

## BOOKS FOR OUR TIME: II

IF, as W. Macneile Dixon maintained, man's self is much more probably a spiritual self than any other kind, and if this spiritual self or soul in each man may be considered to have an ancient lineage and an even longer future, the question soon arises: How, if man be so wonderful, does he manage to lead himself through such an endless progression of wars, hatreds, suicides and insanities? What good is a noble soul if one's psychological structure is awry, as so surely it is? Some say that the fault is not in the soul at all, because there is no soul; that man's brain has become distorted because of the moralistic preachings of religion. Others asseverate that the fault is not in the soul, nor in the responsibility of each man for himself, but due to man's falling from the grace of religion through temptation from an un-soul-like realm.

Dr. Dixon, however, claimed that all human faults are indeed faults of the soul: that to posit an immortal soul with illimitable possibilities is to posit illimitable opportunities for mistakes. And this seems to us both a crucial and a valid point. What meaning can "soul" possibly have that can help man if it does not signify the ultimate individual responsibility of each for his own nature? If either God or heredity-environment has entirely determined what we presently are, these cosmic forces will *continue* to determine our destinies. But if the mistakes and the responsibilities are ours, we must also have the power to retrace our steps and to move in new directions, whenever we have the imagination, courage, and will for the enterprise.

Though not commonly so understood, the pioneering work of Sigmund Freud was apparently inspired in part by this latter premise. The essence of his discovery as to the nature of man was that something called the "unconscious mind" hides the energies that make men hate, fear, or become insane. But Freud did not stop with

this alarming revelation. He also maintained that it is possible to learn how to take the hidden conflicts which make men hateful and ignorant from the "unconscious" and raise them to the field of the conscious mind. Once we get them there, he said, we are in a position to do something about them. No longer helpless dupes of forces and powers we do not understand, we can make conscious choices between alternatives, and then, however bad our choices may be, we shall at least continue to learn.

Freud had no use for conventional religion for the very reason that religion insisted that man's "unconscious" remains unconscious. The priest, and ultimately God, were to deal with those portions of self which are obviously much in need of improvement—and whose presence often occasions such deep feelings of personal guilt. For it is either man's fate or blessing always to know that there is something wrong with him, and even though his conscious mind may proclaim the opposite and his public visage bear no marks of self-depreciation, the specter is nonetheless present at every feast. So, Freud said, away with guilt, and on to a facing of ourselves as we really are, since facing ourselves as we really are can never be as depressing as not knowing what there is to face.

It is at this point that we may introduce (again) Erich Fromm's *Psychoanalysis and Religion*. Though cognizant of Freud's proclivity for overemphasizing the hidden "sex" in even children's lives, Fromm perceived that the basic impulse of psychoanalytical investigation is *moral*, and that anything truly moral needs to be cast in the form of an attack upon the premises of Christian orthodoxy. Fromm analyzes all religious beliefs in terms of their psychological effects upon believers, and in the process clearly demonstrates that the conventional "God-idea" is a very bad

idea because it suggests that Good is *outside* of man, in the form of a personage unreachable save through prayer. Man is, in one sense truly enough, "sinful and weak," but the psychological fact is also that he becomes *more* sinful and weaker when his religious beliefs emphasize his weakness. With unassailable logic, Fromm demonstrates how a God to whom we pray becomes an authoritarian God, and how it is that when we worship an authoritarian God, we lose our humanity:

In authoritarian religion God becomes the sole possessor of what was originally man's: of his reason and his love. The more perfect God becomes, the more imperfect becomes man. He *projects* the best he has onto God and thus impoverishes himself. Now God has all love, all wisdom, all justice—and man is deprived of these qualities, he is empty and poor. He had begun with the feeling of smallness, but he now has become completely powerless and without strength; all his powers have been projected onto God. . . . This alienation from his own powers not only makes man feel slavishly dependent on God, it makes him bad too. He becomes a man without faith in his fellow men or in himself, without the experience of his own love, of his own power of reason. . . . The real fall of man is his alienation from himself, his submission to power, his turning against himself even though under the guise of his worship of God.

Yet Fromm's attack is not an attack on religion. There are other elements in religion than the pitfalls of authoritarianism. For some, the word "God" has symbolized the spiritual unity of mankind. Some of the early Christians saw God, not as a symbol of power *over* man, but of man's own powers. And there is before us on the pages of history the story of an inspiring religion which has managed very well without any sort of God concept—Buddhism. Buddhism becomes for Fromm both an excellent example of what he terms "humanitarian religion"—a religion which seeks the stimulation of man's own powers toward betterment and a higher life—and evidence that the truly metaphysical content of any religion may be true to life and to man. Just as the existence of the soul may be credited, so also may the

persistence of man's spiritual intuitions, expressing themselves only confusedly by adherence to creedal doctrines, but very clearly through his aspirations. The aspirations are the growing tips of progress, and precisely because every goal worth pursuing is a goal a bit beyond our present reach, we cannot in wisdom think we have found any ultimate ways of formulating that goal. Buddha said that the goal is immeasurable, and that attempts at confining definition produce a religion which is long on belief but short on knowledge.

Readers of MANAS may sometimes wonder why the Buddha receives so much attention in these pages. Fromm, we think, makes any number of such references defensible, for Buddha may be seen as a link between psychological investigation and the "wisdom of the ancients." Thus many psychologists besides Fromm have discerned in Buddhist sayings and the scriptures the possibility that psychology and religion may some day be discovered to be speaking a common language, once semantic difficulties have been surmounted and the authoritarian type of religion decently buried. It has taken a long time for such a view to emerge, since it first seemed to those who viewed religion critically that its emphasis was invariably upon negation of the here and now. But genuine religious aspirations are not only a part of the here and now—they are also a means of expressing man's determination to reach to higher and more inclusive states of consciousness.

One of Fromm's best passages, it seems to us, is in clarification of this point. There is, Fromm writes, an evident "ultimate concern with the meaning of life, with the self-realization of man, with the fulfillment of the task which life sets us." He continues:

This ultimate concern gives all desires and aims, inasmuch as they do not contribute to the welfare of the soul and the realization of the self, a secondary importance; in fact they are made unimportant by comparison with the object of this ultimate concern. It necessarily excludes division between the holy and

the secular because the secular is subordinated to and molded by it.

Beyond the attitude of wonder and of concern there is a third element in religious experience, the one which is most clearly exhibited and described by the mystics. It is an attitude of oneness not only in oneself, not only with one's fellow men, but with all life and, beyond that, with the universe. Some may think that this attitude is one in which the uniqueness and individuality of the self are denied and the experience of self weakened. That this is not so constitutes the paradoxical nature of this attitude. It comprises both the sharp and even painful awareness of one's self as a separate and unique entity and the longing to break through the confines of this individual organization to be one with the All. The religious attitude in this sense is simultaneously the fullest experience of individuality and of its opposite; it is not so much a blending of the two as a polarity from whose tension religious experience springs. It is an attitude of pride and integrity and at the same time of a humility which stems from experiencing oneself as but a thread in the texture of the universe.

Like Dixon's *Human Situation*, Fromm's *Psychoanalysis and Religion* is an affirmation, a measured but important affirmation as to the nature of man. Dixon presents the Story of the Soul as a saga of high adventure; Fromm is concerned with the Language of the Soul, a tongue spoken in many ages and climes, sometimes as religion, sometimes as philosophy, sometimes as psychoanalysis—depending upon the basic philosophical orientation and not upon the label. This language affords a means by which the immeasurables of life can be fruitfully considered, so that man feels his own strength as a "spiritual" being, able to realize great potentialities of which his highest aspirations are but presentments. In a later volume, *The Forgotten Language*, Fromm indicates that the discovery of the content of the unconscious is of great importance to the layman, even more important, in one sense, than it is to the psychotherapist. Symbolic language, "the only universal language the human race ever developed," is a means by which "every person who wants to be in touch with himself" can realize something of his objective.

No single religious tradition, however, can provide the understanding of man's spiritual life. Religion and religions gain living reality only through the vitalization of the symbols of which they are basically composed, and unless the individual contributes his own vitalization, his association with belief is merely a sort of political affiliation. Political affiliations invariably move toward acknowledging authority, and, when this happens, the devotee progressively loses touch with whatever self-knowledge he had acquired. The same is true of psychoanalysis itself, if dispensed by men who think in terms of specialization in "saving knowledge." Rival schools of authority are but incarnations of the political, combative and divisive spirit, and offer no aid in nurturing the spirit through which greater soul-understanding can take place.

Here Fromm's contribution becomes especially outstanding, it seems to us. A number of writers have in recent years attempted syntheses between the field of religion and that of scientific inquiry. But most of these, including Lecomte du Noüy's *Human Destiny*, are compromises weakening to both outlooks rather than genuine syntheses. If the fundamental premises of traditional mysticism are accepted—if the "other world" is held of necessity to remain always an *other* world—one has merely come to polite agreement as to where the boundaries are legitimately to be drawn between the domains of religion and science. But supposing that the notion that such boundaries exist is the very heart of the trouble; supposing the first assumptions of supernaturalism and materialism are alike misleading, equi-distant from each other, and from the truth? An entirely new sort of philosophical inquiry is then demanded as soon as it is recognized that a cautious blending of previously conflicting attitudes leads nowhere. This is one of Fromm's assertions, and also one of the reasons why we find his approach to the study of religious and psychic phenomena so remarkably challenging.

The answer, Fromm feels, is not in a return to religion, nor is it in a renewal of faith in the authority of science or psychology. The answer is that some forms of religion ennoble and inspire men, while others debase; that some theories of modern psychology ennoble and others debase. And the real solution is that each man must learn how to distinguish, for himself, and in each field, which is which. If such a proposal sounds like an academic project, this is only because philosophy and religion have been made into academic matters. The search for the soul, however, will go on—interrupted, perhaps, or delayed, but never terminated by the institutional delusions of which we are so infernally capable.

The real issue and it is upon this issue that Fromm has taken his stand—is whether or not the subject-matter with which religion has presumed to deal can be studied, really *studied*. Is religion, in other words, forever an irrational matter, a set of vague theoretical propositions which must always remain unapproachable by reason, or can the search for meaning in religion be conducted with disciplined and serious intent? Fromm, along with a growing number of able minds in our time, holds that it can. He disagrees both with those who hold that religion must of necessity be a flight from reality, and with those religionists who maintain their faith is based on a reality which nevertheless must not be examined. We conclude, therefore, that Fromm, and all those who speak a similar language, are truly religious men, because what is being said is an affirmation reflecting credit upon the capacities of every human mind.

Thus religion, vital religion, is affirmation. Strong affirmation in turn, knows no compromise. Yet most of conventional religion is a matter of compromise; man's weakness or sinfulness is commonly stressed, and when this is done we are no longer speaking in affirmative tones of man's strength and innate moral capacity. Even in the cautious "return to religion" books of the day, the tendency to this kind of compromise is discernible. It most often appears by way of an assertion that

"there is a power at work in the universe" above and beyond all physical phenomena—and above and beyond man's powers. Du Noüy and others lean toward God, when seeking to rediscover religion from the critical perspectives developed during the age of science. But, says Fromm, there is another way to "rediscover" and reinterpret religion. One may look, not to a power outside but to the powers within man, of which all conceptions of God are but the symbolic expression.

It is quite possible—we think it likely—that every speculation which glorifies God confuses and weakens man. For man may be the only God himself, though a deity only partially awake. At any rate, the re-opening of all the great questions with which orthodox religion has so summarily dealt, when divorced from the insinuation of some sort of greater power called God, strengthens man's faith in his own capacity to transcend the limitations of his present outlook. We have always felt that religion without this kind of God might release untapped moral energies in man, and Dr. Fromm indicates how religion may, and why it must, be separated from the conventional God-idea.

## *Letter from* **GERMANY**

BERLIN.—After the currency reform of 1948 in Germany, the Western Allies endeavored to make West Berlin into a kind of shop-window for Germans under Soviet occupation (18 millions out of 66). West Berlin now functions as what we might call a "suction valve" attracting the population of the Eastern zone; at the rate of from 500 to 1,000 a day, people now stream across sector and zone borders into West Berlin, where they declare themselves "political refugees." Late last year special legislation by the *Bundesrepublik* (Western Germany) created screening agencies—called "*Notaufnahmeverfahren*" (for admission under emergency)—stations through which the refugees must pass before being permanently admitted either to West Berlin (where 10 per cent settle) or into the *Bundesrepublik* (90 per cent). The refugee must submit to fifteen separate check-ups—on health, political attitude, reasons for leaving the Soviet zone or sector, and so forth. It takes three weeks or more for him to be either admitted or rejected as a political refugee. In the meantime he stays in a camp or with relatives or acquaintances in West Berlin, and is provided with food and shelter free of charge (good food, incidentally; the shelters are being steadily improved).

This letter can not possibly offer much more than a few sidelights on this most recent human tragedy of our time, which has so many sorrows and tears in store for us. Often the refugees are people who during the past ten years have more than once lost relatives, home, property, and job. Now, they lose everything again! It is a lucky man who saves himself in good health with his family and some of his belongings (not to speak of furniture and other property which are almost always lost forever).

Several categories of people are typically found among the refugees: young men and women who deserted from the "people's police"; real political opponents of Soviet rule who worked underground against the regime, and, having been discovered, were fortunate enough to flee before being caught; businessmen and big farmers who cling to free enterprise and have been stamped as criminals under the Eastern law and economic system; "derailed" youth

and others who come into conflict with the Soviet social order or culture pattern; youth who are simply lured by Western chocolate bars and movies; peasants who lived in the border districts close to Western Germany, and who, being suspect to the authorities, fled to avoid being moved to some unknown destination.

Of all these, only 50 per cent get permission to stay lawfully, to have a new home, and get public support and jobs. The others are not driven out forcefully, and since they will usually not go back again of their own free will, they stay without official admission. Such refugees must live illegally: if they find jobs, they work without permit; many suffer slow degradation, falling to the lowest moral level, enlarging the criminal strata of society.

These are some of the enormous burdens created for the authorities by the policy of free admission to West Berlin—not only in respect to finances, employment, etc., but also in relation to social stability, which was shattered after the war by the influx of millions of Germans driven from the Eastern provinces.

The method of assignment of the status of "political" refugee seems dubious to your correspondent. When, for example, a businessman comes over the border with some property, perhaps his own car or truck and merchandise, he will easily get the desired recognition, although his conflict with the Eastern authorities was by way of strongly pursued self-interest; on the other hand, when a politically-minded man cannot prove continued spying activity (*sic!*), and has only his determined progressive attitude on the credit side, he will have to fight very hard for recognition, which will be given to him only in cases of urgent emergency, *i.e.*, danger for his life and health ("*Gefahr für Leib und Leben*"). Thus the evil pattern continues: not a decent attitude, but subversive activity against political opponents and *close* adherence to rigid political and cultural patterns are what count in our time and lead to success.

What of the decent man who lacks these unnatural traits? Probably, he will have to make many compromises which will certainly bring about the "unhappy consciousness" of which Hegel wrote.

GERMAN CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS

Two weeks ago, Roy Kepler said in these pages that only Europeans could be "Christians" in the generic sense. Robert Payne's new book, *The Fathers of the Western Church* (London: Heinemann), lends support to this view, for Mr. Payne's study of the architects of Christian belief must be acknowledged as possessing natural and authentic conviction, even though the reader may disagree profoundly with him. Let us say, then, at the outset, that the book is entirely honest—it makes no attempt to conceal the personal weaknesses of the Fathers—and is written with a participating sense of history; when we add that it seems to us misleading, this is a criticism which can arise only by imagining comparison with a similar book of equal excellence, written, say, by a champion of the pagan rivals of the Christian Fathers. Such a book as the latter, although it would probably be unpopular, might be of extraordinary value to the thoughtful of our time.

Although he could hardly have intended it, Mr. Payne leads us to the conclusion that the Fathers of Christianity would have done better to let religion alone entirely. That they possessed splendid coloring of character is undeniable; that they were courageous, often fearless, and fanatically determined is equally certain; but that they were the right men to shape the beliefs of the people of Europe for the next fifteen centuries—this we are inclined to doubt.

From reading in other books—*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Bigg's *Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Rand's *Founders of the Middle Ages*, and Etienne Gilson's *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*—one becomes conscious of the great abyss which separates the age of the Philosophers from the age of the Fathers. Gilson, for example, complains that some Christians have made a bad mistake in attempting to find in Plato anticipations of the Christian idea of God. Neither in Plato nor Aristotle, he points out, is there anything like the

grand affirmation of the Christian faith. After surveying Greek philosophy, Gilson observes:

Compare with all these laborious gropings how straightforward is the method of the Biblical revelation, and how startling its results!

In order to know what God *is*, Moses turns to God. He asks His name, and straightway comes the answer: *Ego sum qui sum, Ait: sic dices filiis Israel; qui misit me ad vos* (Exod. iii. 14). No hint of metaphysics, but God speaks, *causa finita est*, and Exodus lays down the principle from which henceforth the whole of Christian philosophy will be suspended. . . .

In his *Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, Isaac Husik says much the same thing:

In the Bible and similarly in the Koran we have a purely personal view of God and the world. God *is* a person, he creates the world—out of nothing to be sure—but nevertheless he is thought of doing it in a manner in which a person does such things with a will and a purpose in time and place. He puts a soul into man and communicates to him laws and prohibitions. Man must obey these laws because they are the will of God and are good, and he will be rewarded and punished according to his attitude in obedience and disobedience. The character of the entire point of view is personal, human, teleological, ethical. There is no attempt made at an impersonal and objective analysis of the common aspects of all existing things, the elements underlying all nature. Nor is there any conscious effort at a critical classification of the various kinds of things existing in nature beyond the ordinary and evident classification in Genesis—heaven and earth; in heaven, sun, moon and stars; on earth, grass, fruit trees, insects, water animals, birds, quadrupeds, men. Then light and darkness, the seasons of the year, dry land and water.

A lover of warm, rich humanity may disdain metaphysics if he will, and Mr. Payne, we fear, will think such comparisons irrelevant, but if anyone is really interested in seeking out the origins of bitter sectarianism and self-righteousness in the history of Western civilization, he might well begin with a reading of *The Fathers of the Western Church*. The Fathers were as good haters of men as they were lovers of God. Moreover, if a modern psychiatrist wanted to write a book on the neurotic personalities of

another time, he would ignore rich material if he failed to look up the lives of Jerome and Augustine. While men of undoubted ability, the Fathers of the Church were peculiarly preoccupied with a sense of their own sinfulness. In fact, they are very much wrapped up in themselves and in emotional tension concerning their "relationship to God." Since God is personal, and unequivocally authoritarian, these personal followers of his are inclined to deep suspicion of all who do not share their views. As Robert Payne says:

It is one of the constant themes of the early Fathers that the Church and the Academy, prayer and pagan poetry, can have nothing in common. Jerome followed an accepted tradition and, like the other Fathers, cursed the pagan poets all the more fervently because he was never able to escape from them. "What has Horace to do with the Psalms?" he cried, "Vergil with the Gospels? Cicero with the Apostles? All things pure to the pure, but we ought not to drink the cup of Christ with the cup of devils!"

If Roman civilization chose to follow the Fathers instead of Plato—if it embraced the desperate declarations of these talented but haunted men in preference to the patient inquiries of Socrates—and led all Europe into the path of narrow belief in a single revelation, then we can only think that decadence had indeed fallen upon the Empire.

One unmistakable influence of the Fathers upon later centuries lies in the intensity of their dependence upon a single and unique happening. The message and power of Christianity rests upon an historical event—the coming of Christ. Its most precious documents deal with that event or are commentaries upon its meaning. Christians, therefore, and European Christians more than others, are bound to feel the weight of a destiny which depends upon the past, upon preserving a strong sense of particular historical reality. It is almost as though the very identity of a believing Christian is umbilically sustained by the thread of his connection with Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary.

The Fathers served their God as a medieval vassal might serve his lord; and, reading the Fathers, one wishes that they *had* been serving a human being instead of serving with such partisan loyalty a supernatural ruler. Partisanship, even if morally defective, seems more suitable in relation to finite beings. A ring of religious imperialism echoes in so much of their writings that it seems reasonable to see in the Fathers the origins of the emotions of national conflict of many centuries later. What offends is not so much the partisanship itself as partisanship in the name of the Most High.

The Bible and the Fathers, it seems plain, set the tone of Christianity for something like five hundred years. Then, with the ferment of the Renaissance of the Twelfth Century—with the slow penetration of Europe by Greek philosophy—the Faith was subjected to a slow but thorough transformation. Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus most of all were made to supply Christianity with metaphysics, which became theology. By this means the Church gained an attenuated rationalism which for a few centuries more satisfied the hunger of the European mind for intellectual investigation. It was a tamed and submissive Plato, of course—Abelard showed William of Champeaux the dangers of following Plato into full-blown pantheistic heresy. And Plotinian mysticism suffered by the substitution of "God" for the Super-essential One of Neoplatonic philosophy. Even so, this extensive borrowing from Greek philosophy proved that there is that of Divine Reason in man, which cannot be suppressed. Nearly every Christian heresy worth talking about arose from some kind of attempt to introduce rational philosophical concepts into religion.

The Fathers, it might be argued, set back the clock to the Homeric Age of personifications in religion, but without the safety valve of polytheism. Absolute power vested in a single external authority is a terrible thing to contemplate, and it is not inappropriate to suggest

that certain centuries of the Christian era were governed by a theological reign of terror, as Lecky, for one, pointed out. Christian advocates certainly did their best to strike terror in the hearts of sinners and unbelievers. Payne gives us an excellent example of this by quoting from Tertullian's gleeful anticipation of the tortures of the damned.

Mr. Payne, we suppose, looks back somewhat fondly upon these doughty champions of primitive Christianity more as an artist than as a moral philosopher. He enjoys them as one might the imagery of a scene from Michelangelo, or a passage from Dante. They have a seemly unity with the rest of European history. Their monuments cast long shadows into the future, establishing familiar landmarks of thought and feeling. Thus one can understand his enthusiasm without sharing it. He is impartial in that he makes no pious improvements on the historical record, and if there are omissions to be noted—such as the slaughter of Hypatia by a horde of jealous monks, a crime matching in cruelty the most inhuman of the persecutions of the Christians—such things are not really a part of his story, which concerns the lives of the shapers of Christian belief and orthodoxy, from Paul to Thomas Aquinas.

There is a mystery about Christianity which we fear will never be solved. It has to do with a comparison of what little we know of Jesus with the vast and powerful institutions built upon his memory. We would welcome a "second coming," if only for the opportunity it would present to learn from Jesus at first hand what he really hoped would happen after he left the scene, and how he would judge what the Christians have done in his name. But, lacking the testimony of Jesus himself, we shall have to be content with Dostoevsky's chapter on the Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*. And we have a suspicion that Dostoevsky was a better spokesman for Christ than any priest—Dostoevsky, with Tolstoy added, perhaps, for good measure.

## *COMMENTARY*

### **COMPULSIONS OF POLITICS**

COMMENT by our correspondent in Berlin (not included in the Letter from Germany) throws further light on the situation of the "political refugees" who cross over into the Western zone. The problems and decisions confronting these people reveal the increasing "politicalization" of life in the modern world.

At a single collection station, our correspondent reports, during a certain period, some 15,000 refugees applied for legal entry into West Germany. Of this total, only 4,000 were able to meet all the requirements. The remaining 11,000 disappeared, some returning to the Eastern zone, some going "underground." It is to be noted, however, that of the 4,000 "politically acceptable" entrants, only two per cent later allied themselves with one of the licensed political parties in West Germany.

What does this mean? Most of these 4,000 people felt obliged to represent themselves as wanting to live in West Germany because of active political convictions; then, having achieved their end, their interest in organized political affairs went into a sudden decline. Yet the presence of a political interest was necessary. Our correspondent remarks that, today, throughout the world, and especially under Soviet rule, a non-political life is becoming increasingly difficult. Whatever a man does is examined by the authorities for its political significance, regardless of whether a political motive for his action was involved.

Thus even those who are non-political by nature and inclination are forced into currents of political decision, simply to survive, while, on the other hand, men with political background—"true political persons," as our correspondent puts it—tend to withdraw from politics, since they regard political affairs as offering no field for constructive work, these days. Politics, for the socially minded European is increasingly suspect. He knows that

the colorful legends of orthodox ideologies conceal the operation of a few extremely powerful forces which in reality dominate the scene. It is in the recognition and the determination of these forces, independent of the labels which are attached to them, that the true work of the humanist or humanitarian thinker lies.

If this be so, then the areas where human progress may be discerned no longer have anything to do with politics; and, most likely, they are the areas of work and investigation which are the least institutionalized, and, therefore, the most free from bias and self-interest.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

To maintain that there is a crying need for more "discipline" in the education of the young is to acquire at once some very objectionable allies. Most of the attacks against progressive education, especially those instigated by men of the stripe of Allan Zoll, have made much of this point, and we must contrive to establish clearly that "more discipline" has, in our view, nothing legitimate to do with nationalistic political conditioning. But we do feel that most members of the younger generation have little opportunity to gain the natural and tremendously important self-confidence which successful self-discipline engenders. For one thing, a society in which there is more and more opportunity for leisure for young and old alike does not present each member of the average household with the necessity for accomplishing certain labors in order that the family may keep going and prosper. And the best discipline is that which is born of meeting necessity. Without such conditions in the home and the community, perhaps all one can do is to reiterate the contentions of Sir Gladwin Jebb, permanent representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations, who wrote in this fashion for *This Week* for Oct. 19, 1952, under the title "Make Your Own Laws":

All of us have occasionally met people who seem to have made and kept their own laws. They are the creative ones. Their personalities are in some way illuminated from within. Perhaps, as the Greeks thought, they have often learned through suffering. But they alone are happy because, as Burton suggests, they are fulfilling their manhood. . . . Everybody should make an effort to discover the good and true by himself, and then set standards based upon his own findings. In doing so there are the great masters to guide us; but it is still the individual who must seek and find.

The difficulty, of course, is that such recommendations are hard to convert into a spontaneously accepted ideal for children. Those who understand what Sir Gladwin means are those who have reaped the benefit of self-discipline in their own lives.

It may be possible, however, to make a few things clear in our own understanding, one of which is that the practice of democracy entails the absolute acceptance of a "government by laws." While an enlightened aristocracy may be, as Plato intimated, the most natural and best of all governments, and if it is based upon the trust and respect for those best fitted to govern, there will be little need for specific laws and agencies of enforcement. But all experiments at successful *self-government* entail the rigid observance of all the laws upon which the community has agreed. A respect for Solon's laws in ancient Athens had much to do with the strength of character which many Athenian citizens possessed, and the average American home may need to inculcate a similar spirit in regard to those patterns and canons of behavior which are recognized as necessary for the welfare of the family.

A reading of the Gilbreths' *Cheaper by the Dozen* nicely illustrates this point. Here the mere weight of organizational complexity involved in maintaining twelve children under one roof made the rules of the home easier rather than more difficult to establish, but one cannot escape the feeling that each one of the children gained a great deal from following the patterns to the letter. Making strict laws, and abiding by them oneself and administering them impersonally produce an entirely different psychological approach from that of constantly moralizing to children. Laws need not define whether a boy or girl is "good" or "bad." If the laws are inflexible, impersonal, and always administered in the same spirit, they can be regarded simply as necessary adjuncts to living, and their requirements given rigor by a retribution which pronounces no moral judgment whatsoever.

In our opinion, any mechanisms which establish the idea that no obligation is correctly performed unless it is performed punctually is of great benefit. Insistence upon punctuality has no intrinsic relation with authoritarian outlooks, even if Mussolini did happen to make the Italian trains run on time. The virtues of punctuality contribute to the adequate discharging of our obligations to another who depends upon our promptness in fulfilling a promise. If those at home are late in preparing a breakfast, or

if the children are late in making their beds in the morning, not any of them are psychologically free; they have incurred an additional obligation in forcing someone else to change plans, hurry more than is necessary, or make an unfair choice between finishing up the housework or leaving a room in disarray. The child who grows to be an unpunctual man is always adding to the obligations of his life, and if we truly believe in securing a maximum of freedom, we must include freedom from that self-conscious uneasiness invariably generated in the man who does not fulfill his promises to the letter.

Of all the possible mechanisms for increasing punctuality in the home, we think that of establishing monetary fines and penalties may often be best for a starter—and this is, certainly, not an area in which we should let the abstract idealism which maintains that "all good things should be done without concern about money" get in the way. Money is an impersonal symbol of value of a sort, and by means of fines for lateness or neglect the individual contributing keeps pace with his own delinquencies, rather than letting them pile up as a kind of moral insolvency that cannot be satisfactorily cleared. The man or child, paying a penalty for some lack of self-discipline which prevents his fulfilling his duties on time, has immediately made recompense. His future efforts at improving himself are therefore not blurred by the weight of previous deficits—he has "paid his way," at least symbolically.

Such experiments can often be made at home, with the parents leading off by a willingness to fine themselves, and a common fund developed out of which household appliances and other necessities may be purchased. Here, again, it becomes advisable to let young children earn some money of their own so that they can enter into such a procedure at a rate commensurate with their ability. Father and mother, of course, need to establish much stiffer penalties for themselves than for the younger members of the family, not only because they will have a great deal more money available, but also because they have had a great many more years in which to learn how important punctuality can be.

While this suggestion may seem rather crass to some parents, who will instinctively react against

"commercializing" the home, our rejoinder is that until some sort of mechanism is set up for encouraging punctuality, the type of automatic and spontaneous self-discipline which is the highest and best will probably not develop. If such a system is to be put into practice, however, a great deal of discrimination is obviously necessary. No parent, it seems to us, should "fine" a child for not completing school homework on schedule. This is another area of the child's life, and it is only the area which directly affects the other members of the family which should serve as a focus for this type of regulation.

We wonder how many children, in their play, have developed strict rules of their own to follow and even "punish" themselves in some way for failing to observe the regulations. According to David Riesman, the most absorbing play is the play which is rigorous, which presents the greatest challenge, and which, at times, is even uncomfortable because of the strains of discipline attached. This preference may grow out of an innate human love of perfection, and needs to be encouraged by every means possible. The child who observes parents living without any rigorous discipline in regard to their time—their privileges of wealth and position perhaps allowing or even encouraging carelessness—starts out in life with a great psychological handicap. The child or the man who cannot plan well enough to rely perfectly on his own promise will know that he or she is not dependable, and this is a greater cross to bear than is commonly imagined.

We do not maintain that such devices and practices as those proposed develop the higher aspects of what may be called the "moral nature." Yet until one's psychological and physical energies have become disciplined, it is much more difficult to grasp the real meaning of moral precepts, which in themselves require appreciation of "exactness" and "exactingness" as their very substratum.

## *FRONTIERS*

### What Psychic Research Has Found Out

WHAT, exactly, have been the results of modern psychic research? If we neglect the large and doubtful area of mediumship—a field too complicated for brief discussion—and restrict inquiry to what is currently termed Parapsychology, excellent answers to this question may be drawn from a paper by Dr. J. B. Rhine, head of the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University, presented last year at a Unitarian Colloquium on the Nature of Man.

Present-day psychic research at Duke and other universities has come to be known as studies in Extra Sensory Perception, commonly abbreviated to ESP. It involves telepathy or thought transference, clairvoyance, premonitory dreams, and has recently produced findings on the question of whether thought or will can directly affect physical objects. Concerning ESP, Dr. Rhine makes this summary:

Extrasensory perception is an unconscious operation subject to some degree of volitional control but unreliable because of the absence of any introspective guidance in determining when and, indeed, whether it is operating at any given time or trial. It has been found to be independent of those main criteria of physical operations, time, space, and mass, as far as it has been possible to subject it to comparative study on those lines. No relation has been found, under test conditions, between ESP scoring and distance of the subject from the person or object he is trying to contact. Even time has not been found to limit the functioning of ESP and an experimental foundation has been established for the age-old hypothesis of prophecy, not as a divine but as a common human attribute.

In this paper, "A Scientific Approach to the Problems of Religion," Dr. Rhine endeavors to show the pertinence of parapsychology to religious questions. Accordingly, in reporting on the accomplishments of research in ESP, he lays emphasis on aspects presumed to be of interest to religionists. His first statement of broad, general significance is this:

From these research findings that certain subjects under favorable conditions can produce test results that could not have been produced by physical operations, as physics is defined today, we can safely conclude that there is something operative in man that transcends physical law and, therefore, by definition, represents spiritual law. The universe then is one about which it is possible to be religious. What lies behind these fleeting effects we must, as scientists, restrain ourselves at present from attempting to say. . . . [although we may] suspect that there is a great hidden system of operations behind these transient phenomena.

Concerning the direct influence of mind upon matter—now known as psychokinesis—Dr. Rhine says:

. . . from the accumulated work of many investigators here and abroad there is an incontestable and unshakable case for the psychokinetic action of subject upon object. There is some influence of mind over matter not explainable in terms of any known physical principle. This psychokinesis or PK is the other half of the transcendent psychophysical action that has been demonstrated in the ESP researches. The two may be considered as basic aspects of a unitary relationship.

Of necessity, in discussing the progress of psychic research in relation to religion, the question of immortality or "survival of death" receives attention. Dr. Rhine reviews the work done by Richard Hodgson with the famous Boston medium, Mrs. Piper, and concludes:

. . . although we appreciate no less the great problem involved, we recognize that there is an alternative interpretation to the results produced by the Hodgson studies of the Piper mediumship. Put all too briefly, the alternative is this: It is possible to account for the results as a product of the combined personal agency of the living without necessarily requiring the intervention of the personalities of the dead. The *psi* [psychic] capacities of the medium and the other participants cannot easily be eliminated. Indeed, there is no point in assuming that the deceased personality, if such there is, has more *psi* capacity than the living, though it is possible; the question remains a matter for research.

In short, through investigation of ESP we come upon what is unmistakably non-physical, objective reality. Although Dr. Rhine says that

this reality, "by definition, represents spiritual law," we are content to call it simply "psychic," since "spiritual" seems to us to connote considerably more than what is merely non-physical. This third category of experience or being seems almost a practical necessity, for "spiritual" and "spirit" are words which ought to be reserved to designate a more ultimate range of phenomena—if, indeed, there are "spiritual phenomena."

We should rather incline to name spiritual realities as *noumena*, connecting them with knowledge, wisdom, conscience, and intuition—all those aspects of life which bespeak the moral and creative intelligence of what, for lack of a generally acceptable term, we may call the soul. A person with psychic capacities may not be "wise" at all—may, in fact, be notably lacking in personal discipline, and the victim rather than the master of his "gift." Why, then, regard the capacity as spiritual?

Religious tradition and even folklore would have us believe that the psychic and the spiritual are often joined in extraordinary individuals. This seems not unnatural, but the distinction between the two orders seems important enough to be carefully preserved. If anyone wishes to urge that the development of psychic faculties gives greater radius to the power of spiritual insight or that psychic ability is somehow evidence of still higher potentialities, we should hardly object. But the confusion of the psychic with the spiritual will leave us open to believing that psychic achievements are evidence of moral growth. Perhaps we should say, instead, that just as the psychic transcends the physical, so the spiritual transcends the psychic. If, through psychic research, the modern world may be led to consider the possibility of "a great hidden system of operations" behind the veil of physical existence, this, surely, is transcendent enough for the time being. The truly spiritual, we think, requires still another order of perception—not only extra sensory, but extra psychic as well.