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FORBIDDEN SUBJECTS

WHILE there is nothing new about the theory that "forbidden subjects" are generally the keys to personal psychological difficulties, the idea of applying the theory to peoples and to epochs has not, we think, been extensively explored. It may be equally true that the matters which a civilization attempts to ignore, for whatever reasons, are the matters which it needs most to understand.

In the twelfth century, Peter Abelard was variously persecuted, tried for heresy and exiled to the monastic hinterlands for daring to discuss the theological Holy Trinity of medieval Christianity. He recognized that much of the Church's irrationalism derived from this incomprehensible subject, and one of the uncontrollable tendencies of Abelard's life seems to have been to attempt to give rational form to the great questions of life—and, in his day, the nature of the Trinity was of some importance.

In the twentieth century, the discoveries of Gregor Mendel in genetics are under a similar authoritarian ban in Soviet Russia. The idea of physical inheritance, it seems, is contrary to Marxian dogma, and any biologist who dares to assert the Mendelian theory in the USSR may expect to meet the fate of Vavilov, who died in prison five or six years ago. According to press reports, several more Soviet geneticists were recently purged for Mendelian deviations which seemed to threaten the Marxian theory of human nature. For if heredity determines biological character, and if man is essentially biological (as implied by the materialist view), then the new environment created by the Communist Party can have little effect in shaping the nature of man. But the Party *must* determine the nature of man: therefore, Mendelian theory is forbidden.

In the United States, the prohibitory lines are less clearly drawn. The American who wants to discuss a "forbidden" subject will not find himself thrown in prison—not, at any rate, in peacetime; he will simply find the channels of public communication closed—or almost closed—to him. Nor is this wholly accurate, for if a man is willing to make the results of his discussion agree with the opinions of those who control the channels of communication, he will find no difficulty in being heard. The forbidden element is in unwanted or unpopular conclusions more than in particular subjects.

To take an illustration, there is the question of the origins of the second World War. Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes has made a study of the reception of articles and books dealing critically with American foreign policy during the years before the outbreak of the war. He finds that both book publishers and magazine editors uniformly refuse impartial treatment of this subject. While the late Charles A. Beard, as one who, until recently, was widely accorded the title of "dean of American historians," could hardly fail to find a publisher for his latest volume, *American Foreign Policy in the Making*, 1932-1940 (no "commercial" publisher, however, would print it, the volume finally being issued by a friendly university press), this important work was allowed only a page of review in the *American Historical Review*. George Morgenstern's *Pearl Harbor* found its way into print only with great difficulty, being published, at last, by a small Catholic firm. Most of the reviewers did their best to brand the book as worthless, accusing the writer of being "bitterly partisan," or in a state of "blind anger." Having read the book, we can say that such charges are without foundation. One professional reviewer, after failing to find serious errors of fact in the volume, concluded that while many or most

of its statements are correct, the book as a whole is a "great untruth." Admirers of Oswald Garrison Villard will be interested to learn that when he called a magazine editor, offering to review the Morgenstern book, the latter asked him what he thought of it. Mr. Villard said, "I believe, since his book is based on the records of the Pearl Harbor inquiry, he is right," but the editor replied, "Oh, we don't handle books of that type. It is against our policy to do so."

Of this "policy" of editors and reviewers, Dr. Barnes says:

> Aside from reviews by Professor E. M. Borchard, Harry P. Howard and Admiral H. E. Yarnell, Morgenstern's brilliant book did not get one fair and honest review when it appeared and Professor George A. Lundberg found it impossible to find an editor who would print his review until May, 1948, thus delaying its appearance until eighteen months after the book was published. Despite his eminence in the historical profession, ... the same treatment has been accorded Dr. Beard.... Even men who made their historical reputation in part by using Dr. Beard's personal historical materials have not hesitated to attempt to smear his book and his historical reputation.

There is this further comment by Dr. Barnes:

> The extent to which the determination to shut off the truth in this field has gone is revealed by the *Annual Report* of the Rockefeller Foundation for 1946 (p. 188) where it is frankly stated that a large sum of money has been granted to frustrate and check the rise of Revisionism after World War II. There is to be a lavishly subsidized "official" history directed by men who played an important role in the propaganda and intelligence work of the British and American Governments during the War. This is supposed to settle the matter for all time.

It is not necessary to agree with Dr. Barnes, Professor Beard and Mr. Morgenstern in order to believe that impartial investigation of the origins of the recent war ought to be encouraged instead of being frustrated and surrounded by numerous practical difficulties. During the war, it was often claimed that one of the most sacred reasons for the struggle was the protection of the right of minorities to be heard. Here, in this handful of historical scholars, is a minority of intelligent men—men with honorable reputations and records of professional integrity—who now are attacked as unworthy of a large American audience. We can let the Pearl Harbor question go, and pass by the Roosevelt criticism; we can assume even that these are matters of relative unimportance—although, manifestly, they are not—and there will still remain the question of *why* the attack on these historians has been so virulent—why the insistence on a single interpretation of the coming of the war takes on an increasingly totalitarian mood. From the general appearance alone of these circumstances, it is possible to suspect that some unpleasant secrets are being withheld from the people of the United States—withheld, as always, for the people's "own good."

The origins of the war is one forbidden subject. There are others which, while not exactly forbidden, are so involved in some sort of emotionalism that any successful discussion of them must be carefully hedged with qualifications and definitions of exactly what is meant. Subjects such as "socialism," "free enterprise," "individualism," and "social classes" fall into this category. A footnote in Crane Brinton's recent study of the difficulties surrounding world federation will illustrate the problem. Prof. Brinton is discussing the sort of administrators who ran the Roman Empire. They made up, he says, "a group that can fairly be called a cosmopolitan, or better yet international, elite." Then comes his footnote:

> Of course, I do not like the word "elite.". . . It has already become an academic smear-word, and to be an "elitist" thinker, like Pareto, is to be labeled a hopeless reactionary, a fascist or worse. But in our democratic society *all* words or phrases indicating the existence in this society of privileged groups are suspect and subject to cheapening. (It must have been already noted that in medieval society the process was exactly the opposite: words describing underprivileged groups, churl, villain, and the like, originally descriptive, acquired unfavorable emotional overtones.) If the reader is offended by "elite," I give

him choice of "ruling classes," "privileged classes," "upper classes," "aristocracy," or even "leaders," "bosses," or "'big shots." But I suspect he will be offended by them all. *(From Many One,* Harvard University Press.)

Prof. Brinton is undoubtedly right in so describing the feeling-tone of these terms, and right, also, in the difficulties he implies for one who wants to indicate the composition of society—any society—in neutral language. What Prof. Brinton would like is a group of words to apply to the stratifications of society as devoid of inferior-superior implications as the words used to describe different parts of a tree—roots, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers, fruit. He wants words that will denote difference of function, place or part, without declaring invidious distinction.

The language applying to man, in other words, should have both a centripetal and centrifugal meaning. The term for "farmer" should convey not only the farmer's special activity, but also the basic import that the farmer is a *man* who farms. So, equally, with all human occupations and social differences. Words, however, can hardly be expected to preserve the sense of the dignity of man. They can only reflect and give appropriate expression to a feeling which already exists.

Here, we come up against the hard fact that the sense of human dignity varies with individuals in an unpredictable manner. It is this variability of human excellence which creates the problem to which Prof. Brinton devoted his footnote, and which seems practically insoluble. The answer to the question, What will cause men to respect one another? is as difficult to determine as the nature of virtue—the burden of Plato's educational inquiry. In order to leave the question not wholly unanswered, various theories have been proposed. One of the most popular in past centuries was the idea that the best of men are immaculately conceived. Another view was that a certain caste of men—distinguished by learning and holiness—would be favored with exceptional offspring. Then there was the born-in-a-stable theory and the born-in-a-log-cabin theory. The theories changed with the social transformations of history. The eighteenth century issued in the hypothesis that better men would develop in the environment of free political institutions and favorable educational influences. In the nineteenth century arose the doctrine that the conditions of class oppression and economic exploitation would generate leaders from within the masses who would establish a just order of society. The twentieth century, inheritor of all previous theories, added a variation on the doctrine of heredity with the "pure blood" explanation of human excellence—a theory driven underground by social condemnation, but which is continued in devious forms by the pride and the prejudice of national and racial groups.

Today, the discussion and inquiry into the nature of human differences is virtually forbidden, largely for the reason that humanitarian thought has attempted to deny that the problem exists. This means that one must agree that the difference between a Socrates and a Nero is superficial—that at birth the two may be regarded as virtually interchangeable. In other words, equalitarian social thought seems to demand what common sense will invariably reject, with the result that common sense tends to become the ally of partisans of racialism, or at least to encourage objectional theories of the origin of an "elite" class.

The ban on discussion of human differences stems from the supposition that recognition of a theory of human excellence carries with it the assignment of the power of authoritarian rule to those in whom the excellence is supposed to reside. Ironically enough, the only group which explicitly rejects this power for men of excellence is made up of anarchists, so that, theoretically, only anarchists can be trusted to proceed with the development of a theory of human excellence without turning their conclusions into an authoritarian threat. And yet the anarchists are probably feared more than any other modern school of thought, not alone for the violence

which characterized their early history, but also for their unsettling attack on *all* forms of social hierarchy.

So, finally, we return to Socrates and Plato; to Socrates for the example of how a man of excellence may be expected to behave; to Plato for a hypothesis that offers some hope of an explanation of human differences. It was Plato's view that to heredity and environment must be added a third factor of explanation for the nature of the individual man—the factor of the soul. The soul, according to Plato, is not a neutral, morally formless entity that begins at birth and is "synthesized" into a measure of uniqueness by the conditionings of personal experience. The soul, in Platonic philosophy, is an independent power, a free moral agent, the unit which moves—or may move—itself. The distinction of the soul lies in its approach to the Socratic ideal in daily life—and this, agreeably to Orphic and Platonic theory—is the course of soul-evolution.

Such a theory of human differences will support no politics of reaction nor crystallization of class, but is rather profoundly *radical* in all its implications. It suggests that human excellence is the private creation of the individual, but that it grows only through sharing the fruits of excellence with the rest of the human community. It is a theory, we think, that has none of the weakness of other competing doctrines, and takes full account of the extraordinary plurality of natures met with in human experience. It is, of course, a metaphysical theory—another "forbidden" subject of our time—but then,—we began by proposing that it is the forbidden subjects of any period which need the closest examination.

Letter from

ITALY

NAPLES.—The bourgeois is an international evil. In a world which moves and shatters, he is always resting. Is he optimistic? . . . Is he pessimistic? Neither. He lies on his property like Fafnir, the dragon of Wagner's Siegfried, and ignores the pulse of the wide world. He lives only in his own petty kingdom.

Perhaps the American reader will be interested to understand a particular type—the Italian bourgeois. The Italian bourgeois is the man who has reached his . . . what? Surely not his, or any ideal. He builds his nest in a corner, hatches his eggs, and declares that the stand-point from which he admires and criticises the affairs of the world is the only right one. The Italian bourgeois has no doubt that his salary is too small, while he thinks his services are the most indispensable. He never questions his worth. The Italian bourgeois goes Sunday to mass and wears his new suit. The Sunday convinces him of his infallibility. And this infallibility secures him from consuming his brain with thought. He sleeps, rests, or works without troubles. He never supposes that matters may be different from his opinions. His equilibrium is disturbed only by astonishment. He learns of a strike and cries: "Why don't 'they' jail this mob?" He doesn't reflect that " 'he' is one of 'they'."

If he must pay taxes, he mutters; and his deepest satisfaction is in evading this payment. He is fond of his newspaper, and like the mercury in a thermometer, he rises and falls: today, war; tomorrow, peace. . . . That he might labor for peace does not concern him. He thinks his nation is the most cultured. Americans are ignorant, the French are vain, Slavs are barbarians, Britons are hypocrites, and Germans are. . . . well, let us be silent on this front, but I think that many of the Italian bourgeoisie feel that the Germans are innocent victims of this war. The Italian bourgeois is impressed by the magic of Germany's "discipline," because he has no discipline himself. Why should there be this decisive difference? In my opinion, the causes are various.

Italian culture is old, it needs new spirit. Italians are reluctant to travel, to see new people and contact new ideas. Italy has a mild climate, her historic monuments are numberless; but the Italian bourgeois does not even know his own country. How many Neapolitans have visited Capri? How many have seen the Museo Nationale? This indolence must be connected with a certain hate of geography. The Italian bourgeois knows little of foreign countries, and so . . . he doesn't care for them.

Surely, the depressive power of indigence has also its weight in the cultural formation of the middle-class Italian. His standard of living is very low. And fear of the future checks the rise of hope and confines his ideals. But in time, should prosperity arise, the bourgeois may be seduced to rest on his memories and fallacious hopes. We need to open the borders, let air of the world into our houses and rouse the sleepy in order to know our brothers beyond our frontiers. Each culture, as it ripens, must extend itself across the borders of its own land; for true culture means conquest of the whole world. But it means also renunciation of violence and adaptation to the civilization of other nations.

ITALIAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

THE FAILURE OF TECHNOLOGY

THE artists, so far as we know, were the first to protest the ugliness and to foresee the other evils of modern industrialism. And the artists, be it noted from William Morris to Eric Gill—were the first people to do something about it. For the artistic conscience, when it is genuine, is backed by an inner hunger for a life and an environment in which acts of natural creation are possible, so that the artist's struggle against the excesses of industrialization is a struggle for personal survival.

But who listens to an artist's intuition? Not the economic reformers and the socialists, who planned to hitch a ride to the classless society on the rising star of technology. And certainly not the industrialists, for whom artists are an eccentric lot reserved to decorate monuments and to bask hungrily in the patronage of the "real" builders of our civilization.

After a while, however, the artists were joined by the ruralists and the communiteers—people who saw for other people what the artists saw for themselves. It was not only the impersonal tyranny of the assembly line, but the entire cultural environment, both physical and psychological, that was corrupting the life of human beings under the industrial system. Wilfrid Wellock in England and others in America began a socio-moral analysis of the industrial society that amounted to planting the seeds of another revolution—this time, against Industrialism. Gradually, the cause gained more adherents. Edward J. O'Brien, veteran editor of the perennial "Best Short Stories," wrote *The Dance of the Machines*—probably the best imaginative commentary on industrialism yet produced. Gandhi, hardly a newcomer to this field, continued to spread his gospel of freedom for India through independence of the British industrial economy. In 194I, Roy Helton declared in *Harper's* (December) that industrialism is reducing "most of us . . . to cowering robots with no creative impulses left." Ralph Borsodi, one of the few Americans who had some kind of an alternative to offer, wrote *This Ugly Civilization* and his *Flight from the City.* Lewis Mumford published *The Culture of Cities.* Meanwhile, the psychiatrists were moving in on sociology. In 1939, Faris and Dunham reported "a striking relationship between community life and mental life," and that "urban areas characterized by high rates of social disorganization are also those with high rates of mental disorganization." *(Mental Disorders in Urban Areas,* University of Chicago Press.) The more concentrated the population, they found, the higher the incidence of insanity, disclosing "a pattern of distribution previously shown for such other kinds of social and economic phenomena as poverty, unemployment, juvenile delinquency, adult crime, suicide, family desertion, infant mortality, communicable disease, and general mortality."

These criticisms of industrialism, while considerable in variety and extent, made little or no impression on the faith of the vast majority in the dogma of unending progress through the advance of technology. And even today, after the atomic bomb has badly shaken the world's sense of material security, this concept of progress is still relatively untouched, it being supposed that the problem of the Bomb represents a kind of political failure of the great nations, rather than the logical issue of the motives and the means of modern industrialism.

But the criticism continues, and when it attacks the core of the delusion of industrialism—the dream of a workless, frictionless world populated by carefree, button-pushing people with nothing to do but "have fun"—it will begin to take effect.

A beginning in this direction is made by Friedrich Georg Juenger (brother of Ernst Juenger, the German novelist), in his book, *The Failure of Technology: Perfection without Purpose,* to be published this fall by Henry Regnery. We are able to anticipate the contents

of this work through advance publication of some extracts as a Human Affairs pamphlet, with the title, *The Price of Progress.* The gist of this pamphlet is that technology will not, cannot, create the longed-for world of prosperity and case. Juenger's analysis is at once ethical, psychological and technical—a combination which gives the work peculiar power and persuasiveness. As the argument has considerable structure, we can only list in rough sequence some of its major points.

(1) Riches are either a "having" or a "being." The riches of "being" are lasting, unalienable, and united by nature with freedom. "Most men," Juenger admits, "believe that riches are created by one's enriching one's self—a delusion they have in common with all the rabble on earth."

(2) The leisure which the machine is supposed to create for the working man, to be fruitful, "pre-supposes a spiritual and mental life from which it draws its meaning and its worth"; otherwise, it is "hollow, empty loafing." The unemployed man has a kind of "leisure," but the unemployed man is the sorriest object of our civilization—the man who "thinks himself degraded because he no longer fulfills his function." He has no machine to attach himself to. A key illusion of the social promise of technology is exploded in a sentence:

> No connection whatsoever exists between the reduction of work on the one hand and leisure and free activity on the other; just as little as an increase in the speed of locomotion implies a rise in morality, or the invention of telegraphy, an increase in clear thinking.

(3) Juenger questions the idea that more machines mean less work. Instead, he says, they mean more things, and more consumption of them. Machines require other machines to build them, thus involving, the ever-increasing "organization" of natural resources to keep up with "consumption." Voracious of raw materials, the industrial society is engaged in "a ruthless destruction the like of which the earth has never seen before." A cotton mill, a foundry, a saw mill, a power house—any sort of factory, reveals the same consuming, devouring, gluttonous motion racing through time endlessly and insatiably. . . . the never stilled and never to be stilled hunger of the machine."

(4) Look at the great industrial and mining centers of the world. The mines are like black, gangrenous wounds in the earth. The cities devour the landscape with their smoke, their ugly factories, and spew out wreckage and junk. Where are these new, these happy, liberated men—freed by the machine? The "rationalization" of industry to increase productive efficiency integrates men with mechanical necessity. Juenger describes the "human" side of technology:

> The physician who taps an automobile driver for blood in order to learn whether the driver has taken alcohol is an official of the work organization; he watches over its undisturbed function, just like a traffic policeman, or a judge who metes out a fine in case of traffic violation. Ability and aptitude tests do not test the capacity for independent sought, but the capacity to react mechanically to some mechanical stimulus.

As with every other front worth fighting for, this attack on the evils of modern industrialism has no organized movement behind it and forms the platform of no political party. Even Socialism, as Juenger remarks, is indignant about the exploitation of the factory worker "only so long as it is in the opposition." The socialist analysis of industrialism is limited to the implications of the class-struggle theory, proposing only the capture of the industrial system for the working class. In comparison to Juenger's, the socialist criticism of industrialism is superficial.

The central point of this pamphlet is that the expectation of miracles of social benefit from more and better machines is a delusion without support from presently existing facts. One hopes that Juenger's forthcoming book will include, also, a discussion of the intelligent use of machinery, once the obsession that human progress depends upon it has been eliminated. This is of some

importance, as too much genius is wrapped up in modern technology for it to be regarded as a latter-day version of the Original Sin. It would be wholly futile to attempt to dissuade future generations of American boys—or, considering recent reports from India, Indian boys, for that matter—from an interest in mechanics and from careers in engineering. Nor is this necessary. Rather, it is the task of education to establish the social and moral neutrality of all tools, machines and technologies, and to point out that modern civilization has integrated human life with good machines, instead of integrating machines with the good life. So far, there have been few practical suggestions for the latter course. Roy Helton believes that "The only cure lies in the discipline of machinery and its relegation to a minor function." Well—which minor functions? Mr. Borsodi thinks that the makers of machinery should design more and better small units for home use, and for general decentralized production. He mentions looms as an illustration. A decentralist society would doubtless require a great variety of such devices. Here is an almost untouched field for study by decentralist sociologists.

CRONIN'S WAY

BoM again. A. J. Cronin knows he will inevitably make Book-of-the-Month, and so he does not always try very hard. *Shannon's Way* required little planning and little thought and, ultimately, is of little value. Perhaps what is most interesting about this volume it that it aids the reviewer in proving that the typical fiction writer simply repeats over and over again his personal scale of values. *The Green Years* earlier demonstrated that Mr. Cronin is prone to insist that his characters blunder along until, almost miraculously, Happiness arrives. Mr. Cronin is also, of course, interested in religion, in a sophisticated sort of way. Apparently, his theory about the function of religion is that it does very well in small doses, but should not interfere too much with one's life.

There is a contrast between the function of religion in *The Green Years* and its place in *Shannon's Way*, however. The Church really Does Something for young Robbie in the earlier volume, while in *Shannon's Way* we have casual references to Dr. Shannon's Catholic belief without any development of the thought that this belief must be made to have something to do with day-to-day living.

We could conclude that Cronin has been disappointed in religion as some men are in a middle-of-the-way amour, but it seems to us more likely that this author simply "feels more religious" at some times than at others. Besides, the problems of sex seem to be much more interesting to the public when readers are not reminded of religion in terms which suggest it must be applied relentlessly to all departments of living.

COMMENTARY

PUBLISHING POLICIES

A CORRESPONDENT writes: "Open recognition of the extent to which 'playing safe' for economic reasons is a characteristic of American society is long over-due." We agree. The fact that neither Charles A. Beard nor George Morgenstern could find a commercial publisher willing to print their books critical of American foreign policy is a case in point. Discussing this question, Harry Elmer Barnes remarks:

> Not all publishers are personally opposed to letting in the light, but even those who are friendly to Neo-Revisionism are in business to make money. Powerful pressure groups see to it that publishers who defy the ban on Neo-Revisionist books meet with difficulty in marketing books through the usual outlets.

We are in principle averse to assigning evil intentions and actions to an abstract "they," such as "powerful pressure groups," but in this instance we have some confidence that if challenged, Dr. Barnes could make good his charge with particular instances. And when he says that the Chicago *Tribune*, among large newspapers, "is virtually unique in opening its columns to Neo-Revisionist conclusions [conclusions as to responsibility for World War II differing from the official and popular version]," he reports a depressing fact that sheds little glory on the Chicago *Tribune*, which exploits the revisionist view chiefly for its anti-administration implications.

For most publishers, apparently, profits are more important than impartiality; a failure in business seems a greater threat to them than a failure in integrity, or, what is worse, commercial success and integrity have come to mean the same thing.

Another sidelight on publishing in the United States is afforded by the policy of publishers with respect to review copies of their books. When the MANAS book editor wishes a book for review, he writes to the publisher and sends a sample copy of the paper. Generally, it is the large universities which respond by sending the book requested. Commercial publishers see no promise of large sales to a mass audience through the pages of MANAS. Of course, there is the possibility—even the likelihood—that by this restriction our reviewers are relieved of the necessity of wading through second-rate volumes which are published primarily to make money. In any event, we are impressed by the high quality of university press publications. In fact, that these institutions retain and exercise the freedom that they do is at least one hopeful sign amid the gathering gloom.

CHILDREN
. . . AND OURSELVES

HAVING in mind a sentence in this department for August 25, a correspondent remarks, "I suppose it is all right to give man's 'moral self' the name of soul, although it seems to me but to lead to confusion." The sentence in question is quoted (with an omission) as follows: "There is a moral self within man which may be called the soul and which is always aware of the rightness or wrongness of an act." The correspondent continues:

> And what is rightness? You say, ". . . morality constitutes intelligent concern for the welfare of other beings," but where does this awareness come from, and *why* is concern for others "right"?
>
> We can say that man's moral awareness is God-given; or we can say that man's concern for others is a result of evolution—necessity back when men banded together to survive competition with others of the animal kingdom, stronger and more agile than they, and passed on from generation to generation until it almost seems now to be intuitive. This is a much more satisfactory explanation to me than the other.

By omitting four words in the quotation from our August 25 discussion, this reader places us in a pigeonhole we would rather not occupy. That which we designated as "soul" was described as being "always aware of *the necessity for establishing* the rightness or wrongness of an act." Our remark, therefore, does not class us with the many Christian sects which oversimplify the moral equation by insisting that an "inner voice" will always tell a man what is the right thing to do. We simply insist, together with Socrates and Plato, on the innate presence in the human being of a feeling that one must concern oneself with the problems of ethics. We submit that all subjective rationalizations of conduct are themselves proof that no man entirely eliminates ethical criteria from his life.

Having stated our view on this point of "innate moral capacity," we can now move to agree with John Dewey as well as with Socrates that all evil is the result of ignorance, and that all morality is a "concern for the welfare of other beings," developed through evolutionary processes. A point of difference, however, is indicated by our correspondent's suggestion that "man's concern for others is the result of evolution . . . to survive competition." While we do not believe that this primary moral awareness is "God-given," there seems to us a primacy about moral capacity, the *sense* of right and wrong standing as the fountainhead of ethical and moral evolution. To say that considerable evidence exists to support the belief that moral awareness in man is innate, rather than developed through the activities of recorded evolutionary history, is not to say that God gave it to us. For instance, moral awareness might be regarded as a manifestation of a power of self-consciousness, perhaps having known periods of expression long before the physical types known to anthropologists made their appearance on the earth.

Here we are reminded of a professor of ethics, one devoted to a philosophy of determinism, who confessed to a graduating class that he sometimes felt a strong suspicion that the human being is *born with something*—a "something" not explainable by either heredity or environment. This feeling harassed the professor, and his confession was obviously made at the promptings of intellectual integrity. Why, without that "something" in, himself, should he have felt obliged to give utterance to a statement which, as he saw it, clearly opposed everything he had been trying to teach his students regarding the foundation of ethics?

We agree with our correspondent that to give man's moral self the name of "soul" often leads to some confusion, but this is not because the idea of soul is of itself confusing; instead, the confusion results, we think, from the innumerable interpretations of soul bequeathed to us by the sectarianisms of a great many religions. Perhaps every man, if thoroughly honest with himself, will admit that there are times when he feels, or

indicates by surprising forms of altruistic behavior, at least a subconscious belief in the real existence of a life transcending everything that is purely physical and emotional—*i.e.*, everything that is competitive. Men demonstrate a belief in "soul" when they venerate famous historical personages who have forgotten personal emotions and physical pain in the service of a Cause. And many men of history whom we instinctively admire are found to have devoted themselves to "Causes" which could not possibly have been successful during their lifetimes.

From what source does man derive his concern for posterity? On a strictly competitive basis, and on any basis of enlightened self-interest, posterity means nothing to us. We should be concerned, as Thrasymachus was in Plato's *Republic*, only with the *appearance* of being virtuous. We would not try to "do something for posterity," but only to deceive people into thinking that that is what we were doing. W. Macneile Dixon's *Human Situation* devotes some amused though penetrating attention to modern man's struggle to explain his desire to serve posterity without resorting to a theory of immortality. The idea that "men live on in the minds of their friends or descendants," or in their "good works," left Professor Dixon unconvinced that these reasons could suffice as dynamics of altruism. He points out that for the individual man, such conceptions do no more than "provide him with a magnificent cemetery" after death—*they do not offer him integration with the future sufficient to explain his concern for it.*

Most of the men who build their lives upon a devotion to social justice are ceaselessly attacked as enemies of society, at least during some period of their careers. What sustains their perseverance? The competitive spirit? The approval of their fellow men? A survival of the survival-instinct?

The last paragraph of our correspondent's letter suggests that morality has a better chance, today, since it “assumes greater survival-value than it has had in this new atomic age." Yet there is little indication that fear is a substitute for a highly developed moral sense, or that it can lead in any way to the development of such a sense. The psychiatrists tell us what each man should know for himself—that anxiety leads to aggression and not to cooperation, that fear leads to hatred and not to love, and that competition leads to animosity rather than understanding.

All such questions need discussion and debate—less, perhaps, in writing than in conversation with friends, and in the home, where the very youngest should have opportunity to ponder some of these difficult matters, thereby entitling themselves to join at an early age a fraternity of thinking men.

FRONTIERS

THE GODS OF EGYPT

IT has taken a long time, but now, in the twentieth century, we are beginning to get impartial studies of both contemporary non-Christian and ancient "pagan" religions. Harold R. Willoughby's *Pagan Regeneration*, for example, published by the University of Chicago in 1929, candidly admits the prejudice of Christian apologists in writing about the mystery religions of ancient Greece. Ananda Coomaraswami's various works on Hinduism and Buddhism have brought to these great world religions the dignity and appreciation they deserve, while the study of Buddhism and Buddhist culture by Marco Pallis in *Peaks and Lamas* will reward and possibly fascinate—the book is intensely interesting—the reader who has only a normal curiosity concerning the distant land of Tibet.

The Pallis book should also interest socially minded readers, because of the puzzles it presents. Tibet undoubtedly leads the world in the number of priests in proportion to population. The air is thick with religion. And yet, if we can believe Mr. Pallis, in Tibet—at least, in the regions he visited—there is more practical freedom for the individual, more prosperity for the average family, less poverty and squalor, than in any other country. Nothing adds up, from the viewpoint of conventional Western social analysis. There is no class struggle in Tibet. The people are happy. They are also deeply artistic. Domestic crafts thrive and even the poorer homes are ornamented in good taste. But the Tibetan theory of art is just about the opposite of the Western theory. The would-be Tibetan painter is strictly forbidden to "express himself." For years, half a lifetime, perhaps, he may be permitted only to copy his great predecessors. Then, when and *if* he excels in some direction, he may hope to "originate" a new composition—depart from the conventional forms of Tibetan art, which is, of course, entirely religious.

If it is difficult for the Westerner to understand how the modern Tibetan can be at peace with the world and his fellow Tibetans, the life of the ancient Egyptians presents still more mysterious problems. Ancient Egypt had all the contradictions of "present-day" Tibet (to say "present-day" has little meaning when applied to so stable and enduring a culture), and others of its own. But here, too, a beginning has been made, even though the Egyptian civilization has passed away entirely and is therefore much less accessible to study. We have in mind *Ancient Egyptian Religion* by H. Frankfort, research professor of Oriental Archaeology in the University of Chicago (published by the Columbia University Press, 1948). This work is more than just another monograph on an unbelievable race with unbelievably fantastic ideas. It gives the reader the feeling of genuine touch with these people who lived in the valley of the Nile three or four or five thousand years ago.

The Egyptians, apparently, were well satisfied with both their religion and their social system. There is no record of a popular uprising in Egyptian history. Like other ancient faiths, the Egyptian religion was polytheistic in form, but the many gods of Egypt stood for various functions throughout the natural world—and the natural world included the world of immortality as well as that of earthly existence. A "purely physical phenomenon," Professor Frankfort reminds us, "was simply unknown to the ancients." In this view of Nature, the ancients may have had the better of the modern world.

For the Egyptians, the relation of the gods to man was impersonal, and here, as the author says,

> the Egyptians present us with one more paradox: living under the rule of a god incarnate [the Pharaoh], they were dependent on human wisdom alone for direction in their way of life. Here lies the importance of the "teachings" which we have quoted. The mature reflection of the sages, the experience accumulated through generations, supplied the guidance of which men stood in need.

The Egyptians never feared the wrath of Providence. justice was a cosmic rather than an "ethical" function—the dishonest man is destroyed, "not because he acts against a divine commandment, but because he is not in harmony with Maat, the universal order." (It seems reasonable to render *Maat* as the Egyptian equivalent of the Chinese *Tao.)* Prof. Frankfort gives further light on the Egyptian "gods":

> But is it not remarkable that none of the gods are mentioned in any of the "teachings"? When the Egyptians appeal to "God," namely, to "the god with whom you have to reckon in the circumstances," they impart to the divine interest in man's behavior a distinctly impersonal character. The whole pantheon, every one of the gods, required the "right" conduct. An individual might be more closely connected with one deity than with another, but the personal character of such a relationship was created by the worshiper, not—as in the Bible—by the deity.

The Egyptians had no word for "sin" in the theological sense, but regarded their misdeeds as aberrations which would bring unhappiness because of a disturbance to the basic world-harmony. The righteous Egyptian was happy, not because he "pleased God," but because he was "in harmony with Maat." Good and evil in human life were typified by the opposites of the "silent man" and the "passionate man." The silent man has self-discipline, modesty, calmness, wisdom, and draws strength from his way of life. Wisdom is power over one's impulses, and the silent man evinces his superiority by being master of himself in all circumstances. On the other hand, the virtue of "silence" is not to be equated with the Christian spirit of humility; it "does not exalt submissiveness, meekness, or any kind of otherworldliness." The silent man is superior, strong, and successful in the best sense.

The great weakness of Egyptian civilization, it seems apparent, was its deification of the king—the Pharaoh—who was the center and driving force of the social system. When, finally, the empire fell to Asiatic conquest in the third century B.C., the whole universe collapsed for the Egyptians. "God" had been defeated. And yet, this criticism is too easy, too glib. The deification of the Pharaoh was also the strength—or symbolized the strength—of the Egyptian civilization, and seems allied to the Platonic tradition that kings must be philosophers. In any event, the theocratic Egyptian culture sustained a life of excellence for its people over thousands of years, and Professor Frankfort's study suggests the view that modem theories of social dynamics have, considered but few of the possible methods of social, integration—a conclusion that by no means need involve one in the wish to revive the divine right of kings.