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A CLAIM TO PROGRESS

THE one thing that, apart from ignorance or shallow conceit, preserves for modern man some feeling of superiority or achievement over past civilizations is what may be called his "social sense"—a form of moral judgment which enters into all his opinions of ancient religions, philosophies, and ethical systems. Even when we question the practical meaning of human "equality," wondering if this idea has not been grossly over-simplified by demagogues, we remain convinced of its profound truth, and although there were those among the ancients who acknowledged the spiritual identity—and therefore a *fundamental* equality—of all men, the failure of even these to examine critically the structure of the societies of their time seems an almost unforgivable sin of omission.

The Buddha, we say to ourselves, while evolving a sublime religious philosophy and a liberating psychology, found nothing especially wrong with the absolute rule of kings and princes. Almost without exception, the sacred literature of the past honors as a matter of course the status of kingship. "Bad kings," of course, are condemned as evil men, but the impersonal criticism of kings, as such—as men endowed with the authority to oppress their people, if they so choose—this we almost never find in ancient thought.

But why should anyone expect to discover the concepts made popular by the French and American revolutions in works set down many centuries ago? This is precisely the point. With all our weaknesses and shortcomings—concentration camps, death-camps, and atom bombs—modern civilization does represent a stage of progress beyond the past. A school boy who has read a little of Thomas Paine or Thomas Jefferson, we feel, "knows more" than the sages of antiquity, simply because he participates in the modem "social sense." What we really mean when we say this is that, with all their wisdom, these ancients ought to have at least attempted to influence their time toward incorporating in their social systems some recognition of the equality of man. Yet the Bible thunders concerning the importance of the "Powers that be"; Confucius speaks tranquilly of the responsibilities of the ruler; Jesus urges us to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; while Plato allows an authority to the rulers of his philosophical state which would be at least disturbing to a modern democrat.

Whatever we may rejoin to this, one thing seems certain: we shall never be able to think exactly as the ancient thought, however well we think. Always, we shall feel this gap between ancient and modern ethics, as though the wise men of old speak to us but partially, without touching the chords which are most familiar to our ears.

Yet need this gap be as wide as we keep it? Our habit of defining practically all morality in social terms may have carried this single virtue of the modern world to such an excess that we are blinded to many things the ancients understood. Take the attitude of grown-ups toward children, or of the young toward the older and the very old: here are abysses in understanding as wide or wider than that which divides ancient and modern views of the social question. Social issues are generally defined in terms of adult relationships, having to do with politics, economics, and the prejudices of class and color. But what of relationships which do not depend upon either money or power? Social justice is not the same as human understanding, although it may be a part of human understanding.

We have child labor laws, in response to our social conscience, but the businessman who

habitually thinks of children as a potential market for what he has to sell—is he so very much more civilized than the mine-owning employer of children of the nineteenth century? The stress on economics in our society—economic equality, economic opportunity, our favored economic "system"—has made us regard human beings in economic terms. In consequence, the "important" members of society are people who are economically important. People who consume are important, people who produce are important, and people who do not have enough of the goods of this world are important because they make us think about problems of justice.

What a withering thought it is, to say of a child that he is on the way to becoming a consumer—that he is entitled to consume as much as the next child, and that our best plans for growing children are those which promise them enough to eat! Children, no doubt, need wholesome food, and the modern wars of competing economic systems have so laid waste at least one continent that we know all about malnutrition and its physiological and psychological effects upon the young. Let us agree that the right to consume is basic enough, and go on from there. How, then, do we think of children and their future? What, indeed, does it mean to be a child that is on the way to becoming a man or a woman? Instead of answering, let us reflect upon what it has meant to the old, about to depart from this life, to have been a man or a woman. And how do those in vigorous youth or middle life regard the old?

Is it no more than coincidence that both the old and the young are much given to inadequate imitation of the behavior of the economically productive and the most actively consuming? The oldster who is proud that at eighty he is still on the job at eight o'clock in the morning, or the youngster who, early and late, is scheming for gainful employment—have they nothing better to do at their time of life? Being busy doubtless builds character, and in a society obsessed by economics such individuals are doubtless its best representatives, but among oldsters we prefer Whitman, and among children almost any harum-scarum youngster more intent upon his own version of the worth-while in life than the economic race of his parents or guardians.

The best we can think of to say of the economic aspect of modern social philosophy is that it stands the profit-loving free-enterprise theory on its head, in this way—it accepts the acquisitive goal or definition of the good, but insists that the acquisition must be for *everybody*. This would probably be all right, if modern thought offered some other dominant goal than acquisition—another goal which the men of our time took seriously—but it does not, and to our way of thinking the whole drive for economic justice turns sour as a result. Further, we are generally distrustful of any social philosophy which finds its highest demands fulfilled by either mild or energetic expropriation—by taking away a measurable surplus from some men and giving it to others who do not have enough. (Only one thing do we distrust more, and that is the capitalist piety which proposes an argument of this sort in defense of Free Enterprise!) The true goods of life, so far as we can see, are those which can neither be taken from nor added to a man, except by himself, and the present complaint is aimed at the fact that social philosophy—which amounts to the total philosophy of most moderns—is largely neglectful of this measure of the good.

The missing ingredient is well expressed in a phrase which appeared recently in these pages—"how men stand with the Gods." Actually, men seem to reflect very little on how they stand with themselves—who are gods of a sort. For something of this mood, we turn to Marcus Aurelius, a Roman emperor, reflecting, as we read, how difficult it would be to imagine a modern statesman speaking to himself as Marcus speaks:

> In the morning when thou risest unwillingly, let this thought be present—I am rising to the work of a

human being. Why then am I dissatisfied if I am going to do the things for which I exist and for which I was brought into the world? Or have I been made for this, to lie in the bedclothes and keep myself warm? But this is more pleasant. Dost thou exist then to take thy pleasure, and not at all for action or exertion? Dost thou not see the little plants, the little birds, the ants, the spiders, the bees working together to put in order their several parts of the universe? And art thou unwilling to do the work of a human being, and dost thou not make haste to do that which is according to thy nature? . . .

Be not disgusted, nor discouraged, nor dissatisfied, if thou dost not succeed in doing everything according to right principles; but when thou hast failed, return back again, ant be content if the greater part of what thou doest is consistent with man's nature. . . . About what am I now employing my own soul? On every occasion I must ask myself this question, and inquire, what have I now in this part of me which they call the ruling principle? . . .

None of these things ought to be called a man's, which do not belong to a man, as man. They are not required of a man, nor does man's nature promise them, nor are they the means of man's nature attaining its end. . . . the more of these things a man deprives himself of, or of other things like them, or even when he is deprived of any of them, the more patiently he endures the loss, just in the same degree he is a better man.

Such as are thy habitual thoughts, such also will be the character of thy mind; for the soul is dyed by the thoughts. Dye it then with a continuous series of such thoughts as these: for instance, that where a man can live, there he can also live well. . . .

Nothing happens to any man which he is not formed by nature to bear. . . . Things themselves touch not the soul, not in the least degree; nor have they admission to the soul, nor can they turn or move the soul: but the soul turns and moves itself alone, and whatever judgments it may think proper to make, such it makes for itself the things which present themselves to it. . . .

Reverence what is best in the universe; and this is that which makes use of all things and directs all things. And in like manner also reverence that which is best in thyself; and this is of the same kind as that. For in thyself also, that which makes use of everything else, is this, and thy life is directed by this. . . .

Live with the gods. And he does live with the gods who constantly shows to them that his own soul is satisfied with that which is assigned to him, and that it does all that the demon wishes, which Zeus hath given to every man for his guardian and guide, a portion of himself. And this is every man's understanding and reason.

Hast felt a cool breeze? Is there a nourishment here for which we search in vain in modern volumes? If, being an emperor, Marcus saw no grave defects in an imperial order of society, he at least found the responsibilities of ruling over the Roman world a burdensome task—so much so that his reader may easily suspect that Marcus would have been delighted to step down from the throne, could he have done so without leaving chaos in his wake. He seems to have been one of the few absolute rulers who might possibly qualify as one of Plato's Guardians—a man who did not seek power for its own sake or for himself, and who exercised it with the reluctance of one who understood its limited value.

Here, perhaps, is the heart of our question—that what modern thought neglects is the good that men can do for each other, and for themselves, without any power at all over one another. Subtract the idea of political power from modern social philosophy, and what is left?

We do not deliberately make light of the demand for social justice. We attempt only to point out that while the demand is important, the goods that are obtained only by compulsion of some men by others are not, and cannot be, in the nature of things, the highest good. And the philosophy of humane and civilized men must begin by declaring devotion to the highest good. Failing in this, men condemn themselves to living under an order in which even the lesser goods obtained by compulsion and legal regulation are warped by the absence of a higher ideal.

How shall we unite the human wisdom of the ancients with the social ethics of the present? Here is a project worth pursuing.

Letter from **MEXICO**

MEXICO CITY.—Sixty-two-year-old Don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, who on Dec. 1 became Mexico's twentieth president since Benito Juárez, is a man of modest pretensions—one of the few native politicos whose name is not prefixed by a fancy title such as Lic.—Licenciado (Lawyer), Dr., or Gen. That the new Chief Executive is an ordinary civilian with an untarnished record of hard honest work portends well for the welfare of the nation.

The inaugural address of this *Jefe del Estado* contained salient legislative proposals. (1) Amendment of constitutional Article 28 to curtail monopoly; (2) Stiff penalties for violations of personal rights; (3) full citizenship for women; (4) drastic punishment of dishonest government employees; and (5) reorganization of federal administration.

Submitted to the federal legislature one day after his inauguration, the first constitutional amendment of the *Primer Mandatorio* is of transcendent importance. The text reads:

> INASMUCH as I have always sheltered the conviction that the Mexican woman, example of abnegation, work and morality, should receive stimulation and help for her increasing participation in the political life of the country, and that during the past electoral campaign, upon listening to sentiment not only of women but of all social classes, the existence of a favorable environment to equalize political rights of men and women was manifest;
>
> INASMUCH as the intervention of women in municipal elections has likewise resulted well, one deems it opportune to reform Article 34 of the political constitution of the United States of Mexico with the object of conferring upon women the equal political rights of men; and to reform Article 115 of the same constitution, abolishing Part I of said Article which conceded the suffrage to women in municipal elections.
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> (This is followed by specific amendments to the constitutional articles cited.)

Jubilation marked the reception by articulate Mexican women of the suffrage amendment. After approval by the House of Deputies, the measure passed the Senate on Dec. 24 by a vote of 42 to 1. To become effective, the presidential initiative must be ratified by two thirds of 28 state legislatures embraced in the federal union.

The lone dissent came from Senator Aquiles Elorduy of Aguascalientes, who saw in the amendment a threat to statutory Church-State separation. *El Nacional,* official government organ, reported the dissenter as saying:

> There are two classes of men: those who confess they are ruled by their women, and those who conceal it (laughter). Women have everything: they are in my heart; in the home they rule their husbands and their children. Then, what more do they want? I fear that they would neglect the home in order to attend political discussions and meetings.
>
> Ninety per cent of Mexican women are Catholic and hardly fifty per cent of the men. I fear they would receive instructions from curates, not how to vote for themselves, but for other candidates. Then we will see a future Congress of frenzied Catholics . . . who will demand the repeal of Article 3 {secular and free primary education}, civil marriage and the separation of Church and State. We will then be in the same fix as Spain where the non-Catholic fares—badly.

For not throwing their handbags at him as on previous occasions, the Senator thanked the full gallery of ardent women present for the hearings. An affirmative spokesman arose, described the dissenting solon as a dignified representative of the eighteenth century; another protagonist declared that the separation of Church and State would remain inviolate. Women will not confuse the boundaries separating politics from the Church, but will reject any clerical suggestions, he affirmed. The doubting legislator was assured that Mexico, which had suffered so bitterly, would not return to the ways of the past.

Although traditionally opposed to education for women, the Roman Catholic Church, perennial partisan of reaction—against Benito Juárez, Francisco Madero and the federal constitution; for

Porfirio Diaz and Victoriano Huetra—through its sprouting political auxiliary, PAN *(Partido Acción Nacional),* conveniently supported the measure. The Mexican women, strongest bulwark of the Church, will undoubtedly exercise a potent influence in the expansion of PAN.

As an appropriate climax to his six-year term, retiring president Alemán rushed to dedicate unfinished public projects before the termination of his administration, among them a statue—of Miguel Alemán —which was unveiled on the campus of *Ciudad Universitaria*—of which, incidentally, the stunning architectural conception will doubtless make it one of the most imposing campuses in the world. By accident or design, Miguel Alemán in sculpture bore a striking resemblance to the late Joe Stalin.

Aware that the millionaire ex-Chief of State has taken measures to assure posterity of his pre-eminence, a skeptical native expressed his sardonic gratitude that the furniture in his home does not yet carry the mark *Alemán,* as do bridges, highways, dams, airports, hydro-electric projects, *et al, ad nauseam.*

CORRESPONDENT IN MEXICO

REVIEW

CORRESPONDENCE ON "THE GREAT BOOK"

MANAS for Jan. 7 called attention to Dwight Macdonald's *New Yorker* review, "Book of the Millennium Club," a brilliantly devastating analysis of the Britannica's *$250* edition of "Great Books," somewhat expansively promoted by Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins. The chief claim of this set to distinction, apart from its price, is Adler's master-index-ofgreat-ideas system, the Syntopicon, and this "formidable production," in particular, became Mr. Macdonald's target. Macdonald also found much of pretentiousness in the rest of the top-heavy enterprise, and lampooned Adler's and Hutchins' estimation of its value. The MANAS reviewer, while not disagreeing with Macdonald on most of his criticisms, wished to say a few kind words for the supposed intent of the Britannica set, and for Dr. Hutchins' general efforts in behalf of philosophical thinking. Our review held that Hutchins' work in university and adult education merits more respect than it has yet received, and that those who learn enough about Hutchins to feel such respect are bound to benefit. The *New Yorker* article, then, from this perspective, appeared to lack a constructive orientation it might have had, and seemed to our reviewer to discourage uninformed readers from subsequently regarding either Dr. Hutchins on adult education or "Great Books" study as other than slightly preposterous.

Several MANAS readers added brief comment to the discussion, some favorable and some unfavorable to our review, and a further clarification of intent was attempted in MANAS for Feb. 18. Since then, Mr. Macdonald offered some counter-criticism of his own, which led to additional correspondence. His two letters arc printed below, together with a few paragraphs from our reviewer's letter to Mr. Macdonald.

Further discussion we leave to our readers—not, we hope, as a debate concerning which "side" must be taken, but as matter for reflection on the rather subtle issues involved. Macdonald, as we would expect, comes out by far the best in terms of effective argument on specific points raised, while the MANAS representations, attempting to deal with wider considerations, will probably be regarded as defensible only by those who feel that it is best, when criticizing any portion of a man's efforts, to add some account of the quality of his total public influence. Macdonald writes:

DEAR FRIENDS: I appreciate the kindly tone of your review of my review of the Hutchins-Adler edition of the Great Books, but not its thinking, which seems to me on the weak side. My review confined itself strictly to the set of books under review, a defensible practice, I think. I found the selection not too bad though marred by dogmatic caprice; I deplored the absence of introductory or explanatory matter and the poor quality of the verse translations; I found the format repellent and noted that one can buy almost all the Great Books in cheaper and more attractive editions, whence I concluded the purpose of publishing the set was NOT to make it easier for Americans to read the Books; and, finally, I examined in some detail Dr. Adler's "Syntopicon" (which I not only "argued" is the *raison-d'être* of the set, but demonstrated this to be the case, since a simple reading list would have served as well—considering the books can be bought separately more cheaply—if it had not been necessary to have a uniform edition whose pagination would correspond to Dr. Adler's index) and found it to be a useless, pretentious, and absurd project.

This is, I think, a fair summary of my lengthy review. I did not say anything at all about the following topics which your reviewer seems to think, or to imply, are also of necessity criticized in the mere fact of criticizing the Great Books set: (*a*) Dr. Hutchins as an educator, moralist, and thinker; (*b*) the "Great Books idea" as expressed in the movement to read the Great Books in colleges and in adult study groups; (*c*) the educational system promoted by Drs. Adler and Hutchins at the University of Chicago and at St. John's College; (*d*) "the value of the Great Books themselves" (which your obtuse reviewer actually thinks I confuse with "Dr. Adler's presumptuous gadget," the Syntopicon). Since I criticized only the Great Books *set*, and Drs. Adler and Hutchins only insofar as they are chiefly responsible for the set, it seems a bit unjust for your reviewer to charge me with using "guilt by association." The

fact is that my evaluation of the above topics cannot be deduced from my criticisms of the set, viz.: (*a*) While I've never thought highly of Dr. Hutchins as a thinker, I do respect him as a moralist for his pronouncements during the war (though I wish he hadn't also allowed the atom bomb to have been conceived under the grandstand at Stagg Field in his university!) and have still more respect for his educational ideas; (*b*) I think it at the worst harmless, and at best a very fine idea, to encourage laymen to read the classics, and so am sympathetic to "the Great Books idea"—indeed, the publication of the set seems to me to conflict with this idea, since it is so needlessly expensive and since it does not make the classics more accessible and understandable to the layman; (*c*) I've given talks at both St. John's and the University of Chicago and have spent a little time on both campuses, and I found more intellectual excitement and seriousness there than on any other campus I have come in contact with—hence I think the Adler-Hutchins educational theories have much to be said for them; *(d)* not only do I value the Great Books highly, but one of my complaints against Drs. Adler and Hutchins in *their capacity as editors of the present set* is that they care so little about these texts that they didn't even commission decent translations (not to mention the barbarous idea of chopping them up in "topics" via the Syntopicon).

If there is to be any talk of "guilt by association," it seems to me it should be directed at your reviewer himself, who, since he evidently assumes that a criticism of Adler-Hutchins as editors of the Great Books set also implies a like criticism of their activities and ideas in other fields, defends them—or at least the latter; he seems willing to throw Adler to the wolves, and here, too, I agree with him; Hutchins is much the better of the pair—against charges that I did not make.

Please excuse any undue sharpness of tone that may have crept into this letter. Just want to be clear and to make some clear distinctions. But some degree of sharpness is often needed in order to cut clearly, as with a razor.

Best wishes to MANAS—D. M.

Dear Macdonald: As the "obtuse" reviewer who perpetrated the Jan. 7 piece in MANAS concerning your Britannica G.B. critique, am dropping a line by way of apology, explanation, or what have you. I wanted to call attention to your article and yet also wanted to mention it in a broad context of the whole Hutchins-Adler-Britannica-G.B. Adult Education complex; having thus begun, I have felt ever since to be peeling layers off a hopelessly large onion.

I should like to clarify two or three things: First, I don't think I accused you of guilt by association at all, but merely suggested that a guilt by association *process* would work in the minds of "most who read Macdonald," and prejudice them against other efforts with which Hutchins may be associated. A few brief sentences in the original article, such as your present "Adler-Hutchins educational theories have much to be said for them," would have taken care of what I chose to regard as an error of omission. (This of course involves whether or not "confining" oneself "strictly" to a single institutional production is debatable as well as defensible.) Second, while I would indeed be the most obtuse of men to think you confused great books with the Syntopicon, the error on my part was not that, but rather in making what I meant so unclear. I meant that even an arbitrary selection such as that honored by capital letters as "THE Great Books" contains much that is worthy of reflection and susceptible of valuable discussion, and that further advertising for such material might encourage more people to attend G.B. discussion groups—something I should like to see, even though some attitudes in some of the groups annoy me considerably. The faults of the Syntopicon, I should hold, do not and could not entirely blot out this potential. And the fact seems to be that, whether we like it or not, more people will try a "great book" or two because of the Britannica enterprise than would respond to a book list.

I support the "Great Books" effort for only one reason: I feel that "ultimate" ethical, religious and political issues should be always and everywhere encouraged as subjects of discussion. I see this as a means of escaping science as The Great and Only Authority, and likewise as a means for escaping religious insistence that all ultimates are not susceptible to rational probing. A fetish of *The* Great

Books does bother me considerably, and I have always disagreed with about half the selections, but nonetheless consider most Great Bookmanites better prepared for future individual thinking than they would have been otherwise.

Dear Friends: Have just read your reviewer's "More on 'Great Books'" in the Feb. 18 issue, which reached me after I'd sent in the above letter, and should like to make a few comments. I disagree with the main argument, namely, that I should have gone easy on the Great Books set because, while not perhaps very well done, it was, as Herbert Hoover once called another Uplifting effort, "an experiment noble in purpose": I also disagree with the corollary statement: "we would rather read a book which inadequately attempts something important than another book which brilliantly serves up a completely trivial dish." I don't think you can separate form and content, or achievement and intention in this way. I'm sceptical about classifying subject-matter as "trivial" or "important": Tolstoy's description of Vronsky's steeplechase in Anna Karenina tells us more about Life, Humanity, Psychology, Destiny, Emotion, and other important topics than the collected works of, say, Lloyd C. Douglas, even though the latter, I'm told, are constantly grappling directly, though inadequately, with basic matter. In any case, an inadequate treatment of any subject, important or not, is precisely that, and the reader would be better advised either to read an adequate presentation if such there be, or else not to read anything. He'll just get all balled up otherwise. A little learning really IS a dangerous thing. (In fact, I thought one of the chief reasons given for reading the Great Books was precisely that one should go to the best thought and not be content with the inadequate.) Indeed, as my review implied, so wretched a job of editing, translating, printing, selection, and presentation as that Great Books set actually raises barriers to the reader's getting acquainted with great books, no "the" and no caps.

It is not true that I "regard ideative and ethical tastes as more important than esthetic ones," or ever have so thought. On the contrary, the ethical and the esthetic have always seemed to me to have a curious affinity, a sort of parallelism, since they are the two approaches that involve value judgments (as against, say, the scientific approach, which doesn't). If anything, I'd probably, in any given matter of judgment, lean a bit toward the esthetic, that is, if some conflict arose, which I have not often found to be the case. Also, I don't know how your reviewer can think that the "negative criticism" which I agree was predominant in my review was a response to writing for the *New Yorker*. I've always been a confirmed negativist (though with a few Uplifting touches now and then, it is true), and the most constant complaint about *Politics* was its "negativism." I've always tried to puncture pretense and incompetence even when it is on the "good" side, since I don't believe a bungling book, or set of them, *can* serve the good. In general, I don't give a damn about intentions—let them pave that well-known road—it's only the achievement, the actual thing done or produced that counts. D.M.

There is always "one last thing" to say in such a discussion—in fact volumes of "last things" from all participants. Our single point for clarification now is that we did not and do not wish that Macdonald had "taken it easy" in criticizing the faults he so ably pointed out in the Britannica set. If that had been our position we would hardly have recommended his article to our readers, as we did. But, precisely because we were recommending it, an obligation was also felt to mention other and more favorable things which might be noted about the G.B. program and Dr. Hutchins. Whatever else was said could have been omitted, and perhaps should have been.

COMMENTARY
THERE MUST BE A BETTER WORD

WITHOUT in the least intending to try to "explain" the psychological experiences reported by John Collier in Frontiers, we nevertheless protest his designation of them as "hallucinations," and have taken the editorial liberty of quoting this expression in his text. We prefer to think that—whatever the cause—experiences of this sort are likely to come to those who, to borrow a favorite phrase of Henry Beston's, are "on the side of life."

If, indeed, the universe is a sea of sentience, in which we, as self-conscious beings, differ from the rest of life only through our capacity for seeing, feeling, and reflecting upon the common interdependence of all things, then why should not such momentary flashes of *rapport* come to us, in recognition, so to say, of the kinship of man and nature?

An hallucination, on the other hand, promises no more than a species of self-delusion—and the term brings to what may have been a delicately balanced visual intuition the blighting shadow of abnormal psychology. Let us not apply the vocabulary of delusion to an experience or type of experience which affords to its subject an "awareness of the livingness of nature" of such intensity that it lasts throughout a life. If, as the Pythagoreans maintained, there is a "music of the spheres" which on occasion may become audible to men, why, not, also, a "dance of life," whose figures are revealed to an inner organ of perception?

At least one other, we think, is worthy to stand with those listed by Mr. Collier as "deviants" from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century philosophy of skeptical mechanism. William McDougall, who for years headed Harvard's Department of Psychology, before going to Duke to inaugurate the program of parapsychology research, was a cautious champion of Animism. His *Body and Mind*, first published in 1911, is the only book we know of which, at almost the midpoint of the cycle of psychological materialism, offered candid defense of the idea of the soul as within the compass of scientific inquiry. "I desire," he wrote in his Preface, "to see the world-old belief in a future life established on a scientific foundation." In McDougall, however, we had what was a rare combination among the psychologists of his time—a man who was both a scientist and a philosopher. Fortunately, present-day directions of psychological inquiry give promise that the combination will not be so unusual in the future

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A VOLUME recently published by the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute of School Experimentation at Columbia seems worthy of the attention of both teachers and parents. Written by Arthur T. Jersild of Columbia, the book's title, *In Search of Self,* is one of those deeply provocative phrasings which carries its own value. (Among other books likewise suggestively titled, though not dealing directly with the field of education, are Carl Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul,* and David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd.)* Stephen Corey, of the Institute, writes in the foreword:

> Mr. Jersild believes that the child has more capacity for understanding himself than we educators, or others for that matter, have ever realized. He believes, too, that something can be done, by teachers, to aid boys and girls to make what is probably the most important discovery of all—a discovery of themselves. He does not flinch from the possible accusation that he is casting the teacher in the role of a psychologist. Actually he does not advocate that teachers take over the functions of the professional psychologist. But he realizes that because of the very nature of their relations with pupils, teachers are constantly using whatever psychological information and insights they have. "In Search of Self" urges the need for improving the quality of this information and these insights.
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> In the empirical part of his report, Mr. Jersild analyzed compositions written by many youngsters who were describing what they liked and disliked about themselves. He had individual and group interviews with pupils who helped him interpret some of these composition data. He contrasted what the children said about themselves with what the teachers thought they would say.
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> These empirical data are interesting, and the inferences Mr. Jersild makes from them about the ways boys and girls regard their own personalities, their self-control, their relations with others, their intellectual abilities, their appearances, and their spiritual values are judicious and revealing.

To this might be added the reflection that, for a long time, words like "self" and "soul" have been in large measure *verba non grata* among the ardent devotees of scientism, and are only now beginning to emerge again in scholarly works. One explanation of the swing of the pendulum away from the tendency to study man only in terms of his separable parts is this: there seems to be no way of getting at the matter of what "moral responsibility" is, nor how it may be awakened, without consideration of man as a forever responsible entity, whose special self-hood, however influenced by environmental conditioning and childhood experience, is nonetheless uniquely his own. Non-religious use of the word "soul," and such use as Mr. Jersild makes of the word "self," invite us to consider the possibility that *we* are ultimately responsible for our own character—that no educator or psychologist can mold a new one for us, nor can any discouraging events in our past bar us from ultimately becoming the sort of beings we should like to be.

Jersild himself seems to stand at some sort of crossroads in respect to the above questions. He emphasizes the ethical necessity for helping children to individual self-respect by way of a reference to Harry Stack Sullivan: "In common with Homey, Fromm, and others, Sullivan sees a close interrelation between attitudes toward self and attitudes toward others. 'As one respects oneself so one can respect others . . . if there is a valid and real attitude toward the self, that attitude will manifest as valid and real toward others. It is not that as ye judge so shall ye be judged, but as you judge yourself so shall you judge others'." Yet, Mr. Jersild proceeds, "According to Sullivan, the self is made up of reflected appraisals," and Jersild himself stresses the "social origins of self," even though he also speaks of the "self" as "both *constant* and changing."

There is, we think, more than a little difficulty in merging the implications of these statements. For if the self is merely made up of "reflected appraisals," or if it has merely a "social origin," how is it possible to conceive of Self as having constancy—or, in fact, any real existence at all?

However, apart from this philosophical contradiction, which runs throughout In *Search of Self,* Jersild's approach provides numerous insights. Most important of all, perhaps, is this—that when teachers encourage self-appraisal on the part of the

child, either through questionnaire or classroom discussion, they commence to learn a great many things they perhaps would otherwise not have known. The teacher discovers, for instance, just how important each type of success or failure is to the individual student, and learns how to give encouragement and help when it is sometimes desperately needed.

An important point of Jersild's is that when the mind throws up defences against ideas presenting an unwelcome view of self, *the learning process is effectively blocked.* Since education is quite obviously more concerned with acceleration and improvement of the learning process than with anything else, it is obviously sensible to encourage students to discard such defenses. And this, incidentally, means accepting the view that learning is so important that one should be willing to go through trying psychological experiences in order to reap its values. As Jersild says:

> Can there be any significant learning without pain? To raise such a question in an educational document is heresy. But it is a question that needs to be raised: for often in an effort to apply the doctrine of interest in education we probably have helped learners (and teachers) to evade reality and have confirmed them in their self-deception and illusion.
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> By way of partial answer, the writer is convinced that the significance of learning cannot be measured by its painfulness. Learning through which the person undergoes a change within himself by means of a discovery concerning his resources and abilities a discovery which adds something to the self—not only can be accomplished painlessly but may be an exhilarating experience.
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> However, in connection with learning which necessitates a revision, a change—giving up a cherished illusion, seeing oneself more realistically and surrendering something false—the case is quite different. It is doubtful that a person at any level can give up a cherished notion about himself or pointedly realize a limitation within himself, which previously he has tried to gloss over, without sharp discomfort, even though in the long run he will be far more comfortable and happier for having faced himself. The truth that heals hurts for a time.
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> If the school undertakes to promote self-understanding, it must face the likelihood that there will be painful periods. There will be times when it will be painful to an individual pupil and, if the writer's observations are a guide, such a program will frequently be painful to the teacher, particularly during the time when the teacher is finding his way. Many teachers shrink from the program for this reason.

Not by any means does Jersild answer the question of what the "true self" (or "soul" or mind) amounts to, where it comes from, where it will go, and what values are most in accord with its true nature. But he has argued, and effectively, that encouragement to self-appraisal is a necessary adjunct of balanced education, both in the home and in the school. A long-standing scientific prejudice against introspection needs to be corrected, and Mr. Jersild's work, like the work of psychologists such as Karen Horney, helps to balance the picture. One view—defended by Mr. Jersild—which we should like to see more in currency, is that all important knowledge is more than accretion. It involves a "re-organization of what was there before," and requires a new kind of self-description. The greatest educators, we think, have always viewed learning in this way.

FRONTIERS

A Note on Animism

WILLIAM MORRIS, in the *House of the Wolfings,* page 2, indicates that the emotion toward place, habitat, etc., is the product then and there of long, intimate union with the locus. "And it became their friend, and they loved it, and gave it a name, and called it The Dusky, The Glassy, and The Murkwood-Water; for the names of it changed with the generations of man."

But see W. H. Hudson in *Far Away and Long Ago.* In his eighth year came the extremely potent feeling of experience of the aliveness of nature and the relatedness of his own being to a nature intensely and sometimes even terribly alive, or if one will, conscious. Hudson believed that his experience was a recapitulation of the experience of ancient man. My own memory of the development of animistic feeling is thus:

I can identify no kind of mystical experience until about my tenth year. Then, I happened to read Marie Correlli's novel, *A Romance of Two Worlds.* The crudities of the book were plain to me at the time, but in some way the book did release an intense awareness of what one might call spiritual presences. These, however, did not appear as living nature, but as presences related chiefly to the human experience; and this awareness carried me into Christian religious experience—Roman Catholicism.

There came no further development until my seventeenth year. By that time I had intellectually, if not aesthetically, outgrown Christianity, or grown away from it. There came the almost lethal shock of my father's death, and a long ensuing depression. Then, after five or six months, in the early spring of 1901, I found myself reading Wordsworth, particularly the Ode on Intimations of Immortality, and the Tintern Abbey. This stimulus brought swiftly and overwhelmingly into my consciousness, not spiritual presences, but nature, alive and interacting with the human aliveness.

To the Wordsworth stimulus was added, after three or four months, the Whitman stimulus; and my first actually "hallucinatory" experience was on a hilltop when the whole forest physically seemed to be engaged in a dance.

A few months later the time came for our family to move away from the old home; as toward a twilight, I stood for the last time on the street beside the old place, again an "hallucination" came. All of the trees gesticulated or bowed in a farewell of extreme mournfulness. It was a farewell, because every tree was doomed to be cut down within three or four years.

Thereafter, the experience never became visual or auditory more than two or three times, but the passion, as it were, of awareness of the livingness of nature continued and never gave way even through the years of absorption into mechanistic philosophy and laboratory biology. I thought of it, however, as an individual experience. I never knew that it was collectively shared.

It was not until almost twenty years later that I encountered the experience of animism and of the organized vitalistic interaction between human cultures and nature, at Taos Pueblo, and then in other Indian groups.

A wider knowledge of primitive society seems now to establish that the animistic emotion was not in human development a product of long association with places but was primordial. This, whether it be interpreted as the mere functioning of what Levy-Brohl calls the pre-logical mentality, or whether it be viewed as Durkeim views it (the symbolization of the society into religious symbols incorporating nature), or again, whether it be viewed as in truth a primordial and also veridical experience, which ancient man reinforced through ritual, symbol, myth, fable, etc.

The presumption of recent centuries has been that whatever its nature, and whatever its functional role in ancient life, animism is now historically doomed. The astronomical-geological

perspective appears to doom it. The mechanical view of physical nature appears to doom it. Religion becomes a transaction between incarnate or discarnate spirits, outside the cosmological frame of reference. Calculating utility (whether short-range or long-range) becomes the ruling principle in the dealings of man with matter. Social psychology, even if extended into parapsychology, does not bring the cosmos within its sphere of attention.

However, as a mere suggestion in this "Note on Animism," it is pointed out that such a thinker as Fechner completely held as his own the "historically doomed" world view (see James's *A Pluralistic Universe).* Of modern philosopher-scientists there come to mind only three who move systematically in an opposite direction, or at least hold an opposite possibility to be real.

One of these, of course, is Alfred North Whitehead, who deliberately propounded that the ancient perception, with its validity, could be the perception and validity of the future. Philosophy has by-passed this aspect of Whitehead, viewing it as a mere effort to construe the cosmos anthropologically.

The second of these "deviants" from a mechanical or at least impersonal absolutism, is William James. See, among much else, the "Conclusions" of *The Varieties of Religious Experience:* "The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also; and that although in the main their experiences and those of this world can be discrete, yet the two become continuous at certain points, and higher energies filter in . . . The total expression of human experience, as I view it objectively, invincibly urges me beyond the narrow 'scientific' bounds. Assuredly the real world is of a different temperament—more intricately built than physical science allows. So my objective and my subjective conscience hold me to the over-belief which I express. Who knows whether the faithfulness of individuals here below to their own poor over-beliefs may not actually help God in turn to be more effectively faithful to his own greater tasks." To James, the question of the ultimate validity of animism appeared to be of stupendous practical importance.

The third "deviant" is Gardner Murphy. See the whole of Murphy's *Personality,* but especially the extremely suggestive, even audacious, concluding chapter, "The Skeptical Psychologist": "Psychology has studied intensively the aspects of self-hood which are in the area of individual threat against individual and corresponding defense and counter-threat; but it has explored by systematic methods only a few aspects of the deeper inter-individual unity that is a phase of the man-cosmos mentioned earlier." And (on page 918), "It is perfectly proper to regard man as a big-chemical system; in fact, this is one of the dimensions in which he can be observed. He can, however, be empirically observed in terms of many other dimensions; only when these have been grappled with (not merely philosophically but in terms of research) can his time-space coordinates be defined."

Again (page 927), "Like our predecessors we shall rectify mistakes not primarily by the minor readjustment of the lines of the argument, but by recognition of the fundamental limitation of the whole present system of conceptions. It is preparation for this destruction and rebirth of knowledge to which serious research should be directed."

One might be tempted to add H. Bergson to the above list of a few "deviants." His life-long supported thesis of the brain as a mere organ of action, limiting upon consciousness, not generating it, implies the existence of something like the cosmic reservoir of consciousness which James often intimates. However, Bergson maintains consistently a view of the radical dichotomy of the worlds of matter on the one

hand and life and mind on the other hand, and the central thread of his philosophy appears to be, that consciousness traffics with the physical universe only through intellectual operations ultimately mathematical and ultimately impersonal in their physical orientation. It is perhaps logical that Bergson at the end of his life embraced Roman Catholicism with its deistic or theistic, as radically contrasted with the pantheistic or pan-psychic or anamistic, view.

Above in this Note, it is mentioned that two or three other quasi-hallucinatory experiences came to me. One of these, at about my nineteenth year, came as an experience after a night of tremendous storm on the Tusquitte Mountain range. It came at the ensuing sunset; and I have never found words, and cannot find them now, to describe the physical "hallucination" which did come. It was of the nature of a stupendous gesture of the whole mountain landscape, itself symbolical of the cosmos—a gesture commanding my own spirit onward along a track on which the whole universe was moving or rather striving toward some event or deed or accomplishment that was not ensured but in some way was contingent on my own striving; and the time span seemed to be that of eons, although the experience lasted only perhaps one minute.

JOHN COLLIER

New York, N.Y.