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FRATRICIDE AMONG EDUCATORS

WHAT one writer has called the "hot war" over education is presently in the public eye, and, as with all wars, there is value in inquiring into what the struggle is about. Already, as in the case of nationalist wars, special pleaders are spreading partisan versions of the issues, so that one who reads about the war in education may easily reach conclusions which entirely miss the point. The purpose of this brief survey of educational controversy will be to indicate how complicated the whole matter is, and to review some of the factors which seem of primary importance.

There are critics who say the schools retard the learning process by offering too stereotyped a curriculum; others claim that the curriculum has departed too far from traditional drilling in "solid" subjects. (Still others, echoing Senator McCarthy, hold that any teacher who encourages discussion of social issues has overstepped his role and is most likely subversive, but with this last aspect of educational factionalism, we are not presently concerned—except as the McCarthyists and the traditionalists appear in superficial and confusing alliance.)

One view worthy of attention is that sociological facts and psychological trends have far more to do with cultural impoverishment than either "Traditionalist" or "Progressive" pedagogical techniques. In any case, the failure of our society to do as well as might be done in helping children to become thoughtful and literate human beings is a situation for which nearly all of us bear some responsibility. There are aspects of educational argument which cannot be separated from other phases of life, for all education involves assumptions concerning the ends and aims of living. Controversy arising from philosophical diversity is not beside the point, but entirely necessary. Free discussion, however, to which philosophical differences should lead, does not make a war. War is a political phenomenon, and it is only when educators stop being philosophers—their natural calling—and politicalize their objectives, that the word "war" becomes applicable to differences of opinion among teachers. Parents are educators, too, and are either good ones or bad ones for much the same reasons. Whenever the frustrations of adolescent-raising impel mothers and fathers to find a *simple* explanation of what is wrong, they encounter a temptation to politicalize their own attitudes toward teachers—that is, to compensate for inadequacies of the home by criticizing the schools. This has always happened, and will continue to happen, no matter what the educational system, so long as perplexed parents allow themselves to be drawn into mere "side-taking" by a few vocal critics. After all, the fact that the youngsters are not turning out quite the way they should must be *somebody's* fault! But parents, like teachers, must recognize that the only way to avoid taking a political view of education is to have more faith in philosophy than in slogans and leaders.

Three recent articles—two of them belonging to serial discussions of education—offer points of departure for evaluation of the "hot war" combatants. Early this year *Collier's* commissioned a writer named Howard Whitman to do a series on educational controversy, titled, "The Struggle for our Childrens' Minds." (See MANAS for Feb. 24) Here, it seems to us, the "political" approach to education is revealed at its worst, for this title is designed to stimulate emotions rather than thought, and implies that Certain People are scheming to possess the minds of *Our* young. This approach may sell copies of *Collier's*, but it is utterly without foundation, and ridiculous to any informed, or merely sensible person. Mr. Whitman's specific charge,

unglamorized, is that the "new education" has so decreased the study of basic subjects that high-school students are now, more often than not, unfit to enter college. His solution is to have all high schools closely resemble the program of the Boston Latin School, which has, from time immemorial, supplied well-classicized boys for Harvard.

These lads at Boston Latin, affirms Mr. Whitman, are really getting their culture and thriving on it, but he neglects to point out that scholastic and IQ standards at B.L. are so high that only a small proportion of American youngsters could keep the pace. As our public school teachers long ago discovered, one cannot treat the many children who have little proclivity for abstract mental exercise as if they were all embryonic intellectuals. Parents again enter the picture here, because non-intellectual parents seldom provide the stimuli which children need if they are to thrive on a curriculum of concentrated traditional culture.

Mr. Whitman is presumably tub-thumping for the "traditionalists." But what sort of traditionalist does he represent? Boston Latin amounts to a direct continuation of a medieval philosophy of education, proposing that many necessary things must be poured into the minds of the young if they are to be adequately prepared for the world of their elders. But if one cares to go all the way back to Socrates—also very much a part of the traditions we venerate—one encounters the contrasting viewpoint that a good teacher should believe that each pupil has an independent, intuitive capacity for *realizing* important truths, in his own way and time, and that the work of an educator should consist in "drawing out" rather than in "pouring in." This view has formed part of the theoretical base of the New Education, and is, indeed, most in accord with democratic assumptions. Mr. Whitman makes these considerations conspicuous by total neglect.

One is forced, however, to admit the truth in some of Whitman's arguments, after taking account of his overwriting and his slyly rabble-rousing paragraphs. As is also revealed in Albert Lynd's *Quackery in the Public Schools*, the pendulum has swung far away from studious disciplines in the high schools. Some Progressive theorists and teachers who give their all to capture the interest of bored adolescents (Denver Manual High, cited by Whitman, supplies classes in stage-craft and fudge-making) give little evidence of appreciating the role of hard work in the learning process. In some schools, a relatively small part of each day is spent on basic subjects. (The defense would be, perhaps, that by offering so many different types of training, every youngster is enabled to find an appropriate activity, thus escaping the inferiority feelings which threaten the lagging student in a traditional institution. But those who need good scholarship more than anything else are easily neglected by such programs.)

On the other hand, neither Mr. Whitman nor Albert Lynd take cognizance of the fact that many of the present-day young need psychological help fully as much or more than they need the Three R's, and that many homes fail to supply it. Sociologists agree that "social and family disorganization" is typical in the twentieth century, causing widespread psychological dislocation in the young. Lynd may be right in arguing that the public schools are presently run by a lot of amateur psychologists, but amateurism, like all other things, is relative, and the administrators and teachers of our high schools are apt to be less amateurish than many of their critics. Moreover, when the welfare of our children demands as much practical knowledge of therapeutic psychology as we can get, we ought to be thankful for whatever is available.

It is true that the close alliance between schools of education and psychology departments in universities had causes which went beyond the demand of home communities for "more

psychology to help our children," but the huge increase in psychology requirements for teachers has been historically appropriate. The last twenty years have seen a rapid increase in incidence of mental illness among adults and children alike. Teachers may, as Lynd insists, be inadequately trained in the basic arts of communication, but they must also learn how necessary it is to understand potentially crippling emotional problems among their pupils. The need for more psychology—and better psychology—continues to grow. Psychology has, indeed, a crucial relevance to the whole educational controversy. Mr. Lynd complains that our teachers and administrators have boldly undertaken all sorts of social and family counseling, and implies that these activities are outside the proper field of the public official. But when a teacher discovers in every classroom pupils who cannot even begin to learn the Three R's because of psychological maladjustment—usually caused or aggravated by parents—the desire to straighten out as much of the tangle as he can is natural, and admirable. Administrators are called upon for advice and, whenever it is disclosed that hundreds of children in a single school district are suffering recognizable emotional distress from their home environment, the logical answer seems to be in some modification of the curriculum which will reduce the tension in the classroom. To the best of our knowledge, many of the psychologist counselors in the public schools are doing excellent work. The trend which has made mental illness our most disabling national disease might even be arrested by sufficient attention to emotional maladjustments of elementary and high school pupils.

Both Mr. Whitman and Mr. Lynd note the growth of bureaucracy in the new education, and take delight in exposing the pretentiousness and waste involved in certain graduate courses offered by teachers' colleges. But similar criticisms apply wherever bureaucracy exists, and bureaucrats in education have increased at approximately the same rate as elsewhere in our society. One reason for this development is growth in population, especially urban population. Social organization becomes intricate with urbanization, bringing automatic multiplication of sub- and super-managers for our public servants. A concentrated population soon becomes administratively top-heavy, and if we really want less bureaucracy we shall have to move toward greater decentralization in living.

The rapid growth of modern cities has worked against the cause of basic education in other ways. For one thing, there is less opportunity for supplying the ingredients of "progressive education" at home. In a rural society you don't need to tell children where eggs and milk come from, nor teach them how to use a hammer and nails. Who can blame a city teacher for feeling an obligation in this regard? Altogether, it seems to us that broad social trends have rather forced public school teachers to become craft teachers, psychological advisers and instructors in the arts of practical social cooperation—regardless of what teachers' college they have attended.

In respect to reading ability, it appears to us that much of the deficiency noted by critics is also traceable to parents. Urbanites are tempted away from reading and discussion by innumerable forms of professional entertainment. It is an open question, moreover, whether the arts of reading and discussion have ever been really learned in school, for most youngsters who become proficient in them do so because of constant exposure to the results of intelligent reading on the part of their parents. In other words, once upon a time a school like Boston Latin was able to perform a limited task adequately, but this was not then considered to be the whole education of a child. The rest of his education was occurring at home, by way of the culture of parents who read, and through discharge of numerous responsibilities natural to the home.

Many critics of the public school, among them Mr. Lynd, call for an increase in the number

of "citizen groups" to seek out and control "quackery" in education. But this would almost surely strengthen the factional, political approach which destroys education. And groups are not initially necessary. Interested parents should first visit their schools in person as individuals and form judgments apart from the pressure of group opinion. Most public schools welcome such visits, being especially proud, for instance, of improved teacher-pupil rapport—an accomplishment easily sensed by visitors.

Citizens, indeed, have a right to know what the schools are teaching, and how they are teaching, but we shudder as we think of the obstruction to education that might result from belligerent parent-groups who have adopted a few superficial slogans of criticism. These parents themselves may sometimes prove to be practically "illiterate." The foremost authority on reading ability, Dr. Emmett A. Betts, of the Temple Reading Clinic of Philadelphia, contends that twenty per cent of adults are seriously retarded in reading. According to Dr. Betts, only two out of five adults read as well as, or better than, the eighth-grade pupil. Although, from the university level, many of our elementary and secondary school instructors may seem woefully deficient in techniques of speaking and writing, as a group they still rate well ahead of the average parent. They include, moreover, thousands of comparatively intelligent young men and women who *like* to help children learn—the most necessary qualification of all.

A *Saturday Evening Post* series, running concurrently with the *Collier's* articles, presents a point of view almost opposite to that of Whitman and Lynd. According to the writer, David G. Wittels, and the same Dr. Betts upon whom Wittels relies heavily, the schools are failing our children to the degree that they *still employ the traditional curriculum.* It is Dr. Betts' conclusion, based upon 20,000 case histories involving reading deficiency, that radical educators are not yet radical enough. Wittels says:

> Dr. Betts blames most cases of failure in reading and other school subjects on what he calls regimented education. At least 90 percent of the grade schools today use arbitrary and rigid curriculums which have little relation with the way children's minds grow, he insists: and, to some extent, they "confuse or frustrate" many of their pupils. In the nearly 20,000 case histories of seemingly backward children which he had compiled, he usually found an over-lapping of blame, with the parents being at least accessories.

Dr. Betts feels that regimentation is always a foe to the learning process, and that we should rid the public schools of all vestiges of the Boston Latin School sort of curriculum. (One would perhaps expect the *Saturday Evening Post* to represent the "traditional" side of any controversy, and it is amusing, if confusing, to find the Wittels articles out-radicalling most "new education" teachers.)

Still another critic adopts what might be called a middle-of-the-road position in attempting to analyze the basic issues involved in the "Hot War Over Our Schools." Writing in the March issue of *Commentary,* Spencer Brown reviews Lynd's work, Prof. Woodring's *Let's Talk About Our Schools*, and Arthur E. Bestor's *Educational Wastelands*. Mr. Brown sums up on the subject of the "Three R's":

> The steady roar of "the Three R's" has been continuing. I should now like to add my contribution. To the best of my knowledge there has been no convincing study showing either serious decline or gratifying gain in the acquisition of basic skills by most of our children. They read less, though I am not sure we can blame the schools. Dime novels were better than comics or television in one way, they had to be read to be enjoyed. But the schools did not create comics or television. I do know that every allegation about the Three R's is accompanied and perhaps motivated by special interest or ideological passion. Nevertheless the contention that the Three R's are dead is reiterated by the attackers and is denied by the defenders, who say (and which side of the street are they working?) that not only do we not bother with the Three R's (an outworn, sterile goal) but the result justifies our neglect, since it has been proved that under progressivism the children learn the Three R's better than ever.

This paragraph indicates what happens when those interested in the improvement of American education admit to belonging to one or another political camp. Factionalism is always the death of reason, and we have, on both sides, many who seem unable to view educational issues in any other way. The present writer, after a tour of elementary schools in a highly congested area, asked one principal for his opinion of the Lynd volume. The question brought no outburst. He simply replied that it was very hard for him to give a balanced reaction, since he considered all school teachers and administrators—including himself—during the current "attack" on the public schools, to be suffering from "a collective paranoia." Why? The teachers and administrators want the friendship and cooperation of the parents while they strive, with inadequate personnel, to help the children become thoughtful, reasonably literate, and emotionally balanced. Partisan criticism and suspicion endanger parental cooperation.

This principal, clearly, had risen above the level of irrational reaction in recognizing that the tendency to factional response must be resisted. (He granted, incidentally, that the Lynd volume might be useful if circulated only among members of the teaching profession as an aid to honest self-appraisal. In general, however, Lynd's picture is so one-sided that parents are encouraged to criticize without sufficient study of all the other factors involved.) The "paranoiac" reaction is bound to be heightened by the insinuations of reactionary groups that many public school teachers are "Communistically inclined." To imply "Communist sympathies" in respect to an opponent is the lowest trick of controversy in the 1950's; that it should be played upon our public school instructors at the present time is enough to drive any teacher wild.

As a matter of fact, it seems to us that somewhere along this bend of the road many critics of the public school can be nicely hoisted by their own petards. The critics often blame the schools for failing to foster in the young a proper respect for parents and it is true that a teacher harassed by political methods of attack may easily come to think of his pupils' mothers and fathers as reactionary obstructionists. But what of the old and great tradition which holds that *teachers* are to be especially respected? Most of our teachers merit far more respect than they command, and perhaps both parents and the public should begin a reform in this direction.

From a logical point of view, one can agree with *both* traditionalists and "new educationists" in their basic contentions. It is quite possible that many high schools need to give more attention to spelling, speaking, thinking—the foundation subjects of liberal arts generally—yet, *at the same time*, need further liberation from traditionalist *methods* of instruction. Again, it may be that the traditionalist recommendations are especially applicable at the high school level, while the elementary schools need "new educationist" methods and curricula. The present writer, having encountered a strongly traditionalist set of classrooms during elementary training, can testify that being scared to death of grim, disciplinary teachers and the possibility of receiving low marks pretty nearly froze the learning apparatus on the spot. Conversely, in high school, the same student, having grown up enough to be no longer paralyzed by fear of teachers, then was offered more snap courses than were good for him. Such experiences may be but random evidence of confusion during transition, yet confusion and failure are by no means one and the same.

In summary, we offer two tentative lists of erroneous assumptions, one for the factional "traditionalist" and one for the factional "anti-traditionalist."

The factional traditionalist assumes, incorrectly we think:

(*a*) That the best social order, for any age and for all ages, is theocratic. This means that all necessary moral values and methods of teaching them are already known, and need only to be repeated to the young. Accordingly, the thought

of discovering new values or radically different methods is anathema.

(*b*) That no science of psychology, present or yet to be constructed, can throw significant light on the proper ends and aims of human striving. Religion, or tradition, can presumably perform this task unaided.

(*c*) That a well-packed memory and an ability to manipulate cultural symbols are the chief hallmarks of education and wisdom.

(*d*) That the same disciplines are good for everyone, and at the same time.

(*e*) That all "Progressives" are "materialists"—and probably anti-religious.

(f) That the worst state of mind for a youth to be in is one of frank confusion as to the ends and aims of his unfolding life.

The factional anti-traditionalist assumes, again, we think, incorrectly:

(*a*) That rigorous disciplines cannot be achieved without employment of authoritarian methods, and therefore, along with quiet classrooms, should never be sought. (Why not complete quiet and order at least one hour a day? Even children might appreciate it, in such dosages.)

(*b*) That children have been satisfactorily educated if they have been helped to avoid serious emotional difficulties.

(*c*) That anyone who upholds high standards of scholarship is apt to be a factional traditionalist. (The best case in point of error here is Robert Hutchins, who wants everyone to read and learn how to discuss philosophical issues via "The Great Books," but who, also, while at the University of Chicago, did more to upset medieval rigidities of curriculum than any educator before or since. Similarly, Hutchins stands in the front line of defense against encroachments on academic freedom and free expression.)

(*d*) That all traditionalists are theocrats, or Catholic propagandists, or unimaginative, stuck-in-the-mud businessmen. (Mr. Lynd opposes federal aid to parochial schools—even opposes "released-time.)

(*e*) That words such as "philosophy" and "values" are all right if quoted from John Dewey—otherwise suspect.

(*f*) That "social education" is always, and for everyone, more important than the sort of education which enables one, if need be, to be quite "well adjusted" as a recluse.

In looking over what we have written—except for our lists of errors—we seem to have slanted our remarks chiefly in defense of the schools and teachers. This is partly because one cannot help but respect the efforts of teachers, as one visits classroom after classroom. Here are hardworking men and women who, whatever their personal deficiencies, have learned to make schoolrooms happy places for the young to occupy. Most of the children respect and like their instructors. But another reason for clearing away the debris of unjust or unnecessary criticism is because, until this is done, it will be difficult to discuss other errors of omission, in respect to what education should mean, which our teachers, along with the rest of us, are guilty of making.

More later on this equally important topic, first by way of a large assist from Marten Ten Hoor, whose *American Scholar* article, "Education for Privacy," deserves adequate space for consideration. Meanwhile, it is plain that little more than a beginning has been made in exploring the issues of the controversy regarding education. Perhaps letters and suggestions from readers will help to open up the subject more thoroughly. Such letters will be welcome.

REVIEW
DEMOCRATIZING THE ARTS

SOME weeks ago an article in these pages ("Extremes of Social Theory," MANAS, Jan. 20) called attention to Dwight Macdonald's essay, "A Theory of Mass Culture," which appeared in *Diogenes* for the Summer of 1953. Macdonald's point is that High Culture involving authentic and original expression in the arts—is continually being "mined" by the purveyors of "popular" or "mass" culture, chopped into commercial measures, and sold at a profit. This process, as a matter of fact, is fairly self-evident and has been made the subject of an article by Jacques Barzun in the March *Harper's.* Macdonald's evaluation is more or less an indictment of the people who manufacture the ingredients of Mass Culture: "It [Mass Culture] is fabricated by technicians hired by businessmen; its audiences are passive consumers, their participation limited to the choice between buying and not buying." Barzun approaches the subject from another viewpoint. He draws a parallel between American popularization of the arts and the habit of the ancient Romans to borrow from their more creative neighbors, the Greeks, and from other rich cultures to the East. The difference, of course, is in the incredible multiplication of "art forms" made possible by modern technology.

Barzun regards the extraordinary drive to add "culture" to American life as not necessarily a "good" thing, but as an inevitability which must be faced and the best made of it. Oddly enough, the modern interest in culture is in some ways a fulfillment of the dreams of the Founding Fathers of the United States. The first citizens of this Republic were extremely touchy about the superiority of European to American culture. Some of them noted the difficulty of pursuing the service of the arts in a new country busily engaged in winning a war for independence and rooting political institutions that embodied revolutionary principles. One of them remarked that he was willing to devote his life to politics in order that his sons might have opportunity for more refined activities—the practice of literature and philosophy and the arts.

The irony of the modern realization of this dream, of course, is that we are rather "exposed" to the arts, these days, than enabled to practice them. But Mr. Barzun finds some pleasant exceptions:

> As one who has sat on national award committees, I can testify that this country produces four or five talented people for each one that is chosen. The country is rich in amateur players, singers, and painters. The President of the United States is perhaps painting at this very minute, and no one thinks any less of him for his hobby. He can take it or leave it alone; and he is not a sissy, since he can also fish. . . .

Meanwhile, the mass magazines have become conveyor belts for mass culture:

> The mass media plug culture of set purpose, and they do it harder and better than their own politics. Every week *Life* stuffs modern poetry, great art collections, stories of Western culture, and resumés of science down the throats of several million people. It is a high-brow magazine. Even in the cheaper journals, T. S. Eliot and Jean-Paul Sartre are news. Meanwhile the record industry and the radio have made classical music something other than a subject of jokes against dry-as-dust people—so much so that the interchange between classical and popular music is now a two-way traffic in tunes and rhythms. You can hear Ravel's *Pavane* adapted to the juke-box audience and our chief composers have a *pied-à-terre* in Tin Pan Alley. In a word, the fusion of elite and people, which began as a political and social movement, has now reached culture and is—shall I say?—homogenizing it.

Mr. Barzun's attitude toward all this is that of an interested but detached observer. He finds Americans very busy bringing art and culture to the masses. Art, and being an artist, he finds, are rapidly becoming "respectable." The important thing to recognize, however, is that all this mass production of artistic objects does not necessarily bring us closer to understanding the meaning of art. The interest in art is not an interest in art as resulting from an act of creation, but in art as

décor, or, in Barzun's words, art as *artifacts*. He writes:

> We are concerned with ways and means of producing and distributing them [artifacts]: we run to technique. Technique is indeed essential to art; it is, so to speak, its packaging; but it is not its essence. Notice how artlike all the popular forms of entertainment have grown under this confusion of technique with art. Technically, there is nothing finer than a Hollywood movie; in our weekly magazines, in our broadcasting studios, technique is an obsession, and if virtuosity did mean virtue, we'd have it. But we all recognize that beyond a certain pleasure that is given by neat presentation, the techniques stifle thought instead of serving it. . . .
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> Because art is "fun" and for enjoyment instead of distant lip service, we now take it like soda pop, anywhere, anytime, in meaningless little gulps. We have bits of the Ninth Symphony trickling into our ears as we sit at the lunch counter. We overhear "Hamlet" as we drive on the highway, to reach a hotel room hung with reproductions of Van Gogh. Where in all this are we in touch with the secrets of life and death? We do not even find continuity, or silence, or presence of mind.

Here is the point of Mr. Barzun's article. The genuine artist works at the project of actual discovery. He is not a "nice" person, but a man who is intent upon the meanings of things. Unless he is this, his work may be "artistic," or it may have "technique," but it will not be art.

We may learn to delight in artistic things, and even improve our taste, but so long as we neglect the central reality—that art is a path of original discovery, that it involves the pain of creation, the championship of unpopular truth—so long shall we be practicing the Higher Acquisitiveness in the name of the arts, instead of the arts themselves.

There may be value in thinking of the artist as a man who has learned how to pursue his calling with the attitude and intensity which all men need to adopt in the living of their lives. The artist may be a kind of specialist, but only in the same sense that a teacher is a specialist. Both are concerned with the disclosure of meanings, and since the disclosure of meaning is the larger business of life for every man, one might even argue that art and education are adjuncts of philosophy. Barzun draws this parallel:

> Like philosophy, but clothed in seductive forms, art records man's consciousness about life and death. Appearance and Reality are the main concern of both artist and philosopher: the artist makes patterns so as to focus the beholder's feelings upon what his life is really like; art makes us imagine once again what we actually are under the cloak of convention. The awareness of death gives the philosopher his idea of an absolute in experience; the consciousness of life gives the artist the materials for his deliberate relativism. Man as philosopher keeps seeking for the one absolute philosophy, whereas man as artist keeps multiplying relative points of view, which we find in the varied and opposing schools of art. The "one true art" is an absurd ideal that never crosses our mind. Art and philosophy thus complement each other and supply the images and habits of thought that we call culture.
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> If this is so, some of the familiar facts of our cultural life are explained—why, in the first place, art is difficult, rare, and valuable—a question we tend to forget; why, again, the great artist is more or less at odds with society; he is trying to change its perceptions; we, the mass, refusing to see through his eyes because it is upsetting to do so. . . .

Perhaps, as we continue to "homogenize" the art of the past, filtering it into our lives in terms of pleasant fragments, tones, harmonies, and moods, we shall finally reach a point where the "art" we know is all used up, just as, in other areas of life, our heritage is slowly being used up. Then, with no more of the past to "assimilate" or "democratize," we may be ready for another sort of expression in both philosophy and art—expression which is genuinely our own.

COMMENTARY
FACTORS IN THE FERMENT

FROM the editorial vantage-point—if it *is* a vantage-point—we find it difficult to escape the notion that every phase of modern life is in such rapid transition that any prediction about the future, except that it is bound to be very different from the past and even the present, would be foolhardy. It seems likely, for example, that within a few years the balance of opinion will swing in favor of acceptance of the idea of extra-sensory perception. Then, perhaps, instead of endless discussions and denunciations of communism, the popular magazines will rediscover the idea of the soul and of immortality, and scores of new religions will be in the making. As evidence, we call attention to the increasing confidence with which workers in psychic research—or "Parapsychology"—report conclusions which imply that the soul is not only a metaphysical possibility, but a scientific probability. (See Frontiers.)

In the meantime, despite the frights and alarums of war, technology is proceeding to assimilate the cultural riches of the past. While, thirty years ago, one might expect to see a reproduction of the Mona Lisa hanging in every other hallway, today the themes and forms of modern art find their way into advertising and into architecture and decoration almost overnight. Real estate developments on a mass scale are also making impressive contributions to change in living habits. One such development, Levittown, on Long Island, has a population of 70,000, and Lakewood, to the South of Los Angeles, is almost as large. Radically new cultural patterns are emerging in these suddenly created cities, where it is hard to find anybody much over thirty years old! There is a clean break with the past in such communities. Interior decoration is taken almost bodily from the pages of home-making magazines, and the one thing that is rare is a family heirloom.

Education is in ferment, as this week's lead article reveals, and if past experience affords any measure, out of ferment generally arise new movements of constructive purpose and effect. Our "education editor," incidentally, reports that there are more young people on the campus, today, who are genuinely seeking an education than there were during the pre-war period, and that the professors, too, are less complacent, more intent upon stimulating actual thinking.

It all seems to us to indicate a reshuffling and consolidation of culture, to the point where new beginnings will be almost inevitable. Perhaps "The Next America" of which Lyman Bryson has written is not so far away as some may suppose. One condition, at any rate, of any far-reaching change is the breakdown of tradition, and this condition is being rapidly fulfilled. And while a traditionless culture tends to be formless, easily degenerating into a mere mass, with the psychological attributes of a "crowd," there is also the possibility of a new kind of freedom, and of the enlightened rationalism of which all the utopians have dreamed.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

SOMETHING of the importance of the role of parents and home life for children is indicated by the strange case of the "wolf children," the two little girls who were found in a wolf's den in India, some years ago, and taken into the family of English missionaries. Nurtured from a very early age by wild animals, these children had lost almost all trace of specifically human characteristics. Instead of walking, they scrambled about on their hands and knees, having developed great calluses on their lower limbs as a result. They did not survive the change of environment for long. Speech was apparently not possible for them, and the chief joy of their foster parents was that, after many months, one of the girls gave faint indication of an effort to *smile*.

There are other evidences of the importance of the human influence of mind. Ruth Benedict (*Patterns of Culture*) speaks of children of the Middle Ages who, abandoned by their parents, lived by themselves in the forests of Europe. Their animal-like behavior caused Linnæus to classify them as a distinct species, *Homo ferus*. "He could not conceive that these half-witted brutes were born human, these creatures with no interest in what went on about them, rocking themselves rhythmically back and forth like some wild animal in a zoo, with organs of speech and hearing that could hardly be trained to do service, . . ."

Dr. Benedict remarks that we do not come across wild children in our "more humane" civilization, but perhaps she forgets the gangs of "wild boys" reported as roving and pillaging in post-revolutionary Russia. Then there was the tragedy of children without enough to eat in Spain, during the ravaged years of the Spanish civil war. James Wood Johnson told in a series of *Saturday Evening Post* articles how the children, ceaselessly hungry, felt betrayed by their parents, and how they became brutal and vicious in the struggle for existence.

These are some of the effects which come from the breakdown of physical nurture. But may there not be a kind of care and continuity which is equally necessary at the higher level of *human* relationships? Recent studies of juvenile delinquency suggest that children may be properly fed, even lavished with affection, and still turn out to be as ruthless as the "wild children" of other days, despite the appearance of a good up-bringing. To be "human" involves something beyond sanitary conditions in infancy, scientific diet, and a happy, expressive childhood. Older races and cultures managed to establish a pattern of influences which worked to induct the young into successive relationships of social responsibility, and in some cases a wider vision of the interdependence of the human being with the natural world about him was deliberately planned as a kind of "initiation" into maturity. The Hopi child, for example, learns to think of himself as growing up into responsibility for even the harmonious function of the laws of nature. *His* integrity, he comes to believe, is important to nature. If he fails to practice the ideals in which he is instructed, the rest of nature may falter as a result.

Our own culture is almost wholly without traditional ideas of the links between man and nature. We have no rites and ceremonies, handed down from our ancestors, to instil in children a sense of participation in the world's work. In fact, we have no notion that there is anything that might be called the "world's work." We have instead the habits of invaders and exploiters of nature. Even parents who, having reflected upon this lack in their own and their children's lives, would like to make a change for the better, find themselves without educational instruments for this purpose, unless they devise them without help from modern culture. And while those who live in rural areas have greater opportunities for helping their children to gain a sense of rapport with

nature, the simple idea of being natural beings in a natural world is so uncommon that it may be the artist visitor from the city who is more alert to the beauty and wonder of the outdoors than some of those who have lived close to the land.

For untold centuries, sun-worshippers have greeted the dawn with hymns of thanksgiving and reverence. Fishermen have tossed an offering to the waves, in recognition of the sustaining power of the sea, and hunters have made a kind of obeisance to their prey. Farmers have practiced planting rites and harvest celebrations. A kind of universal mysticism has pervaded the existence of nearly all ancient societies, reaching its climax in the meditations of the sage who seeks the underlying meaning of human experience. These were not, we may think, precisely "religious" acts, but rather institutions created by wise men who realized that a sense of unity, of cooperation and interdependence with nature, requires a certain direction of the attention. Once the attention is directed, there is that in the human heart which may respond, which may *feel* the bond of life which unites man and nature. And from this feeling may arise a quality of devotion which is not possible for those who think only of their own satisfactions.

We know from personal experience that the human beings whose presence we most enjoy are people whose natural interests reach beyond their personal lives. There is something deadly dull about the selfishness of others. We may argue that it is "natural," but we nevertheless avoid it as uninteresting. There is even an unaccustomed thrill when we observe a child who shares his toys without a calculating gleam—a manifest timing which awaits the moment when he can shout, "Now it's *my* turn." Simply to watch such a child at play affords us pleasure.

The difficulty in all education, and especially in moral education, is that to be effective it must have an element of spontaneity. A child preached at is a child bored, and rightly so. Morality, like happiness, is best conveyed by an infectious spirit which awakens a like feeling in others, to be explained, perhaps, *afterward*, in almost casual ways.

We cannot go back to tribal customs and ceremonies. We are far too self-conscious for these ancient forms of group experience. But what we can do is watch for those intervals in life when reflection upon our relations with others and with nature seems appropriate. Perhaps, if we assume that this natural mysticism is not reserved for great and exceptional men alone, but has its place in everyone's daily existence, we may find that both nature and others will meet us half-way.

FRONTIERS

The Liberation of Science

THE hand of theology, even an outdated and almost discarded theology, often exerts an undiscerned influence upon the sciences. Many years ago, the British psychologist and ethnologist, W. H. R. Rivers, pointed out the extent to which the science of ethnology, which came into being during the nineteenth century, was shaped in its beginnings by the Biblical story of Creation. Because of the common opinion that the entire world had been peopled by the lost Ten Tribes of Israel, ethnology started out with the assumption that the similarities among races and cultures were the result of the diffusion of the races from a single point of origin. Then, by reaction, perhaps, a new school of evolution, led by the German ethnologist, Adolf Bastian, proposed a contrary thesis—that the similarities of peoples in widely separated parts of the world were no more than illustrations of the uniformity of evolutionary processes. Men are similar, it was argued, because the laws of evolution make them similar. Only after another swing back to the diffusionist hypothesis, this time unaffected by religious tradition, could it be maintained that ethnology was at last free from uncritical religious belief.

Other branches of science have undergone similar modifications. The physical sciences, as we know, were the first to emancipate themselves from religious doctrines. While Kepler blended his astronomical theories with astrological and mystical speculations, and Newton maintained almost Neoplatonic views as the foundation of his interpretation of celestial mechanics, the scientific inheritors of the laws established by these early pioneers very soon separated physics from any theory of superphysical causation. Aided by the materialism of Descartes, they insisted that physics could concern itself with only *physical* causes, and set about erecting the theoretical structure of the universe which later became known as the Newtonian "World Machine." They felt that any admission of a superphysical cause in natural phenomena would be an admission of the "hand of God," and this, they knew, would be absolutely destructive of their science. Materialism, therefore, became the rule of progress for physics.

Writing in the December 1953 number of the *Journal of Parapsychology,* Dr. J. B. Rhine of Duke University discusses "The Pattern of History in Parapsychology," making it plain that this advance guard phase of psychological research was also obliged to free itself from religious and sectarian influence. While Dr. Rhine makes no mention of the medieval period, there is little doubt but that the psychical phenomena occurring before the birth of modern science obtained only a theological explanation. The psychically sensitive or abnormal were always in danger of the charge of witchcraft, while anyone giving evidence of clairvoyant powers might easily be accused of being in league with the Devil. Even after the major physical sciences were well on their way to independence, investigation of such things as telepathy and clairvoyance was pursued in connection with some interest which was not primarily psychological. The Spiritualists hoped to prove a particular theory of immortality by means of mediumistic phenomena. The Swedenborgians were a religious group with the elaborate cosmology of their founder to document and support. It was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century, with the founding of societies for psychic research, that parapsychology, or the study of supernormal faculties or powers, achieved the status of an independent discipline. And only within the past ten or fifteen years has parapsychology reached a stage of recognition by other scientists which permits the statement that parapsychology is an accredited field of modern scientific research.

Judging from the record, one could argue that the law of scientific identity, by means of which a special science becomes established as such, is that workers in research shall separate themselves completely from any sort of religious or

philosophical preconception. This, at any rate, is what has happened in all the fields of modern science. Either the sciences maintain perfect neutrality on religious or metaphysical subjects, or they lose their identity in the world of modern learning.

Here, however, an element of irony appears, for as soon as complete purity of research is achieved—research for its own sake, uncolored by philosophical motives—a kind of longing for philosophic interpretation begins to make itself felt. Actually, the books on what scientists happen to "believe," as their personal religious or philosophic credos, are much more popular with the general public than their scientific contributions, which can hardly be understood, anyway. It is as though, from the *human* point of view, the drive through two or three centuries for "scientific objectivity" had for its sole purpose the clearing away of irrational, partisan religions and philosophies, preparatory to a fresh attempt at explaining the meaning of life. Scientists strove for generations to persuade the world of the importance of the materialist view of things, and now, when they have practically succeeded in this enterprise, they exhibit a scarcely concealed boredom with the sterility of the materialistic approach. The whole value of the cycle of materialism, it appears, was in providing the basis for *unprejudiced* philosophizing.

This is especially evident in the field of parapsychology, and naturally so, since study of the character and capacities of the human mind brings science very close to the problems of philosophy. Dr. Rhine himself, while protesting the need for extreme caution in the interpretation of parapsychological evidence, seems to be straining at the leash of scientific objectivity. Or rather, this is doubtless the impression gained of him by those who are still sectarians of materialism. It is probably just to say that Dr. Rhine is endeavoring to formulate a new working definition of "objectivity" for the psychological sciences, whereas, to those who think they are still fighting the old battle against theology, his objections to mechanistic dogmas seem like a violation of scientific neutrality.

The startling fact which will probably have a key position in the new definition of objectivity is that the intelligent being or essence which operates to produce parapsychological happenings is "something other than the nervous system itself or any aspect of it." This conclusion is reached by two psychologists who have been working along the same lines as Dr. Rhine, and reported in the *Journal of Parapsychology* for last December. In more familiar terms, this suggests, as a minimum assumption, that a non-physical being is at work in the physical body, a being who uses the nervous system as an instrument, but may, on occasion, act independently of it. It might even be said that this independent being could properly be called the *soul.*