintessential: the villains wear the outcaste nobility of -rebellious angels, damned souls, but with the dignity of those who know they are damned; the "little guys" have legendary devotion to the leading figures of the tales—Blondel loved his Richard, Gunga Din his Regiment, not more than they the deep-cheated heroes created by Max Brand; and these heroes—strange and wonderful olympians—surely appear from some Never-Never land where the gods themselves wait patiently for Mr. Brand to invoke their presence on earth, and in his stories.

Mr. Brand's heroes do not drop quotations from Marlowe and Shakespeare along their trail, giving secret promise that these hard-bitten men of mountain and desert will turn out to be hereditary earls with an uncontrollable bent for adventure. The mysticism of these stories is of a deeper sort. One gets the feeling that the whole world and nearly everyone in it is unworthy and trivial, according to a *real* man's way of thinking. The true spiritual existence lies in lost valleys hidden beyond passless ranges—places forever preserved from human pollution, where the lust for gold is unknown and the birds and the beasts and Our Hero live in a state of original innocence, untamed and free.

Occasionally the clean-limbed man-god forgets his ancestral wisdom and sallies down from the mountains to make a story for Mr. Brand. If a mortal of common breed looked closely at the silent one, come like Nemesis to avenge the humble and make the greedy and the evil tremble in their guilt, he would see—

> the great spring of muscles that arched from shoulder to shoulder, the corseting of might which gripped him about the loins and swelled his torso above hips as lean as those of a desert wolf that can run all day and fight all night.

He comes among men, not as a prophet who has been alone with the Alone, and now must communicate his message before he dies, but in response to some primeval impulse to the peculiar

sort of knight-errancy always undertaken by Mr. Brand's heroes, and which the reader learns to expect. He has, perhaps, to seek out Death and play stud poker with him a while. Or he gives Robin Hood a new incarnation by matching his forest-bred sagacity with the puny man-hunting skill of a town-bound sheriff. The crimes of the man-god are not crimes at all, but benefactions of Nature. If he kills, the earth is cleansed of vermin; if he robs, justice always gains. And the man-god lives as he was meant to live, releasing the power in his steel-thawed body like thunderbolts from Zeus, blasting wickedness and making violets spring up in the wastelands for the simple people to remember him by.

Ordinary western-story authors always manage to get the rustlers shot, hung, or chased across the border to Mexico, and finally to marry Miss Bluebells, the rancher's daughter or niece, to the loyal foreman who acted so strangely because he had a Secret he couldn't explain, but Max Brand gives the tired shipping clerk riding home in the subway all this, and Superman, too. Genghis Khan and Charlemagne must have stirred uneasily in their great tombs whenever Mr. Brand planned a new story, for his scheme was always a preview of *their* third act. And Mr. Brand himself, it may be, wondered at odd moments if he was playing fair with his wilderness gods in harnessing them for the pulp-paper fiction industry. For Mr. Brand, we think, believed in his gods, even as we should like to believe in them. We doubt if he ever called his readers "suckers," while sharing with them his foreshortened dreams—dreams that made him rich, and his readers happy, for a time.

No man can capture a reading audience like that without putting some of his heart in his work. And when he tells us that a wild stallion ought never to be raced for money, we believe him. When his man-god looks upon the city or town to which the plot draws him on, he feels contempt and hesitates, as, perhaps, Mr. Brand hesitated thirty years ago, when he first began taking the man-gods to town and to market. But in town or hurtling up the mountainside in some wild pursuit, the man-god never breaks faith with the wordless secret he carries in his heart—that "up there," over the basalt rim and beyond the half-seen peaks which rise in series, fugue-like, to be lost in skies which swoop to meet them, is a place where time stands still—where an effortless wish is an act of creation. Every poet knows this place. The Greeks called it the land of the Lotus-eaters. Lord Dunsany knew and practiced its magic. Oscar Wilde, too, had been there. Returning, he wrote:

> Surely there was a time I might have trod
> The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
> Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God:
> Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod
> I did but touch the honey of romance—
> And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

COMMENTARY

THE RADIO AND EDUCATION

A POLITE discussion in the current *American Scholar* concerning the good points and bad points of radio broadcasting in the United States leads us to the conclusion that not only the ordinary person, but the man of learning, as well, is sadly confused concerning the actual processes of education. There are, for example, many who cannot quite recover from their disappointment that radio, with its easy access to 30,000,000 homes, has not already accomplished the millennium, educationally speaking, by bringing truth and light to this vast audience of American listeners. These disheartened critics of radio seem unaware that education is not among those things that can be done *to* people, nor even *for* them.

For education, as we understand it, means the desire to know the truth for its own sake, and the willingness to follow it wherever it leads. Genuine educators have this desire, and people who lack it cannot be called educators. It is possible to establish centers of learning, to invite good teachers to make their headquarters in those centers, and then provide opportunity for young men and women who want to know what truths have already been found out to make a respectful approach to education in their company. That is possible, and that is about all we know about the processes of education. The essentials are simple: the desire and the capacity to learn on the part of the students, and the desire and the capacity to teach on the part of the educators. This much we know from Plato's *Apology* and his *Meno* and from human experience.

We know, or should know, also, from human experience, that a great pile of stone, an enormous library and an expensive faculty catering to thousands of students are no evidence at all that education is taking place. Institutions of this sort are dispensaries of certain skills—the skills for example, that enable the gentlemen who run the radio networks to make a lot of money for themselves and their stockholders—but education is not something that can be dispensed.

So, we have little sympathy, although some patience, with those who bravely challenge the radio industry to transform itself into a beacon light for democratic progress. We are not even impressed by the conscientious little talks given by competent scientists concerning their specialties. Fundamentally, radio is an instrument of modern marketing. Its advocates and apologists insist that because radio commands an audience of many millions, it is of necessity "democratic"—if it can sell more soap powder and tooth paste than any other advertising medium, the case for the spiritual benefits of radio is proved!

It may be admitted that radio brings good music—along with much that is less admirable—to many who would otherwise be without it; that news broadcasts perform a social service comparable to that of the press. But the radio is not—no more than the press—an educational institution. Actually, one defense offered of the radio is that it is "no worse" than the commercial press. Which is to say that at best, it is the source of an incalculable amount of triviality, bad taste, emotionalism and misinformation. Let us stop "wasting time" trying to reform the radio, for that is an activity which radio has itself brought to perfection. Expecting radio to educate is like expecting Mr. Hearst to hire a man like Gandhi as his editorial director. It isn't going to happen.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A READER writes:

> Some weeks ago (MANAS, April 7), you said that "men, even the small ones we call children, are essentially supra-physical, *i.e.*, 'souls'." Whatever your specific definition of "soul," the word does not seem to terrorize you. Certainly, it is a common term for suggesting a real and inner individuality which has high instincts and intuitions. Perhaps, then, you could indicate what, in your opinion, the parent can contribute to the "soul-life" of a child. When does such help begin? When the child begins to talk? Emerson said, "Treat men and women well. Treat them as if they were real. Perhaps they are." The difficulty seems always to have been—what is to be treated as "real"? *Souls* don't misbehave, have tantrums, bad habits, and so forth.

Perhaps we should explain how we came to use the word "soul" in this column. There is a part of each man, we thought, which is concerned with the principle of justice—fairness to others—even when being just means opposing strong personal desires. Since the ability to perceive the abstract idea of justice cannot be satisfactorily traced to urges for biological satisfaction or supremacy, the simplest conclusion seems to be that there is a moral core within each man transcending everything physical and personal. The word "soul"—having its equivalent in every known tongue, past or present—has been a symbol for this "self within a self." Religions which have preached "brotherhood" have done so on the basis of an inherent logic which asserts that all humans can find a basis for moral unity by recognizing in every other man a transcendent Self or Soul. The belief in an ensouling essence seems to possess validity, if only because of its timeless presence in men's thoughts.

Are we sure that children know nothing of the feelings which caused the universal tradition of "soul" to arise? The capacity to desire justice is not, as often incorrectly assumed, limited to adults. Within each child there is a private warfare—such as that described in the Indian *Bhagavad-Gita*—between the desire to care only for that which is pleasant to self and the desire to act on the basis of that which is helpful to others.

When a child forcibly appropriates a toy from another child, especially if the latter is younger and more helpless, does the aggressor give evidence of being well satisfied with himself? Very seldom. Facial expression and general attitude will usually reveal some kind of inner dissatisfaction. The smaller child cries. Why should the older and stronger biological specimen care about this, since he now *has* the object of his desires? He cares because even at that time there is another dimension to his life than "the gaining for self"—a dimension he does not understand and yet of which he can, at times, be acutely aware. Such instances may, on a "soul theory" of education, be regarded as significant opportunities for imparting some form of understanding. *The child's own feelings can be explained sympathetically to him.* It is this—not punishment and scolding—which his moral sense requires for intelligent enlargement.

If the assertion of a transcendent moral self is valid, it implies that our "soul vision" is sometimes clear and sometimes obscure. Or, as the questioner suggests, "souls" do not have tantrums. No man has ever been impelled to an emotional excess because of an overpowering sense of justice. A sense of justice calms emotion and encourages reason. Yet children do have tantrums, "misbehave" in various ways, have been known to "show very little consideration for others," etc. But if there is an embryonic sense of justice within each child—just as there is a not-so-embryonic egocentricity—it would seem wise to acquaint the child, as soon as it is able to talk, with the reality of its own dual nature. This is how we might begin to "treat children as souls." The next step, logically following, would be for the parent to restrain himself from treating the child as if it has no moral perception or responsibility; the moment we assume that "he doesn't know any better," we are professing our

ability to determine the exact stage of moral development in the child, and because we usually expect so little from the independent moral capacities of children, we may easily overlook the signs of their presence. We are in a poor position to aid a natural growth in the child's sense of justice if we think that it must be "conditioned" into existence.

When we have talked in this column about treating children as "equals," we have meant to stress, in philosophical terms, the need of demonstrating to the child that his quest for happiness and wisdom is the same as our own—that the same obstructive psychological factors are encountered by us, even though sometimes in different form. Nothing is more important for a child to learn than those things which unite him to the rest of the human world. He is on the pilgrimage of Everyman, traversing a simpler terrain with less elaborate equipment, it is true, yet the rules of procedure, identical. He will find happiness in the same states of mind as will his parents; and, similarly, find unhappiness in purely egocentric attitudes of mind. To give the same consideration to the child as one would to the adult means to admit him openly into the fellowship of humans and to erase from our own minds the notion that such admittance is impossible until biological maturity has been achieved.

At an extremely early age each child can be made aware of the fact that he is a different person at different times according to the quality of his motivations. He will come to discover that he receives (experiences) more spontaneous "love" from his parents when his motivations include a desire to be constructive. And he will respond to parents similarly: his feelings of love for us will be stronger when we live as "souls," weaker and more confused if or when we are the prey of petty ambitions and fears.

FRONTIERS

Design in Nature

GUSTAF STROMBERG, staff astronomer of the Mt. Wilson Observatory from 1917 to 1946, has lent his voice to the campaign against Atheism conducted by the Hearst *American Weekly*. In the issue of April 18, introducing Dr. Stromberg's article, an editorial note lays claim to piety by calling the statement, "Science proves there is no God," a "blasphemous lie," and implies that "Nobel prize winners from Einstein to Millikan" have testified in *The American Weekly* to the existence of God.

It is curious how, over centuries, the interpretation placed upon scientific "facts" varies with the spirit of the times. In this article, Dr. Stromberg presents the findings of embryologists to the effect that the pattern of development seems to originate in a single point in the embryo, and thence spreads its influence as a "wave of organization" to produce the particular formations of cells and tissues that characterize the developed organism. The discoverer of this phenomenon, Prof. Hans Spemann, of the University of Freiberg, Germany, found that a fragment of tissue from the "organizing" region of the embryo (the dorsal lip of the blastopore), when transplanted to another part of the same embryo, would establish a new center of vital organization, causing a double embryo to form.

The presence of this "organizer" or principle of form in a small bit of tissue, which has the power to control or guide the development of an entire embryo, became the basis for a long series of experiments. Dr. Oscar Shotte, of Amberst, following Spemann's lead, grew strange monsters from the embryos of tadpoles by transplanting the "organizers" from one embryo to another. He produced an eye in the regenerating tail of a tadpole by taking a fragment of "eye" organizer from another embryo and planting it in the tail. Eventually, the eyefield, transplanted to the tail, extended its influence and caused the development of an entire head. Similar experiments carried on by N. T. Spratt, Jr., of the University of Rochester, Ross G. Harrison of Yale, and Elmer G. Butler of Princeton, all supported the view, voiced by Spratt, that organic development "seems to be the expression of an already existing but invisible structural organization." Or, as the noted cytologist Edmund Wilson had said, many years before, biologists are driven to "the assumption of a 'metastructure' in protoplasm that lies beyond the present limits of microscopical vision."

The reality of these biological "organizers," mysteriously present in the embryo, is cited by Dr. Stromberg as evidence of the "plan" in nature—and, he says, since a plan "can only be made by a personal being," and since "an impersonal nature cannot have such characteristics, we are led to belief in a personal God."

But Dr. Stromberg is not the first controversialist in religion to employ evidence of this sort. Two hundred years ago, Lamettrie seized upon the results of quite similar experiments to prove exactly the opposite conclusion! Lamettrie, author of the notorious manual of materialism, *L'Homme Machine*, was the avowed opponent of the Christian doctrine of creation. An eager admirer of experimental science, he sought evidence to show that there was no need for any outside creator, and in the years 1744-47, Abraham Trembley, a Swiss naturalist, published researches on fresh-water polyps that were just what Lamettrie was looking for. Trembley had cut a polyp into several pieces, and in eight days each fragment grew into a whole organism capable of reproducing itself. Lamettrie urged this wonderful fact as proof that man has not sufficient knowledge of the powers of Nature to deny that she produces everything out of herself, without help from God. Thus, in effect, Lamettrie's proof of atheism was exactly the same as Stromberg's proof of theism—and both arguments are equally inconclusive!

Lamettrie, as is sometimes forgotten, was himself a moralist with a high social purpose behind his forays against theology. He maintained that the world would never be happy until it was atheistic. "If Atheism were universally disseminated," he argued, "all the branches of religion would be torn up by the roots. Then there would be no more theological wars: there would no longer be soldiers of religion, that terrible kind of soldier." It was not unnatural that scientists both before and after Lamettrie's time shared his general view. Copernicus and Galileo could hardly have admired the religious institutions which made the pursuit of scientific truth so hazardous, and evidence was not wanting, even in the nineteenth century, that the forces of organized religion were enemies of free and impartial investigation.

Today, however, the fear is of the destructiveness of a world without religion. Instead of the blind, mechanical forces of materialism, an increasing number of scientists now allege that they see behind the veil of nature the hand of the Creator once again. It seems never to occur to these unsophisticated theologians from observatory and laboratory that their arguments will as easily vindicate the existence of pixies, dryads and Aristotelian *entelechies* as the great Artificer of Christian tradition. (Incidentally, there are, we think, arguments favorable to pixies, dryads, and even the 33 million gods of the Hindu pantheon, but which in no sense support the deity of Western monotheism.)

Dr. Stromberg supposes, doubtless, that he is repeating the quite respectable "Argument from Design," so carefully developed by loyal Christians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But what persuasion he possesses really grows out of the Argument from Anxiety, or, in the less charitable phrase of modern skeptics, it grows from the modern "failure of nerve."

Actually, the facts of the new embryology are extremely interesting, and they do stand in opposition to oversimplified theories of organic development. What they do not do is justify a sudden short-circuit of open-minded inquiry and the adoption of the most unphilosophical and anti-social conception of deity that the world has known.

A last word on the suggestion of *The American Weekly* that Dr. Einstein and other great scientists stand foursquare behind the modern attempt to revive belief in a personal God: We should hardly call Dr. Einstein an "atheist," but we know of no utterance of his suggesting belief in a conventional "Supreme Being." In point of fact, at the first meeting of the Conference on Science, Religion and Philosophy (now an annual event), held in New York in September, 1940, Dr. Einstein expressed himself categorically on this subject, saying that "the main source of the present-day conflicts between the spheres of religion and science lies in this concept of a personal God." He added:

To be sure, the doctrine of a personal God interfering with natural events could never be refuted in the real sense by science, for this doctrine can always take refuge in those domains in which scientific knowledge has not yet been able to set foot. But I am persuaded that such behavior on the part of the representatives of religion would not only be unworthy but also fatal.

For a doctrine which is able to maintain itself, not in clear light, but only in the dark, will of necessity lose its effect on mankind with incredible harm to human progress.

In their struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal God—that is, give up that source of fear and hope which in the past placed such vast power in the hands of priests. In their labors they will have to avail themselves of those forces which are capable of cultivating the Good, the True and the Beautiful in Humanity itself.

That is, to be sure, a more difficult but an incomparably more worthy task.

READING AND WRITING

In the midst of the war, Bernard DeVoto wrote for *Harper's* (March, 1944):

> . .. this war has begotten one fear which seems altogether new. It is not often acknowledged. It has little public expression, little direct expression even in private. It has to be sought in overtones, between the lines, as an implication and an inference, as a subtle coloration or an impalpable envelope—but it exists and it may well be the most truly terrifying phenomenon of the war. It is a fear of the coming peace.

What men feared in wartime was the uncertainty and insecurity which seemed in store for "peace," and now that the war is over, that fear has grown to the proportion of a national—or is it "international"?—obsession. Devere Allen, discussing "What Europe Thinks about America" in a recent Human Affairs pamphlet, quotes from a European author who recently visited the United States, and wrote for an overseas weekly: "It is not only that Americans fear war; their fear is frankly neurotic . . . there is perhaps no adequate word for the nexus of guilt, frustration and emptiness one discerns in the American psyche."

Sounds pretty bad. *UN World*, however, seems of the same general view, for the May issue presents an analysis of "the psychological illness of the world's most powerful nation," by Carey McWilliams, who attempts to answer the question, "What does America Fear?" No one, it seems, is exempt from the insidious virus of foreboding, which leads Mr. McWilliams to record "the pathetic fact that *we cannot identify what it is that we fear."* He lists some of the symptoms. A Los Angeles County official who admitted that not one case of disloyalty amoung county employees arose during the war angrily insisted that a "loyalty test" be given to the county's 20,000 employees. . . . At Cal Tech, a friend reported to Mr. McWilliams, the library is guarded like a prison, and scientists engaged in research at that University "have a feeling that they are in fact prisoners, working on projects the control of which is vested in persons they have never seen, fashioning processes which will be used for purposes to which they would never give their approval."

Since the McWilliams article went to press, other incidents confirm its general diagnosis. In Detroit, for example, the Police Commissioner recently commandeered the newsdealers' stock of comic books, declaring them "Communistic and immoral." . . . In Los Angeles, that vigilant guardian of free institutions, the *Times,* "exposed" an effort to "sovietize" the Navaho Indians. It seems that an employee (Russian-born) of the Department of the Interior attempted to introduce "co-operatives" as a part of the economy of the Navaho Reservation. And a co-op, according to the *Times* correspondent, is a "Russian Soviet," and look how such fiendish plots can mature right in Arizona! (The co-ops were to replace the traders who, an Indian spokesman claimed, had overcharged the Indians for years.) . . . An editorial in a house-organ issued by a midwest manufacturer warns against "The Menace of Minorities," apparently oblivious of the fact that every forward step in history is directly traceable to minority action. Quite evidently, the writer has communist infiltration in mind, yet in his attack upon this "fanatical, destructive minority," he nowhere distinguishes it from the traditional idea of a minority group and the quite different part played by cultural and idealistic political minorities.

Thus, not only is fear producing overt acts which betray the hysteria of their origin, but also, a kind of stultification of thought, a loss of historical perspective which is more threatening even than momentary excesses of patriotic zeal. For when fear affects measured judgment as well as impulsive action, the hope of ultimate balance is attacked at its root.

There is a fitness in the fact that J. Robert Oppenheimer, the theoretical physicist best known as "the man who built the atom bomb," seems to be one of the few men who have some understanding of what is behind this all-pervading uneasiness—the "fear" described by Mr. DeVoto over a year before the great atomic blast. Dr. Oppenheimer, who is now director of the Institute for Advanced Studies, at Princeton, New Jersey, recently told a New York *Times* interviewer:

> The world difficulty is that the sense of progress, the central theme of European culture since the Renaissance, has been jeopardized. The Europeans see no horizons. Even here the frontier has been shut down. For a while atomic energy looked like a frontier. But its short-term prospects have been oversold. It will be a good thirty to fifty years before atomic energy can supplement the world's power resources in a substantial way.

One wonders, however, if the world's sense of "progress" is in any real sense dependent upon a frontier that promises additional sources of power. The anxieties of men seem rather to be based on a growing sense of distrust of one another, and it would be more to the point to suggest that the original Renaissance conception of progress was very different from a dream of endless physical achievement. Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on Man* states the Renaissance idea succinctly:

> Thou [Man] shalt define thy nature for thyself. For thou man art made neither heavenly nor earthly, but art as it were shine own maker, having power to decline unto the low brute creatures or be reborn unto the highest, according to the sentence of shine intellect.

This is the sense of progress we have lost. For, as Carey McWilliams says, "The most serious consequence of all this [fear] is that it builds up, within the individual citizen, a feeling of utter helplessness, a feeling that his fate is being determined by 'crises' which neither he nor his elected representatives can foresee." It was this feeling of "helplessness," fostered by the Medieval Church, which the Renaissance rejected. How it can be rejected again, in the twentieth century, is the fundamental question.