VOLUME VI, NO. 37
SEPTEMBER 16, 1953

NOTES ON RELIGION

THERE is an enormous amount of writing about religion, and this writing will no doubt continue indefinitely, unless, as is not impossible, some strange evolutionary mutation introduces human beings to greater wisdom about themselves and the world than they now possess. Even the man who writes *against* religion is also writing about religion, since he is concerned with the answers to basic questions, contending, in his argument, that religion does not have them.

Western intellectuals have been writing against religion for about two hundred years. The provocations were great and the intellectuals, including countless scientists, revolutionary political leaders, and thinkers of every description have usually had reason on their side. As a great movement which was to gather strength through the years, the anti-religious trend probably began with the French materialist, Julien Offray de la Mettrie, who in 1747 wrote *Man a Machine*, a book which offended all orthodox Europe, while exercising immense influence among the educated, familiar with the progress of science. Lamettrie proposed:

> If Atheism were universally disseminated, all the branches of religion would be torn up by the roots. Then there would be no more theological wars: there would be no soldiers of religion, that terrible kind of soldier. Nature, which had been infected by the consecrated poison, would win back her rights and her purity. Deaf to all other voices, men would follow their own individual impulses, and these impulses alone can lead them to happiness along the pleasant path to virtue.

Let us note, here, that Lamettrie does not only attack the God-idea. He is not simply for Atheism: He also intimates that the idea that man has a dual nature, capable of either good or evil, and responsible for his choice between the two—is no more than bosh. The "natural impulses" which arise in man are his true guide, which will lead him "along the pleasant path to virtue."

This was Rousseau's theme, too. The natural man is naturally good. Society corrupts him, causing him to do evil. Tear down and destroy the evil institutions, and the natural man will naturally do the right thing!

Since the dominant religion of the time of Lamettrie and Rousseau had been responsible for endless frustrations of the natural man, filling him with artificial notions about good and evil, reformers like these two had ample excuse for their over-simplification, even if it was nevertheless possible, in the eighteenth century, for a reflective man to recognize the reality of the moral sense, despite the warping effects of religious dogma. Today, there is very little excuse for this mistake—little *historical* excuse, that is. As theological commentators never tire of telling us, the idea of a world with no moral principle at its root, the idea of man with no moral sense in his heart—these two influences have wrought havoc in the modern world. (The confusion and destruction, perhaps, are no greater than that which would have been experienced under the continued rule of authoritarian religion, but the success of the anti-religious movement makes it possible for spokesmen of orthodoxy to blame the free-thinkers and secularists for all the trouble.)

The fact is that the modern world now has to the credit of its collective experience two painful ordeals of life under authoritarian regimes—one belittling the moral individual in the name of God, the other belittling him in the name of Dialectical Materialism. And since the most recent ordeal is that imposed by the doctrines of Dialectical Materialism, it is natural that there should be, today, a general inclination to return to faith in God. Hence there is particular pertinence in a critical examination of the God-idea. This time we should be especially careful to see that whatever God-idea we return to, it does not accomplish yet another annihilation of the moral individual.

A subscriber concerned with this problem writes:

> There is something that came to mind when I was rereading a MANAS article on the personal and impersonal God-idea. In the *Common Prayer and Hymn Book* of the Church of England, page 659, under the "Articles of Religion, I," is this statement: "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions. . . ." I wondered how many of those holding a personal idea of God have read this.

It is something of a commentary on the intellectual quality of religious orthodoxy—that most believers are quite capable of reading this statement and remaining wholly undisturbed in their faith in a "Heavenly Father." After all, a God who can perform miracles of every sort can certainly manage to get along without a "body" or even "parts or passions." He can, like his only begotten son, be all things to all men—shepherd of the faithful for simple believers, and an abstract principle for the metaphysicians. This ubiquity of the traditional deity is so troubling to the mind that it seems to us far better to abandon the term "God" altogether. Too many deuces are wild in religious logic—the logic which uses the word "God" as the term of supreme value.

At root, it is the miracle idea which is at fault. Once miracles are accepted, discipline in thought is no longer needed, and religious devotion can be turned to the most contradictory ends—as Lamettrie was well aware. It is through the idea of miracles that organized religion maintains its hold upon the minds of simple people. This is well illustrated in a passage in Ignazio Silone's *The Seed Beneath the Snow*. Some Italian peasants are discussing *Jesus:*

> "Ah, so you're surprised that He appeared in the garb of a beggar?" asked Francisco. . . . "Did you expect to see Him rigged up like a banker in a top-hat and tails and yellow gloves?"
>
> "Do you think that He's still around here, Francì? When He comes to a place, does He pass right through it or does He stay about for a while?"
>
> "He is present in every man that suffers, Amerì. He is the dying one that refuses to die. He told us Himself but, since we are so prone to forget, we must ever repeat it, that He is in every one of the poor."
>
> "I'm poor enough, Francì, but He isn't in me."
>
> "You're poor, Amerì, but don't you hanker to be rich? Well then, you see, yours is false poverty."
>
> "If He lives among us, Francì, why don't we see Him?"
>
> "Because we don't know how to recognize him, Nicò. We can tell a mule from a donkey, a corporal from a sergeant, a priest from a bishop, but when we meet Jesus Christ on the road or in the fields, we don't know Him. The priests have given us an utterly false idea of Him; the image of Him which we see on their altars is simply ridiculous; when we picture Him as a pomaded and wavy-haired tenor it is small wonder that we do not recognize Him at real sight."
>
> "Tell me where I can find Him, Francì. You know what a bad way I'm in and how I stand in need of a miracle."
>
> "If you need money, Giuvà, you'd better ask it of the devil. It would be a waste of breath to ask it of Jesus Christ. He's poor, really poor, not just in a manner of speaking. Don't think that He goes around dressed like a beggar just for propaganda or to get votes or to show off. No, He has no other clothes; He's poor in the most literal sense of the word, poorer than you or I, that's certain, Giuvà."
>
> Giuvanne was greatly alarmed. It may be that there is more than one God; every race has its own, or so they say; why then must we unlucky devils have a God that is poor?
>
> "Francì if what you say is true, there's no use praying; if He's poorer and sadder than we, what can He do for us?"
>
> "He can help us to become still poorer than we are, Giuvà, this at least He can do."
>
> Giuvanne went away terrified. So this is why we are always getting poorer and poorer!

We do not intend any big sociological conclusions in these brief notes, yet the implication of this passage, in terms of moral responsibility, is fairly obvious. We now turn to the religious ideas of an entirely different culture—that of the Eskimo Ihalmiut, described by Farley Mowat in *The People of the Deer*. Mr. Mowat writes:

> At the peak of the hierarchy of spiritual beings stand those elemental forces of nature which have no concrete form. At their head is Kaila, the god of weather and of the sky. Kaila is the creator and thus

> the paramount godhead of the People. He is aloof, as the mightiest deity should be, and man is no more than dust under his feet. He demands neither abasement nor worship from those he has created. But Kaila is a just god, for he is all things brought about by the powers of nature, and nature, who is completely impartial, cannot be unjust.
>
> It is permissible to appeal to Kaila, yet there is no implicit belief that Kaila will hear or respond to prayers couched in the midge-like voices of men. This quality of impersonality, of detachment, in this god of the Ihalmiut strengthens the majesty of his power. Kaila is no simple creation of men's imaginations shackled to the whims and fancies of human minds. Kaila, to the People, is an essence. Kaila is not spoken of with fear, nor yet with love. Kaila is. That is enough. What man may do or not do is of no more direct concern to Kaila than the comings and goings of ants under the moss. Kaila is not a moral force, because the Ihalmiut have no need of a spiritual magistrate to administer the moral law. Kaila is essential power. He is the wind over the plains; he is the sky and the flickering lights of the sky. Kaila is the power in running water and in the motion of falling snow. He is nothing—he is all things.

While comparisons of this sort may not be "scientific," they are certainly suggestive, and we need not judge either Christianity as a whole or the religion of an Eskimo tribe in order to reason that the more a man relies on a miracle-working God who responds to prayer, the less he is likely to depend upon himself, and to become,—if this is the great object of life,—a fully responsible moral individual.

We have one more quotation, which might be headed, "The Religion of an Artist." It is taken from the conclusion of Agnes de Mille's *Dance to the Piper*, in which Miss de Mille reports a conversation with an older and more famous artist in the same field:

> I spoke to Martha Graham on the pavement outside of Schrafft's restaurant. She bowed her head and looked burningly into my face. She spoke from a life's effort. I went home and wrote down what she said:
>
> "There is a vitality, a life-force, an energy, a quickening that is translated through you into action and because there is only one of you in all of time, this expression is unique. And if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium and be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is nor how valuable nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open. As for you, Agnes, you have a peculiar and unusual gift and you have so far used one third of your talent."
>
> "But," I said, "when I see my work I take for granted what other people value in it. I see only its ineptitude, inorganic flaws, and crudities. I am not pleased or satisfied."
>
> "No artist is pleased."
>
> "But then there is no satisfaction?"
>
> "No satisfaction whatever at any time," she cried passionately. "There is only a queer divine dissatisfaction, a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than the others. And at times I think I could kick you until you can't stand."
>
> I kissed her and went west to my bridegroom.

We should like to think that this "queer divine dissatisfaction," this "blessed unrest," comes closer to the truth about the reality sometimes named "God" than all the deliberately theological treatises ever written. There is not room in the universe for two separate divinities—divinities, absolutes, realities, Gods, call it what you will. There can be only one divine essence, and once this essence is subtracted from man, it leaves him *only* a sinner, *only* an economic unit of the "Workers' State," *only* a momentary aggregate of matter, animated by conditioned reflexes.

Finally, we protest the claim that it is a piece of arrogance to speak of man as having divinity within him. What is divinity but the power to create—and what is man but a being of creative power, sometimes an active power, sometimes not? What we hear of God, that is worth hearing, we hear from Godlike men; and what we know of God, we have learned from our own hearts. All the rest is either trivia or blasphemy.

Letter from
CENTRAL EUROPE

VIENNA.—For about half a century, a certain type of "illustrated journal" has been popular in Central Europe. These magazines are printed in a size similar to the American *Life*, but published in black and white on a paper which is only slightly better than that of the daily papers. The contents have generally been limited to the sensations of the week, theatre-and-movie-stars, short stories, puzzles, and serial fiction.

After the shortage of paper had been overcome in 1948, more "Illustrateds" than ever before made their appearance in the streets. Today, in Austria as in Germany, there is hardly a large city without a publisher of one of these popular journals.

Naturally, the objects and themes are now presented in a more fashionable manner than before World War I. The technique, particularly in photography, is much improved, and the reporters seem to know their public better than they did ten or twenty years ago. The morning papers are often just glanced over and put aside, while there is no tram, subway or bus, no bench or office seat, where an "Illustrated" is not studied in detail.

They still contain photos illustrating sensational news all over the world—of beauty-queens and such—, but they have added other things of interest during the last years.

The recent dramatic development of modern medicine is kept under observation, and many problems—until recently known only to a small circle of specialists—have now, thanks to these publications, become a basic part of the knowledge of millions of people.

Since one or two papers, however, began a few years ago to print reminiscences of the National-Socialistic era, others have followed and such journals are now filled with reportage about Hitler, Goering, Goebbels and all the other Nazi leaders—about their wives or daughters and sons, and about the development of politics, secret meetings of diplomats, etc., during that period. If the front page is not occupied by a pin-up girl or great actress, one can be sure that a picture of one of the Nazi leaders is decorating it.

It is understandable that foreign visitors to Central Europe might be surprised by these interests and regard the Austrians as well as the Germans as still being Nazi-minded. But if they would take the trouble to approach the problem from the psychological point of view, they would reach other conclusions. Most Central Europeans from 1933 to 1945 were fed a one-sided diet of Goebbels' clever propaganda, so that they imagined Germany and Austria to be "right" during the war. . . . They fell from sky to earth when the Allies told of the murdering of the Nazis among themselves and among others, and about the destructive ways of the "Führer" and his men.

The readers of these popular magazines are no disciples of National-Socialism any more, but they are after explanations. They desire to learn the truth, whatever it may be, and they would like to know how it could happen that they believed in those ideals and did not see behind the curtain of propaganda at the time. (As the "Illustrateds" publish documents which seem to acknowledge the attitude of the one side, and others which express an entirely different opinion, and as one writer may be obviously in favour of a Nazi-General, for instance, while others are against him, it will take a long while for the readers to be "enlightened.") Other readers—mostly the younger ones who were children during the war—are just out for a thrill. They study these articles like boys who find the "Red Indians" heroic and get excited about "Custer's Last Stand." It is for them that the "Illustrateds" adorn the occurrences of that period with all kinds of exciting inventions.

Partly because the "source-material" might be exhausted, and partly because danger is seen in such articles—especially with regard to younger readers—the "Illustrateds" are slowly switching over (or try to do so) to the memoirs, engagements and weddings of former monarchs or their children and grandchildren who either still live in castles or, having fled when the Russians started to occupy the Eastern parts of Central Europe, now work like anybody else.

The influence of the illustrated papers surpasses in some respects that of the movies and broadcasting. The editors pretend that the average Central European (who has known the glamour of courts and the magnetism of illustrious names for many generations) sees too little glamour in the institutions of democracy.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

ANY REVIEWER CAN TRY

THE recent selection of Vercors' *You Shall Know Them* as a "book of the month" was obviously prompted by the BoM editorial board's desire occasionally to include something controversial on the yearly bill of fare. The volume is a bit disturbing, both as to plot structure and in its probing of *status quo* attitudes in religious thought, so that we were not surprised to find two local libraries uncooperative about procuring it—BoM be damned. But the book has received serious attention in the *Saturday Review of Literature* and the *New Yorker*, while Joseph Wood Krutch was prevailed upon to review it for the New York *Herald Tribune.*

"Vercors" is the pen name of Jean Bruller, which he first adopted during the Nazi occupation of France as a clandestine anti-Nazi pseudonym. Variously called "fantasy," "fable" or "satire," *You Shall Know Them* is a tall tale involving the discovery in New Guinea of a "race of creatures" which seems to supply the missing link between man and monkey. These docile bipeds are close enough to the usual connotation of the word "animal" to stir Australian wool magnates to find a way of breeding and utilizing the "tropic," as they are called, for labor in their mills. The hero of the story, a reporter accompanying the archæological expedition which makes the discovery, becomes fond of the unusual animals and is aghast at the thought of their being exploited for financial gain, reacting against what his emotions lead him to regard as slave-labor. The wool magnates claim to "own" the tropis, while the members of the expedition argue that the tropis are men and cannot be owned by anyone.

This situation is Vercors' device for posing the ancient but never fully answered question: "What is Man?" It is the author's intent to show that a civilization unsure of a definition of man is bound to be a civilization of violently conflicting ideologies. A famous jurist who figures in the story, for instance, argues that all confusions of social and political contract reflect lack of agreement on man's basic nature, that behind the *status quo* of organized life there is "an incredible gap that's been there for thousands of years." This jurist feels, quite logically, then, that reason must be built on fresh foundations, "that the age of fundamentals" must start again, and that the tropis are to be blest for making men revalue themselves. So Vercors takes us back to the supposed "fundamentals" of anthropology, biology, economics, race ideologies, religion and philosophy, and jurisprudence, winding through these labyrinths to the conclusion that metaphysics is, after all, as Plato maintained, the root of civilization: as men think themselves to be, so they become. Krutch remarks in his *Tribune* review:

> Perhaps what began as the great humanitarian age has turned into a nightmare of quasi-religious world wars partly because we can't agree on what is important about this creature whom we assume to be supremely so. How can you be "humanitarian" if you don't know what "human" is? It is not to be wondered at if the Nazis and Communists would make of man something which does not seem to us to be human at all. Without some sort of definition how can any of us know?

The musings of the jurist who influences a jury deadlocked on the status of the tropis illustrate the tone of philosophic self-discovery which pervades the book:

> "How often in the course of your life have you said to yourself: 'I'm a human personality.' It would strike you as preposterous; but isn't that so because, above all, that idea's too vague, because you'd feel, if you were nothing but that, you were floating in mid-air?" The judge smiled: . . . "I think to myself: 'I'm a judge; I have to give right judgments.' If asked: 'What are you?' I too answer: 'A faithful subject of Her Majesty.' It's so much easier to define an Englishman, a judge, a Quaker, a Labor member, or a policeman, than to define a man pure and simple. . . . The tropis are the living proof of this. And it's infinitely more comfortable to feel you are something which is clear to everyone.
>
> "And here I am, . . . all because of those confounded tropis, slipping back into those endless questions that haunt your mind at twenty. . . . Slipping back, or rising to them again?" he mused with sudden candor. "After all, if I've stopped putting them, was it for any very valid reason?" He had been appointed to the bench at an earlier age than is usual in England. He remembered certain problems that troubled his conscience at the time. "By what right do we judge? What is the basis of our judgments? The fundamental concept of guilt—can we even define it? incredibly presumptuous to claim to probe another's heart and mind! And absurd, to boot: if

> mental deficiency lessens a criminal's responsibility, it partly excuses his deed, and we let him off more lightly. Yet why does it excuse his deed? Because he's less able than others to resist his impulses; but for that very reason he will relapse. He therefore, more than others, ought to be rendered harmless, sentenced more harshly, more lastingly, than the man who has no excuse: for the latter will afterwards find the strength to control himself in his reasoning power and in the memory of his punishment. Yet an inner feeling tells us that this would be neither fair, nor humane. Thus justice and public welfare are implacably opposed to one another." He remembered that these dilemmas had troubled him so deeply that he had thought of resigning his office. And then, little by little, he had become hardened. Less than others. The incredible sclerosis of most of his colleagues caused him constant surprise and dismay. Still, he had eventually told himself, like the others, that it was fruitless to waste time and energy on insoluble problems. Had put his trust, with belated wisdom, in rules, in traditions, in legal precedent. Had even come to despise, from the lofty vantage point of age, the presumptuous young whippersnapper who had claimed to set his puny individual conscience against the whole edifice of British justice! . . .
>
> But here he was, at the end of his life, faced with a baffling problem, which suddenly, brutally, challenged everything again, since neither rules nor tradition nor legal precedents could provide an answer. And he honestly could not say whether he was vexed or delighted.

The young reporter becomes involved after allowing himself, in the interests of science, to mate with one of the female tropis via artificial insemination. Young Templemore succeeds in having his "child" baptised and duly registered as his son, immediately after which he painlessly extinguishes the life of the little creature and invites prosecution for murder. Templemore reasons that if he can only get himself hanged for the crime he will have saved a whole race of innocent creatures from labor exploitation in the woolen mills of the antipodes, and that it is his duty to sacrifice himself in this fashion. But there is nothing spectacular about either the "murder" or the trial, the latter becoming a forum for debate among anthropologists, psychologists and biologists on the question of whether a "tropi," or the son of a tropi, can be considered a human being.

During the learned discussion we discover, among other things, that the ape is now known to be a more *recent* rather than an older derivative from whatever "common stock" relates it to man. Finally, when all the comparative evidence on anatomy and bone structure has been assembled, the anthropologists and psychologists return to the realization that the only certain distinction between man and ape is the former's capacity to hold a religious faith and philosophize. Man, in other words, has a "soul" because he is able to have the concept of soul, whereas the animal has never separated himself from the continuum of nature sufficiently to distinguish between the whole and its parts.

Vercors' leading characters become entirely absorbed in finding a way "to disclose, to reveal at long last that *sign,* that distinguishing mark. . . among the members of that human freemasonry which requires, as qualification for membership—a soul." "Wouldn't our acts," he reflects, "all our *human acts,* automatically be founded on such a sign? Founded no longer on the quicksands of our intention, as you say, on the intangible phantoms of good and evil, but on the changeless granite of what we *are*. . . ."

Having no particular reason to wish to persuade readers to purchase and read *You Shall Know Them,* since our primary interest is in pointing to some of the issues called up by this ingenious bit of writing, we feel no inhibitions about revealing that Douglas Templemore is not hanged for his dastardly crime. (Perhaps the reluctance of the libraries to purchase the book stems from a Catholic protest.) On the other hand, the tropis *are* admitted to the human kingdom, pretty much on the ground that any being or creature who could conceivably benefit from such an initiation should not be refused. (No encouragement to the racists, here.)

An interesting idea, this, at the end. Perhaps men did become men through some form of "initiation," bestowed by other, more advanced entities in whom the fire of mind burned with sufficient brightness. Anyway, some of the tropis are described in the book as being just about ready to receive the spark of individual mind.

COMMENTARY
THE MORAL INDIVIDUAL

OUR lead article for this week skates rather lightly over the question of moral choice, suggesting, somewhat hastily, that both the religious version of the individual and the amoralism implied by eighteenth-century writers inspired by science lead eventually to the subjection of man to authoritarian rule. It would be natural for the religious believer to rejoin, "But religion *insists* that man has a moral nature, and should prefer good to evil."

Actually, the religious reduction of man to moral insignificance is accomplished by the claim that "God" is all-powerful. If man has freedom of choice—"freedom of will," in the traditional phrase—then he is to that extent independent of God's will. But to just the extent of his independence of God's will, God ceases to be omnipotent, and those who honor God above man will therefore always say that man is God's "creature," having no will of his own. Rigorous logic led John Calvin to this conclusion, obliging him to assert the extraordinary teaching of predestination of souls to either eternal damnation or eternal salvation, even before they were born!

This, we submit, renders man's moral nature non-existent, and is the basis of the claim to absolute authority by those religions which pretend to know and to interpret God's will.

So, authoritarian religion denies man's moral nature by giving all power of choice to God, while authoritarian politics makes the same denial, but without any pious equivocation.

So far as we can see, there is no real difference, morally speaking, between religions which teach an all-powerful God separate from man, and materialisms which assert that there is no moral reality at all. Both subvert the dignity of man, and both are bound to advocate some sort of totalitarian rule.

Through this sort of reasoning, we are led to a pantheist view of Deity, and a dualist view of man's moral nature, as the only possible position consistent with human freedom and human responsibility. Great problems, no doubt, remain, but they are not the problems which haunt the modern world—a world deeply involved in both theological claims about God and oversimplifying materialism. No wonder that, periodically, the world swings from one extreme of belief to the other, since the disasters which result from rejection of the moral independence of the individual man are themselves so extreme'

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

IF readers want to go on with the subject of Self-Reliance—and letters received indicate this is the case—it is fine with us. Here, then, we present another "extremist" position in regard to allowing children maximum freedom. This particular essay, as a matter of fact, has been on file for some time, being an unprinted chapter in a previous discussion as to whether youths gain anything worth learning from institutional assaults upon the wilderness, such as those perpetrated by Scouts, etc. Since, however, this question gets us directly into what might be called the sociological side of the "self-reliance" question, we offer it for consideration now. The writer, we may note, identifies all out-of-door youth organizations, such as the Scouts, with the psychology of "external controls." The central thesis, that given a chance at sufficient freedom of mobility "the child or man has something within him that will lead to right action, that he will make the right mistakes," is certainly debatable, but a debate on this particular subject should stimulate further clarification. Our contributor writes:

> There are two kinds of education: one, built on external controls, following the popular leader, in which man must be protected from his own propensity for getting into messes, where the spirit and the flesh, the world of mind and the world of nature are separated, where nature must be dominated. Second: education in inward development, the idea that given a chance the child or man has something within him that will lead to right action, that he will make the right mistakes, that he needs the chance to try himself if he's going to find himself.
>
> I don't think training in externals ever leads to inward development except accidentally. I am aware that our language structure, our school programs, our culture are built on an extrovert orientation. "Subjective" and "introvert" are bad words in our culture. Rather than advocate more external controls, I would like to see an inclination built up to try the other way for a change. There are various ways of encouraging children to strike out for themselves, and giving parents the encouragement to let them. Expense accounts given to individuals to provide bus fare, maybe, an extension of the youth hostel idea so that there would be places scattered through the countryside where a child on a day's exploring trip could get a drink of water and a free or inexpensive lunch and information on what he's seen if he asked for it, maps available at the school with descriptions of the locale in various directions, and the locations of places to call in case he needed assistance.
>
> This sort of thing would help encourage any parental inclinations to let the child strike out for himself and reassure the child that an individual search apart from social regulations is not improper. That just to be and to know is legitimate even if the being and the knowing have no foreseeable social use-value.
>
> Many people in our culture feel alien in the land, strangers to themselves and each other. If they would only try this individual search, they might find and like themselves, as well as discover that this is not an unfriendly world but a co-related universe in which they and everything else have a necessary place. If we can't develop this individual orientation, I think it's better to do nothing. Doing more of the wrong thing is just doing more of the wrong thing. It doesn't bring anyone nearer to the other kind of goal.

With the basic sentiments of the foregoing, we find ourselves in accord. So do idealists talk—those who, because they are primarily concerned with how things should be, stand the best chance of effecting improvements in the *status quo.* It is, moreover, our contention that there are important truths reflected in every idealism, providing the "idealism" has to do with the nature of man and not with political and economic orders in which it is proposed man should lose himself for his own good.

But some of the "truths" contained in our correspondent's paragraphs, we also feel, have to be tabulated alongside other undeniable truths with which they presently seem to conflict. In theory, "letting the child strike out for himself" is compatible with every view of man except those which hold him to be primarily a sinful or a sensual creature who must be guarded against inherent evil. Unfortunately, however, when we "let the child go" into these old highways and

byways, we may be sending him forth ill-equipped to really "strike out for himself." Another truth of the matter seems to be that the child, like most of the rest of us, is easily absorbed in mass or group emotions and standards. It is the percipient parent, and not the child himself, who is able to see the value of following trails between youth hostels, in taking lonely excursions, and some encouragement usually needs to be provided before such adventuring comes "naturally." The influences from most of our youth's contemporaries are apt to be of another order altogether, running to plans for motorcycles and jalopies, with which they can hope to eventually enjoy the thrills of the speed age.

A perusal of Faris' sociology textbook, *Social Disorganization,* reminds the reader in a good many ways that the standards and aims of youths generally are confused, disoriented—that ours is presently a society wherein "whirl is king," with lack of direction because everyone tries to go in so many directions at once, and in this respect ends up just like everyone else who is similarly whirling.

The notorious Ann Arbor "prank" slaying of a young nurse by three eighteen-year-olds, the case-study subject for John Bartlow Martin's *Why Did They Kill?,* brings to light many of the characteristic forms of drifting by which "disorientation" finds outlets. (We intend more commentary on this book later.) The parents of the youths involved, it can truly be said, left their progeny entirely too much on their own, *physically,* without first presenting challenging and difficult situations in the home environment which help to awaken qualities of "self-reliance." They loved their children, and they provided freedom and spending money with the best of intentions, but the youths were completely unable to be self-reliant; they simply adopted the behavior patterns of their confused, mildly delinquent contemporaries—then decided to go them one better.

What we are trying to suggest is that the whole tendency of youth today seems one of psychic drift, and that merely dropping children into the stream will often encourage them to drift around the bend. In a healthy society, the recommendations of our correspondent could undoubtedly stand without qualification, but if this is a "delinquent society," as Mr. Martin claims, the problem is much more complicated. Meantime, if the parents cannot themselves introduce their children to the inspiring atmosphere and fascinating facts of the countryside and mountains—admittedly by far the best introduction—they may well thank kismet for boys' and girls' organizations. The latter, whatever their failings sometimes successfully perform the introduction, despite cumbersome organizational impedimenta.

The point is that a child, left *entirely* by himself, will not even develop a human mind. He learns from the presence and the contact of those around him. He will make the "right mistakes" only after he has developed some sort of criterion, some sort of idealism, inspired by the living human contacts forming his environment. Parents, and friends who are also parents, can, it is true, provide this background quite naturally—provide a small "healthy society" from which children can safely venture, but only in such cases are the prospects altogether good that the young "when allowed to strike out for themselves" will indeed make those "right mistakes."

Before concluding, however, we should take note of another subscriber's similar "extremism"—the subscriber, incidentally, who, last week, was so concerned with the principle of loyalty in the home. She writes:

> Let children live as dangerously as possible, climbing trees, sliding down hills, making real fires and getting really burned; let them get good and wet and sopping, and muddy, and scratched. Give them permission to run away from home, with a few sandwiches, a knapsack, and a little money. Give them directions about the world, with its hazards, and tips on how to deal with those dangers. They may

> break a leg or a head, and then again they may become very skilled. But they have met a challenge with our permission, and the bond of loyalty has not been broken. If they are busy doing hard things, they will not have time for easy things, like stealing, nor for sad things, like vandalism. And if the whole family is beating heavy odds, each helping the other to achieve his challenge, there is a constant odyssey of adventure to be told, and a loyal audience to help in its evaluation.

Obviously, there are many good points in the extremisms presented. The need, in regard to extremisms, is probably to make sure that we neither neglect sociological considerations of present moment nor forsake a basically optimistic philosophy of them.

Another subscriber, writing on "moral standards," concludes that "standards" can quite early get in our way and in the way of our children:

> Insecurity and neuroses are all a part of the major problem—the conquest of fear. That neurosis is on the increase is not strange in a world that is being taught to fear—not just the Russians, but everything else. (We try to insure ourselves against everything in a frenzied groping for security.) Of course, there is also the climate of opinion. Take the damage to children that is supposed to result from the divorce of parents. If we did not believe this, there would be no damage. In societies where children are adopted freely from home to home, with no thought of harm to the children, there is no harm. If we purify our own hearts, we become non-contributors to weakness. People can be stoned to spiritual death with thoughts.

Perhaps this case, too, is somewhat overstated. But the argument that the much needed "human continuum" is hopelessly damaged by a divorce in the home is not necessarily valid. As Faris shows, it is the *psychologically* broken homes which damage the personality of children; people can have these and still be determinedly married. Conversely, if the adults involved in the homes the child leave or enters are neither morally irresponsible nor candidates for neurosis, the child may indeed find the essence of what he needs for ethical inspiration in both places, despite the loss of the original parents' constant companionship. The basic point, clearly, is that just as all moral judgments are dangerous, so is there a hidden danger lurking in all specific "moral standards." What is to be avoided, our correspondent implies, as did a similarly-minded writer of last week, are all tendencies to pre-judgment, for these are basically negativistic and "personality-killing."

FRONTIERS

What Paper Do You Read?

BERLIN.—The execution of the Rosenbergs has provoked protests from very different sides of the public opinion of this world of ours, among them the Communists and the Pope. But I think the topic touches deep moral instabilities of our age which ought to be frankly discussed.

There is something of a double morality in this dirty business—as if moral standards ought not to be valid for everybody and in any circumstances, to deserve their name.

The Rosenbergs betrayed American atomic secrets to Russia at a time when the two countries were close Allies. In January, 1945, Churchill sent a special message to Stalin, nearly begging him to start the next Russian offensive earlier than scheduled. The Western Allies were in distress from a vigorous German counter-offensive in Belgium and hoped that the Russians would be able to reduce the pressure. Uncle Joseph complied. The Russian offensive started twenty days earlier than planned, bringing immediate relief to the Western Armies in Belgium. Churchill then sent another message to Stalin, assuring him that he would never forget what a fine ally he had proved to be.

It was about the same time that the Rosenbergs delivered atomic secrets to Russia—secrets which, among allies, perhaps never ought to have been secrets at all. Or was it their duty to foresee that the ally of today would be the enemy of tomorrow?

Perhaps. At any rate, those who withheld such secrets from their allies seem to have foreseen the present situation—which means that they were then insincere to their allies.

But the Rosenbergs were insincere, too. Being spies, their very atmosphere was deceit—the living element of all spies.

Why did they do what they did? For money? I don't believe it. They may have received money, but even a spy has to live on something. The real reason why they acted in a way that proved their path to the electric chair was that they were fanatical Communists, convinced that Communism meant benefit for mankind.

Were they "idealists"? Yes and no. That they acted out of their fanatic creed may be an extenuating circumstance, yet they desired to place the power of atomic weapons—which may bring destruction to mankind as a whole in the hands of more than one powerful nation. It is difficult for me, being a pacifist, to appreciate or even to tolerate this. By what they did, they added to the forces of evil, not of good.

I have little sympathy with spies, those masters of deceit. And if I were not an adversary of the death penalty I should, considering the Rosenbergs, say: Away with them!

* * *

But now I read, in a popular magazine, immediately following an article dealing with the sinister behaviour of the Rosenbergs, a report about heroic lieutenant Franszisek Janecki, of the Polish Army. Having distinguished himself as an aviator, Janecki was called to enter the Secret Senice of his country. He had to sign a declaration of loyalty, which he did at a time when he had already resolved to change his allegiance. Soon after this he set off from Stolp in his new MIG jet fighter and landed the machine on the nearest air strip belonging to NATO, on the Danish island of Bornholm. There he delivered his MIG to the Americans. (He had read or heard somehow that the Americans, representing the "Free World," were specially interested in this new fighter plane. The Americans even had promised to anyone bringing them such a machine not only the grant of American citizenship, but also a high reward in precious dollars.)

Was Janecki a hero?

It is true, he got some money for what he did. But still, a spy has to live on something, doesn't he?

But I had read, in the same paper, about the felonious Rosenbergs. I couldn't help thinking that what they did and what Janecki did were much the same. Both betrayed their countries in order to deliver military secrets to that side of the world which to them seemed more progressive. Both

received money for what they did. Janecki was simply luckier than the Rosenbergs, who had to pay with years of terrible suffering, ending in death. Yet from the moral point of view Janecki seems even more guilty than the Rosenbergs. The Rosenbergs did not pledge their loyalty shortly before their deed, as did Janecki, and they were able to think of Russia as an ally of the United States, as all papers were saying in those days.

I have no sympathy either for the Rosenbergs or for Janecki. Both deceived their respective countries. It was deception which brought success to their activities. And both tried to make deadly military devices accessible to other ruthless militarists.

But I have even less sympathy for those moral acrobats who are capable of praising the one and loathing the other. For the East, the Rosenbergs are martyrs of a good cause, and Janecki a miserable traitor. For the West Janecki is a hero—even if a well-paid hero—and the Rosenbergs are criminals.

And those, in both East and West, who think thus are people with a double moral standard: Moral is what serves my interests.

* * *

This generation is lost if it does not learn that deceit is immoral even when it serves "my" interests—that moral standards ought to be above the turmoil of human passions. Is there any hope?

MANAS has always attached importance to what children think. I have a piece of evidence showing what children think about this double standard.

In a school at Potsdam, in the Russian Zone of Occupation, a young teacher told her class a story about the activities of a boy during Hitler's rule. This boy, affected by the never-ending propaganda, had denounced a man for having uttered discontent with the Hitler regime. Then somebody explained to the boy that he had not done well—that the man now in jail would probably be executed. So the boy, regretting what he had done, managed to free the victim of his denunciation. And the teacher called that boy a hero.

Immediately, however, her class manifested revolt. "Tell us, Miss—" one youngster said, "if we should liberate a man arrested by the people who are now in government, would we be heroes, too?"

The young teacher was a little embarrassed. She answered: "You must consider; it would depend upon why they have been arrested."

But the boys were not satisfied. One said:

"No, no, Miss—we don't mean murderers or thieves. We mean just people who are not on good terms with the present government. Would we be heroes if we set such people free?"

Children are less corrupted by "interests," less subject to the pressures felt by adults. This is why the Potsdam boys immediately saw through the bias of what their teacher said.

Jesus was not so wrong when he admonished us to be like the children.

GERMAN CORRESPONDENT