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NATIONALISM: AN ANALYSIS

HAVE you ever tried to define who or what is an American? Many have. Senator McCarthy has. The Americanism Department of the American Legion has. The House Committee on Un-American Activities has. So have the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the CIO. Since defining an American is such a popular diversion these days, I'd like to try my hand. Sociologically speaking, attempting to define any particular national group, or member of a national group, must be approached negatively in two respects: first, we define by making clear what the national group *is not;* and second, we define by identifying what the national group is opposed to or organized *against.* This arises from the simple, observable fact that every human organization is organized against something, has an opponent. In order to have "we-ness," there must be "they-ness." Curiously, it is not easy to define a national group by what it is constructively for, since any statement of high purposes and intentions turns out to be of universal, not necessarily national, import.

With these matters in mind, let's try a definition. What is an American? An American is not necessarily a Negro, although there are many Negroes who are Americans. An American is not necessarily a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Jew. He is not necessarily a Republican or a Communist, although he might be either. An American is not necessarily in favor of internationalism or isolationism. He is not necessarily a member of the Rotary, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the War Resisters League, or the Ku Klux Klan. An American is not necessarily pro-French, or an opponent of the United Nations. What then is an American? The best operational definition I know *today is* that an American is an anti-Russian. This is the point of unity, or the largest area of working agreement. On other issues, there is no clear "American" viewpoint. Even this definition fails to take *everybody* in; but it comes closer than any of the others; it is more *inclusive;* and it has something to say about those who don't come within its scope: they are un-American!

This isn't an attractive definition, but I challenge you to find a better one, from the point of view of sociological process. For example, about nine years ago, an American was anti-German. During the nineteenth century, Americans were anti-British. For years American politicians swung votes by "twisting the Lion's tail." They proved they were good Americans by being anti-British. This early attitude, of course, simply reflects the fact that the United States was originally organized *against* Britain.

One of the differences between being an American of the anti-British variety of a century ago, and being an American of the anti-Russian variety of today, is in the degree of intensity. A century ago particularism was much stronger than it is today, and nationalism was in sharper competition with other smaller cultures: for example, people in those days spoke of *these* United States (plural), instead of *the* United States (singular). Local, state, and regional symbols were stronger in people's lives then, and so could often compete on more equal terms with the national symbol. To an Oklahoman of the territorial days, the United States Marshal was as likely to appear as an outlander who endangered the interests of Oklahomans, as he was to appear a man whose office superseded any local interests.

Today, "national interest" has superseded all other interests, political, personal, and religious. In a crisis there can be no other god before it. In America it has many names and expressions: "Our Way of Life," "The American Way," "Free

Enterprise," "Americanism," and so forth. For all practical purposes these names mean the same thing, and men will go out to die for them—even if some of those who die have not always shared to a very great extent the fruits of the symbols. The symbol is more important than the reality. In these terms, it is more important that people *think* that they are free, than that they b*e* free. It is more important that they *think* their interests are being served, than that their interests be served.

It is through an American prism then that we see the world and interpret it. The facts and events must be shaped to pass through the confines of the prism in order that they can become intelligible to us, even if in the passage they are distorted from their objective reality.

Since the conditions of the prism itself are in a constant state of change, it sometimes becomes necessary to rewrite history to fit the new view of the world. Americans have shown themselves extremely resilient in adjusting to new editions and revisions, transforming their opinions and attitudes in a variety of ways within the course of a few years. There are, of course, the obvious changes that we are all aware of: the transformation of wartime enemies into cold war allies—no great feat in itself, except that the wartime versions of our "enemies" were presented to us in such bestial form that it has required some elasticity to look upon them now as either pleasantly quaint supporters of the "American Way," or merely misguided victims now "liberated" into allies.

A recent example of how opinions and attitudes, and therefore interpretations of history, change, was given us only a few weeks ago when Senator Taft revealed that, conservative that he is, he has not yet revised his opinion with regard to the right of Communists to teach in American schools. Only a few years back, popular interpretations of the meaning of "academic freedom" included the right of Communists to teach; the criteria for dismissal for any teacher being whether or not he used his classrooms to distort truth, or whether he penalized his students for efforts at free inquiry which he himself frustrated through special pleading for his own beliefs or interests. All that, as most right-thinking American (that is, anti-Russian) educators know, has nearly gone by the board. Communists must not be allowed to teach. It must have been just a bit embarrassing ten days ago for some of the self-styled defenders of academic freedom to learn that Senator Taft, of all people, was defending the right of Communists to teach. . . . Incidentally, it is interesting to note that the Senator's own "Americanism" is so impregnable that critics of his statement have been obliged to call him "naive" instead of "un-American."

Another and extremely vital area for which history is being re-written for Americans, and, so far, for Americans only, is in the Far East. Almost all the rest of the world tends to reject the new American abridged edition of Asian history—at least in its early rough drafts. Few people outside of America believe that the Chinese Communists came to power because of the blunders of the American Democratic Party. Blunders there may have been, but most of the rest of the world is inclined to think that the Communists came to power because of internal Chinese conditions that were beyond the control of the Democratic Party, the Americans as a whole, or anybody else outside of China. Owen Lattimore's thesis that Asia is out of Western control, that the best the West can do is to try to influence, but not control, Asiatic conditions, is widely accepted throughout the world in other than Communist lands. In America, that thesis, within a few years' time, has come to be, first, rejected, and, second, held suspect as being Communist-inspired. Whether or not the thesis accords better with objective reality than does the counter-thesis that somehow China can be manipulated and controlled through an American association with the Formosan Chinese government, is not the test. The test is whether the thesis is ideologically—perhaps a better word is theologically—correct; that is, is it American? In short, is it anti-Russian?

I have pursued these examples at some length in order to underscore the power of national interpretations, whatever their current emphasis may be. National symbols have become the strongest symbols in men's lives, wherever they may live. When we in America talk about the dangerous nationalistic forces growing in the Middle East, or Africa, or Asia, we tend to forget that our own brand has its dangers, too. Liberals may castigate, but they also tremble under the attacks of a McCarthy. Motion picture distributors and public opinion acquiesce to American Legion pressures in Los Angeles, and Charlie Chaplin's new picture, *Limelight,* is not shown. In each case, men give way in part to the mobilization of national symbols *against* them. It is either hinted or directly charged that they are un-American, subversive, pro-Communist, *or* naïve.

Interestingly enough, the liberals mobilize the same symbols to gain advantages: as when anti-semitism or anti-Negro attitudes are branded un-American; or when Labor argues its case in nationalistic terms of the working man's right to share in "The American Way of Life" and the "American Standard of Living." These national claims sometimes go so far as to tell us, as I have sometimes been told by a voice over the radio, that giving my blood to the Red Cross is not an act of mercy and humanity, but a patriotic act. In fact, sometimes that voice has told me, and you, that our blood *is* an important national resource. Now there may be many things that my blood is, but there is one thing it is not: it is not a national resource. But in today's world the claim of the nation tends to be all-encompassing, and there may some day be a contest between me and it as to whether or not my blood is a national resource. When one man attempts to assert his individuality in some nationalistic climates, the pressures summoned against him often prove overpowering. If too many people acquiesce today to that voice, and accept the definition that their blood is a national resource, the day may yet come when only Senator Taft and I, and a few others will still be holding what will be considered an obsolete and unpatriotic opinion about blood and to whom it belongs.

What I am suggesting is this: There are some things that are not Caesar's. But when various power groups, right, left, and center, struggle for the supremacy of their ideas, they are often tempted to take the easy way out; they appeal to the all-high, the national symbols. But there are some concerns which, while temporary victories can be won for them under the national symbol, are fundamentally human problems which supersede national interest or national boundaries. Erasing Jim Crow is not just an American problem, but a human problem; Jim Crow is not simply un-American, it is inhuman. Similarly, problems of the economic, social, and physical welfare of people will not be solved if only Americans enjoy a high standard of living. We must continually work to prevent the national prism from distorting our view of life in this world, so that we see only the rosy hues of well-being in our own back yard, and so conclude that the task is completed.

Now most of what I have said to this point is unpleasant and sombre; the negative side of the coin. There is another aspect that should also be viewed. National demands are not all-powerful yet, even if they sometimes claim to be. Woven into the fabric of our society is a tradition of dissent, of appeal to a higher law, or assertion of the rights of men as ends in themselves, as well as in their role of participants in society at large.

When I was in Europe last year, I had the experience on several occasions of being asked if I didn't fear to return to the United States. This question was put to me for two reasons. First, because of a general reaction prevalent in most of Europe with regard to the intensity of anti-Communist fears in the United States, and some shock at seeing the Americans endangering long-established civil rights in an overheated quest for "subversives." A recent statement by Representative Velde was typical of this quest, as

far as Europeans understand it: he said, in effect, that it was worth the risk of smearing a man's reputation if along the way traitors were caught in the same net. Since Britain and America have a tradition that men are innocent until proved guilty—that it is guilt that has to be proved, not innocence—the British and Europeans in general look on in some dismay to see established concepts of men's rights being pulled down.

The second reason people thought I might fear to return was that they had heard me criticize sharply one or another American policy, and so they actually thought that I might face an inquisition, or even imprisonment, if I attempted to speak as freely upon my return. I explained to them that, contrary to reports they may have heard or conjectures they may have made, there was little likelihood of such action against me. Rather, I pointed out to them that the real danger to free speech in America today is not that there are already groups which can impose penalties upon those who dissent, but that too many dissenters may reach the point of fearing to dissent because of a generalized persuasion within themselves, and within the public at large, that only orthodoxy is now acceptable, and that punishment will be imposed successfully upon unorthodoxy.

I am not blind to the fact that men and women have suffered for their opinions in the United States during the past six years, but many others have suffered more from their fears than from stating their opinions. One thing we would-be dissenters must keep in mind is that we cannot expect praise from those who disagree with us; we should expect at best only toleration, and sometimes we should expect even that to be fairly exasperated. But the danger to free speech at the moment lies chiefly in would-be dissenters who allow their inner fears to quiet them. If too many shut themselves up without protest over a long period of time, then the day can come when the few dissenting voices still to be heard *will* be crushed, not by inner fears, but by the harsh hand of orthodoxy. Free speech is not dead in America. But it may become seriously atrophied from lack of use if men grow silent out of generalized and assumptive fears. Insofar as we keep free speech alive and fearless, to that extent will we be able to control the indiscriminate use of national symbols to bludgeon people into acquiescence—even for a good cause. When national symbols are used by all groups to bolster both human and inhuman causes, the only real gain in the end is for nationalism itself—tending toward its totalitarian form.

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BERLIN LETTER

BERLIN.—I was really amused when reading "Letter from America" in your issue of Feb. 4. I assure you that in spite of the extremely violent Hollywood films which we have to swallow here, I should myself venture a trip through the United States (if, being a pacifist, your immigration authorities would not turn me back). But there are more serious aspects of the matter.

When in 1934 I was living in Spain, an English gentleman asked me to help him. He expected his son from New York, who had to sail to Vigo and then pass through Spain to the Mediterranean coast by railway. Now, as sort of a revolution was then taking place in Spain, I tried to find a way for his son to avoid Spain. We tried to arrange passage through France, but this was in vain. Finally he arrived in good health, but without a penny. The Spanish revolutionists had had no chance to rob him, as this had already been done by some gangsters in New York.

In that fine book, *The San Quentin Story,* which was reviewed in MANAS, I read that in California about 2,000 people had been indicted within 5 years for murder or manslaughter. I doubt whether in all Germany, with about six times the inhabitants of California, one would have as many bloody crimes as that. Why is it that the criminal record, especially for capital crimes, is so much higher in the USA than anywhere else? I cannot believe that the reason is that the character of Germans, as a whole, is less violent than that of Americans. What happened under the Hitler regime has made such an assumption impossible.

But there is one decisive difference. Germany has been unarmed since the war. It is difficult, even for criminals, to obtain fire arms. As the mere possession is heavily punished—sometimes with 10 years of imprisonment—criminals avoid carrying fire arms if possible, there is so much risk. Further, there is no need for weapons! Criminals can be absolutely sure that all other people are unarmed.

An American burglar who wants to steal in a certain house, has to carry a pistol. The owner of the house may happen to awake, or to come home at the wrong moment. Seeing the burglar, he will shoot immediately. There is mutual fear between the two, each knowing the other to be armed. Fear attracts violence, not only in international but also in private life.

The German burglar, during the years since the war, was nearly always unarmed. He knew that the home-owners, as decent, law-abiding people, were unarmed. In case of being discovered, the burglar would run away. There is less risk in that than in a duel with firearms. He might be seized, of course, but this may happen to the man with the pistol as well, and it is worse to be caught after having shot a men.

Recently we read that a New York policeman who had been hunting a group of burglars for weeks, awoke one night to see a dark figure slipping through his bedroom. He immediately took his pistol and fired. Then he put the light on and found that he had killed his wife. Such an accident would be quite impossible in this country. During 1945-1949 not even policemen had pistols. They could not shoot burglars, nor other people by accident. Even now, they would not shoot without first calling "Hands up!" They can be pretty sure that no burglar has a pistol.

The experiment of disarming a whole nation has had a remarkable consequence. In the nation of Hitler and Himmler, whose soil has been dishonored by the bloody concentration camps of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, of Belsen and Ravensbrück, crimes of violence are now less frequent than nearly anywhere else in the world. The death penalty has been abolished without any visible increase in crimes.

"Safety first," we say, but is there more safety when both the decent people and the criminals are armed to the teeth, or when both are unarmed?

I need not point to the international sphere. The USA and the Soviet Union have a different philosophy. We cannot help that—but how safe this world would be if both were unarmed!

GERMAN READER

REVIEW
HOLLYWOOD REVIVAL

> While a "Hollywood" report may appear out of place in a magazine which endeavors to be of interest to people throughout the world, the incidental results of the impact of Television are everyone's concern, especially when they seem to contribute to a rebirth of non-mechanized forms of the Arts. It is a carefully nurtured hope of ours that TV, which brings standardized entertainment not only to your door, but into your living room, may eventually prove too much of a good thing, leading, finally, to a general revulsion against this completely passive way of spending one's time. Ridgely Cummings' notes on the revival of legitimate theater in Hollywood at least suggest the possibility of new life for the little theater movement, and his personal knowledge of these doings gives pleasant contrast to the ordinary "review."

PERHAPS because of the hold-back in movie production while the studios are converting to three-D, Hollywood and environs are currently enjoying an upsurge in theatrical activity. New legitimate theaters are opening up their petals like daisies after a spring rain and the old ones are flexing their dramatic muscles and exhibiting fresh energy.

Katherine Cornell, who was in town with a touring version of Somerset Maugham's *Constant Wife,* said in an interview with the Los Angeles *Times* that television is responsible. According to her, people sitting at home get a tantalizing taste of drama sandwiched between commercials. Having developed the appetite, they are ready to escape from their living rooms and support worthy stage productions.

Miss Cornell's explanation is at best a partial one, but the fact remains that the phenomenon exists. Although many of the new theaters open their doors in a burst of hopeful publicity releases and close them silently a few weeks or months later, after the backers have lost all they can afford, the trend persists.

Among the notable new ones, Henry Duffy has converted the Carthay Circle from a movie palace to stage presentations. At the moment he is offering Billie Burke in *Life With Mother* after a long and successful run with Otto Kruger in *Affairs of State.*

Maurice Schwartz of the New York Jewish Art Theater has leased the Century here and announces an ambitious program of classics, probably starting with Ibsen's *Enemy of the People.*

Another New Yorker, a dancer named Miriam Schiller, has taken over the old Gateway Theater halfway between Hollywood and downtown Los Angeles, has secured a beer license, and is running something she calls Cabaret Concert. This is a cross between a theater, a restaurant and a night club, featuring modern dance, folk music, one-act skits, and entertainment of an exceptional and highly sophisticated sort. The night I was there two young people did a fine job with the dance scene from Christopher Fry's *Ring around the Moon.*

A youngish school teacher named Judith Littlefield has sunk her life savings in a long-term lease on a former night club which she has redecorated and named the Arena Theater. There recently she starred a friend of mine, Vivian Brown, as Mrs. Alving in Ibsen's *Ghosts.* Currently she is showing a Strindberg play with the unlikely name: *There Are Crimes and Crimes.*

At the Las Palmas Theater, in the heart of Hollywood, Eugenie Leontovich recently put on a dramatization of Thomas Wolfe's *The Web and the Rock.* This was more praiseworthy for its good intentions than its artistic quality and lasted only a few weeks, after which the theater was dark until the other night when there was a dress rehearsal of Clifford Odet's *The Big Knife.* I didn't catch this, being otherwise engaged, but apparently there were bugs in the production for the formal opening is still delayed.

A few weeks ago I was sent on a journey to the suburbs to review the opening of a new theatre in Cheviot Hills, converted with loving care from a pool hall into the Rancho Playhouse by the volunteer labors of the Cheviot Hills Community Players. Their opening vehicle was *Guest in the House,* a pretty fair psychological thriller.

On another night my critical duties took me to Glendale to appraise *Personal Appearance* as put on by the Hide-Away Theater in that city. It was unpretentious but amusing and serves as another indication of the intense activity going on here.

Yet another assignment put a severe strain on a friendship when the paper sent me to review *The Pretender*, an original play by William Harlow, at the Hollywood Playhouse. I was forced to pan it but softened the blow by remarking that most playwrights have; one or two bad plays in their system and if they never see these produced the odds are loaded that they may not muster up the courage and patience to plug ahead and write the good one. Bill Harlow, with whom I became acquainted when I was putting on a play last fall, still has *The Pretender* on the boards and is going ahead with the writing of another one.

Another friend, George Patrick Graham, who played a prominent part in the dramatization of Franz Kafka's *Trial* at the Pasadena Playhouse, is currently rehearsing in an original play dealing with Russia, to be presented soon at Plummer Park. This one is unimaginatively titled *The Lash Changes Hands* and that's all I know about it except that it should be a competent production since Graham is a good actor. He is scheduled to give a reading of the accused K's soliloquy from *The Trial* at a one-night brotherhood observance for which I have unintentionally managed to become the unpaid promoter.

But the best thing on the local scene that I have witnessed recently is Robert E. Sherwood's *The Road to Rome*. When Sherwood wrote his play he combined all the factors needful for the creation of a lasting masterpiece except the highly essential one of clear-cut psychological motivation. His drama has importance of theme, beauty of language, dignity of concept, sparkling humor, solid characterization and most any other flattering quality that comes to mind except logic. As presented by Preston Sturges at his Sunset Strip theater restaurant, the action is so convincing that it is only later one wonders why Hannibal decided to quit when he was winning and why Amytis went back to her stodgy husband. Otherwise *Road to Rome* is an excellent play, with an anti-militaristic message and some shrewd comments on our own times.

My three friends come off well in it. Carolyn Jones plays Amytis, the lead, and looked so beautiful and acted so well that a Warner Brothers producer spotted her the first week and gave her an important role in *House of Wax*, the new three-D thriller they are filming over in Burbank. What with acting at night and working in the picture during the day, poor Carolyn was so tired that when a sequence called for her to be laid out on a marble slab in the morgue, supposedly dead, she went sound asleep despite the cold marble. Fortunately she didn't snore and spoil the shot.

It is a nice feeling to be able to plug one's friends. Too often, in my role as a writer who wants above all else to be honest, I am forced to pan them or else discreetly omit all mention of their names. But what this piece started out to be was a report on the rebirth of live drama in Hollywood. For those who love the theater, the grandpappy of the movies and TV, the current upsurge is a heartening development.

RIDGELY CUMMINGS

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COMMENTARY
REBIRTH OF A SCIENCE

THERE is nothing especially remarkable in the fact that the science of psychology is being helped to regain its "sanity" (or should we say, its "soul"?) through the agency of "child-rearing authorities" (see Children . . . and Ourselves). The dragging weight of "theory" cannot possibly exert the same degree of influence in child psychology as in other fields, for child psychologists are confronted by the practical problem of helping human beings to grow up. A theory which is found to interfere with this process, or to contribute little to it, is likely to be abandoned or ignored. The same considerations apply to the clinical work of psychiatrists and psychoanalysts. These men have their theories, but because of the continual exchange between them and afflicted human beings, a theory is always subject to the changes demanded by human need. It is here, we think, that the great debt of the modern world to Sigmund Freud becomes manifest. We may not "like" some of Dr. Freud's ideas, but he at least set an example of trying to serve the needs of actual, individual, human beings.

Interestingly enough, the effect of the work of such men upon academic psychology has become, in a relatively short time, a conquest rather than an influence. In 1940, Prof. Henry A. Murray, of Harvard, wrote for the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (April) a paper which tells of his own qualified "conversion" to psychoanalysis. While Murray is critical of Freud, and more of an admirer of Jung, his chief contention is this:

> . . . psychoanalysis is entirely concerned with man's inner life and everyday behavior, and academic psychology but faintly so. The analysts spend eight or more hours of the day observing, and listening to what a variety of patients say about the most intimate and telling experiences of their lives, and they spend many evenings at seminars exchanging findings and conclusions. The professorial personologist, on the other hand, spends most of his time away from what he talks and writes about. He labors over apparatus, devises questionnaires, calculates coefficients, writes lectures based upon what other anchorites have said, attends committee meetings, and occasionally supervises an experiment on that nonexistent entity, Average Man. He makes little use of the techniques that analysts have perfected for exposing what occurs behind the stilted laboratory attitude. In addition, the analysts have read more and to better profit in the great works of literature (collections of the best guesses of highly conscious men), and this practice has served to sensitize and broaden their awareness.

This articulate psychologist, while speaking for himself, undoubtedly speaks for many others who have accepted the dynamic quality of analytical psychology. And, be it noted, the vigor of such men's minds, when once liberated from academic molds, produces effective criticism of psychoanalytic theory. Murray, for example, asks:

> . . . the question is, have the Freudians allowed the id enough creativeness and the ego enough will to make any elevating declaration? What is Mind today? Nothing but the butler and procurer of the body. The fallen angel of the soul has been put to rout by the starker theory of the soulless fallen man, a result—as Adam, the father of philosophy, demonstrated for all time—of experiencing and viewing love as a mere cluster of sensations. Little man, what now?

Here is illustrated an early stage in the birth of the New Psychology, now in challenging youth, represented by the books and articles referred to in "Children . . . and Ourselves."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

IN conjunction with last week's discussion of Arthur Jersild's *In Search of Self,* we wish to call attention to "A Study of Man," by Glenn Gray, appearing in *Commentary* for January. A teacher of philosophy at Colorado College, Dr. Gray subtitles his article, "How to be a Parent—and Stay Sane," and, developing this theme, founds his optimism on the psychological views of twenty-six child-rearing authorities.

In a generalized introduction, Dr. Gray indicates why a revision of the idea of "total parental responsibility" for the character and happiness of the child is seen to be imperative. Since the young are often guided by tutors who carry Freudian doctrine to an extreme—by those whose own schooling has been dominated by the theory of complete environmental determinism—the children themselves all too easily come to believe that they are at the mercy of conditioning forces beyond their control. According to Anna Wolf, whom Gray quotes, it is also a distinct handicap for the child to have parents who "feel fantastic degrees of guilt when their children do not turn out well." Dr. Wolf continues:

> The child is thus doomed to be brought up in the gloomy atmosphere of parental disappointment or defeat, from which he can escape, if at all, by pitying himself as the irresponsible product of his parents monumental ineptitude. His failures and successes are explained for him in advance and forever as being not his but his parents', and the general attitude of guilt, defeatism, and over-all failure spreads out like a pall of smoke over the whole idea of raising a family, and thus pollutes an atmosphere which could have been sunny and honest and humble in the face of the whole truth.

Dr. Gray comments:

> The doctrine of total parental responsibility stems from the idea, so deeply embedded in our culture, that the human being is infinitely plastic and manipulable, that our freedom of will is such that we can make of ourselves or each other what we want to make. Many anthropologists have bolstered this favorite American faith with sweeping assertions of the unimportance of natural endowment in comparison with cultural inheritance.

Many of the "authorities" cited by Dr. Gray are much concerned with the question of "maturity." Just what does full maturity mean? Carl Binger speaks of the mature person as one who has sufficient self-knowledge "to learn from the past, not only to suffer from it." But what is self-knowledge? Obviously, self-knowledge is not possible without the "search of self" recommended by Jersild. Becoming mature, according to Binger, requires that children "grow to accept and respect their own uniqueness and that of others, develop the capacity to tolerate frustration and disappointments, and find pleasure and satisfaction in living and working and in their association with other people."

Dr. Gray reviews developments in respect to the concept of "maturity" during the past fifty years. "We are," he writes, "rapidly overcoming the assumption of a few years back that maturity can be understood in terms of simple "adjustment to environment." He continues:

> Whatever the demands of the present social scene toward conformity or toward "other-directedness" in thought and action, our authorities are sure that maturity is not to be found that way. In fact, it is becoming clear to many that we cannot arrive at an adequate idea of maturity through social sciences construed in any narrow sense, because maturity involves judgments of value.

"The present trend," Dr. Gray adds, "is to think of maturity as an inner growth in a process of external adjustment." In final summary, he expresses his own opinion that one of the chief difficulties in the way of psychological maturity for our children is "our failure to leave them *alone."* (We are here reminded of Erich Fromm's discussion in *The Forgotten Language* of the vast psychic turmoil caused by the incessant noise and activity of modern life. Only in the land of sleep and dreams, writes Fromm, is there calmness and solitude—and even then, most dreams reflect the frenetic hurrying and chatter of our waking lives.)

Important correlative material on the subject of maturity is furnished by Alan Gregg of the Rockefeller Foundation. We have ourselves, perhaps, never been "left alone" enough to develop much more than a modicum of self-understanding, and if we treat our children in the same way we will probably deny them their chance to become "psychologically mature." Gregg is sharp and strong on this point:

> In my opinion the fact that so many creative men and women tell us that in their childhood they had much illness or loneliness or lots of time to swing on the gate is more significant than we realize. Illness and freedom from over-stimulation give a child time to absorb his impressions, to integrate and organize them, and finally to create from his whole being a response.
>
> Such a conclusion takes us, at least temporarily, beyond the bounds of science. It says simply that maturity is a mystery and we know so little about it that all we can be is sympathetic observers, waiting for this human *summum bonum* to appear from the depths each child brings with him. Such, at any rate, is the conclusion that seems to me most in harmony with what we know.

If we accept all this as extending Mr. Jersild's thesis in *In Search of Self*, we are likely to restrain ourselves from forcing children into "adjustment" with prevailing norms—and to refrain, also, from completely "protecting" them from the difficulties which self-learning is apt to entail. Self-learning "will be at times painful" for anyone, child or adult, because the process involves relinquishing the protective devices we have either engineered ourselves or have been provided with by parents. But if "self-learning" is at times painful, it is also, at other times, the source of the greatest happiness, and, more important, the source of an inward serenity which makes us capable of assuming dynamic and creative roles in society. How can a man be "well-educated," at least in the philosophical sense, until he has discovered independent courage of the mind? Further, how can there be consistent awareness of moral responsibility without the presence of tested courage?

We recall listening to the surprising speculations of a university professor to the effect that his own small child might better be kept out of school entirely for the first ten years of his life. This man of letters was "well-adjusted" and well-liked on the campus, and had achieved a pleasurable and rewarding manner of living, but he could not help reflecting that the submergence of the child in an "educational system," no matter how "progressive," removes the opportunities for that solitude from which self-learning and a self-dependent attitude toward life may arise. He recalled that James Mill raised his son John Stuart without the benefit of formal schooling, and while the younger Mill experienced some difficulty in understanding the society into which he was finally introduced, the world benefited considerably by his unorthodox upbringing. Our point here, though, is that it may not be only the "world" which benefits; we doubt whether John Stuart Mill would have exchanged the enlightenment which his opportunities for deep and quiet thinking afforded for an orthodox, if untroubled, mind.

One thing is sure; there can be no psychological maturity without transition from emotional dependence to independence of mind. And educational institutions, even with the best intentions, often subvert originality. We are not advocating that parents remove their children from school, but are suggesting that they should be aware of these subtle, almost "esoteric" factors involved in the learning process, and that they take the further precaution of helping their children to become increasingly aware of these values, themselves, as they grow older. To achieve this end in the home, discussion of every sort of unorthodox opinion will be of considerable assistance, as will also be the allowance of large blocks of unscheduled time for the child to spend as he will, apart from too much supervision, and, if possible, apart from the "social group" to which he belongs.

FRONTIERS

Rethinking Religion

A DIFFICULTY often felt by those who endeavor to think intensively in the fields of philosophy and religion is that, by doing this, they seem to set themselves apart from the rest of the world—which thereupon becomes "the masses," or "the great majority," or, as the Greeks put it, *hoi polloi*. Yet a sensible man, noting this tendency, is bound to wonder about such seclusion from the multitude, whether it can be justified at all, and if so, how. Tolstoy, we may remember, found refuge from this egotism of the intellect by discovering, in the Russian peasant, qualities which he, Tolstoy, felt that he lacked—some kind of intuitive self-realization which the highly educated are commonly unable to attain. We may admit, perhaps, that Tolstoy eventually reproduced the simplicity of the peasant in himself, while retaining his own acute self-consciousness; and this, again perhaps, may be why we are able to look upon Tolstoy as an extraordinary man.

But what about this "great majority" for whom deliberate "high thinking" holds no attractions?—who follow conventional paths from birth to death, regarding all views on abstract or impersonal subjects indifferently, or accepting them casually, at second hand, yet who, if we are honest about it, may often seem to live at a greater pitch or intensity than the scholars and would-be philosophers for whom all these others amount to little more than a subject-matter for learned essays on the problems of mankind?

Do only "mystics" feel the breath of "divinity" about them? Is it that scientists alone, austere, remote, are privileged to touch the garment-hem of Cause? There seems a vanity in all such suppositions, some sort of intellectual self-deception which betrays the very quest to which the intellect aspires. Yet men of mind have no choice but to pursue that quest, to interest themselves in just those questions which the great majority neglect, so that the mystery of the "touch with life" of those who seem not to be questing at all remains an important problem.

It is a problem not often discussed, probably for the reason that intellectual activity tends to create interests which can be indulged only through its own vocabulary, and departs from this common tongue only with condescension. Yet recently we came across a book, published twenty years ago, in which this matter of the touch with life is made the subject of profound inquiry. *Earth Is Enough*, by Baker Brownell (Harper, 1933), discusses religion, its author says, from the viewpoint of "mystical realism." It is Mr. Brownell's contention that any man may have his touch with reality by means withheld from the technicians and architects of religious systems. Some quotation is necessary to grasp his meaning—quotation from a passage which describes a "type" among modern man:

> Tom Fisher is without status or designed eternity or any office in the realm that priests and preachers talk about, and though he likes to shoot ducks in the marshes . . . and drive a car or a business deal with speed and abandon, eternity to him is an official future left better to technicians in that line. . . . though Tom rides a wave whose fury is its main content, he lives after its fashion with joy and recklessness. Tom does things, if shoving things about may be called action. He shoots and loves and eats; he trades and swims. . . . he spins blithely on his wheel, and carping intellectuals, priests and teachers or those who yearn for more delicate adjustments to the cadence of their world were wiser to keep their mouths shut. Where Tom lacks, they are usually failures. Where Tom finds life in action, they find no life at all. What things the world of Tom may lack are mainly those that their futilities and niceness have failed to put there. The new world they have failed to face, and if Tom's world be wild and stupid, as well may be the case, the blame, if blame there be, is more theirs perhaps than his. Tom has faced the music of a new world, and if his life is reckless and indifferent, narrow in scope, brutal to those not in his group, his critics, it would seem, have heard no music at all.
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> For Tom finds eternities, of a kind, irrelevantly in the mesh and mechanism of the modern age, though the word would leave him in baffled

> contempt; he finds presence and the living flesh and movement of this day in a system that was designed for other ends. For other ends it is designed; most men must bow to the present day's impoverishment, but Tom can find in it an eternal now that too few others have. . . .
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> In a world of casual but intense organization, of business corporations, trade associations, protective and insurance societies, or organizations political, economic, recreational, of lodges, fraternities, committees, luncheon clubs, military, social, educational, meetings, dinners, "functions," societies without end and endlessly interlocking in his life Tom finds somehow the meat and sweetness of living. Though the whole man, if there be one, and his whole world are endlessly broken, subdivided, screened and sifted down into cells that allow few mixtures, Tom has vitality enough and lucky chance to live across them. He finds beauty of a kind in the interstices, and even in the giant fabric of society itself he can see the gleaming real. . . .
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> Tom finds joy that may be shallow but is no less real. His life spreads thin, no doubt, for organizations are by nature horizontal but he has movement. . . . He lacks depth and cubic quality in living. He has no stillness. Though confident, he has no self-reliance. The continuity of his life is always extensive, always in one dimension wherein movement is the means of unity, but Tom does not mind. He darts over the film of things like a gay water-spider; he loves facility and movement and the shining levels of his world, and while the bubbles on his feet still hold him up, why should he worry? . . .
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> . . . the churches are machines for Tom that serve no modern purpose. . . . Once the church was a pattern on society that men like Tom could not ignore; now it is displaced by systems more potent and more apropos. It never was religious, nor really holy; when its use was gone, nothing was left. A worldly church in a world of clubs and systems for Tom is at last crowded out. It shows the failures of man's efforts to organize religion.

What is Tom's secret, if he has a secret? Tom, it seems to us, is one of those fortunate men who have a talent for what they like to do. He is not reaching after something he cannot possess, but is able to find happiness with what is already his. You may say that his goals are not, after all, worth while, and this may be the case, but care must be taken to be sure that such judgments have no element of sour grapes in them. And if Tom's rapport with life is gained at a somewhat earthly level, he has nevertheless accomplished at his level what many of the rest of us have been unable to achieve at ours. It follows, then, that we are obliged to honor Tom's skill in the performance of action—which, according to *The Bhagavad-Gita*, is Yoga.

There is reason to think that every level of life has a kind of "Yoga" appropriate to itself. Why else should men of sensitive spirit find such exquisite pleasure from learning to feel at home in the world of nature? It must be that the endless activities of nature, each with its own peculiar mastery of living process, each with its own synthesis, struggle, climax, and then decline, present the panoramic drama of a thousand differing yogas of fulfillment, and that this, as we come to recognize it, places us in the presence of the gods. Nature reveals no futile longings, no anguish of remorse, no wasted tears. A flower, knowing only one secret—to blossom and cast its seed—works on this fabulous project all the time. You cannot distract a flower from its appointed task. No whisper of pie in the sky will prevent the roots of a plant from seeking water in the soil, where water lies. The flower, and all the life of the natural world, are blessed by their single intent. This is the unresting symbolism of living things—the eternal sermon of the world of nature to the consciousness of man.

By the same capacity for concentration, genius in man moves us to a proper awe and piety in the presence of a master intelligence at work. Unlike the plants and animals, man has a choice between work and a multitude of evasions of what lies before him to do. Thus, when a human being chooses to work with 100 per cent commitment, at almost any task, some kind of natural blessedness descends upon him, for by working he blends himself with the law of life. This is the magic evident in the ways of a skilled technician, and it is no more a "moral" manifestation than nature itself is "moral." Yet it is a touch with life.

Just as there is a "yoga" for every form of natural life, from an atom to a star, so there is a yoga possible for every human being. It is this practice of yoga, we think, which sustains all existence. If we wish a text for this, what better can we find than the words of Krishna, in the seventh discourse of *The Bhagavad-Gita:*

> I am the taste in water, the light in the sun and the moon, sound in space, the masculine essence in men, the sweet smell in the earth, and the brightness in the fire. In all creatures I am the life, and the power of concentration in those whose minds are on the spirit. . . .
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> Four classes of men who work righteousness worship me, O Arjuna: those who are afflicted, the searchers for truth, those who desire possessions, and the wise, O son of Bharata. . . . Excellent indeed are all these, but the spiritually wise is verily myself, because with heart at peace he is upon the road that leadeth to the highest path, which is even myself.

Thus even a man who seeks not wisdom, but something else, so long as he seeks with all his heart, has his touch with the essences of things. His life has the validity of concentrated striving. Here, it seems to us is the logic of Baker Brownell's *Earth Is Enough,* a book which all those concerned with "rethinking religion" ought to read.