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THE GREAT TEMPTATION

FOR men who combine active intellectuality with a broad interest in the problems of the world, there is natural attraction in the idea of synthesis between science and religion. Spokesmen for liberal Christianity were spurred to write on this subject by the Scopes Trial in 1925—when Tennessee justice declared that a young biology teacher had broken the law of the state by teaching schoolchildren the Darwinian theory of evolution—and they found fresh speculative material when the unpredictable motions of the electron were publicized as promising a scientific hope for the free will of man. Then, with the coming of the Great Anxiety—the period which began when the atom bombs were dropped on Japan, and is still going on—scientists also submitted to the urge to write about science and religion. The periodical literature of science entered a cycle of soul-searching, and some sort of climax was reached with publication in 1947 of Lecomte du Noüy's *Human Destiny*.

. Not many of these efforts are worth reading. As products of either special pleading or anxiety, they often represent the all-too-easy solutions arrived at by men who seek "adjustment" rather than truth. The surprising thing is that they have not met with more aggressive criticism from scientists. It sometimes seems that the more disciplined thinkers working in scientific fields withhold the comment on such attempts that they would normally express, either from a deep feeling of humility (since the need for human understanding is so very great, these days), or because they think it a bad policy to take up arms against a manifest tendency of the *Zeitgeist.*

Meanwhile, the movement toward synthesis continues. *Science* for Oct. 1 contains the report of a Conference on Religion in the Age of Science that took place last summer, attended by ten scientists and the representatives of ten religious groups, including Protestant denominations, and Jewish, Buddhist, and Vedanta groups. While the report is brief, it appears that no large or challenging issues came to focus. Most notable to Ralph W. Burhoe, the writer of the report, was the pervading "cooperative cordiality and even elation" of the participants in the meeting. His account continues:

> The clergy and lay members of the conference were deeply impressed with the grand sweep of knowledge about man and his destiny in terms of the scientific view of the universe and they were amazed at the concern of scientists to help, as Wald [of Harvard] put it, to "organize human experience so that persons can feel at home in the universe, some sense of direction in their daily lives, some hope for the future, some purpose in their lives."

A. G. Huntsman, a professor from Toronto, is said to have approached "a number of theological questions in the light of science," ending with the proposition that "in order to find life man must first seek God's will and obey it." B. F. Skinner, Harvard psychologist, when questioned about free will, cited the doctrines of John Calvin to indicate that "a strict determinism was neither new nor antagonistic to a vital religious doctrine." Other scientists pointed out that the scientific account of the material side of man's existence need not be regarded as eliminating the possibility of a higher aspect encompassed by the term "spiritual." While there were differences of opinion in respect to whether or not "religious truth" could be approached by scientific methods, the willingness of the participants to adopt each other's points of view, at least tentatively, led to a rather notable truce in what the reporter calls "the cold war" between science and religion: "Among the members of the conference there developed jovial references to the scientists as fellow theologians and to theologians as fellow scientists."

Possibly the most encouraging thing about the conference was a minor breakdown of "party lines" among the theologians. "There was a line of cleavage of opinion about equating God with nature that seemed not so much to separate the clergy from the scientists as to cut between members of both groups." The reporter, Mr. Burhoe, regards as somewhat historic the fact that, when some members of the clergy set forth a certain concept of God, they were challenged by other clergymen to produce evidence in the form of "directly observed phenomena" to substantiate that concept.

The real issue, it seems to us, lies precisely here, in the question of the God-idea. Insofar as men are guided by reason in their determinations, what they think about God or "the highest" directly affects what they think about themselves, and, as the psychologists never tire of telling us, a man's idea of himself is the most important factor of all in "behavior," or, in an older language, *"morality."*

Three things, then, appear to be wrong with the method adopted by this conference in its quest for synthesis between science and religion. First, so far as religion is concerned, the approach is institutional—institutional because the religious delegates came as representatives of particular groups or sects. The scientists, while having different specialties, came and spoke as individuals. It hardly needs to be pointed out that any "organizational" viewpoint would be ridiculous as a means of expressing scientific truth or views. Scientific conclusions about the universe are not reached by taking a vote or subscribing to a creed. What is actually known to scientists about the processes of nature is determinable by experiment, so that no organization is needed to propose and support scientific "doctrines." All serious scientists would become immediately suspicious and even contemptuous of an organization formed for this purpose. Scientific organizations, except, perhaps, those in Russia, are not created for the purposes of declaring conclusions, but in order to facilitate cooperation in investigation. On the other hand, for scientists to form an organization to promote ideas which are not "known" in the scientific sense would be equally ridiculous, and ominous as well, as an obvious betrayal of the scientific spirit. It is plain, therefore, that whatever else one may say of scientific undertakings, the religious type of organization would be completely obstructive of scientific aims. Both the assumptions and the methods of science are radically opposed to those of organized religion. It follows that the first thing a conference concerned with synthesis between them ought to do is to make this difference clear.

A second thing wrong with the conference was its failure to recognize with clarity the crucial importance of the God-idea to all subsequent considerations. We say this, despite the fact that a number of the papers presented seem to have dealt with this subject. By "crucially important," we mean that any compromises on this issue, by either "side," or by individuals, must have the effect of watering down to insignificance whatever else may be said. The objective of "harmony" among conferees should never be allowed to displace integrity of thought on this all-important question. We doubt, however, if the two men on the scientific side of modern thought who have expressed themselves with clarity on the subject of the God-idea could expect an invitation to such a gathering. We have in mind Albert Einstein, whose unequivocal condemnation of the notion of a *personal* God (in 1940, at the first Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion) brought a tempest of disapproval from the theologians of various orthodoxies, and Oliver Reiser, professor of philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh, who has never feared to repeat the classical refutation of the personal-God idea.

The way we have presented this point may suggest that we have already taken a position on the subject. We have; but it is not necessary to share this position in order to believe that it ought

to be clearly represented and vigorously argued at a conference which seeks unity between science and religion.

The third thing wrong with the conference is the implication, which apparently went unchallenged, that a battery of religious and scientific "experts" is competent "to organize human experience so that persons can feel at home in the universe," to provide them with "some hope for the future," and help them to feel "some purpose in their lives." This implication, if taken seriously, constitutes a surrender to the organizational theory of religious truth. For it supposes that some men, more skilled in intellectual manipulation of ideas, are able to devise a view of nature and life in which other men may be "at home."

From the viewpoint of the dignity of man, this is a ruinous assumption. It ignores a fundamental truth known to all who have any experience at all in teaching—the truth that the securities of the mind cannot be borrowed or purchased ready-made. The ends proposed by the conference are indeed the highest, but they are the ends of philosophy. They are the ends which gave Socrates both his courage and his calm. They are the ends which every truly great man has gained in some measure, realizing them in the unique idiom of his own ordeals and struggles; and while he may long to give his wisdom to others, he cannot, save as they undertake ordeals and struggles of their own. And even then, the outcome is uncertain. As the teacher of *The Bhagavad-Gita* has put it,

> "Among thousands of mortals a single one perhaps strives for perfection, and among those so striving perhaps a single one knows me as I am."

The first duty, then, of serious men concerned with the search for ultimate truth is to speak of the truly sublime qualities which are required of those who undertake the quest. This is not a new idea. It is found, as above, in *The Bhagavad-Gita,* it was taught by Pythagoras, and was known to the Middle Ages in the qualifications of knights who dared to set out on the quest for the Holy Grail. It is only in the modern age that men of supposedly great learning have been able to believe that the reaching to truth is some sort of collectivist enterprise through which an officer corps of specialists can lead an army of the ignorant or less fortunately endowed non-specialists to their common salvation. Whether this delusion arises from the Christian idea of the Vicarious Atonement or from the materialistic utopian theories of modern economic reformers and socialists is not important; the delusion exists and may be described as the belief that men can gain the truth by joining the right association or by following the correct leader.

But supposing this heroic conception of reaching to religious or philosophic truth is properly established, what of the great majority of people who are not ready for these ardors? The question is a logical one to ask, for it obliges us to consider the role of the churches and religious organizations in human society. Instead of churches, perhaps, we ought to have educational bearers of cultural tradition —bodies, institutions, or schools which would be devoted to transmitting from one generation to the next the transcendental ideals which eventually lead men to undertake the search for truth. The prime purpose of these ideals would be to provide ennobling conceptions of human life— to inculcate in the young the idea of a high calling to which young men and young women may respond. On this view, civilized, humane culture is culture which proposes that the ordinary life of man is but a portal to mysteries which lie beyond, and which each human being may choose to try to penetrate. Some may suppose that this proposal of a philosophic climax for both scientific and religious undertakings would make for instability among ordinary people. It would not, we think, if the view is a true one. For the commonplace notion that we *have* the truth, that our inherited religion satisfies our "spiritual needs," while the science of the day accommodates our material requirements,

is at least accompanied by, if it has not produced, gross instabilities and insecurities.

There is no stability in pretense, no lasting security in the illusion of certainty. Here, we think, the churches have been the greatest offenders, for they have deliberately fostered the idea that they hold the answer to human problems. This psychology of pretending to "answers" has had a corrupting effect throughout modern society. It enables politicians to win elections by promising what it is completely impossible for them to fulfill. It beguiled several generations of enthusiasts of science into thinking that human happiness depends upon the progress of physical and biological science, with judicious application of technology to meet the material needs of mankind. It makes the common people vulnerable to the appeals of dictators who combine the glamor of some spurious "mysticism"— racism, or some other "ism"—with absolute political authority. Inevitably, faith in the finality of "revelation," whether religious or scientific, leads to the pitiful march of one revelation after another, each hopefully tried until its failure is beyond doubt. Meanwhile, the popular although submerged resentment of betrayal grows stronger and stronger, until the demonic current in history breaks out to triumph over the weakening influence of the rational and the humane, and a revolution of nihilism takes place.

What should be the role of science, in contrast to the abuse of scientific authority? So far as religion and philosophy are concerned, science is primarily a critic, and sometimes a practical instructor in the spirit of impartial investigation. Here, the comment of C. J. Ducasse, professor of philosophy at Brown University, seems pertinent. Prof. Ducasse suggested to the participants of the Conference on Religion in the Age of Science that "what science has undermined is perhaps not religion itself, but only some of the dogmas of the orthodox forms." Actually, it seems likely that science, properly pursued, could not possibly harm the spirit of religion itself, any more than religion, in the sense that we have tried to give it, could interfere with the progress of scientific investigation. A synthesis, therefore, on the basis here suggested, ought not to be difficult at all.

REVIEW

WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT STEINBECK?

THE literary magazines possessing obligations to review books likely to be popular have about finished their effort to say something fairly original about John Steinbeck's *Sweet Thursday*, Book-of-the-Month alternate selection for August. And as the literati will all have something to say, too, if they haven't said it already, we might as well have a small go ourselves.

In the first place, John has long gotten away with murder in the literary field, and is probably proud of it. Steinbeck's offense is an unexpected sort, to be sure, but if one reflects upon how close to a capital crime the unrestrained intrusion of an author's morality into his stories has been regarded, the point may be acceptable. Now, there are two kinds of moralists about. The first, pretty well extinct so far as authorship goes, spent much time and trouble demonstrating to readers just how bad people could be, and how bad it was to be bad. One reason, of course, why this sub-species no longer thrives is that we are now in an interesting social and psychological transition marked by healthy uncertainty as to what morality is, anyway. More important, perhaps, is the fact that a considerable number of people now seem more interested in what is good than in what is bad—perhaps a final liberation from the guilt complexes of our religious past. Thus the second sort of moralist, of which Mr. Steinbeck is a pretty good example, can have both enthusiasm and an audience. His characters, as often noted, are "impossible idealists," but one enjoys reading about them partly because one wonders if the impossible may not be a bit possible after all.

Sweet Thursday is a continuation of *Cannery Row*, one of the poorest of Steinbeck's efforts, but improves upon it considerably. Whereas CR might be considered as some sort of inferior *Horse's Mouth*, lacking Joyce Cary's artistry, yet afflicted by all the latter book's aimlessness, *Sweet Thursday* gets back to making sense out of the motivations and strivings of little people. The characters here are indeed "one dimensional," if viewed from a certain angle —*Saturday Review* was pleased enough with this observation to make it twice but from another view each one is a sort, or rather part, of "everyman." In this case the "everyman" is divided up into a lot of separate personalities. One does not recognize himself in one or another of them, but in all. Clifton Fadiman, reviewing for BoM, calls *Sweet Thursday* "a delicious fairy tale," and this comes close to what we have in mind.

For illustration there is Steinbeck's friendly account of the thinking processes of weak-minded Hazel, a man who couldn't read or write, but who enrolled in a University of California course in astro-physics after the war on the GI Bill, simply by making a check mark on an interesting-looking page. Hazel finally finds himself in a situation where he *has* to think—no getting around it this time because his best friend is in trouble:

> Thinking is always painful, but in Hazel it was heroic. A picture of the process would make you seasick. A gray, whirling furor of images, memories, words, patterns. It was like a traffic jam at a big intersection with Hazel in the middle trying to get something to move somewhere.
>
> He strolled back to Cannery Row but he did not go to the Palace Flophouse. By instinct, he crept under the branches of the black cypress tree in the vacant lot where he had lived for so many years in pre-Palace days. Hazel's thoughts were not complicated. It was just remarkable that he had them at all.

One gets the impression that, according to Steinbeck, people who can't recall ever being in Hazel's predicament suffer from delusions of grandeur.

And what is Doc's trouble? (Doc is Hazel's friend.) Here Hazel is temporarily beyond his depth, for the trouble is a philosophical argument as well as common human loneliness—a longing for someone with whom to discover and share a sense of purpose. Doc tries to explain this to "the seer," a beach-wanderer of petty foibles and grand

thoughts: "I've tried to think," said Doc. "I want to take everything I've seen and thought and learned and reduce them and relate them and refine them until I have something of meaning, something of use. And I can't seem to do it."

One suspects that a good part of the time this is what Steinbeck himself tries to do, which may account for the fact that his writing is so often called up-and-downish. But what could be more natural? A man who undertakes to philosophize is bound to have muddy moments as well as moments of clarity. The person who is clear and sure all the time is no philosopher, part of whose business it is to be puzzled and confused, but a propagandist, a mere copywriter—or a stylist, who doesn't care as much about what he says as about how it sounds.

We suppose that there are still a few readers who find Steinbeck's harlots and bums beyond the pale, productive of an "immoral atmosphere," but these at least get no sympathy from the critics. As Fadiman remarks, *Sweet Thursday* "is moral enough unless you're an old deacony curmudgeon, and it's very funny indeed. It's also good for the spirit. . . . Most fairy tales are moral but not very funny."

Even so, it may be wondered whether Steinbeck, and also, say, James Jones in *From Here to Eternity*, do not take a perverse delight in locating their morality in the midst of "immorality." Probably both do, yet do it with a sound reformer's instinct. The virtues of Steinbeck's cast of characters are often precisely the qualities respectable people lack. If, Steinbeck seems to say, you can't take pleasure in these other decencies of the human spirit, you're probably a prig.

It is necessary to note, however, that Steinbeck is not really oblivious of the grime in the grimy side of life. The "problem of evil" does exist for him, and he devoted himself to it in *East of Eden*. But this is not his natural forte, which is rather to follow with his own brand of fanaticism the counsel of Aristotle, who said: "We must not obey those who urge us, because we are human and mortal, to think human and mortal thoughts; in so far as we may we should practice immortality, and omit no effort to live in accordance with the best that is in us." Steinbeck, very simply, is concerned with the "best" that is in every man, lending it what immortality he can, and if his version of that "best" involves more biology and humour than scheming for "social improvement"—well, that's his version.

Actually, Steinbeck seems to enjoy tramping around roughshod over the "socially organized" human, whom he regards as usually acting against his own best interests. As an example of this mood, with a final touch of humour which we hope will not go unappreciated, we offer some of Doc's conversation with a rich eccentric. Born to great wealth, Old Jay would like to help Doc financially, but finds in the tax laws an obstacle to giving substantially to anyone who is not "an institution." Hence Jay pinches pennies atrociously and gouges his friends, in misdirected revenge upon the Treasury Department:

> "Where's my change?" asked Old Jay.
>
> "I drank your change," said Doc. He was beginning to feel good. He saw the stricken look. "You cheap old fraud," he said happily, "for once you've been had." And he went on, "I wish I could understand you. You must have millions and yet you pinch and squirm and cheat. Why?"
>
> "Please give me beer. I'm dying," said Old Jingle-ballicks.
>
> "Then die a little longer," said Doc. "I love to see you die!"
>
> "It's not my fault," Old Jay said. "It's a state of mind. You might call it the American state of mind. The tax laws are creating a whole new kind of man—a psyche rather than a psychosis. Two or three generations and we'll maybe set the species. Can I have beer now?"
>
> "No."
>
> "If a man has any money he doesn't ask, 'Can I afford this?' but, 'Can I deduct it?' Two men fight over a luncheon check when both of them are going to deduct it anyway— a whole nation conditioned to

dishonesty by its laws, because honesty is penalized. But it's worse than that. If you'll just hand me a bottle I'll tell you."

"Tell me first."

"I didn't write the tax laws," Old Jay said, trembling. "The only creative thing we have is the individual, but the law doesn't permit me to give money to an individual. I must give it to a group, an organization—and the only thing a group has ever created is bookkeeping. To participate in my gift the individual must become part of the group and thus lose his individuality and his creativeness. I didn't write the law. I hate a law that stifles generosity and makes charity good business. Corporations are losing their financial efficiency because waste pays. I deplore it, but I do it. I know you need a microscope, but I can't give it to you because with taxes a four-hundred-dollar microscope costs me twelve hundred dollars—if I give it to you—and nothing if I give it to an institution. Why, if you, through creative work, should win a prize, most of the money would go in taxes. I don't mind taxes, God knows! But I do mind the kind of law that makes of charity not the full warmness of sharing but a stinking expediency. And now, if you don't hand me a beer, I shall be forced . . ."

COMMENTARY
KNOW ANY INDIVIDUALS?

IF Steinbeck had made no other point in Sweet Thursday than the one our reviewer selected for extensive quotation, we should still like him very much. For the crazy logic of the way income taxes may be reduced by giving to "institutions," while creating special hardships for those who prefer to give to individuals, is typical of our capitalist-type "collectivist" society.

The Government, of course, wants all the money to be where the Treasury Department can watch it, to make sure it doesn't get too far away. Since it is easier to watch corporations than to watch individuals, the tax law is written to make giving to individuals very expensive. The fact that individuals might be able to use the gift to better advantage does not enter in. An individual is not very important. He might do something unexpected or unconventional with the money. Remember Henry Ford's Peace Ship? Henry Ford was an individual.

Just on general principle although with very good "practical" reasons, too—our society seems to have developed a general contempt for the individual and his enterprises. If you should be so odd as to want to be a conscientious objector to war, and if you're just a plain conscientious objector, and not a Mennonite or a Quaker or a Brethren conscientious objector, the draft board will probably regard you as "insincere." The crazy logic here is that no man would become a conscientious objector unless he had been misled by a respectable religious organization. And since freedom of religion means that every man has a right to be misled by a respectable religious organization, those young men who belong to the traditional peace churches may be presumed to be sincere conscientious objectors. Of course, the law isn't written in just these terms, but its administration has been plainly anti individual conscience, and medium-patiently pro group conscience.

Getting practical again, we ought to admit that what Selective Service has to have, and what Selective Service has got—it usually gets what it wants—is a simple way to test the sincerity of young men who claim to be conscientious objectors. If the draft boards had to set up machinery to evaluate the consciences of the young men ("machinery" —curious word), then they'd really have a time. They'd have to take up psychology, put in a lie detector, and maybe hire a low-priced psychiatrist. So the Government tries to keep it simple, and keeping it simple means classifying individuals by creeds, and dealing with them as members of groups. If you don't belong to a group . . . well, are you trying to deceive people? Everybody belongs to something.

If this sort of thing keeps up, mere individuals may some day find out that they don't exist at all. According to law, that is.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THERE are probably many parents and teachers who are unaware of the existence of an organization called "The American Association for Gifted Children." A good way to get acquainted with it would be to read its publication, The Gifted Child, edited by Paul Witty, comprising two years of study of the results of experimental work in this field. (Proceeds from sale of the volume will revert to the Association for furtherance of its educational endeavors. The publisher is D. C. Heath Co., Boston, 1951.)

Those who are familiar with Greek concepts of education, Plato's in particular, will be aware of the fact that while the word "democracy" comes to us from the Athenians, the Greek philosophers also insisted that the discovery and training of those with *unusual* ability is the best way to assure that the ideals of the state will be realized. Although we have lately been willing to make application of this idea in America—especially since the need for young physicists for atomic research has been apparent—we no longer have the philosophy from which it originated. Thus it is not hard to understand why a man like Robert Hutchins, following in Plato's footsteps, should be more concerned with the educational opportunities afforded those of marked *philosophical* capacity than with whatever of general "business literacy" can be achieved by all.

The Association for Gifted Children goes to some pains to distinguish between *talent* and that of over-all excellence or "giftedness." Professor Leta S. Hollingsworth, who, together with Lewis Terman, pioneered most American work in this field, defines the gifted as those who stand at the top in *general intelligence.* General intelligence is identified as the "power to achieve literacy and to deal with its abstract knowledge and symbols," and Prof. Hollingsworth is convinced that nearly all mental abilities are positively correlated with *general* intelligence. The "gifted," then, are not those whose bent is toward a specialty, but those who display a wide range of thinking and versatility. Small wonder that Mrs. Hollingsworth is forever quoting Plato, as when he says:

> We must watch them from their youth upward and make them perform actions in which they are most likely to forget and to be deceived and he who remembers and is not deceived is to be selected, and he who fails the trial will be rejected. This will be the way.

But the work of the Association did not begin as a search for philosopher-kings—it began because a number of educators realized that the most intelligent pupils of the public schools were being seriously neglected. According to the Foreword of *The Gifted Child*:

> In our concern about improving the opportunities for the millions we must not fail to make provision for those who can bring about still greater improvement in our society. There is abundant evidence that we are neglecting our greatest resource—gifted children and youth.
>
> During the past generation pioneers in the field made great progress in locating and studying gifted children, for which they deserve great credit. In the pioneer work however, the gifted were identified largely by their superiority as revealed by an intelligence test. There is need today for expansion of this concept to include other types of gifted and talented children.
>
> The American Association for Gifted Children is interested in building upon the foundations of the past and in greatly broadening these foundations. It is vitally concerned with enlarging our concept of ability and with the discovery of better ways to identify the gifted in many different fields. And it is particularly interested in furthering educational opportunities for gifted children and youth. We believe with the prophet of old that when people have no vision they perish. Much of the vision necessary for the promotion of human welfare must come from our gifted boys and girls. . . . The American Association for Gifted Children is conducting a wide range of activities designed to meet some of the outstanding needs of this group. Among the most urgent needs are: a more widespread understanding of the nature of gifted children and youth, more efficient teachers, improved working relationships between parents and teachers, more varied and more

stimulating curricula in our school system, and more research on the gifted.

Terman was blunt on the subject of maltreated genius. Mrs. Hollingsworth says: "Terman's intensive research studies have shown that gifted children make up the one most retarded group in the public schools, when mental rather than chronological age is the criterion of retardation. He found that although in actual knowledge of the subject matter taught (as measured by achievement tests) the typical child is accelerated over 40 per cent, in actual grade placement he is accelerated by only 14 per cent of his age." Those interested in remedying this situation have tried many approaches, recognizing that a mere "skipping" of grades may do more harm than good, by uprooting the child from his contemporaries.

Generally speaking, the experts are convinced that a "true enrichment of curriculum . . . which provides for the development of essential skills or understandings and at the same time offers an opportunity to exercise initiative and originality commensurate with ability and interest; is the most desirable type of educational program for every child in our educational system." "True enrichment" does not mean simply giving additional work of the same nature to the brightest pupils of the class. It means supplying avenues of reading which will enable active young minds to branch out in many directions, correlative to their regular school work. This requires individual attention from teachers, but it is the plea of the Association that the gifted are less apt to become problem children if they are given help and guidance of this sort, and, further, that eager minds do not need the teacher's "time" so much as sympathetic willingness to assist them over new thresholds. Recommendation of reading and the lending of books are ways to go at the problem in the classroom.

Researchers are now convinced that the general intelligence test supplies a rather inadequate measure of the gifted. Paul Witty stresses this point to parents:

> Another need of the parent involves a clear understanding of the meaning of the results of intelligence tests. Parents sometimes attach too much significance to test results. It is unwise to regard a high IQ as proof of genius. Genius is a product of many factors; some of them—emotional development, drive, temperament, and talent—are difficult to measure. It is unwise, however, to disregard the results of tests and to discount their value in the identification of the gifted child.
>
> What the intelligence test can do is to enable us to recognize, very early in the child's life, abilities that lead to valuable contributions to society. Before reaching a more general conclusion about any gifted child, we must study his IQ in relation to data concerning his physical, mental, emotional, and social development. So used, the test result is of great value. No more should be expected of it.

Other paragraphs from the last chapter, "Summary and Recommendations," further clarify the general orientation of this volume. Mr. Witty closes with this emphasis:

> Educators at all levels of instruction must divest themselves of the belief that gifted students can get along by themselves and that it is undemocratic to give them special education suited to their particular needs. And we must also dispel the fear sometimes expressed that the gifted may become selfish through too much consideration, for "it is precisely this group of individuals of great ability who, in the long run and as a group, will be the least selfish, the least likely to monopolize the good things in this world, and by their inventions and discoveries, by their creative work in the arts, by their contributions to government and social reform, by their activities in all fields, will in the future help humanity in its groping struggle upward toward a better civilization."
>
> We have seen that failure to recognize the gifted child is a result of a number of forces. Among these factors is the traditional attitude—which has been to regard the gifted child as peculiar, eccentric, or queer. The results of such thinking are far-reaching. Bright and talented children are sometimes shunned; occasionally they are looked upon with jealousy, or even hostility. In school, some gifted children, responsive to the attitudes of others, hesitate to reveal their abilities.

> It is to be hoped that a renewed interest in the bright and the gifted will attend a widespread dissemination of the facts concerning children of very high IQ's whose growth and development have been studied over a period of twenty-five years. The facts about the educational progress and needs of the gifted child should be widely known. It has been found that the general educational growth of the gifted child progresses at such a rapid rate that in the upper elementary school he has knowledges which surpass those of children classified two or three grades above him. Almost every study shows that gifted children are offered little that is mentally or educationally provocative by the subject matter of their grades.

To our way of thinking, more is here involved, even, than the evident need of such children and youths as those discussed in *The Gifted Child.* We have here an implicit appeal for revaluation of the whole mechanical approach to learning which has arisen from the general "mass production outlook" of America.

FRONTIERS

Philosophical History

HISTORY could easily be the most fascinating of all forms of philosophical expression, since history, unlike biography, must meet and deal with, if not account for, every sort of diversity in human nature. And we may speak of history as "philosophical" for the reason that history is made up of the interplay between the actual and the ideal. It is the story of what men have done to obtain what they wanted; and also, inevitably, a judgment of what they wanted and how they sought it.

Only in recent years, however, has modern history—or rather historiography, which is the interpretation of the meaning of history—turned consciously philosophical, starting, perhaps, with the works of Alfred North Whitehead. Like the other branches of learning concerned with the affairs of man, history has but lately recovered from its bondage to a rather mechanical version of scientific method, and the recovery is by no means complete. However, *The Judgment of History*, by Marie Collins Swabey, associate professor of philosophy at New York University (Philosophical Library, New York, $3.75), is current evidence of the strength of the movement to restore to history its character as a philosophical discipline.

The fundamental question, of course, is who or what makes history? It is Prof. Swabey's contention that man makes history, and that this view, shared by both the "common sense" historians and the historian-philosophers, is likely to be adopted by anyone who gives prolonged reflection to the phenomena of human life. At the conclusion of her book, she offers this broad justification for basing history upon a transcendental interpretation of existence:

> In sum, our argument has rejected history as written in purely existential terms, presenting man as wholly a part and product of nature. For any such account of man by himself and his origin from a vast panorama of geologic changes, evolutionary biology, microphysical and astronomical events, which he has never seen, involves a transcendent metaphysical sweep contradictory to its purportedly empirical authority. There is no question but that the naturalist's tale offers a magnificent cosmic story. The only trouble is the conflict between its method and its findings, its theory of what we know and what we are, the gulf between man as a beast and as a god. How could this microscopic bit of dust, this carnivore driven by clamorous needs, empirically encompass the macrocosm? Surely this frail creature of an hour could no more reabsorb the creative process than a fish could swim through all the seven seas or drink the ocean dry. This radical inconsistency at the basis of naturalism accounts for the tendency among those who have reflected most upon the subject to adopt a transcendental view. For the historian, whether he wishes to or not, claims pretensions not unlike those of divinity; power to review the past forward or backward, to survey the globe, and to grasp through the comprehensiveness of mind an order of purpose and grounds beyond mere efficient causality. At bottom he cannot but allow that man in his range of meanings and personal life reaches out to a genuine value world incompressible to natural existence.

Prof. Swabey is frankly Platonic in outlook. Of necessity, therefore, there is an element of enthusiasm in her work. For the Platonic idealist writes out of a conviction of the reality of the physically unseen, and this obliges him to create by means of the imagination a sense of unseen reality. Actually, this is the nature of all inspiration, the result of a successful effort to endow the abstract, the general, or the ideal with the substance of reality. When a man responds to the Sermon on the Mount, he "sees" what he had not seen before. A new reality emerges for him. While the dimensions of an ethical existence may fade, its content pale, the inspiration of the scripture has awakened a portion of his being to the reality of a higher life. He may some day return to that life with an inspiration of his own.

We note at the outset this characteristic of the undertakings of all idealists, since it represents a burden which naturalist writers need not bear. Obviously, the idealist writer can hope for response only from the idealist component in his readers. The idealist writer, therefore, must possess genuine powers of imagination, if he is to gain an audience, whereas the naturalist writer need only be a faithful reporter, an accurate describer, of what is evident—or supposed to be evident—to the senses. The problem is complicated, however, by the fact that, in epochs of revolt against spurious idealism, men who are naturally idealists often masquerade as naturalists

in order to strike a blow for freedom of the mind. Then we have the spectacle of pseudo-idealists making what are really naturalist arguments against claims by pseudo-naturalists who are really idealists. At such times, clarity is practically impossible.

But in the present, since the dogmatic systems of pseudo-idealism now have little power over men of intelligence, idealism has an almost unique opportunity for a hearing on its own merits, and naturalism must stand without special assistance from idealists who borrow naturalist arguments for polemical purposes.

Already, in this discussion, we seem to have accumulated considerable confusion from the use of undefined terms. Here, then, naturalism may be equated with the conventional meaning of materialism—the claim that man is the object, not the subject, of history, that he is the effect, not the cause, of what happens to him. Under naturalistic interpretation, the individual becomes unimportant, a powerless particle instead of a partially free moral agent. In naturalist history, the quest for causes comes to rest in conditions, not in men.

Idealist history, on the other hand, proposes that human beings are seeking fulfillment of some larger destiny than biological survival. As Prof. Swabey says:

> Instead of reading history simply as universal warfare, the struggle for power, or as the play of natural forces, it has emphasized liberation of the ideal aspirations of man. Somewhere, in Walt Whitman's phrase, "amid the measureless grossness and slag . . . nestles the seed Perfection." From this standpoint ideas are not only criteria of history but forces in history, since man's lot becomes history in so far as it is lifted above the compulsions set by nature and starred with achievement through mental effort. It is not simply material conditions but the way people respond to them that determines the character of a culture or epoch. Men's attitudes are decided by their basic beliefs as to what is worth while in large part, by their courage and ingenuity in grasping situations. On these convictions depend whether they rise to meet opportunity or collapse before the obstacles facing them. The driving urge of bold ideas is necessary for men to forge fresh techniques, create new arts, sail far seas of thought, carve empires, and launch large adventure in action. To do such things requires a sense of the importance of issues sufficient to make men put forth great efforts. The "little explanations" of the factualists are not enough, pressing through chains of unilateral causes (economic, geographic, social), but denying significance to the totality. Only the conviction that the threads form part of an ideal meaning of the world seem sufficient to provide men with the buoyant temper and coordinated outlook necessary for the highest achievement.

One "ideal meaning" often cited is that of liberty. The human struggle for liberty, Prof. Swabey shows, is at least twofold. A man wants relief from bondage to circumstance, from the absorbing demands of his physical environment, but he also endeavors to break out of the confinements of ignorance, and he feels the need of that higher "liberty of conscience which impels him on occasion to obey a higher law within himself even against the established order." A definition emerges:

> Thus human history may be viewed on the one hand as man's slow liberation from force and oppression and on the other as the infinite adventure of the soul in eliciting its presuppositions and objectives. Yet whether freedom or some other idea be set as the goal, those who discern objective meaning to history discern a rationale, an ordering principle, if not a specific purpose, in the process.

Prof. Swabey has no special theory of meaning to defend, except, perhaps, the broad implications of the assumption that the hopes and hungers of the human heart are not betrayed by the senseless, meaningless pattern of a world machine. It is enough for her that life, and therefore history, hide a meaning worth striving after, and that the historian should labor to remove some of its outer veils.

One implication of idealist history is the importance of the human individual:

> Man is not to be treated as wholly one with his matrix, his actions and values appraised by his success in conforming to its conditions. Instead of contrasting man in terms of nature, or nature in terms of man, it [common sense] recognizes a duality of powers: on the one hand a context of impersonal physical forces, operating for the most part under available mechanical laws, and on the other the psychic impulses centering in personalities endowed with free capacities to plan and create. In them appears a source of invention unknown to physical things, a power of origination and fiat begotten by the psyche itself. Thus history represents the play of two forces, each irreducible to the other. "Persons" are never

> mere "things speaking," nor are "things" mere slumbering psyches.

By abandoning the common-sense attitude toward man, the scientific historians raise an impassable barrier between themselves and the real subject of history—human beings. Naturalist writers "can never pluck out the heart of the mystery, never capture in their explanations of the past the originative element of personality." Moreover:

> Only by taking personality in its own right can the worth of human nature be safeguarded, its dignity and autonomy preserved. For if a man cannot trust his own consciousness, he can trust nothing else....
>
> . . . the threat of free reason to the materialists is that it leads men to believe that the consciousness of the inner subject can decide the merits of human action by principles drawn from within itself and can set itself up in judgment of the world. The fact is that, reason everywhere presents itself in colors false to naturalism, claiming not partiality but impartiality, not impotence but power, not attachment but detachment, an ideality beyond materiality as its substantive source. Today in the long struggle between power and rights the tide is beginning to turn once more against naturalism. For it comes to be seen that if a man cannot trust his own insights, his own intelligence as authority, both freedom and knowledge are dislocated at their source and sink in a bottomless quagmire of delusions. With their denial, political constitutions, moral codes, histories, even scientific systems, everything that is the creation of the mind and rests on norms and presuppositions beyond the sensible facts can be charged with deception.

The portions of this book devoted to analysis of recent historical works are particularly useful. In one section Prof. Swabey shows how historians typically take from the dominant notions of their culture the analogies they use for the interpretation of history. Thus man is explained, not by his own nature, but by analogues of the machine, or by comparing his efforts with biological processes. Superficial simplicity may be obtained by this trading on the clichés of the sciences, but at what cost!

> Discredit is brought upon history by such wholesale borrowing from the blind, inhuman world for the interpretation of human happenings. Would it not be truer to the spirit of science to declare frankly that the ingenuity of the human mind is the storehouse from which these ruling metaphors have come, and that it finds patterns within itself against which to square the world? The layman laughs at the elaborate circumlocution by which the so-called scientific author, having borrowed from human mental activities his notions of the machine, warfare, and selection for use, seeks to obliterate all trace of his borrowing. But why metamorphose these conceptions beyond all recognition of their source and then deny the connection? How much better, says common sense, for historians to choose their analogues from human life rather than from inhuman, impersonal worlds, thus avoiding far-fetched comparisons. . . .

Many readers will be especially grateful for Prof. Swabey's examination of the economic interpretation of history, in which she shows how its exponents, by devoting themselves entirely to the economic status and probable factors of self-interest, affecting, say, the authors of the Constitution of the United States, managed to forget the quality of the *men* they were writing about:

> Historians troubled less and less to inquire whether at any point devotion to principles prevailed over interest, or choice based upon impartial reflection found expression in directing affairs. Indeed, the question whether men are capable of responding to abstract right and justice as opposed to natural ends like security came to be quietly ignored. Writers assumed that they already knew the answer.

While, in *The Judgment of History*, Prof. Swabey has written a book to balance what she regards as recent gross misconceptions in this field, her work itself is not disproportionately weighted for the argument's sake. She does not swing to any idealist "extreme," but exhibits, so far as we can see, a just appreciation of the importance of "measure" in the use of the mind. Her book, in other words, is itself a notable vindication of its content. Whatever the direction taken, the fulfillments realized, by idealistic thought in the future, no one will have to alter very much the foundations here supplied.