

## THE THEORY OF CASTE

WHILE it may be admitted that theories or dogmas concerning human differences have supplied the justification for a large part of the injustices in the world, it seems likely that a disregard of those differences may be equally fruitful in evil. It is certainly true that the political taboo on recognizing human differences has enormously complicated the problems of educators, obliging them, in both theory and practice, to pretend that the differences do not exist, or are wholly a matter of environmental influence. Even if we accept the argument that the doctrine of equality ("all men are created equal") has given the world a basis for justice which is worth all the excuses of misinterpretation and political exploitation of this rule, we are still confronted by the fact that the persistent denial of differences often leads to tyrannical revolutions of reaction.

This may happen in two ways. The fascist revolution was a rejection of the doctrine of equality and the proposal of an alternate theory involving the conception of an *élite* group—the "master" race or nation—possessing the capacity to rule for the common good. Interestingly enough, many of the fascist leaders were originally socialists, and a case could be made for the view that the early fascists abandoned the claim of the equality of man because they observed that so many people were unresponsive to the humanitarian promise of an equalitarian social order. The leaders became convinced that if reforms and changes were to come, they would have to be introduced by a small minority of aggressive individuals who would force the masses to accept what was good for them. The Bolsheviks reasoned similarly, although their doctrine of the *élite* was political rather than biological. The Bolsheviks did not throw out the claim of the equality of all men; they retained it as

an ideal and as the excuse for seizing power and proceeding to liquidate all those who opposed the particular sort of "equality" the communist revolution intended.

The United States has had better success with the idea of equality than have other countries. This may be for the reason that America has afforded greater opportunity for self-betterment to all Americans, through the natural riches of a great continent; and, also, because Americans have not attempted to make a rigid political system out of the principle of equality. In theory, at least, equality has meant for Americans a uniform system of rules or laws for all citizens, equal education and opportunity for all.

In recent years, however, the people of the United States have been obliged by their elevation to world power to participate in the problems and conflicts of other nations. Domestic "prosperity" is no longer enough to stabilize American affairs. Today, the future of America seems to depend upon the future of the world, with the result that the organization of the rest of the world—or of the powers which dominate the rest of the world—has become a part of the domestic problems of the United States. Add the fact that the organization of the world is seen as almost exclusively a *military* problem, and an explanation for the atmosphere of crisis is plain enough.

The question, *What shall we do?*, haunts all those millions of the American people who have acquired some sense of the meaning of this crisis. It is in the answers returned to this question that the differences among men may be recognized as being of the highest importance.

Human differences, of course, have not been entirely neglected in modern thought. "Introvert" and "extrovert" are terms which have been incorporated into the modern vocabulary. Charles

Jung has devoted a book, *Psychological Types*, to the subject, and the correlation of psychic traits with anatomical differences has been extensively studied by Dr. William Sheldon. But research of this kind is of little assistance in meeting the sort of problems which confront the modern world. It is really extreme differences of human motive and judgment of what is morally important that create the confusion.

Actually, there is no available theory of recent origin to which we can refer differences in motive—no theory, that is, except the familiar doctrine of "conditioning" by environment, and this is of limited explanatory value. If we are to have any theory at all, we prefer the ancient one of Indian philosophy which, despite its theological origin, seems to come closer to fitting the facts of human nature than any other formulation. This theory is briefly put by Krishna in the fourth chapter of *The Bhagavad-Gita*:

"Mankind was created by me of four castes in their principles and in their duties according to the natural distribution of the actions and qualities."

If, for the purposes of discussion, we can forget the abuses which have grown up over centuries around the institution of caste in India, it may be possible to extract some value from this statement. According to Indian authority, the four castes include the *Brahmins*, or teachers, the *Kshatriyas*, or rulers and administrators, the *Vaishyas*, or merchants, and the *Sudras*, or servants. We are not interested, here, in vindicating antique sociology, but in the present-day applicability of this classification.

First of all, it is evident that in any society there are always a number of men who are led by some inner impulsion to go into teaching. Not everyone *can* teach. It takes special qualities of mind and heart to be a teacher. Disinterestedness is basic in good teaching, and this is not an attitude of mind that is easily acquired. Today, perhaps, the term "intellectual" comes the closest to approximating the meaning that is attached to the idea of the Brahmin caste. Of all the natural

groupings in society, the intellectual, whatever his faults, is the most adaptable member of society. The intellectual is usually able to do the work of men belonging to other segments of society, but his natural skill in dealing with abstractions is seldom met with in, say, either businessmen or mechanics.

Natural leaders in action are *Kshatriyas*. The logical role of the Kshatriya in modern times is doubtless that of the statesman, but, adopting the theory, we suspect that both industry and finance have their share of this type of man. In fact, it could be argued that the intensity of purpose and strong emotional nature of the Kshatriya may play a part in the furious pace of industrial progress and competition. Whatever the Kshatriya undertakes, he pursues his work with the drive and commitment characteristic of a noble man, and if he sets his energy at the performance of tasks unworthy of his qualities, a kind of distorting fanaticism may result. On this hypothesis, one could say that the presence of Kshatriyas in commercial enterprise—in pursuit of "profits"—has produced a perversion of the patriotic tradition, since the Kshatriya ought, according to his status, to be above self-interest.

The Vaishyas were (or are) those who are so attracted to buying and selling that their life orientation is one of acquisitive gain, while the Sudras are the workmen of the world—or those of them, properly, who happen to have little interest in the other functions in society.

According to the theory of caste, there is a natural distribution of human capacity and responsibility in these four functions. It falls to the Kshatriya, for example, to make the decisions which relate to security and affairs of state, and it is the role of the Brahmin to offer him counsels. The Vaishyas maintain the economic functions of the community while the Sudras are the hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Now it is manifestly the case that some men are better fitted for administrative decision than others. It is evident, further, that the role of

counselors is filled by men of reflective tendency. Sir Winston Churchill is plainly a Kshatriya, and men like Walter Lippmann and other journalists of distinction have the function of counselors. These divisions of function develop naturally, without any attempt to impose a pattern of behavior upon the members of society. We already have, in short, the castes, in terms of their function; what we do not have is a clear definition of standards with which to evaluate their fulfillment.

The ancient theory of caste, however, provided these ethical norms. Both the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas, for example, were supposed to be above personal ambition or self-interest. The Brahmins represented the area of timeless, philosophical values, the Kshatriyas the realm of national welfare. From the Brahmins the Kshatriyas obtained "the counsels of perfection," which they might or might not obey, according to their sense of duty.

Conceivably, a democratic society organized as a republic, like the United States, could realize the essential values of the system described in the sacred books of India, without falling heir to the abuses which would inevitably result from a rigid hereditary system. There have been cases of men who have been returned to Congress again and again because of popular recognition of their integrity and capacity to deal both skilfully and justly with great national issues. The republican form of government is a species of voluntary adoption of the principle of hierarchy in the management of human affairs, yet it also provides all citizens with an element of participation in the higher functions of administration. If the administration is *imposed* upon them by a higher authority, whether theological or political, you have a tyranny, but if it is chosen by democratic means, a kind of dynamic equilibrium supplies both freedom and order, making selective use of the best abilities the society affords.

The difficulty, of course, with any such scheme, even supposing it provides a rough correspondence with the actualities of the

population, lies in what would happen if it were publicized under the present climate of attitude and opinion. The air would be filled with claims of status and the right of the candidates to be known as the worthiest of the worthy. Manifestly, the plan would not work at all, for the sole condition under which human excellence can really rise to the top of the social pyramid is that the best leaders shall have no desire for power, the best philosophers no longing for "authority." If the ancient Eastern revelators were right, and mankind is really divided into these four groups, then the present political orders of the Western world are clearly dominated by a revolutionary rejection of natural hierarchical arrangements, for the reason that imperfect Brahmins and faithless Kshatriyas betrayed the trust reposed in them until the lower castes rose up in violence to destroy their status and to deny their claims to either special responsibilities or special privileges. So, whatever the future holds, we shall probably be very lucky to get along without any revival of formal castes or classifications of men according to natural tendencies.

Yet the tendencies seem to exist, and if they should be denied political relevance—and we think they should—they may still be of incalculable educational importance. Here is an analysis of human behavior which differentiates the decisions of men according to their natural interests and inclinations. How few there are, really, who look upon the present-day situation of the world from the Brahmin or philosophical point of view! And how many there are who are perfectly willing to see commercial interests dominate the foreign policies of their governments—even to the point of bringing an outbreak of atomic war.

Perhaps we should insist, at this point, that a discussion of this sort is not intended to lead to the suggestion that the "true" Brahmins ought to be sought out and their advice solicited; that the genuine Kshatriyas ought to be marked for identification and raised to power. On the

contrary, the underlying purpose of any such consideration is to propose the need for extraordinary patience, since the obvious need of modern populations is to transcend the limiting controls of caste or natural interest—which is usually self-interest. It should be evident, also, that the functioning of any such "system" as the ancient Brahminical one requires the presence of an over-riding spiritual ideal or general scheme of human development to which the entire arrangement contributes. The modern world has no such ideal, nor is there the slightest possibility that it can be supplied in the paternalistic manner that was characteristic of ancient times.

What we are suggesting here is rather that the practical wisdom found in ancient religions may be none the less wisdom, despite its alleged supernatural origin, and that it is possible to examine such ideas for their pragmatic validity without giving up in the slightest our protective agnosticism. Actually, the differences among men are likely to be discovered to be as natural as the differences between trees and flowers. Yet the great and wonderful thing about human beings is that, with all their differences, they enjoy in common the quality of self-awareness and the capacity for moral decision, whatever the differences among them in degree. It is this, after all, which makes possible even a discussion of human differences, and an attempt to deal with the problems as well as the opportunities created by them.

For several generations, now, it has been considered in extremely bad taste to refer to the fact of the differences which have here been under discussion. Mere mention of the subject has been enough to provoke the charge of an intention to form an elite for the purpose of exploiting those of lesser skill or ability. But if the differences are facts, it were folly to ignore them.

## REVIEW

### "RELIGION AND THE MODERN MIND"

THIS volume by W. T. Stace, recently come to hand through the courtesy of a subscriber, should have been reviewed by MANAS at the time of its publication—1952. For here is another book supplying excellent footnotes to many of the discussions of religion in these columns.

Professor Stace, still serving in the Department of Philosophy at Princeton University, brings to the philosophic revaluation of religion not only considerable scholarship, but also perspectives on Eastern thought gained during twenty-two years of residence in Ceylon as a British civil service official. A Westerner who gravitated naturally to the "scientific world view" and to repudiation of conventional religion, Stace also developed an interest in Buddhism and Hindu philosophy. Apparently the insights thus found led to a new valuation of Christian doctrines, and the result is an enlightenment somewhat similar to that achieved by Professor Ducasse in his *Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion*. Ducasse has suggested that Buddhism provides an incomparable touchstone for evaluation of Christianity, the reason being that Buddhism, while "naturalistic"—that is, devoted to logic and psychology more than to supernaturalism—is also concerned with the transcendental. Since critical consideration of Christianity requires the Westerner to compare and evaluate science and religion together, the point of view of those whose *religion* has always been essentially "naturalistic" is of obvious relevance.

Professor Stace became a controversial figure in 1948, due to an *Atlantic* article, "Man Against Darkness," which urged that the naturalistic view of man be accepted as opposed to Christian interpretations, and therefore was regarded indignantly by spokesmen of religion, who read it as a general attack on religion. It is true that Professor Stace went to great pains to prove the invalidity of all extant arguments in behalf of a

personal God. But, as a later work, *Time and Eternity*, made clear, he was not attempting to discredit the feelings that make men *seek* "God," but only the insupportable arguments subsequently accumulated in "His" behalf. To those who read *Time and Eternity* carefully, it was apparent that the author was seeking rather to encourage a reinterpretation of religious reality, and that if his only intent had been an attack on religion he would have proceeded quite differently.

Stace's remarks in *Religion and the Modern Mind* make it very clear he presently feels, even more strongly, that what we have called the "naturalistic view" can be expanded—and needs to be expanded—to include the phenomena of "mysticism," out of which all religion flows. When he remarks that "the spiritual darkness of the modern has its source in the scientific view of the world," he means that the only "scientific view" that is popularly known is both limited and negative. A fully mature "naturalism," then, has yet to be discovered and enunciated; Stace's latest book is an effort to contribute to both tasks.

What is mysticism? "It is," writes Stace, "a vision wherein the individual transcends all distinctions and the distinction between one man and another. There is for him no such distinction between an 'I' and a 'you' as would cause him to seek something for the 'I' and deny it to the 'you,' to hate another while loving himself, to cause pain to another while grasping at pleasure for himself. He lives in all men and all men live in him. His desire, his love, therefore, is not for himself but for all men. It is this which makes mysticism the source of the moral life and provides the religious foundation of ethics."

Another approach to the meaning of mysticism is to consider that we live in relation to two forms of reality at the same time. We exist in the "time-order," but are also dimly aware of an "eternal-order." The mystic vision makes no sense so long as we examine *other people's* mysticism from the standpoint of the time-order. But "if we take our stand within the mystic moment itself, if

we view it from within instead of from the outside, then it alone is the truth; and it is, rather, the time-order which is subjective illusion. The same will be true of the moral ideals, the value experiences, which are enclosed in the religious vision and which overflow from it into our daily lives in time. From a [oversimplified] naturalistic standpoint they are merely subjective. But in that other frame of reference, which is the eternal order, they are eternal truths." Thus Stace is able to suggest that "what some philosophers have called moral 'intuitions' are in reality an influx into our ordinary consciousness of elements from that radically different kind of mentality, intuitive and non-discriminating, of which mystics speak, which in most of us is sunk in the depths of the unconscious. This would explain the apparently mysterious character of such intuitions, and would also explain many of the paradoxes with which ethical philosophers have wrestled."

We are here concerned almost exclusively with Part Three of *Religion and the Modern Mind*, since its two chapters, "The Problem of Religious Truth," and "The Problem of Morals," seem especially relevant to our previous discussions of Professor Ducasse's work, and to dimensions of philosophy and religion highlighted in the MANAS "Books for Our Time" series. While we have criticisms in respect to some of Stace's references to "God"—despite his clear refutation of arguments for God as a "big Being," he still refers to God as "him" during discussion—his development of the meaning of mystic experience is particularly notable. By insisting that the central truth of religion *is* mysticism, and by further demonstrating in several different ways that every man is something of a mystic, he provides a concise reply to the question raised in our last issue—"Isn't it a waste of time to talk about religion?" If mysticism is the core of religion, and if every man is something of a mystic, just as he is something of a poet, we are *all* able to evaluate religious symbolism, and, further, to improve our understanding of ourselves in the process.

Some passages from "The Problem of Religious Truth" deserve full quotation, and we devote to them our remaining space:

All men, or at least all sensitive men, are mystics in some degree. There is a mystical side of human nature just as there is a rational side. I do not mean merely that we are potential mystics in the sense that we theoretically could, by living a life which is a practical impossibility for most of us, achieve the mystic consciousness. That would indeed be next to useless. I mean that we have the mystic consciousness now, although in most of us it shines only dimly. This is proved by the fact that, as with poetry, the utterances of the saint or the mystic call up a response in us, however faint it may be. Something in us answers back to his words, as also something answers back to the words of the poet. Why has the phrase of Plotinus, "a flight of the alone to the Alone," become famous and echoed down the ages? Why has it fascinated generations of men? It is not mere nonsense to men who, though they do not claim ever to have had anything which they would call a recognizable "mystical experience," yet possess spiritually sensitive minds. It must be that it stirs in them some depth of the waters of the soul which is ordinarily hidden, and which, by these words, is, if but for an instant, drawn up to, or near, the surface. Deep down in us, far below the threshold of our ordinary consciousness, there lies that same intuitive non-discriminating mentality which in the great mystic has come to the surface of his mind and exists in the full light of conscious recognition.

This is the justification of the religious feelings of common men. They are not sentimental and subjective emotions. They are faint mystic experiences. They are a dim vision of the eternal, appearing in the guise of feelings, or even emotions, because they are dim and vague. It is here that the myths of the different religions have their function.

This is the justification of the myths and images, and therefore of the creeds and doctrines, of the great religions of the world. No doubt they tend to degenerate on the one side into superstitions, on the other into mere intellectual abstractions spiritually dead and powerless. No doubt they may in this way become fetters on men's minds and even sources of intellectual and spiritual disorders. They become even shams and hypocrisies. It is then that the skeptics turn on them and rend them, and in this way the skeptic too performs a function which has value in the spiritual life, a spiritual purging. But basically

most men will always require myths and images to evoke in them the divine vision. And when one set of symbols has degenerated into mere abstractions or debasing superstitions, another set arises.

Where do these considerations lead a man of philosophical bent? What may be his attitudes toward those who find in the structure of formal or orthodox symbolism a source of inspiration? Philosophy itself, in Stace's opinion, affords the common ground, and also opportunity for enlargement of one's perspective:

A man may attach himself to any church, or to none. He may be disgusted with the superstitions into which institutional religions degenerate, and with the shams and hypocrisies which they engender. Or he may have seen the literal falsity of their creeds, and because he has been taught to take them literally and thinks there is no other way, because he fails to see their symbolic truth and function, he rests in a mere negation. He may then call himself an agnostic or atheist. But it does not follow that he is irreligious, even though he may profess to be. His religion may subsist in the form of a sort of unclothed religious feeling, unclothed with any symbols at all, inarticulate, formless. *Each man*, in an institutional religion or out of it, *must find his own way*. And it is not justifiable for those who find it in one way to condemn those who find it in another.

## *COMMENTARY* WHAT IS MORALITY?

A PHASE of human differences (see leading article) not frequently noticed is the polarity which divides the people who instinctively want to think for themselves from those who anxiously seek the opinions of others in all important decisions.

This is a difference which affects all aspects of human life—education, politics, religion, and everyday human relations. The man who fears the responsibility of complex decision without a "ruling" from some established authority will naturally disapprove ways of doing things that involve the terrors of independent thinking. In education, he will prefer unequivocal indoctrination in the "right" things to the Socratic method of raising questions. He will demand the old-fashioned methods of grading the work of school children, feeling that clean-cut "classification" is better than marks which reflect a teacher's judgment of a child's accomplishments in relation to his own ability.

In all things, such a person will welcome measures which seem to reduce to a minimum the hazards of the unknown, and his animosities will be directed at anyone who opposes such policies.

In economic pursuits, the man fearful of original thinking is likely to prove acquisitive, since he finds his security outside himself and hopes to build a wall of familiar possessions around his life to prevent contact with new experiences. His politics will reveal clear affinities for the party of dogmatic certainty and arrogant assurance. He will like policies which promise *final* solutions, such as the complete destruction of an enemy in war, the ruthless punishment of criminals, and the rigorous suppression of nonconformists who dare to question prevailing conventions.

From the viewpoint of the unfearful man, however—the man who finds the highest human expression in meeting and dealing with the unknown—the various doctrines of "morality"

which spring from fear are largely irrelevant. He seeks discovery, not security. His reflexes of reaction are set to respond favorably to entirely different stimuli. His morality is defined by the interests of education and his allegiance is to the qualities which delight in daring and an atmosphere of freedom.

The question of what determines the play of this polarity in human beings is fundamentally a philosophical inquiry, and we offer this as a further explanation of the interest of MANAS in discussion of issues of a transcendental nature.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### MORE COMMUNICATIONS

A FRIEND has recently made available to us some inspired commentary on "education" by Henry Miller. When Miller writes on this subject, he evinces both insight and enthusiasm one cannot fail to appreciate, and he makes a brilliant case for getting away from "traditionalism" in our thinking as well as in the schoolroom. Far from showing contempt for the classics, Miller believes in them, yet he also believes that both the classics and philosophy have to come alive for each youth by way of individual inspiration. Mr. Miller has apparently thought considerably about the implications of Helen Keller's amazing life story. Her teacher, perhaps one of the rare ones of all times—so far as concerns the particular instinct for teaching of which he writes—helped Helen to *desire* fields of knowledge. She began in the most natural way—the only way possible for Helen Keller—working outward from the first simple ideas which could be comprehended. Here is the quotation we thought our readers would appreciate:

I have noticed repeatedly how frightening to parents is the thought of educating a child according to their own private notions. As I write I recall a momentous scene connected with this subject which passed between the mother of my first child and myself. It was in the kitchen of our home, and it followed upon some heated words of mine about the futility and absurdity of sending the child to school. Thoroughly engrossed, I had gotten up from the table and was pacing back and forth in the little room. Suddenly I heard her ask almost frantically—"But where would you begin? How?" So deep in thought was I that the full import of her words came to me *bien en retard*. Pacing back and forth, head down, I found myself up against the hall door just as her words penetrated my consciousness. And at that very moment my eyes came to rest on a small knot in the panel of the door. How would I begin? Where? "Why there! Anywhere!" I bellowed. And pointing to the knot in the wood I launched into a brilliant, devastating monologue that literally swept her off her

feet. I must have carried on for a full half hour, hardly knowing what I was saying, but swept along by a torrent of ideas long pent up. What gave it paprika, so to speak, was the exasperation and disgust which welled up with the recollection of my experiences in school. I began with that little knot of wood, how it came about, what it meant, and thence found myself treading, or rushing, through a veritable labyrinth of knowledge, instinct, wisdom, intuition and experience. Everything is so divinely connected, so beautifully interrelated—how could one possibly be at a loss to undertake the education of a child? Whatever we touch, see, smell or hear, from whatever point we begin, we are on velvet. It is like pushing buttons that open magical doors. It works by itself, creates its own traction and momentum. There is no need to "prepare" the child for his lesson: the lesson itself is a kind of enchantment. The child longs to know; he literally hungers and thirsts. And so does the adult, if we could but dissipate the hypnotic thrall which subjugates him.

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Editors: I recently read the article on "Children . . . and Ourselves" in the [April 20] MANAS. Although there is much worth in the article, I was disturbed in that it omitted what I consider some important issues. The article seemed to imply that it is pretty well agreed upon what "IQ" is and what constitutes the area of learning in which this intelligence quotient is manifested (namely, the acquiring of knowledge through verbal skills). However, there are many definitions of intelligence of which the present-day schools select only a few as of importance to society or individuals. There are many kinds of intellectual abilities which are not necessarily in proportion to linguistic or verbal skills (that is, not highly correlated). Second, do not many evaluations of intelligence include to a large extent the factor of speed and not so much the subtler or less defined moral intelligence, creative intelligence or sensitivity to other people's reactions? The narrow, technical definition of intelligence assumed by the MANAS article would tend to overlook those cases where children can learn more abstract thinking, but not in the terms or conditions of the public school system (or any school system). Witness some well-known cases of genius who did not fare well in many "school" subjects. Or look at some modern approaches to teaching (such as Catherine Stern's *Children Discover Arithmetic*) in which arithmetic skills are taught without prerequisite knowledge of reading, which might be a block to one who is slow at reading but faster with numbers. Or examine Fawcett's

teaching geometry through the genetic method in which the usual ready-made axioms are abandoned for a development of the subject-matter in terms of the student's own personal thought-processes and experience. Many students with not so high "IQ" scores or who learn slowly could very well be taught some of the "higher" skills, but by other than the traditional methods. Because one learns slowly or by peculiar means does not mean that the person has no wish to learn, think, or know, and must therefore be given something to do with his "hands" instead of with his "brains." Such considerations would no doubt require an unusual kind of teacher not always found on the payroll, but the possibilities remain and should always be considered when examining a student's "psychogram."

We have no objection to seeing these points made again by our correspondent and in this condensed fashion, though the series of articles on the comparative value of different ways of reporting children's progress to parents, to which he refers, actually stressed the same considerations the writer has in mind. Apparently a misconception was caused by the fact that the writer of the original article, a Southern California Curriculum Supervisor, wished to *help* those who needed that special sort of teaching which could be provided if the atmosphere of the classroom was not directly competitive. The writer of the original article, in other words, was simply pointing out that "IQ's" *do* measure, at least approximately, the sort of mark a child is going to get in the classroom. Since this can be proven to be statistically true with of course a certain number of exceptions granted—it means that competitive grading is *repetitious*. But this is not the only fault in A's and F's, for it is easy to see that a child whose skill is currently low in manipulating symbols of language and ideas will suffer deep feelings of inadequacy if constantly reminded that another's comparative skill is greater.

Our correspondent does make a good tally when he insists that pedagogues should be careful to remember that *everyone* may have latent capacity for thought—even, perhaps, abstract thought. But teachers with classroom experience,

who know that the prospects of having an instructor for each two or three children is quite remote, feel that providing the opportunity for development in manual skills may, in fact, be the very best way of releasing the creating intelligence of the child—so that more abstract, evaluative thinking can take place at a later date. Often those whom we call "low IQ" children are handicapped by some psychological twisting, not by a permanently innate deficiency. So one who favors manual training does not necessarily believe that only "some" children will ever be capable of evaluative thinking.

In closing commentary on this subject, we reproduce a paragraph from the original article, indicating the context in which the subject of IQ's first appeared. As the writer indicates, the IQ is not presently regarded as an index of the child's complete capacity. The limitations of the IQ have, as a matter of fact, been capably explored and enlarged upon by psychologists—but improved intelligence testing (a poor name, we grant) will at least forewarn the teacher about a child's ability to get good marks in school. This does *not* affirm that good marks in school are particularly important, but, as long as we employ such marks, the IQ is fully as logical as they are and, we think, can be a lot more helpful. In any case, the mention of IQ in our April 20 piece reads as follows:

Though all educators are aware that the IQ as a specific numerical rating is certainly unreliable, nevertheless any of us is able to recognize in others a greater mental ability than our own—or a lesser. We see many children and adults who obviously have low "IQ's." Yet it just does not seem possible for a teacher to say frankly to a parent, "Your child is very low in mental ability. He is doing the best he can in spite of that." And sometimes simply because the teacher cannot say this, the schools are blamed by parents of such youngsters for not teaching their children to read, for graduating young people from high school who cannot write or spell, for not teaching the three R's, and many other "failures."

## *FRONTIERS* Delusions of Belief

THE death of Albert Einstein was so peaceful an event, a natural termination of a natural life, that the universal sorrow which marked the carrying off of Gandhi is remembered in distinct contrast to the passing of the physicist. There have been various memorial articles by Einstein's most distinguished contemporaries—a particularly good one in the *Listener* by Bertrand Russell—and the usual editorials, but the best notice of the great man that we have seen appeared in *Life* for May 2. By fortunate coincidence, a *Life* editor, William Miller, had taken his son, Pat, a Harvard freshman, to see Einstein a few months before he died, and these two were accompanied by Dr. William Hermanns, who had known Einstein in Germany many years before. Miller brought his son to meet Einstein in the hope that the boy might be helped to overcome a kind of philosophical depression over the apparent uselessness of life, while Hermanns wished to carry away with him some version of Einstein's ideas about God, so that Bishop Fulton Sheen could use it on his television program.

Einstein received the three, even though no appointment had been made. Dr. Hermanns edged the conversation around to the subject of God, which drew this reply from Einstein:

"You are in full liberty to call any power you believe in God. . . . But if you say this, what are you telling me? I cannot accept any concept of God based on the fear of life or the fear of death, or blind faith. I cannot prove to you that there is no personal God, but if I were to speak of him I would be a liar."

But was there no message, asked Dr. Hermanns, which he could take Bishop Sheen? "If you must tell the bishop something about me," he said genially, "tell him I am an honest man."

Later in the interview, Dr. Hermanns pressed Einstein to say whether or not he believed in a "soul." The physicist answered:

"Yes, if by this you mean the living spirit that makes us long to do worthy things for humanity."

The effort of the German professor to extract from Einstein some expression that would furnish the Catholic Bishop's television program with "usable material" seems unimportant enough, yet it illustrates a kind of anxiety which lies at the root of many human problems. From the days of Gotama Buddha onward, great men have been followed about, and questioned by others who seek, not wisdom, but confirmation of their own opinions, or of the tenets of their sect or organization. And when the opinions of great men have varied to a noticeable extent from the views of the majority, their greatness has not protected them from anger and condemnation.

Einstein has been no exception to this rule. His pacifist convictions caused American patriotic organizations to oppose his coming to America in the 30's, and his opinions on religion, such as that quoted above, have elicited stormy protests from the ranks of orthodoxy. The traits of human nature which stand revealed by such behavior are doubtless very familiar to students of social psychology, so that there is no novelty in pointing them out, yet the need for understanding them is much more than a "scientific" matter. *Fear* of the opinions of others is a reaction which has played a part in the most terrible cruelties and injustices known to history, from the execution of Socrates to the "Holy" Inquisition and the witch hunts of modern politics. Its manifestations ought not to remain only as the data of psychological research.

As usual, there are two possible explanations of such fears. There is the familiar claim that unorthodox or heretical opinion threatens the foundations of society by spreading delusion and therefore instability and immorality among the young. This claim is sometimes honestly maintained. The differentiation of motives for censorship suggested in "Children . . . and Ourselves" two weeks ago (June 15) makes this point in a way that bears repeating:

. . . we see—or think we see—a distinction between censoring ideas and proposals seriously voiced and censoring material which is purely emotional in appeal. Perhaps Plato had something like this in mind when he argued for the censorship

of some of the poets, but stood for free and hot political and philosophical debate. Strangely enough, few who criticize Plato because of his proposal to control the poets pause to note that nearly all of Plato's writing revolves around the admired character of Socrates, and Socrates is clearly given this position by Plato because he stands as a symbol for unconfined Reason.

Teachings that corrupt the young may be either precocious for youthful minds or cunningly devised propaganda. Precocious material may represent knowledge, yet be the sort of knowledge which is beyond the area of childhood experience. This is a matter of judgment in education and, for the most part, may be safely left to the intelligence of educators. Propaganda, on the other hand, is intended to circumvent the processes of rational inquiry, and is therefore, anti-educational.

Fear of the opinions of others, therefore, is either an apprehension that subtly devised persuasions will mislead the immature—a complaint which requires honest attention—or it is a fear that one's own opinions will be exposed as false, inadequate, or unjust.

Socrates, it seems clear, was the victim of this second sort of fear. The opinions of Socrates were such that they exerted a logical constraint upon men to examine their own lives in an impartial light. "The unexamined life," Socrates maintained, "is not worth living." Now those who were made uncomfortable by Socratic utterances were obliged to choose between examining their lives and their opinions, as he recommended, and accusing him of being a menace to youth and the stability of society. The vote of the Five Hundred was close, but the fear of the exposing force of the opinions of Socrates triumphed over the appeal to reason in those opinions. His accusers hid their personal fears and insecurities behind the righteous mask of "public interest" and "morality."

How, then, are we to tell when someone with unpopular opinions is justly accused of being "subversive," and how are we to recognize an honest educational effort which is unpopular because it makes men admit their own moral weakness?

First of all, we need to ask: Does the accuser want *all* the evidence, or does he insist that the menacing statement or opinion be regarded in isolation?

A "safely" fair appraisal of Einstein, for example, is provided in *Life's* editorial note introducing the Miller interview:

Just as his ground-breaking scientific conclusions were unconventional, so were Einstein's philosophical concepts. In politics he took sides that were unpopular with Americans. In the sphere of religion his views contradicted strongly held beliefs. But because of his unwavering rectitude Einstein was regarded as one of the most unselfish men of his time.

When there is honesty in appraising a man's opinions, there is likely to be less and less fear. For some reason or other, fear does not survive very well in an atmosphere of impartiality, while it thrives and grows to obsessing dimensions in the minds of partisans. There are critics who always reject any good reported of an opponent, and other critics who always welcome it. Which sort of critic claims our best attention?

To illustrate: The more extreme of the red-baiters have lately been finding much fault with John Dewey as a corrupter of American education. The charges of these critics seem to vary inversely with their knowledge of Dewey's life and work. The less they know, the less they want to know, and the better able they are to hurl their accusations.

In this matter of "dangerous opinions," it might be a good idea to set up a system of "ground rules" to regulate all charges and defenses made concerning ideologies and political and religious opinions. Simone Weil suggested something of this sort in her book, *The Need for Roots*, and while it may seem impractical or injudicious to hope for a legal tribunal of this description, a general cultural agreement on canons of honest criticism might be the best way to clear the air of irresponsible charges and counter-charges.

The rules would have to apply equally to both "liberals" and "reactionaries." The liberals, despite their label, are not always faithful to the principles of impartial criticism. For example, Plato has been

attacked again and again for having "fascist" notions in respect to the opinions of the poets. But if it be conceded that Plato seems to have gone a bit far in this aspect of state authority, it must also be pointed out that the whole tendency of Plato's writings is to create an atmosphere in which response to rational appeal will be the foundation of order and social control. "Fear of evil" has an extremely minor and insignificant role in Plato's thought.

What we are demanding, in short, of those who ask the right to condemn the ideas of others as "subversive" is that they give evidence of a capacity for philosophic judgment, and that they show no interest, themselves, in the techniques of rabble-raising and emotional propaganda. When they have made this demonstration, then they may have the floor.

But besides the political aspect of the fear of the opinions of others, there are personal considerations. The eminence of Einstein—the very "unselfishness" noted by *Life*—may be resented by the man who has acquired his self-esteem by claiming belief in a particular set of doctrines or dogmas. If Einstein is able to display such virtue without this man's beliefs, what good are his beliefs? The man who is jealous of his own virtue may argue that there is something suspicious in the excellence of those who have reached to heights without following the path which he claims is the *only* way to virtue!

The basic delusion, here, seems to result from a confusion between beliefs and achievement. Those who, for example, accept the view that human beings are innately sinful and cannot of their own power become good, assert that by maintaining the correct beliefs they *can* become good. For these, attainment of the good results from *association with correct beliefs*. This, they hold, is the only good that can be realized by sinful man. The achievement of virtue *without those beliefs* thus becomes the most terrible crime of all, for this shakes the foundations of religious faith.

This delusion obviously has corresponding political forms, and is bound to appear wherever it is thought that human excellence can be borrowed from any outside power or institution, whether of heaven

or earth. The tragic aspect of this situation lies in the fact that the delusion is one which exercises absolute control over its victims. No appeal to reason can affect those who form their judgments under its influence. What must be defeated is not the results, one by one, of this delusion, but the delusion itself.

What is human greatness? Doubtless it is many things, but first and foremost it is freedom from this delusion. Those who enjoy this emancipation can feel no enmity toward any man nor fear any man's opinions.

This quality of greatness pervaded Einstein's conversation with young Pat Miller, the Harvard freshman who accompanied his father on the visit to Princeton. When the young man asked if there were anything in the world in which a man could believe, Einstein replied:

Certainly there are things worth believing. I believe in the brotherhood of man and the uniqueness of the individual. But if you ask me to prove what I believe, I can't. You know them to be true but you could spend a whole lifetime without being able to prove them. The mind can only proceed so far on what it knows and can prove. There comes a point where the mind takes a leap—call it intuition or what you will—and comes out on a higher plane of knowledge, but can never prove how it got there. All great discoveries have involved such a leap.

Later he answered another question:

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existence. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery each day. Never lose a holy curiosity. Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value. He is considered successful in our day who gets more out of life than he puts in. But a man of value will give more than he receives.