

## "UNCERTAINTY" IN WORLD AFFAIRS

THERE is a sense in which discussion of the large sociopolitical issues of the modern world suffers from the same uncertainty or "indeterminacy" as the equations of the new physics. The difficulty in examining electrons and other minute components of the atom, the physicists tell us, is that it is impossible to look at these particles without changing their location. For if you have a light to look at them—as any kind of looking requires—the light itself pushes the particles around. The units of light, called "photons," belong to the same order of magnitude as subatomic particles, so that to cast light on a particle means to change its position. Thus, so far as "seeing" is concerned, the position of an electron is uncertain.

In matters of world affairs, a similar phenomenon confronts the observer—the eminent observer, at least. For if a man like Supreme Court Justice Douglas writes a book in which he regards the lately freed peoples of Asia as human beings, despite their occasional response to Moscow diplomacy, he is thereupon accused of giving aid to the enemy in the cold war, and a man who aids the enemy quite obviously improves their position. The situation of the angry statesman who prefers bristling armaments and blockades to any other approach to the Red Menace is not entirely dissimilar. In rendering his opinion of what should be done about the nations and peoples he dislikes and suspects of the worst, he, also, changes their position. Whatever their attitude may have been before he declared his views, they now are a little harsher in spirit, a little less reluctant to say to themselves that there is really no point in anything but preparation for a great and decisive war.

If a man like India's Vice President Radhakrishnan suggests a patient friendliness for non-democratic countries, he at once earns the retort: "But surely, you wouldn't have us *trust* those people!" Well, perhaps we shouldn't trust them. Not many powerful nations have given evidence that they

can be entirely "trusted" in matters where their national interest is concerned. If you pick a nation you suppose worthy of "trust," and then invite a literate historian to undermine your faith, he will not find this difficult to do. The problem, then, is very much like that which confronted Spina, Silone's Italian hero in *Seed Beneath the Snow*. Spina saw that proposals of farflung political reforms couched in terms of social philosophy were absolutely meaningless to people who no longer trusted their next-door neighbors and relatives. The currency of even the ordinary human relations of daily life had been debased by Fascism. So Spina set out to do the work which had to be done before any thing else could be accomplished: he performed acts of unexpected kindness. He did things from which he had nothing to gain, and, slowly, he saw the peasants smile again, as they once had smiled in their childhood, many years before. The hope began to dawn in them that some human beings retained the decent impulses which, by careful schooling, they had learned to suppress in themselves.

How can a "nation" do anything like this? It can't, of course. But *people* can begin to foster in themselves the mood of thinking it possible that other people would *like* to be pleasanter and more friendly than they are. There are always occasions when we can refuse to make cynical response to a friendly judgment about a nation habitually suspected of wicked intentions. A bitter rejoinder can be withheld without implying that the communist governments of Rumania, Poland, and Czecho-Slovakia are really progressive affairs which remain unappreciated by stolid capitalist prejudice.

Then there is the matter of seeking just appraisal of historical events, regardless of whether the conclusion suits current political policies of our own country. If we, who boast of our freedom, fear to be just, lest we become merely sentimental, how can we expect those not allowed the luxury of free opinions to envy the advantages of democracy? If freedom is

not worth an occasional folly, it can't be very valuable, and why all the bother about "totalitarianism"?

Here, we are thinking mainly of the reactions that may come from reading a book reviewed in the *Christian Century* for Dec. 1—*Fifty Years in China*, by John Leighton Stuart. Dr. Stuart was American Ambassador to Peking during the period in which China fell to the Communists, and his measured account of what happened makes the reviewer say:

I do not think that in the entire body of U.S. citizens Gen. Marshall on his special mission to China, or Pres. Truman and his various secretaries of state in Washington, could have found another man so dependably informed as a reporter and so competent an adviser. If the Stuart advice did not save China from the Communists and the U.S. from some sad blunders, the reason could have been that by 1946 China was past saving. . . .

While Dr. Stuart has great respect for Chiang Kai-shek, he writes of the Kuomintang:

. . . this party almost from the time it came into power had tolerated among its officials of all grades graft and greed, idleness, nepotism and factional rivalries. . . . These evils had become more pronounced after V-J Day. . . . The government had been steadily losing popular support and even respect. As the Communist forces advanced in a victorious march toward the Yangtze river, the grandiose plans for defense crumbled amid political bickering, desertions or betrayals, disorderly retreats.

The reviewer comments:

Now, to understand what the problem in China at the crisis really was, add the immense moral factor in this sentence, which comes just a few pages farther on: "Its [the Chinese Communist Party's] success was in large part due to the differential between the spirit of unselfish devotion to a cause which it managed to engender and the woeful lack of this among some Kuomintang members."

The interesting thing about this book is that its writer is not only a diplomat, but a Christian missionary as well. He is the last man in the world to suspect of communist sympathies, and he is personally in favor of all possible aid to Chiang Kai-shek at the present time.

We turn, now, to K. M. Pannikar, Indian author of the just published *Asia and Western Dominance*, who writes in the *Nation* for Nov. 20 to explain the basis of the accord recently achieved between India and China. The friendship between China and India, he says, grows out of centuries of good relations in the past and common problems in the present:

While India chose the liberal democratic way, China preferred the Communist system; but this difference in ideology does not change the basic fact that both represent the spirit of Asian resurgence. Their resentment of the great powers' reluctance to allow Asian problems to be settled by Asians, their resistance to Western attempts to build up spheres of influence in Asia stem from this common background.

India and the People's Republic of China stepped on to the international stage practically at the same time. Few people then realized the significance of the emergence in the comity of nations of these two giant peoples having between them a population of a thousand million. The inherited sense of superiority cherished by Europe and America prevented them from recognizing an important shift that had taken place in international life. But it was grasped immediately in both New Delhi and Peking. The problem that faced the leaders in both countries was whether it would be possible for them to work out a basis of cooperation for mutual benefit.

Last April, China and India jointly adopted Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which are: mutual respect for each other's sovereignty' non-aggression, non-interference in each other's affairs, cooperation for mutual profit, and peaceful coexistence. Mr. Pannikar regards the Sino-Indian accord as "the best assurance for peace in Asia." Since India will not be a party to any military alliance, the friendship cannot be claimed to be directed "against anyone." India, on the other hand, candidly dislikes the American effort to build up an Asian bloc and to isolate China from the rest of the world. On the question of whether Red China can be "trusted," Mr. Pannikar has this to say:

The criticism most often heard about this policy of coexistence is that it is a snare invented by the Communists to lull the free world into a sense of security. In support of this view critics quote Lenin's famous statement that mighty conflicts between Communist and capitalist systems are inevitable and

further buttress it with references to world revolution and so on. Whatever Lenin may have said, in a pre-atomic age, about inevitable conflicts, leaders of communism today cannot but realize that such conflicts could only have one result—the destruction of all civilization, Communist and non-Communist. Coexistence has therefore become as much a necessity for the Communists as for the capitalists.

Another Christian missionary, Stewart Meacham, helps the readers of the *Christian Century* to understand why relations between the United States and India have worsened during the past two years. Mr. Meacham, again, seems an impartial witness. Wanting to work in India, he found himself up against polite but firm rejection of his services. It became apparent that the Indian resolve to free the country of foreign cultural influences was paramount in the officials he encountered. Contradictory interpretations of Indian policy finally led to a laughable situation, and Mr. Meacham, as its victim, could easily claim unfair treatment. Instead, he writes with great understanding:

Developments disturbing to the mind of India began to fill the newspapers [in 1952]. The early accusations by American authorities that Indian generals in charge of Korea truce forces were biased, America's championing of Chiang Kaishek, the military pact with Pakistan, the flirtation with intervention in Indo-China, the insistence on some sort of Asian military pact—all appeared to Indian eyes to betray an increasing absorption in the dangerous notion that America can have her way and solve her problem in Asia merely by marshaling a preponderance of military power. The deadly H-bomb tests in Asian waters only confirmed them in this view.

It is difficult in the extreme to convey in a brief comment the degree to which India and America have got at cross-purposes. And to each the process that has brought them to the present situation seems thoroughly logical, thoroughly moral, thoroughly prudent and thoroughly patriotic. This makes it nearly impossible for either to understand the other.

Shortly after the U.S.-Pakistan pact was signed I heard an Indian pastor say to a visiting American church dignitary that India was deeply disturbed because of the pact. The American replied, "I cannot see why. We offered to give arms to India too." The

pastor later said to me, "If I complained because a man was giving poison to the neighbor children, would it be sufficient for him to say, 'I'll give some to your children too'?"

While India has an army, and is said to be developing an excellent air force, the fact remains that millions of the Indian people are convinced that violence is wrong and ought to be abandoned as a national policy by all nations. This conviction naturally tempers Indian policy—as is illustrated, for example, in India's refusal to join in any military alliance with another nation. It follows that public opinion in India may often resemble views which, in Western countries, belong only to small pacifist minorities. Take the idea that arms for war are a "poison," as suggested by the Indian Christian quoted by Mr. Meacham. The visiting American cleric doubtless could not have understood this point of view, since the Indian reserved his comment for Meacham. But what of Indian public opinion in regard to America? As Edmond Taylor pointed out several years ago, millions of Indians view atomic bombing, even when merely a "test" which destroys fish and "experimental" animals, as a crime against life itself. Will all these millions be as impatient of us as we are of them, because they have made a non-aggression pact with China?

Surely, political realism and moral realism can never join hands in the United States until all these matters receive fearless and untiring reflection. To ignore them can only make them—and ourselves—worse. For it is plain that the more suspicious and expectant of evil we become, the less able we are to understand the behavior of others, and this very lack of understanding itself turns into a kind of confirmation of our suspicions. In a world in which disastrous events may actually result whenever suspicions harden into unalterable convictions, even a little hopeful uncertainty about the intentions of others may be a means of holding open the door to peace.

## *Letter from* **CENTRAL EUROPE**

INNSBRUCK.—Some years ago I watched a one-armed man carrying packages at one of the small Tyrolean railway sidings. Later, when I questioned his wife about him, she told me that he could no longer work very much, as his arm was strained by carrying heavy bundles, but that he seemed too proud to ask the authorities for help. I asked her for his papers (concerning the cause of his disablement, etc.), hoping to talk to a competent official about the case. The documents told me that he was a native of Bozen (now called Bolzano, according to the ordinance of the Italian Government), in the southern part of the Tyrol, and that he had lost his right arm as a soldier, in action against Italy, during World War I.

The Tyrol is populated by a German-speaking group of mountain peasants and has for many centuries formed a political and economic unity, until the Western Powers—in violation of their promises and claimed principles—partitioned the country in 1919 and presented the southern part to Italy. Thus the one-armed man had, like his countrymen, become against his will an Italian citizen. And since it has been the policy of the Italian Government to attempt to Italianize those fertile regions, the Tyroleans were forced to conform. There was no authority or official who used the mother-tongue of the peasants, and even on the tombstones of their beloved ones (who had never spoken a word of Italian), it was forbidden to print a word in German.

There is no doubt but that the Italian authorities did their best to develop the territory. The advantages for the Tyroleans were, however, small, as many thousands of Italians were settled in the area and the native Tyroleans were kept out of the higher positions, and often kept out of work altogether.

The signing of an agreement between Hitler and Mussolini settled the problem in so far as the territory was to remain part of Italy; meanwhile the Tyrolean inhabitants were advised to move to the Northern Tyrol (or anywhere else in Austrian or German regions). Since the cost of removal was paid by the German Government, this came like a liberation to many of them. Thousands who had suffered economically crossed the frontier, and were glad to find work as well as living space for their families prepared by German commissions. Among those who moved was the one-armed man, his wife and two children. All the emigrants obtained German citizenship.

Learning this, the official to whom I presented the papers shrugged his shoulders. The man is an Italian, he said. How can the Austrian Government give him relief?

Wait a bit, I replied. This man lost his arm as an Austrian soldier, in action. That he became an Italian was not his will. Moreover, he became a German citizen in 1940, when he decided to leave the Italian-ruled territory.

The official explained to me that such German citizenship had not been recognized by the Allies, who, after occupying Austria in 1945, decided that all those who had left Southern Tyrol in consequence of the Hitler-Mussolini agreement must have been Nazis!

I directed his attention to the fact that this man, like many others who emigrated from Italian to German territory, had never been interested in any political party, but that he had simply hoped that in the North he would be able to make a living for his family.

It finally developed that the present German Government is not obliged to follow the directions of the Allies, as issued in Austria, so that it might not be out of the question for the Germans to accept his citizenship and give him aid. Of course, under those circumstances, he would be treated as a foreigner here in Austria, and suffer discrimination so far as employment is concerned. . . .

This man, born in the Tyrol, had been called up as a soldier, had been severely wounded, had never left the land of his fathers and forefathers, had always done his work quietly, and is still ready to do his duty, so far as he can—yet he had been chased by different governments through various citizenships, through registers, books and lists, had been suspected, oppressed. . . .

I was happy, one day, to find the problem "solved" by his recovery. He was working again near the railway-siding, carrying packages under his arm.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### "THE MAGICIANS"

THIS latest novel by J. B. Priestley (Harper, 1954) we enjoyed as both a thoroughly engaging book and a stimulus to thought. Minor criticisms, such as that the conclusion seems commonplace, as if Priestley were not quite sure where to go with the theme he had been developing, seem beside the point if one feels special appreciation for a story which explores transcendental philosophy without being dull.

This is how Mr. Priestley manages: A famous electrical engineer and industrialist, Sir Charles Ravenstreet, finds the policies of the concern with which he has long been identified becoming intolerable; he sells out his interest, but then discovers that he is without any significant focus for his ample energies. While considering an offer from a powerful magnate who has corralled the discoverer of a new drug which will make people forget all their worries, he encounters three strange individuals whom he invites to his country house. These are "the Magicians," unprepossessing in appearance, but the genuine article nonetheless—men out of nowhere, yet who seem to know definitely where they are going. They have acquired their "magic" powers, it appears, through lifetimes of diligent study and discipline. The three convince Ravenstreet that the thoughtless routinization of human life which has made the general public spiritually uncomfortable and lethargic cannot be overcome by any ordinary scientific means, and that escape drugs, on the other hand, are a ghastly perversion. Further, that the human race deserves to be "saved," since every human being is a great deal more significant than he has yet realized himself to be, but that the saving can only come through individual deepening of psychic and spiritual powers.

The greatest stumbling block, it appears, is the currently accepted notion of time; the magicians hold that the belief that the life of man

ends with the dissolution of his body is but a logical projection of an illogical premise. Man must acquire faith that he can transcend all of his errors of the past as well as his present limitations; he need not be bound to his failures, because all his failures are still present and active part of a living continuum in which he exists. The follies of youth, the mistakes of middle age, can still be corrected, nor will there ever come a point in the journey of the soul when the effects of any thought or deed are unalterable. The Magicians hold that men accept a life of automatons, drugging themselves with half-wanted pleasures of the senses, only because they feel that the conditions of life make it impossible for them to repair mistakes of the past. But if time is not "past," if it is always alive, what we have done is part of life as it is, not life as it was.

Ravenstreet first humors the old men out of kindness and then out of curiosity—always straining however, to retain the sort of "sanity" which he has identified with a scientific view. Typical resistance to the magicians' transcendental philosophy is thus expressed in one of the early chapters, as Ravenstreet tries to sort out the meaning of a strange psychological experience precipitated by one of the three:

"Our object in meeting like this is to share any discoveries we may have made, to pool our knowledge, and to discuss what may be done by ourselves and others—"

"Yes, yes," cried Ravenstreet impatiently. "The usual objects of a conference, however small. But to what purpose? Or haven't you one?"

"Our purpose—and of course we aren't alone here—need not be despised even by the busiest man," replied Wayland with a smooth irony that was not unpleasant. "It is to save Man—not all men but some—essential Man, if you like."

"From what?" His tone was sceptical.

"From being bound, without hope of release, into the mere organic life of this planet, without any further chance of possible development as a fully conscious spiritual being, capable of being himself, of making free choices. We don't want mankind to go the way the social insects went."

"Good God! Of course not," Ravenstreet stared at him, incredulous. "Neither does anybody else. Anyhow, it's absurd, I'm sorry—but—really—"

Wayland was no longer smiling now, but to Ravenstreet's relief, he showed no sign of losing his temper. His self-control was exceptional. "Very well, it's absurd. But you must allow us our absurdity—that is, if you are ready to dismiss in a second what we've been thinking about for thirty years—"

"I know, I know," cried Ravenstreet. "But this idea of men turning into insects—"

The other checked him. "I never said anything about men turning into insects. That is absurd. I said we didn't want mankind to go the way the social insects apparently went, away from all developments, into unchanging automatism. We believe it's in danger of happening. We believe that the life of contemporary man is now a battleground, where intelligences and forces, on a higher level of being than man, are contending."

"I find that most unlikely," said Ravenstreet mildly. "You mean God and the Devil—good and evil—that sort of thing?"

"It isn't so simple. We live in a universe much more complicated than that, Ravenstreet. But even the simplest explanation would take too long. . . . Our lives are being shovelled away. This is living two dimensions short. It is like the hen that cannot move away from the straight line. Now this won't do from you, Ravenstreet."

"Have you some reason for saying that? I'm not arguing, I'm curious. Were you making a point then—or just talking?"

"I was making a point." Wayland did not relax.

But while the Magicians' doctrines are strange and unacceptable, so are Ravenstreet's other prospects, as he views them in the light of ordinary common sense. When another of the three describes the progressive despiritualization of mankind, in an effort to show the desperate need for another world-view, Sir Charles is impressed:

What had Marot said—that he would show him time alive, the life as it is? As he crept upstairs, almost morbidly anxious to reach his room without meeting anybody, Ravenstreet began asking himself what in fact he had experienced during those two hours, whether he had remembered or dreamt and

remembered together, or if, as he suspected Marot meant to suggest, he had more or less re-entered a past that was in some inexplicable fashion still going on, presumably in "time alive" or "the life as it is." He had come across vague references to theories that played about with time and unknown dimensions in this fashion, and so far as he could understand such theories he found them irrational and repellent, belonging to some tormented Eastern notions of existence. By the time he reached his room, his mind still working coldly, he had come to the conclusion that what he had experienced was a mixture of memories, released in a flood by some hypnotic trick of Marot's and some dream elements, stimulated no doubt by his talk with the Magicians. So there it was.

Mr. Priestley's novel is not entirely constituted of such expositions. A rather lively plot holds the reader's attention, with the disclosure of the Magicians' philosophy playing an integral part in the development of events. The reader will find himself carried along as Ravenstreet is led back into what he thought was his "unchangeable past" in the extraordinary psychological aura provided by his three guests. For he recaptures the vitality of thought and feeling he had known in youth. Fearing, however, that he is being drawn into some new variety of religion or Yoga, he holds himself back as much as he can. As, for instance, when he puts the following question:

As they moved out, Ravenstreet said quietly and in all sincerity: "Doesn't it ever occur to you, Wayland, that you three may be living in an imaginary world?"

"We're all living in imaginary worlds, Ravenstreet. If you could catch a glimpse of the real world, you'd think you'd gone mad. But ours is nearer the ultimate truth than yours is, I believe; it has far less self-deception in it. And let me give you one piece of advice. Don't be deceived by the apparent solidity of things. That's the grand illusion of the senses. The old warnings against trusting the senses weren't all pleas for asceticism, as most people think, but were concerned with false knowledge, wrong beliefs. You have to reverse all common-sense judgments. What seems solid is fluid, even gaseous, spectral. What seems ghostly, lighter than air, come and gone in a second, may have more true solidity than Gibraltar."

The Magicians finally make their departure, going as mysteriously as they came, but only after subverting the plan for marketing the new wonder escape-drug. Before they leave, Ravenstreet finds himself profoundly influenced by them, and discovers also that he is able to re-work his past, to alter mistakes he has made. He never loses his caution and does not prostrate himself as an abject disciple, but one of his last conversations with the three indicates the new direction of his life:

Ravenstreet finished his coffee before replying. "As between Mervil and you Magicians," he began slowly, "I've made my choice. Even if you're wrong, you're wrong in the right way. You make things come alive, take on significance, point somewhere, instead of killing and burying them. Even if it shouldn't be true—and I don't say it isn't, I still don't know—that a man is really all his time and that he may have the chance, if he really wants it, to change both himself and all that has happened to him, it's better to think so, to take the long, hopeful, creative view, than to believe you're being hurried helplessly into the grave, the victim of a meaningless savage joke. A fool would think yours an easy, wishful sort of creed, but I can see now it isn't—very stern and demanding in many ways. To escape no consequences and I take it, that's what you believe—that's an idea that calls for more patience, courage, and faith than most people have to spare now. But there's size to it, hope in it. I see it as the opposite of what I used to call the 'cyanide philosophy' of the Nazi leaders—you do what the hell you like because we're all doomed anyhow so you keep a pinch of cyanide handy in case you lose and have to get out quick. I suspect it's a fairly popular view of life these days, only they worked it with the lid off."

*The Magicians*, most reviewers will probably say, is far from a great book. But it is certainly more than a merely "interesting" one, for, simply and directly, its theme strikes at the heart of many fundamental doubts and fears, and offers a kind of hope, half mystical, half philosophical, that will not be easy for readers to dislodge from their minds. Part of Mr. Priestley's success in achieving this effect is doubtless due to the fact that he successfully restrains himself from expounding a too definitive philosophy of his own. If he were endeavoring to promote a new form of

spiritualism, or any other sort of faith about which people could "organize," the book, we think, would be much less appealing. But Priestley is content to suggest that the preponderance of psychological evidence indicates that the basic questions in respect to the nature of human destiny are still open questions. This is as far as the Magicians really go, and it is far enough. From there on, each of us, it is implied, can write his own story even, perhaps, rewrite his own life reaching beyond the prospects currently afforded by the spokesmen of either religion or science.

## COMMENTARY

### A NOVELIST'S APPROACH

J. B. PRIESTLEY (see Review), to our way of thinking, is several cuts above most contemporary novelists, partly because he attempts to do well what many other writers can not or will not do, and what the few who try usually make into sectarianism or sheer sentimentality. Priestley, in short, writes philosophical novels with philosophically "happy endings." This is to say that he gets on paper a sense of meaning in life which comprehends the miseries and oppressions of the present, but does not succumb to despair.

For at least two generations, novelists have risen to fame by exposing the anatomy of human weaknesses and the way in which the circumstances of modern life twist and batter its victims. *The Naked and the Dead* is one such book. *From Here to Eternity* is another, although Jones, unlike Mailer, stakes out a small area of heroism and integrity and makes his bugler defend it against all comers until the juggernaut rolls over him. In most of these books, the good, when it exists at all, is primitive in nature and stoic in principle. The good is shown with its back against the wall.

Priestley is different. Priestley goes to meet the opposition on its own ground. Instead of making his protagonist *fight* ineluctable fate, Priestley dips into philosophy and metaphysics for a theory of how fate is originally constructed. Who knows, perhaps it can be changed. For some years now, Priestley has revealed his interest in Oriental theories of Karma, Free Will, and states after death. He has, we imagine, been mining Evans-Wentz' *Bardo Thödol*, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, Dunne's *Experiment with Time*, and similar sources. As a first-class artist, however, he never uses these materials until he has assimilated them sufficiently to make them at least partly his own.

The thing that we admire in Mr. Priestley is his determination to pioneer this new form and

spirit in literary art. And he succeeds relatively where others fail absolutely. *Johnson over Jordan* was difficult to forget. *Time and the Conways* may have brought short shrift from the New York critics—perhaps it wasn't the best drama in the world; we didn't get to see it—but the play was exciting experimentation in a new theme, that of reincarnation. Sometimes we wonder if critics may not subconsciously resent efforts of this sort—because they require something more than a conventionally glib review—and fail to honor courageous innovation.

Perhaps Malcolm Boyd (see *Frontiers*) could learn something from Mr. Priestley on how to write a morality play. But it wouldn't, of course, be "Christian."

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

WE attempt discussion of Mortimer Smith's *The Diminished Mind*—given to us by a MANAS reader—under distinct handicaps. First, we have not read Mr. Smith's *And Madly Teach*, an earlier controversial book on education on the side of the traditionalists. The second difficulty arises from the fact that we have apparently been unable, as yet, to discuss any of the recent pro- or anti-progressive volumes without incurring a certain amount of displeasure on both sides. That we persist in a rather thankless task, therefore, must be due to our belief that a subject which gets people to talking and arguing is better than a subject which stimulates no discussion at all.

We are definitely in the middle of the road in respect to *The Diminished Mind*, which seems to follow the pattern of other books examined in "Fratricide Among Educators" (MANAS, April 21, 1954). First of all, we have a loaded title, recalling both *And Madly Teach* and Albert Lynd's *Quackery in the Public Schools*. Before the reader starts the first page, in other words, the power of suggestion is strongly at work—though he is at least warned that he is going to read something quite critical of most theories of education. Second, Mr. Smith makes some excellent statements of what education ought to be and do, but throws around words such as "absolute values" and "the truths of religion" as if anyone who doesn't know what these are is willfully obtuse. Indeed, part of the charge of "lack of direction" leveled at the progressives arises from their confessed inability to entertain established beliefs about such matters, but we cannot agree that this constitutes some kind of sin. A growing intellectual honesty is one of the better signs of our times, while one may have good reason to distrust those who are so sure they know what are the religious needs of education that they grow impatient with others who remain in puzzled doubt. One reason why we so often quote Robert M. Hutchins in this regard is that he

goes to some effort to investigate this dilemma, and while he is usually claimed for the side of the "anti-progressives," we still maintain that, adding everything up, he cannot easily be classified as a partisan in educational controversy.

Getting back to Mr. Smith's assertion that our educators are "diminishing the mind," he justifies his fervor by an impressive list of failures of basic instruction in the secondary schools. An extraordinary number of students arrive at universities in fantastic ignorance of how to read, spell or write a trend summed up in a paragraph Smith quotes from Oliver LaFarge. After working with undergraduates who had "successfully" completed high school, LaFarge had this to say:

In a class of thirty, at least fifteen will dread what they call "essay exams." An essay exam is anything requiring written answers, as against checking off multiple choices or true-or-false statements on a prepared sheet. A quiz of ten questions requiring answers averaging fifty words apiece is feared; a major examination question, calling for several pages of answer, is a pure horror. The reason for this is clear in their contorted faces as they put pen to paper. It is painfully clear when one reads their exams. *They can't write.* . . . They cannot spell, punctuation is quite beyond them, the mere formation of a written word troubles them.

In his own conclusions as to the cause of such social and cultural disaster, Mr. Smith takes into account some of the factors which critics of traditional education insist are overlooked:

Now I am aware of the fact (which educators keep announcing as a startling discovery) that our high schools are a good deal less selective than they were a generation or two ago and that the present heterogeneous population of the schools is not comprised exclusively of potential geniuses and scholars or persons with superior I.Q.'s. I readily admit that the curriculum of the high school is going to have to be revised for the average student, or the student on the shady side of average, but the revision needs to be in the direction of discovering new and better methods and techniques for reaching this group with the values of the cultural heritage. I wish this were the task at which the professional pedagogues were busying themselves. . . . The personal pronouncements of leading educators and the ukases

of their professional associations pay lip service to formal knowledge and the cultural tradition, usually at the end of a many-numbered list of objectives for the schools; their *practice* shows that this has been pushed to the periphery of educational aims while they are busy devising courses in trade skills, personal grooming, smoke abatement, and social adjustment. The latter may be legitimate auxiliary and incidental concerns of the school but they cannot take the place of intellectual and moral training and the cultivation of intelligence.

Then, in a section of his Prologue, the author of *The Diminished Mind* states his own educational philosophy:

But to come to the positive side of things, let me state what I feel should be the function of the school. Some people seem to think it ought to be a sort of social service agency, replacing that quaint old institution, the home, where all the educative needs of youth will be met, but this would seem to me to be too indiscriminate a function, resulting in the school spreading itself so thin it can't be effective in any direction. I would grant a lot of ancillary functions, but I think the *primary* function of the school is to *transmit the intellectual and cultural heritage and knowledge of the race.*

I believe there are universal values in education that are good for everyone, whether he intends to become a butcher or a banker, a minister or a motorman, a professor or a plumber. The average student should not be treated as a second-class citizen of the educational world who can be thrown a few devitalized crumbs and then shoved into a variety of nonacademic courses devoid of real content. When the schoolman of today implies that education is only for an intellectual elite and attempts to water it down, or practically eliminate it, on the assumption that most people aren't up to it—when he does this, he is dooming the vast majority to intellectual and cultural subservience. The irony of the situation is that this is done by those who often talk as if they were the only legitimate guardians of the sacred flame of democracy.

When, however, Mr. Smith comes to the difficult task of evaluating incidents in the hot war between the traditionalists and anti-traditionalists, we feel that he writes himself down as a partisan. He attempts, for instance, to ridicule James B. Conant's position in regard to Pasadena's removal of Willard Goslin as Superintendent of Schools,

by what we consider rather ridiculous means. Fastening upon a single remark by Dr. Conant—that those who attacked Goslin and progressive education were simply "self-appointed critics of the school"—Smith cleverly argues that all critics of public schools *should* be self-appointed. But this seems a willful attempt to confuse Conant's meaning, who obviously referred to the fact that Pasadena "public opinion" had been influenced considerably by self-appointed *professional* critics—that is, those who found in the current controversy about education a means of feathering their own nests as propagandists. By one who has read the pro and con literature about Pasadena under Goslin, the existence of a well-paid-for smear campaign cannot be doubted. And, as Smith later points out: "If, as happened in most of these communities, the people over a long period of time fail to interest themselves in educational philosophy and permit that philosophy to be set for them by the professionals, they are apt to suddenly wake up to the fact that they don't like what has happened during their abdication. Where these conditions prevail, and corrective committees are formed, there is bound to be generated a certain amount of bitterness and bad feeling, for persons who are forced to fight continuously *against* something are apt to raise not only their own but their opponents' blood pressure."

We hope Mr. Smith realizes that the existence of such a psychological environment is itself a point of defense for the teachers of our public schools now under attack. No one with the sort of intellectual background described is apt to make his criticism either measured or helpful.

In conclusion, we shall have to agree with Mr. Smith that there is a "deep-seated bias of modern education which reflects the general philosophical bias of the last one hundred, and more, years, a bias involving the perversion of science into idolatry of the scientific method, the dethroning of man as individual in favor of sociological man. From this philosophical

viewpoint spring many of the practices which are revolutionizing our schools." But, as we have said before, this is not the only thing that parents need to understand. Disagree with current leanings in educational philosophy all you wish, become familiar with the statistics of educational failure, but, first and foremost, accept the invitation of the teachers in your schools to get to know them and their classrooms; the teachers must deal with conditions as well as theories, and there is no better way of understanding those conditions than by inspecting them at first hand.

## *FRONTIERS*

### Art and Moral Education

ONE of the happiest experiences of youth is the feeling that comes when you discover from life itself some lesson or meaning which well-intending teachers had failed to get across. For in that moment are combined two pleasures—the pleasure, so well known to the child, of "escape from the schoolroom," and the greater joy of seeing beyond or around some former obstacle to understanding.

The typical schoolroom, alas, has much to contend with in the constitution of human nature. First, there is the inevitable discipline it must impose upon the unruly energies of childhood. Then there is the subtler offense of "truths" brought to the child at second hand. Much of what is introduced to the child during school hours comes to him because someone else believes it is important for him to know. The six-year-old will take far greater delight in the first recognition of a word spelled out on an advertising billboard, than in the coached identification of "cat" and "bat" in the first reader. Reading the billboard, the child is on his own, out in the world where exploration, not docility, is the secret of success.

So it is that major reforms in education during the past thirty years have endeavored to make the schoolroom seem like a small world for the child to explore—a "part of life." But whether or not the project of recreating for the child the circumstances of original discovery is successful depends not so much on the resolve to bring "real life" to the child, as upon the art of the teacher. A carefully staged production of "natural experience" may contain the elements necessary to discovery by the child, or it may completely fail. The critical factor is the teacher, who may approach his task in the mood of indoctrinator about "life"—in which case he is no better than the old-fashioned schoolmaster with his "dose" of learning to impart for the day—or he may join with the children as a genuine colleague and companion in an adventure awaiting them all. More important, then, than your theories of education is your theory of the child. For if you can not enjoy discovery with the child, you can not really teach the child anything. He may learn something by himself, but the sense of learning by "being told" will blight the *intentional* aspect of

education, and reduce the moral value of school-time experience to the simple ecstasy of freedom which arises when it is over.

Under a system which mistakes indoctrination for education, the capacity to feel this ecstasy may be the only remaining evidence of the real nature of the human being, when the educational process is supposed to be complete. For not all children resist indoctrination. Many of them seem to like it as providing an easily purchased form of security. The instinct which leads children to label other children "teacher's pet" is a sound if sometimes cruel perception of the surrender to views and standards which are not really shared or understood, but adopted from prudence and a desire to obtain status with the powers that be. The issue here, vaguely felt for by the child, has to do with the relative importance of independence and of security. A seemingly stubborn child may really be a child who cleaves to the value of independence without knowing why he does so. Such a child may be made miserable by a clever teacher—he can be talked into low compromises with his longing for independence, with accompanying sensations of guilt that he does not understand—and so, step by step, an angry rebel is shaped who may some day loose a revolution.

Again, another sort of teacher may fan the weakest spark of originality in a passive child, working patiently through years to arouse a flame of individuality. Children are different, teachers are-different, just as parents and all human beings are different, in these respects, so that arguments about systems of education may be recognized as dealing with broad generalizations about these differences. The systems, it should not be too difficult to see, are really no more than hardening shadows of great classes of human differences and opinions about them, whereas education itself is the art of dealing with the differences in children and the young, in order that the essential person, the essential man or being within, may have the greatest opportunity to grow. The best teacher, then, is at his best when his pupils completely forget that he is "teaching" them—and this, very likely, is possible only when he, too, completely forgets that he is teaching—when discovery is indeed the thing for both.

This brings us to a paragraph in the *Christian Century* for Dec. 1, in which the writer, Malcolm

Boyd, who is concerned with the moral or religious content of motion pictures and radio and television programs, notes that the deliberately "religious" films or shows too often have nothing more than a "sleek, brittle, hoked-up and hoppedup biblical message with phony emphases." Mr. Boyd concludes:

It is indeed a tragedy that, seemingly, the better creative work nowadays is being done by people who instruct us without intending to. There are exceptions, of course. But the "religious" television program, for example, though its motivation is sound, simply does not measure up by artistic standards to the TV program which ostensibly does not give a hoot for religion.

Religion never leaves off in any area of life. The question is not: Is this a religious film? Rather the question is, or should be: What religious significance can this film have for me?

Here is an extremely interesting combination of opinions. Why, for example, should it be a "tragedy" that the best instruction, or "creative work," comes from those "who instruct us without intending to"? Is the tragic element in the fact that those who want to "instruct" their fellows find themselves unable to be good artists? Perhaps this is a relationship of motive and quality which is written in the grain of human reality. A lot probably depends upon the meaning of "instruct." Does "instruction" here mean a sense of duty to convey what we *think is* the truth, or is it an enthusiasm for discovery, wherever it leads? Now if authentic art depends upon the latter feeling, then the failure of the instructor to qualify as an artist or "creative worker" is the most dependable criticism we can have of the content of his instruction—or, at any rate, of *his grasp* of the content of his instruction.

The arts, from this point of view, are as useful a measure of genuine religion as the sciences. While the sciences may expose the ignorance of religious belief, the arts expose its lack of originality and authentic conviction. This, surely, is no "tragedy," but the best possible reason for honoring the arts and preserving their independent authority.

There may be some disagreement here. The arts, it will be said, are handmaidens of culture. They bring into the plastic world of shapes and sounds and sentiments an order which reflects the views of the age, and of individual men, about the nature of things—or

about what is important and "real." Mr. Boyd is right—"Religion never leaves off in any area of life." What can we learn, then, of the religion of a people whose art forms are either hackneyed and conventional, or cheaply and fawningly "popular," or angrily and persistently obscure?

The art of the ancients becomes a withering reproach, by such comparison. But we are not now so much concerned with "cultural criticism" as with the sensitive conscience of the individual—especially the individuals who long to help their fellows to see more clearly. Can they—and we—afford to ignore the criticism implied by our own limited capacity to practice the arts—the art of thinking, conversing, speaking, writing, explaining? Or is it that, since we hold captive a portion of the truth, we can be indifferent to the lesser truths of form and display?

Now, perhaps, we approach the heart of the matter. For form and display, and even the things we call "beautiful," are only the outer coating, the "carnal" embodiment of art. Ultimately, the artist in man, we think, is that portion of the human being which is determined to be honest with himself; and is, therefore, the only part of him that has the slightest competence or claim to being a teacher. The rest is preaching, self-righteousness and pious pretense. So that anyone who sets out to be a "moral" educator must resign himself to accepting instruction from the least of his competitors as teachers—from the artists and honest men in every walk of life who do not "give a hoot for religion." For while these people may not have very much to say, what they do say has the ring of natural expression, and if the teacher has not this, he has nothing at all.