

## BOOKS FOR OUR TIME: I

IN conversation not long ago, an able and respected critic of modern culture remarked that, more and more, he has come to feel that less and less is explained by what we usually call "common sense." In other words, if this is an uncommon universe, uncommon sense will be required to make it out. Joseph Wood Krutch, the critic referred to, went on to develop the background of this conclusion by way of historical explanation, saying that to realize that we live in a most uncommon universe is hardly a revelation prepared especially for him—nor even for a select few.

Since there is little doubt that physical science has set the tone for most of the thinking of the past two centuries, and since physics has played a key role in the development of science, everyone is or shortly will be affected by the physicist's new effort to tell us that "feet-on-the-ground" common sense doesn't even explain what goes on in our backyard, let alone subatomic and celestial motion.

The theme of physicists of a century ago was quite different. Then it was popular to maintain that everything in the universe could be explained in a matter-of-fact way, and that all such explanations would soon be as familiar as the facts of the barnyard which experienced husband-men grasp with ease. But "matter," that old reliable, has now become energy, and by some is ultimately linked with the primordial nature of mind itself.

(Dr. Krutch, who some years ago wrote *The Modern Temper*, is now busying himself with another volume which, unless a better title comes along, will be known as *The New Modern Temper*. So fast, apparently, do the changes in basic orientation take place, that even Dr. Krutch finds it difficult to catch up with them in comprehension, for he confesses the new work

just as difficult to write as its theme is interesting and rewarding.)

Krutch's view is one of many ways of describing the tremendous transformation which has taken place in orientations of mind during the last fifty years. It is a change which came not a bit too soon, we might remark, for there is not much comfort in the thought of a stable and stolid physical universe with so much present likelihood of its being blown out from under! In any case, it is a transformation which touches each field of human inquiry. The biology of this century is by no means the biology of century 19, and this, as in the case of physics, is not merely because clever young men have come along to build painstakingly upon the foundations erected by their forebears. Vistas so entirely new have been opened to biological gaze that the total orientation of this science may undergo radical change. For one thing, the origin of living form is now an almost mystic sub-division of biology called "morphogenesis," and from this new voice among the life sciences we presently hear that the essence and the source of cellular structures is an electromagnetic field. Not the physical nucleus, but the virtually metaphysical "nuclear intelligence," gives to each part of our bodies the shape and self-regenerating durability it possesses.

Other biological spokesmen have also been behaving strangely, lately. Julian Huxley, addressing recently the membership of the William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation, explained that, having rescued God from theology, and protected him from the character assassination of anthropomorphism by redefining "him" as the spiritual aspect of nature, it is now the privilege and pleasure of science to put him back into the natural scheme of things where he belongs.

While we are reporting on the spiritualization of God, we may consider anthropological evidence that man has a more complicated lineage than the Darwinians suspected. Numerous discoveries support the view, expertly summarized by Frederic Wood Jones, that man is himself a primary biological type, with the giant apes relegated to some sort of ancient bastard deviation. If the apes have split off from man rather than man having come up from the apes—as modern anatomical studies and the recent diggings in Iran imply—the "spiritual" qualities of man may again be considered to be primary in the general explanation of things, much as "metaphysical" forces are now held to be primary in physics and biology.

Nor do the new horizons stop here. The fields of psychology and sociology are passing through their own transitions, and this, in turn, means that concepts of education will be in an interesting state of flux for some time to come. Even the professional philosophers, so long impoverished by a determination to gear their system-building to the pace of physical science, are beginning to broaden their bases of theoretical operation. Meanwhile the "wisdom of the East" awakens new interest, since from Asiatic lands have come so many labors in rational mysticism. (In order to maintain that "rational mysticism" is a misnomer, you will have to ignore the magnitude of the tasks in synthesis which are demanded today.) Even the religionists and the psychologists—at least the non-doctrinaire among them—are finding common grounds of interest in a study of the meaning of metaphysical symbols.

We hold that the books of our time which contribute to an understanding of this mighty transformation are, in every real sense, great books, and especially if they indicate a few things we may do with our thinking after the transformation has proceeded further, and familiar landmarks have altogether disappeared.

Such books may need to be made the very backbone of both university and secondary school

discussion of "the Humanities," to furnish stable ground for independent efforts of thinking among the young, and so that they may recognize that the experiment of true human understanding is barely begun. Such books, we hold, are "great books" because the need for them is great. We are, it seems, only on the threshold of authentic self-consciousness, with a coming awakening of mind the chief hallmark of the future.

We propose now to list several books which appear to us to do the best job of making the present intelligible, while offering credible hopes for the future. Granting that other volumes unknown to us may be even better for serving the needs at hand, until they are called to our attention we shall rest our confidence in these:

- (1) *The Human Situation*, by W. Macneile Dixon
- (2) *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, by Erich Fromm
- (3) *Richer by Asia*, by Edmond Taylor
- (4) *The Root is Man*, by Dwight Macdonald
- (5) *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, by Karen Horney
- (6) *The Higher Learning in America*, by Robert M. Hutchins
- (7) *The Reach of the Mind*, by J. B. Rhine

Since first on the list is W. Macneile Dixon's *Human Situation*, often referred to in these pages, some special note of this book seems in order. Our appreciation of these 1935-37 Gifford Lectures stems less from a desire to canonize Dr. Dixon than to make use of a great opportunity which this particular book, alone of his works, affords. Dixon, it seems to us, here took a long stride into the future possibilities of human thought. We say this partly because he was so well able to understand the dilemma of our civilization—a culture which had, fortunately, forsaken religion, but which, unfortunately, has been forsaken by science.

Dixon not only vividly portrays the dilemma of "modern man in search of a soul," as Carl Jung phrased it, but clarifies greatly the problem of how that search may now be legitimately pursued. In so doing, he takes us back to some very ancient philosophers, not because they are made imposing by age, but because they lived in a simpler time, centuries before all human opinions were encompassed by the "religion vs. science" debate. The freer perspective of ancient philosophy certainly needs to be reborn, to fill the great need for high and broad hopes in our time. Thus Dixon's view on the "great books" is stimulating. For him, such books are not the end of thinking, but only a beginning of philosophizing which we must ourselves institute, sometimes along lines quite different from those sanctified by the passage of centuries.

It is all very well to point out, as a precautionary measure, that the classics have stood the test of time, and that a work like Dr. Dixon's own, for instance, however excellent it may appear, has not yet endured this test. But we are not sure that "time" can be relied upon to perform the task of "testing" any better than we can, here and now. Nor are we sure that we can afford to wait. The value of "time" has been in the extensive "filtering" of a work through many acute human minds which it allows, accomplishing, finally, the judgment of a collectively broad perspective; but since we cannot today think at all, in terms of important questions, unless we adopt a broad perspective, it should be less necessary to wait centuries for just appraisal. *The Human Situation*, then, we hold to be a great book for our testing.

What are its basic propositions? First, that we must, in all matters, "aim at conclusions upon which both the heart and the intellect can agree." Poetry and metaphysics, for instance, or even our own private intuitions, may be just as capable of revealing reality to us as is rational analysis. Why should we be privileged to cut nature asunder, proclaiming that the intellect alone can give us

"true knowledge"? What right have we to make this distinction? If nature misleads us in the one case, why not in another? Let us consider both or neither as avenues of approach to reality, and if we conclude the latter, we may as well, in resignation, stop all efforts to search for truth.

The great intuitions of man need, on this view, intensive re-examination. The human yearning for immortality, and the consistency of many beliefs in respect to its possibility, are primary facts of the "human situation." Dixon predicted that mechanistic speculation would soon reach a dead-end because the primary puzzles of life's meaning always remain no matter how thoroughly you have charted its mechanical motions. The soul must be a reality, he said, or, if it is not, it matters little whether anything else be "real."

So Dixon goes on to view "the great experiment of existence" from the standpoint of a collectivity of evolving human souls. He wrote of birth and death, of changing philosophies, religions, and sciences, as a man should write—with the enjoyment of one who finds the life of man and of mind a continual adventure. Philosophy was to him neither the arid figurings of the pedant nor the doctrines and dogmas of religion, but rather an affirmation that no "thus-far-and-no-farther-shalt-thou-go" can ever circumscribe. The great currents of Platonic thought, so imperfectly grasped by Western culture, come alive again in his words, and the ideal of the quest for truth and beauty emerges as the only goal worthy of man's vast potentialities. And, finally, the index points of thought are in *The Human Situation* freed from the confining categories of "historical periods" and returned to the province they should occupy—the province of each man's present thinking. What Dixon really did was to take the soul away from theology and give it back to man.

Slowly, since Dixon, have come along other attempts to revitalize and synthesize religion, philosophy, and psychology. C. J. Ducasse's

*Nature, Mind, and Death*, a 1952 writing, follows Dixon's trail in its closing sections, reevaluating the basic question of the immortality of the soul, presenting the logical possibilities of this idea as to truth and the magnificent probability that immortality of a non-theological sort may indeed be truth. A gathering of many concerns here comes about, or, at least, the attitudes which may make such gathering and unifying possible.

In Dixon, the poetry and inspiration of philosophy come alive. Genuine religious issues find synthesis with philosophical discipline and qualification, in passages such as the one we are about to quote. Perhaps, for some, this "flight of mind" is too wild and free, yet its splendid vision cannot be denied, and it is the width and breadth of vision of *The Human Situation* which won its placement on our present list:

It is Plato's doctrine, and none more defensible, that the soul before it entered the realm of Becoming existed in the universe of Being. Released from the region of time and space, it returns to its former abode, 'the Sabbath, or rest of souls', into communion with itself. After a season of quiet 'alone with the Alone', of assimilation of its earthly experiences and memories, refreshed and invigorated, it is seized again by the desire for further trials of its strength, further knowledge of the universe, the companionship of former friends, by the desire to keep in step and on the march with the moving world. There it seeks out and once more animates a body, the medium of communication with its fellow travellers, and sails forth in that vessel upon a new venture in the ocean of Becoming.

Many, no doubt, will be its ventures, many its voyages. For not until all the possibilities of Being have been manifested in Becoming, not until all the good, beauty and happiness of which existence allows have, by the wayfaring soul, been experienced, not until it has become all that it is capable of becoming—and who can tell to what heights of power and vision it may climb?—is it fitted to choose for itself the state and society which best meets its many requirements. . . .

We include this quotation principally to call attention to one view of life which *may*, in the final analysis, be wholly natural to man. At any rate, it is an outlook which has deepening relation

to the premises and temper of other works we plan to mention. What are the essential ingredients of the view for which Dixon declares his preference? First, the affirmation of man's intrinsic nature as a *self-moving soul*. Second, the suggestion that whenever man considers himself to be *less* than a "self-moving soul," he retreats, with appropriate lament for his weakness and inadequacy, into the protection of authoritarianisms, either religious, cultural, or political. From this we may reason, if we care to—as we happen to do—that the most important determinant of man's happiness on earth is his opinion of his own essential nature. For the "root" is indeed man, individual man. In accordance with what he thinks himself to be, man determines the nature of his relationship to others, and to the society and natural world in which he lives. Neither economic nor cultural factors are of themselves sufficient as the key to man's behavior, but his ultimate philosophy begins and completes the picture.

Those who truly believe in the dignity of individual conscience are often, we suspect, those to whom the doctrine of the "self-moving soul" has an inwardly tested validity. This one article of faith depends upon no authority, upon no theology, and upon no specific science. Because of its independent origin, it is never advanced by powerful institutions, to whom, for obvious reasons, it is anathema. But it does find voice, nevertheless, and that perennially, among all the members of an unlabelled fraternity whose company may continue to bring both delight and benefit to the rest of humankind.

## *Letter from AMERICA*

ST. LOUIS—On returning to the United States, a pleasant ship-board companion went to some length to hide from me his rising anxiety about visiting in America. At first his questions were veiled, but it didn't take me long to discover that he was frankly worried about his treatment at the hands of the Barbarians.

The gentleman was from Pakistan, had a remunerative watch business which brought him to Europe quite often; and he had the easy manners of a seasoned traveler. It took me a while to comprehend that the least he hoped to escape from this country with was a smart blow on the head. He assured me that he realized Chicago was out of the question, a No-Man's-Land with machine-gun strafing on every corner and sinister groups of beautifully-dressed trios tearing around in expensive cars to attend to the destruction of their enemies.

Painstakingly, I tried to explain that one could move through the Eastern part of the United States with a reasonable amount of immunity from sudden violence, and that there was very little danger in the West of being trampled to death in a stampede or "shot-up" in a barroom brawl with avenging cowboys. He listened patiently, amazed at my tranquility, and then asked if it were true that in the nightclubs the ladies plied you with knock-out drops, had you photographed in compromising positions and proceeded to hound you to the grave with blackmail.

The absurdity of the questions caused me to be short in my answers, but annoying little episodes from the past began to make themselves known. I remembered a brilliant woman from the Argentine, who had all her expenses paid by the United Nations and who could have easily detoured back to Buenos Aires by way of New York, but claimed, rather uncomfortably, that she didn't think she could cope with Americans' highly/geared pace. I remembered a man from Egypt who planned a fabulously inconvenient trip through South America, in order to circumvent the Badlands.

Reflecting over these several situations, the veiled hints and awkward questions, I finally faced the blunt, horrendous fact:

*They were afraid of being shot.*

Trying to view this ridiculous assumption from a stranger's eyes, I read the movie section of the newspaper upon my arrival in New York. The first print that caught my eye was of a bare-breasted woman being publicly flogged. The next print showed a handsome man crushing his co-star's jaw, the blurb beneath announcing that the hero solved all his problems with a bowie knife. Recalling how many Western films go into our output to foreign markets, I couldn't help but feel that the mortality of Hollywood extras far exceeds that of auto accidents.

The ordinary noises coming out of an apartment where the members are listening to a radio detective story sound like an all-out massacre, complete with shrieks, gasps, blistering shots, falling bodies and back-breaking crashes into the cellar. The magazine stands show opulent flesh and dripping blood with gruesome comics for ghoulish children and pocket books for depraved adults with half-clothed sailors ogling voluptuous sirens, while mass murder takes place.

Enough has been futilely written about the disastrous effect of all this on our own youth, but what about the visitor? This year, North Americans sent the largest number of tourists to Europe in travel history. It would be interesting to know if a record number of tourists visited the United States—and how many of them escaped with their lives, how many were merely maimed or blinded, or just suffered temporary shock.

ROVING CORRESPONDENT

## REVIEW

### "THE REPUBLIC AND THE PERSON"

A 1952 HENRY REGNERY edition under the above title, by Gordon Keith Chalmers, president of Kenyon College, is an invitation to philosophical examination of American culture. More, perhaps we should say, since Dr. Chalmers' effort is so assertively challenging that to read *The Republic and the Person* is one step towards becoming convinced that a personal re-thinking of contemporary values is the most important and most necessary thing that one can be doing.

Chalmers is one of that growing number of men who are seeking to enliven the meaning of "philosophy." Unhappy with the pedants and scholastics who have buried the twin spirits of vital inquiry and ethical assertion under a great weight of technical jargon, Chalmers tries to show that philosophy, in its pure and real sense, does not belong to the academicians at all but, rightly, to each inquiring individual mind. Also, he intimates, politics and philosophy are not two separate subjects, even though Aristotle divided "Politics" and "Ethics" by way of titling two different volumes. Aristotle kept switching back and forth in both treatises from one province to the other, and the time has arrived when, unless we take steps to end the dangerous dichotomy prevalent in our time, we may no longer have any "politics" nor any Republic with which to bother ourselves. In developing this contention, Dr. Chalmers substantiates the basic thesis upheld by Justice William O. Douglas and Stringfellow Barr, by way of the implications of such passages as the following:

What is at stake is easily seen. For if hundreds of thousands who influence thought, taste, and opinion fail to sense why "we hold these truths to be self-evident," is something more critical and knowing than chanted reiteration of the truths, America will soon agree with the Nazi belief that our quarrel with communism is merely one of territory and power, and we may expect at home some form of dictatorship, whether imported or native . . .

The proper treatment of the traditional American goals is not to take them for granted—which amounts to consigning them to dogma, slogans, and radio sing-song ("I Am an American")—but critically to reperceive them, which amounts to the long study, at school and college, of the nature of man. . . .

Liberal thought is never permitted to depend upon a party line, not even what appears to be the enlightened party line of the democracies, Western style. It can never remain liberal if its ends are assumed, even though the assumptions be such evidently fine ones as the traditional American goals. . . .

If a politics in which a free individual can participate is, of necessity, inspired by philosophy, philosophy, in turn, must be regarded as a legitimate participant in those concerns we usually call religious. For, just as a political science which one may describe only in terms of methodology is barren of human inspiration, so is a philosophy denying any concern with the ultimate metaphysical yearnings of the heart an inadequate aid. One of the strongest recommendations of *The Republic and the Person*, in our opinion, can be made at this point, for Chalmers avoids the temptation to leave religion to the traditionally religious. The sort of religion in which Chalmers is interested, however, has nothing to do with specific creeds and tenets. Religion, he says, may best be regarded as an inward attentiveness as to "how one stands with the Gods," to interpolate an attitude of the great Greeks. Chalmers remarks:

How one stands with the gods sounds archaic to any but those acquainted with Greek tragedy. The gods are not worshipped nowadays. No. But one cannot see the translation of the *Antigone* prepared during the occupation of Paris in order to present to the brave men and women of the Resistance a reason for their faith in France without sensing that how Antigone stood with the gods was precisely how a man or woman in any time preserves or wins his own self-respect.

Perhaps this review commentary should have begun with the recommendation that all writers and teachers should spend a month or so with *The Republic and the Person*. Yet, as Chalmers himself points out, it is often futile to recommend anything in generalized terms. Philosophy itself, on his view, must never be regarded as a series of vague abstractions. Philosophy lives for man, rather, when the driving need to pursue truth for its own sake—philosophy derives its name from word-roots signifying "love of wisdom"—has focussed upon the specific issues of our lives. Then we begin to understand what philosophy may have meant to many of the worthy ancients.

Those philosophers who have merely bobbed along in the wake of scientific enthusiasm have done a distinct disservice, Chalmers avers, by suggesting that

rational investigation must be narrowed to the dimensions of the physical world. The cult of specialization now holds the philosophical fort. "How would it be," writes Chalmers, "if the departments of Philosophy were to close up shop?"

The same suggestion, for the same reason, has been made to churches. The reason is that, like religion, philosophy probably has to be rediscovered; people must first find out that they need philosophy. Now, it would prove embarrassing if, unlike the emperor who didn't know he was naked, people never woke up to their need. So instead of the whole radical proposal, I make half of it. Suppose the professional philosophers give up their departments and courses and teach for a season in other departments. For a philosophy professor to learn and teach another science and to teach it philosophically is to demonstrate the simple truth that philosophy permeates and upholds all the ranges of experience and evidence, and in particular to show professors of the sciences in question in what way philosophy is responsible to the evidence of their own science and how their particular subject is responsible to philosophy.

Since Chalmers is writing in terms of those things which institutions of higher learning may accomplish if they only set their minds to it, a specific proposal for renovation is implicit in nearly all of his remarks. His conceptions of liberalism enable him to point out why academic freedom is mandatory and loyalty oaths very dangerous, why sectarian religion must never be introduced into the public schools at either the elementary or collegiate level, and why, on the other hand, a "socialization" which is merely a conditioning to accept the mechanics of present society should not be allowed to set a dominant tone for the intellectual life of the schools. It is Chalmers' contention that the rediscovery of religion is dependent upon the rediscovery of philosophy, and that when a university falls into any of the three errors mentioned, religious concerns find only *emotional* outlets, thus leaving the student who seeks enlightenment on the ultimate ends of life a sort of split personality. If academicians who have presumably hitherto followed the "scientific approach" suddenly append affirmations of metaphysical value to their treatises and lectures, this helps but little.

An excellent summary of the theme of *The Republic and the Person* is provided in the following:

Absorption in means has led many to sense, usually in maturity, the poverty of their plan, and frantically, at

the eleventh hour, to add a paragraph somewhere in their thinking, concerning ends. The echo most easily heard in the times is a sentimental one. Today the word most commonly coupled with *moral* is *fervor*. The popular connotation of *spiritual* is related to the candle on an altar, the flame beneath a tripod, or a revival meeting. The admired head of a great engineering school recently said that the affairs of mankind should be guided by two things in addition to the splendid application of scientific knowledge to material problems for which his institution is justly famous. These two things, he said, are social technology and spiritual uplift. What we really need is not spiritual uplift at all but a critical understanding of spiritual fact.

And what is "spiritual fact"? Chalmers says the evidence showing that a goodly number of men since the beginning of history have been concerned with how they stand with the Gods is a spiritual fact of some magnitude. What these Gods have been named matters much less than the implicit affirmation of man's religion or philosophy that there is a higher and nobler self within each person, noble enough so that even the Gods have some interest in his moral stature. And while this is metaphorical talk, the talk of poetry rather than of science, such talk is in the language of the faith that "the great experiment of human existence" will never come to a close! Men preserve themselves, either as individuals or as civilizations, only by striving to become something more than they presently are, and those who talk of the Gods rather than security against A-Bombs may turn out to be the only dependable guardians of the future.

## COMMENTARY THE INCREDIBLE TRUTH

THERE is hardly any point in complaining that foreigners are entirely too casual in the way they form opinions of the United States. And while the account of this process in Letter from America could doubtless be supplemented by brighter impressions, it remains true that American ideas of Europe and Asia have for generations been constructed with as little regard for facts. This is not a national problem—although it affects all nations—but a problem of modern world culture. We see no real solution save through a rather remarkable change of heart on the part of many millions.

What we can all do now, however, is to learn patience with the misconceptions of others. For example, a year or so ago a young American Negro in private relief service in France found it almost impossible to convince young Frenchmen of his own age that he had not come to Europe to escape the dangers of racist mob violence. The idea that millions of Negroes live peaceful lives in the United States—although without, we hasten to add, the full measure of justice and equality under the law—is practically incredible to innumerable Europeans. When this Negro visitor to France attempted to describe his life in a northern city at home, he was simply not believed. Only when he found in a letter from his mother a newspaper clipping reporting that his brother had been appointed as a high school teacher, the story being illustrated with the brother's photograph, was he able to offer his French friends evidence at all acceptable of what he had told them. And even then, he realized that he had done little more than plant a few doubts.

The project of spreading sympathy and understanding between peoples is likely to need generations, or even a century or so, to accomplish measurable results. That the brotherhood of man is being indefinitely delayed by deliberately misleading or fanatical propaganda,

there can be no doubt. We can do very little, ourselves, against the lies of propaganda, except to be scrupulously careful not to use the same methods, and to be as patient as we can with the believers of such propaganda. An angry reply to a distortion often seems to confirm the lie, instead of opening the believer's mind to wider considerations.

Finally, there is another long-term project—most important of all—that of steadily reducing at home the situations and circumstances which supply the shreds of truth on which the propaganda is based.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### NOTES IN PASSING

A MONTHLY magazine, *Highlights for Children*, edited by Gerry C. Myers (37 E. Long St., Columbus, Ohio), has for some time been appearing regularly on our desk. This rather substantial production (56 pages) seems to us to maintain an exceptionally high standard, both in "moral education" and in interest for children. Every story is suitable either for parents to read to young children or for older children to read to themselves. While all the stories have a "moral," the emphasis is invariably on the *psychological lessons which human beings need to learn*, instead of on the blacks and whites of conventional Good and Evil. Whether the characters in the stories are animals or children, the only real "enemies" they encounter arise from their own states of mind, and we cannot say too much for this approach, wherever it finds expression. (We note from the masthead of *Highlights for Children* that the managing editor is Caroline Clark Myers, implying that the magazine may be a family undertaking and a "labor of love." In any event, it is plain that a great deal of time and attention is devoted to getting out this paper, especially in terms of encouraging contributors to understand the Myers' editorial viewpoint on child psychology.) Educational puzzles are liberally interspersed with the stories in *Highlights for Children*, as well as intriguing educational experiments in music and art. We suggest that parents interested in home instruction procure a sample copy and check our judgment of what seems to us a splendid magazine.



A sentence in a recent defense of Progressive Education (appearing in the New York *Herald-Tribune*) reads:

Teachers or parents who quickly and arbitrarily answer questions for a child often destroy at the

outset the best opportunities to help that child to think.

While this use of "destroy" may seem somewhat extreme, Joseph T. Shipley's *Dictionary of Word Origins* establishes a quixotic connection between "destruction" and "education." In fact, when one looks for the definition of "education" in Shipley's book, he finds nothing save an invitation to "see destroy." Turning to "destroy," we come upon evidence that "education," like the word "religion," has had two contradictory meanings throughout history. With apologies to the linotyper, we reproduce Mr. Shipley's discussion verbatim, in evidence that a *Dictionary of Word Origins* is often handy to have around:

destroy: To pile things up was L. *struere*, struct—. (Quite the opposite of the common Teut. *strew*, which meant to scatter things around: AS. *strewian*, closely related to the noun AS. *streow*, *strew*, whence Eng. *straw*, which is *strewn* in stables.) To put things together is thus to *construct* something; but also (to put two and two together), to *construe* it. The reverse of this process leads to the *destruction* of what has been builded, via a LL. form *destrugere* and OFr. *destruire* the Eng. verb is *destroy*, as befell the ancient Troy. Besides the *structare* of our society, we have from this source *instruct*, *obstruct* (to pile in the way); *instrument* (that with which to build). And *industry* is from L. *indus*, within, + *struna*, *stria*, from *struere*; whence *industrialism*, which is not *indestructible*.

*Instruction* (piling in) grows from a theory of child training the converse of *education*, which is from L. *e*, *ex*, out + *ducere*, *duct*—, to lead, cp. *duke*, *doctor*. Pack the information in; or draw the talents out. The former does not spare the rod, but may *destroy* the *education*.

One could go on making such correlations almost indefinitely. For instance, if we wish to span the gap between the intellectual training of children and the intellectual indoctrination of adults, a challenging paragraph comes to mind from a discussion by Dr. D. Drake in the *A.M.A. Journal* (Sept. 6, 1952):

An overweening regard for authority in the sciences, is the offspring, either of a slender

understanding or a timid spirit, still further enfeebled by bad education. It shows itself, not merely in an unsuspecting assent to alleged facts—a pardonable credulity—but in an implicit adoption of the conclusions of eminent men, when we should examine for ourselves, both their premises and reasonings. The latter species of intellectual servility has done much harm to the profession, and through it to society at large. In general, we are under the necessity of receiving as true, that which the archives of medicine present to us as fact; for it is impossible to repeat every experiment, and many observations can never be made a second time, because the same combination of circumstances may not recur; but nothing should be taken on trust, when it can be avoided, as that which is reported correctly, may have been seen incorrectly, and the professions of truth with which a subject is introduced may be designed by the author to protect it from suspicion. But the *reasonings* of an author, a professor or a colleague, are legitimate subjects of scrutiny, and he who passes timidly over them, admits an inferiority, which fearless investigation might convince him did not exist. He becomes the slave of opinions, instead of the servant of truth; and contributes not more to the diffusion of falsehood, than to the degradation of his own character.

✓ ✓ ✓

*Holiday* magazine seems to be getting along fairly well without any support from this page, and we have no particular desire to promote its sales. However, for those who find *Holiday* readily accessible, we suggest notice of a pictorial series, "Youth and the World," in the January issue. Teen-agers are likely to benefit from this graphic evidence of the similarity of the problems and states of mind affecting young people of different nationalities and creeds. "Youth and the World" is comprehensive in its coverage, including India, Yugoslavia, Japan, South Africa and Israel. While the captions accompanying the pictures are generally non-controversial and middle-of-the-roadish, as might be expected, expressions of unconventional opinion are occasionally quoted, as, for example, in the views of a "reconstructed" English youth named Andrew Heath, who summed up his attitude on world affairs for the *Holiday* scribe:

I distrust America. I distrust Russia. I believe that another war is not inevitable, but probable. I'm not belligerent but I would fight if necessary; I would fight with an aim, but not with a cause. The next war would be a politician's war, anyway.

Such a sentiment may be termed a wholly negative judgment, born of cynicism and disillusion, but *Holiday*'s inclusion of its full flavor is a step above complaisance.

## FRONTIERS

### More than a Choice of Reading

MODERN thinkers have not yet left off castigating the men of the Enlightenment for their naive reliance on Reason, and for their hope, even prophecy that, could the world once be converted to the worship of Reason, the Millennium would blossom almost in a matter of hours. We say "modern thinkers" in a largely inclusive way, for, on the one hand, the Freudians and other psychological explorers endeavor to show that reason has had only a superficial role in the lives of most men; and, on the other hand, the advocates of a return to orthodox religion invite their hearers to "look around" at the carnage of the twentieth century to see where "reason," unaided by the paternal guidance of God, has led us.

That the men of the Enlightenment were naïve we may admit. The question to be considered, however, is whether we are wiser. Let us first remind ourselves of the intellectual transition accomplished by the Enlightenment, which is described with both spirit and exactitude by the late Carl Becker in his *Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers*:

It would have been impossible . . . for the *Philosophes* to have . . . complacently permitted God the Father to fade away into the thin abstraction of a First Cause unless they were prepared to dispense with his revelation to men—the revelation through Holy Writ and Holy Church. This was, indeed, the whole point of their high, offensive gesture. Renunciation of the traditional revelation was the very condition of being enlightened; for to be truly enlightened was to see the light in all its fulness, and the light in its fulness revealed two very simple and obvious facts. One of these contained the sum of those negations which we understand so well—the fact that the supposed revelation of God's purposes through Holy Writ and Holy Church was a fraud, or at best an illusion born of ignorance, perpetrated, or at least maintained, by the priests in order to accentuate the fears of mankind and so hold it in subjection. The other fact contained the sum of those affirmations which we understand less easily—that

God had revealed his purpose to men in a far more simple and natural, a far less mysterious and recondite way, through his works. To be enlightened was to understand this double truth, that it was not in Holy Writ, but in the great book of nature, open for all mankind to read, that the laws of God had been recorded. This is the new revelation, and thus at last we enter the secret door to knowledge. This open book of nature was what Jean Jacques Rousseau and his philosophical colleagues went in search of when they wished to know what God had said to them.

Nature and natural law—what magic these words held for the philosophical century!

The new revelation was not adopted all at once—has not, indeed, been widely adopted at all, the scientific critics of modern society tell us—the obstacles to its acceptance being solidly erected on a foundation of religious emotion. When Thomas Jefferson—a doughty champion of the Enlightenment—ran for election to the Presidency of the United States in 1800, faithful Christians predicted almost certain doom at the hands of this impious unbeliever, should he be elected. Timothy Dwight, president of Yale University, foresaw Jefferson inaugurating an epoch of Jacobin frenzy, in which, as he graphically put it, "we may see our wives and daughters the victims of legal prostitution; soberly dishonoured; speciously polluted; the outcasts of delicacy and virtue, the loathing of God and man. . . . Shall our sons become the disciples of Voltaire and the dragoons of Marat; or our daughters the concubines of the Illuminati?"

President Dwight left no horror to the imagination in anticipating the reign of "Jeffersonian democracy." That such warnings were not without effect is evidenced by the fact that, after Jefferson was elected, some pious New England ladies buried their Bibles in their gardens, lest that terrible man send his atheistic minions to confiscate them!

Thus the Enlightenment—the worship, we may say, of the Book of Nature—had its ordeals and persecutions, which did not end until the outlook of the *philosophes* was safely institutionalized by the seats of higher learning and

made into the credo of the scientific way of life. Revelation for revelation, there seems little doubt that the Book of Nature has many advantages over the Book of God. The Enlightenment was just what its name implies, and the feeling of liberation one gains from reading the eighteenth-century philosophers celebrated by Carl Becker seems an authentic response to the contribution of these free men. Yet we wonder about their high confidence in any "book" at all—even the Book of Nature. A book can be misread, and having once misread the book of nature, men seem able to adopt invincible convictions concerning their misreadings, while ignoring pages which seem quite clear to everyone else.

Take for example the "pages" in the book of nature which deal with parapsychological phenomena—telepathy and the like. According to an editorial by Dr. J. B. Rhine in the December number of the *Journal of Parapsychology*, only about one in six among academic psychologists in the United States is prepared to agree that ESP (extra sensory perception) is "a likely possibility." The gain in acceptance of ESP among psychologists since 1938—when a similar survey of opinion among psychologists was completed—is only about eight per cent, and this during a period when, as Dr. Rhine points out, "the greatest bulk of the best controlled work in ESP has been done."

Dr. Rhine discusses the possible explanations for the rejection of ESP by the large majority of academic psychologists, concluding that, in general, it results from the unwillingness of men schooled in materialistic assumptions to abandon what they regard as the first principles of their outlook on life and their method in science. Proof of this lies in the fact that, in both the 1938 and the present survey (reported in detail in the December *Journal of Parapsychology*), some 20 per cent of the replying psychologists candidly admitted that they had reached their conclusions about ESP "*entirely on a priori grounds.*" And

only one in six claimed to have formed his opinion from acquaintance with scientific reports on ESP!

Here is a doctrine, in short, which threatens the authority of the Book of Nature, *as these men have learned to read it*. This is no exaggeration of their view. As one of them explained to Dr. Rhine, after witnessing a successful demonstration of ESP: "If it were any other issue, one-tenth of the evidence reported would have been enough to convince me. As it is, ten times that amount would not do it." Or, as a colleague of Dr. Joseph Jastrow once put it:

ESP is so contrary to the general scientific world picture, that to accept the former would compel the abandonment of the latter. I am unwilling to give up the body of scientific knowledge so painfully acquired in the Western world during the last 300 years, on the basis of a few badly reported experiments. (*American Scholar*, Winter, 1938-39.)

The apprehensions of these scientists, while less colorful, are not entirely different from the disturbed feelings of the president of Yale University in 1800, when contemplating the election of Thomas Jefferson, Deist philosopher and reader of the Book of Nature.

Are we then left with the unpleasant notion that the "progress" instituted by the Enlightenment has brought us exactly nowhere—that an exchange of opinions has taken place, rather than the substitution of knowledge for delusion? A partisan of pessimism could easily defend this view, although he would have to grant that the scientists have better manners than the Fundamentalists, and see no threat to the chastity of women in ESP.

The trouble, we think, is in our theory of knowledge, as much as in the "data" to which we apply ourselves, or the "Book" we resolve to read. The men of the Enlightenment persuaded us that a book alleged to be of supernatural origin is downright deceiving, while the book of nature, although difficult, is at least honest in intentions. We may grant this, but still question whether "reading a book" is the foremost project in human

development. The priests asserted that salvation could be gained from assiduous study of and obedience to the book of divine revelation. The advocates of natural knowledge urged us to accumulate the facts of nature's laws and processes. Both procedures, while very different in content, are of an *additive* character. In one case you add the true beliefs; in the other, the demonstrable facts.

But suppose an entirely different process is required for obtaining the kind of knowledge we want? Suppose a profound truth is hidden in the expression which the ancient Brahmins proudly applied to themselves—the "twice-born." This is not an additive concept of human development. It has little to do with reading the "right" book. A twice-born man, we may imagine, will never seek his security in a tradition of learning or a theory of knowledge. As the *Bhagavad-Gita* puts it:

When thy heart shall have worked through the snares of delusion, then thou wilt attain to high indifference as to those doctrines which are already taught or which are yet to be taught. When thy mind once liberated from the Vedas shall be fixed immovably in contemplation, then shalt thou attain to devotion.

The men of the Enlightenment argued for the theory of a Better Chrysalis, but Krishna, here, speaks in behalf of Metamorphosis—the rebirth of man at another level of freedom and being.

This, we grant, is an extremely obscure subject. But when we find men of immense erudition and long training unable to examine evidence which common folk see almost at every hand, there is ground for striking out in new, even obscure, directions. There is no point in casting stones at what we might call "scientific bigotry." In the facts drawn to our attention by Dr. Rhine, we are confronted, not by a "scientific" situation, but by a *human* situation—confronted, perhaps, by our own gigantic misconception of the nature of human progress.