VOLUME V, NO. 10
MARCH 5, 1952

THE POWER OF MEMORY

EVEN if, within the week, we had not received a querulous note from a reader who wonders why MANAS has "had so much to say about the 'soul,' lately," there would still be need for some sort of generalized discussion of this subject. One editorial resolve of this publication is to avoid, if possible, any surreptitious presentation of views or opinions—and repeated reference to "soul" is, after all, considerable evidence of an opinion held.

Much talk about the soul is commonly regarded as evincing a religious outlook, and the demand that ideas about the soul be put on a reasonable basis might easily be resisted on the familiar theory that religion doesn't have to be reasonable, and generally gets into serious trouble when it tries to be. Quite possibly, however, a case for the "soul" can be drawn up without any relying on typically religious contentions. At any rate, the use of the term itself ought to be capable of rational justification.

First of all, the soul denotes the presence of sentience. The soul is that in man which is capable of being addressed and responding in terms of self-consciousness. You can talk to a man, but not to a rock or a tree, and while some kinds of sounds may elicit particular responses from animals, no animal has been shown able to deal with abstract ideas and symbols such as are involved in human speech.

Soul also serves to indicate the capacity for moral perception. It is the soul—or *something*—which interprets experience in terms of good and evil, behavior in terms of right and wrong. In order to do this, some idea of goal or purpose or meaning for life has to be adopted, and the soul, it may be said, establishes this criterion of moral decision.

Finally, there is in every man some conscious sense of being himself a *cause*. He is not merely a cosmic atom bouncing around the cushions of a cosmic billiard table, to whom it is somehow given to feel the impact of both cue and cushion, but no authority over the motions so pursued. *Some* of the time, he feels, he starts up motions of his own. And this feeling of being a cause, undoubtedly, is the inalienable content of the expression, "the dignity of Man." If man is not a causing being, then *he*—the "he" to whom we ascribe those qualities which we honor and respect in one another—is simply not there at all.

Our correspondent invites us to consider an experiment conducted by Soviet scientists on a dog. This poor animal was drained of all its blood. It "died," of course, but returned to life fifteen minutes later when new blood was pumped into its body. Later the dog bore several litters of pups, which is pertinent, we suppose, as proving that the revival left her biologically unimpaired. What, then, we are asked, of the dog's "soul"? Where did it go, and how did it get back? Did the same "soul" reanimate the resuscitated body?

Candidly, we don't feel able to answer this question. We could easily scheme up a speculation or two with as much sense as the question itself, but at this point the project seems aimless. We have no doubt that animals have some sort of cohesive psychic intelligence—"embryo" souls, perhaps—and that the living, electromagnetic field which supplies the vital unity of the dog's existence is something more, much more, perhaps, than these terms borrowed from physical theory can suggest. But obviously, the precise relationships between physiological processes and psychic integration belong to a world which our science has not even begun to explore, so that even if we could guess at them correctly, how could anyone discuss the guesses in scientific terms?

We use the word "soul," then, as applying to man, for the reason that it declares for the qualities which seem most precious in human life, without which there would be no arts, no literature, no moral decision—no creative action of any sort. It is a word which by direct meaning as well as by implication and overtone opposes all the important derogations of the human race. It takes man as given in experience and gives a name to his highest faculties and powers. It presumes no theologies, endorses no dogmas. Other words, perhaps, would do the same, but "soul" seems to serve this purpose with fewer qualifying explanations than the available synonyms require.

In short, when we talk about man, we choose to talk about man as a moral intelligence. To talk about man's collection of conditioned reflexes gives no insight into what man himself is, but only describes some of the things with which he has to cope. To write about the supposed heritage of the human body from some mythical common ancestor of apes and man, and to define the human being in these terms, is to neglect what we really know about man for what we may imagine his early history to have been. When we discuss the economic pressures on human behavior, the emotional frustrations which end in neuroticism or insanity, the phenomena of crowd psychology, or the vulnerability of populations to partisan propaganda, we map part of the wilderness in which we live and move and have our being, but we do not illumine the whole nature of man. Through such discussions, unrelieved by cognizance of the soul, we shroud the nature of man in a dispiriting darkness.

It is quite possible for a young man or woman to pass through all the conventional forms of education, from kindergarten to graduate work in a university, without ever being led to reflect upon the nature of the self. The study of man in our schools and colleges is the study of man either fragmentized or socialized—of human behavior as it may be determined by forces other than human decision. One might naturally conclude from all this that the individual has no more personal control over what he does than a bit of thistledown in a high wind. The science of man, as our civilization has compiled it, is the science of a mechanical man whose life is no more than an intersection of numerous complex forces which combine for the duration of fifty or sixty or seventy years to produce the semblance, but only the semblance, of a human being.

Why, it may be asked, should we require more? Common sense, if not some profounder authority, should reply that we require more because we *are* more. It is possible to indoctrinate a civilization with opinions which diminish the dignity of man to the meaningless gestures of formal ritual; it is possible to instruct the young in theories which ignore the subtleties of moral experience, which turn the dreams of youth into practical economic settlements with the law of averages; it is even possible to convince large numbers of people of their impotence to do other than their ancestors have done and to make them submit to the destiny mapped out for them in their genes and their environment: all these things may take place—but it is not possible to avoid the accumulating nausea, self-disgust, fear, and disillusionment which these views of man invariably produce.

It takes sturdiness of spirit to reject these influences—the kind of sturdiness which Socrates exhibited to the Five Hundred, when he decried and ridiculed the indoctrinations and "conditionings" of twenty-four hundred years ago. Men plied him with questions, with arguments, and even his closest friends wept over his inflexible principles, which brought him death, yet the allegiance of Socrates to the admonitions of his soul gave him an immortality in the memory of man which has soared across the centuries and is as fresh, today, as the moment his body grew cold with the juice of the hemlock in his veins. Socrates believed that the good in man can never suffer or die. Socrates himself, at any rate, did not

suffer, except in behalf of his fellow Athenians whom he loved.

We could say, perhaps, that the power of Socrates over our feelings and imagination, today, is no more than a phenomenon of literature and history. What of others who lived and died as nobly, of whom we have never heard? What, we ask in return, of the quick flow of feeling in the heart whenever any man we know acts nobly for the things he thinks are true? What, indeed, do we mean by such words as "noble," and why should love and hope, loyalty, courage, honesty, faithfulness, and all the cherished qualities of heart and mind be able to lift us out of our lesser selves—beyond the mechanical man of conventional scientific explanation?

A heavy weight of hours, wrote Shelley,

> . . . has chained and bowed
> One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.
>
> . . . Be thou, Spirit fierce,
> My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!
>
> Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
> Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
> And, by the incantation of this verse,
>
> Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
> Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
> Be through my lips to unawakened earth
>
> The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
> If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Who has not felt this yearning in his heart—this uncontrollable emotion which reaches beyond itself, this longing for union with the Promethean identity which we feel to be within? But it is not a heavy weight of hours which chains us . . . it is a weight of *memories.* Every man bears upon the shoulder of his mind a many-leaved sheaf of memories—palimpsest of failure upon failure, and scholarly justification of them. Once it was the burden of his alleged "sinfulness" that he bore, the weakness of Adam and the brand of Cain. From every corner of the age echoed the sour accusation of priests. The must of dogma made the world old in its wickedness and tired in its sloth of spirit. The dark incantation of sin spoiled the babe's innocence, the lover's ardor, and the repose of the aged.

Then, with the Renaissance, came the new affirmation: Man is not evil, but good. His spirit has kinship with the spirit of nature. And with the gathering anger of rebellion, the soul of man rose up to condemn its distorted image in the theology of sin, impotence, and failure. So every betrayal of the human spirit, every denial of the incommensurable reality in man, produces, in time, its own volcanic reaction, its revolution against whatever has suppressed or ignored the noble qualities of the soul of man.

There is another aspect of this issue—the unpreparedness which our psychological history has laid upon us. No man ought to be caught speechless and afraid by the question: "Who am I?" Surely, this question is as inevitable a part of the experience of psychic maturation as is the retuning of the emotional strings of adolescence. Yet we lack even traditional forms of meeting with this question. The man who has not faced the major crisis of being stripped of all protective coloration, of all superficial costumes of self-esteem, is still in the larval stage of human existence. The appalling fear of being "alone" is a characteristic symptom of this psychological unpreparedness. We do not want to inquire into who or what we are, lest the mirror of self-analysis disclose only a receding emptiness. This modern taboo as to the essential nature of things is probably a major source of the ill-concealed timidity which increasingly afflicts the people of civilized countries. Again, this vacuum-substitute for the substantial content of self-respect doubtless forms a psychological matrix which is eagerly receptive to the emotional filler of totalitarian propaganda. The man who is his own man no longer, but the State's, need never answer the terrifying question, "Who am I?" ' The Leader has already told him. He loses himself in the self-effacing debauch of nationalist loyalty, nationalist fury. He even welcomes the engulfing wave of

dehumanization as a glorious release from responsibility.

Alcohol, narcotics, aggression, the disease of melancholy, political or religious fanaticism—what are these but flights from knowledge of the self? Eric Hoffer, in his recent book, *The True Believer*, attempts to explain the entire psychology of mass movements in terms of an escape from the self. He goes even further than this by supposing that some form of self-hate is at the root of practically all behavior which may be called "altruistic":

> The burning conviction that we have a holy duty toward others is often a way of attaching our drowning selves to a passing raft. What looks like giving a hand is often a holding on for dear life. Take away our holy duties and you leave our lives puny and meaningless. There is no doubt that in exchanging a self-centered for a selfless life we gain enormously in self-esteem. The vanity of the selfless, even those who practice utmost humility, is boundless.

From these judgments qualified by "often," Mr. Hoffer moves to absolute assertion:

> When our individual interests and prospects do not seem worth living for, we are in desperate need of something apart from us to live for. All forms of dedication, devotion, loyalty and self-surrender are in essence a desperate clinging to something which might give worth and meaning to our futile, spoiled lives. . . .

The True Believer (Harper, 1951) is a collection of morbidly fascinating aphorisms. It is Machiavelli's *Prince* brought up to date, and with no more evidence of higher motives in human beings than Machiavelli affords. The interesting thing that might be observed of this volume is that it represents the only kind of maturity of which disillusionment is capable—an exquisite appreciation of human weakness and psychological vulnerability. Only the shadows of human beings, mostly in crowds, move through its pages. It defines their behavior under the conditions of a paralysis of soul. Not only this, the author seems to accept those conditions as "natural," for he says in his final paragraph:

> J. B. S. Haldane counts fanaticism among the only four really important inventions made between 3000 B.C. and 1400 A.D. It was a Judaic-Christian invention. And it is strange to think that in receiving this malady of the soul the world also received a miraculous instrument for raising societies and nations from the dead—an instrument of resurrection.

Here, indeed, is malady—the malady of enthrallment by the psychological and emotional *status quo*—or, if you will, by the derogation of man that has been the dominant theme of the Judaic-Christian era. It is little enough to do to try to displace this weight of memories, this oppression of the human spirit, by affirmative discussion of the potentialities of the soul.

Letter from **JAPAN**

TOKYO.—With the turn of the year, the Soviet Union has launched an entirely new approach to the Japanese people. Whereas cool indifference has marked the attitude of the Russians toward Japan in the past few years, they are now suddenly taking a warm interest in the "welfare" of the people here.

Premier Stalin was the only one of the 17 heads of state to answer a request made by a Japanese news agency for a New Year message to the Japanese people. In his message, the Soviet ruler expressed his sympathy for the unfortunate lot of the people of Occupied Japan. At the same time, the announcement was made of a leading Japanese Socialist being awarded the Soviet "Peace Prize." Reports from Moscow have also indicated that the Soviet press has suddenly come out with a series of articles on Japan and the Japanese people. The Soviet Embassy in Tokyo, moreover, announced that permission has been granted a Japanese news agency to station a correspondent in Moscow. Several Soviet-Japanese trade contracts have also been approved recently. Likewise, an invitation has been received by Japanese economic leaders to attend an economic conference the Soviets are sponsoring in April.

The question of whether or not the Japanese economic leaders should attend the Moscow meeting is today one of the most heatedly discussed subjects. The issue seems simple—why not attend? But the reason why it cannot be handled so lightly and frankly lies behind the difficulty in reaching an honest rapprochement between the democratic and the communist worlds.

According to available information, the economic conference is supposedly nonpolitical and is for the purpose only of reviewing the economic trends of the world. Those favoring attendance are claiming that Japan has nothing to lose by being present at the conference, nor has she anything to fear from being tarnished by the communist ideology. To the contrary, here, they say, is a splendid opportunity to see what the Russians have "up their sleeves" and to study what's going on behind the "iron curtain." They point out that the lifting of the "iron curtain" by the Soviet Union, even on this limited scale, must be encouraged so that closer relations might be achieved. They are also desirous of the trade opportunities which might be opened up with the Communists.

Against these arguments are the contentions that this Soviet gesture is clearly a part of the Red "peace" offensive, and Japan, as a nation pledged to the free world, should have no part of it. It is also pointed out that little can be learned from what will surely amount to conducted tours of the Soviet Union. And it is argued that no line can truthfully be drawn between economic and political—and ideological—matters. It is also contended that the Japanese may be accused of playing a double-faced game by her friends of the West.

There is no doubt that the timing of the Soviet moves toward Japan have all the indications of being a part of a "peace offensive." Shortly, with the actualization of the Japanese Peace Treaty, Japan will become a definite part of the Western bloc. This is the last chance for the Soviets to win Japan back from a final commitment to the West. Deprived of her trade with Red China because of her adherence to the American "Battle Act," Japan is viewing her economic and commercial future with no little anxiety, and most Japanese businessmen would jump at a chance to trade with the Soviets. Moreover, the Soviets have approached prewar "capitalist" leaders, who had been purged from public life until only recently, with economic conference invitations. The Russians are obviously aware that the ex-purgees have no love for the American Occupation, which took them out of circulation for six long postwar years, and that they would welcome this opportunity to stage a comeback. And the invitation to "capitalists" would give credence to their claim that the meeting is nonpolitical.

But the dominating thought for most Japanese as they view this argument, is that they are being drawn into the very vortex of the East-West conflict. They view it as an extremely unfortunate state of affairs that they must hesitate in accepting an invitation from Moscow, whereas they would accept without question a similar call from Washington, London or Paris. It is a sad commentary on the world situation that we must begin to suspect innermost motives before acting. The "iron curtain," it seems to us, may have been erected by the Communists, but we may be helping to perpetuate it. Peace has little chance under such circumstances.

JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
SOME REVOLUTIONISTS

THE Bantam edition of *The God That Failed* (Harper), a symposium on Communism by six famous ex-Communists or ex-fellow-travelers, should, we think, be called to the attention of every MANAS reader. "Mass production" in reprint literature performs, at times, a great service to the general public, and *The God That Failed* is one of the best cases in point.

The Bantam cover announces, "Six Famous Men Tell How They Changed Their Minds About Communism," but the important contribution of these essays by Richard Wright, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Louis Fischer, Stephen Spender and André Gide is in their penetrating and moving accounts of the *causes* of their original Communist sympathy. According to the best of religious ethics one is supposed to try to love one's enemies, so that even if the six authors were still Communist apologists, a certain obligation would exist to study carefully what they have to say, for the value of the writing of these men is doubled by their transition *through* Communism.

It seems to us that no real liberation from Communism is ever accomplished by a simple emotional reversal. The notorious ex-Communists who spectacularly "hate" everything about their former faith are seldom measured or helpful, and probably weren't when they were Communists, either. As ex-Communists, they are still enamoured of diatribes. But these men who once put the best of themselves into support of the Communist movement are able to write with objective sympathy for their former allegiance, and thus bring readers closer to an understanding of the dynamics of the Communist appeal.

The God That Failed is introduced by Richard H. Crossman, MP, assistant editor of the *New Statesman and Nation* since 1938, a man who has never been satisfied with political slogans, though his sympathies were and are strongly socialist. The plan for *The God That Failed* grew out of conversations between Crossman and Arthur Koestler, at which time it was decided that the most valuable commentaries on Communism would probably be supplied by writers and journalists who had no present political career in mind. In Crossman's words: "An autobiography of this sort is almost impossible for the practical politician. His self-respect distorts the past in terms of the present." A single sentence suffices to indicate Crossman's and Koestler's attitude of mind:

> We were not in the least interested either in swelling the flood of anti-Communist propaganda or in providing an opportunity for personal apologetics. Our concern was to study the state of mind of the Communist convert, and the atmosphere of the period—from 1917 to 1939 when conversion was so common.

One other portion of Crossman's introduction seems to us to merit special consideration as a key to the extraordinary agreement in approach among three of the contributors—Koestler, Wright, and Silone—who were active workers for the Communist cause until each was disavowed by the Party for refusing to oversimplify social and political issues:

> In the years between the October Revolution and the Stalin-Hitler Pact, numberless men of letters, both in Europe and America, were attracted to Communism. They were not "typical" converts. Indeed, being people of quite unusual sensitivity, they made most abnormal Communists, just as the literary Catholic is a most abnormal Catholic. They had a heightened perception of the spirit of the age, and felt more acutely than others both its frustrations and its hopes. Their conversion therefore expressed in an acute and sometimes in a hysterical form, feelings which were dimly shared by the inarticulate millions who felt that Russia was on the side of the workers. The intellectual in politics is always "unbalanced," in the estimation of his colleagues. He peers round the next corner while they keep their eyes on the road, and he risks his faith on unrealized ideas, instead of confining it prudently to humdrum loyalties. He is "in advance," and, in this sense, an extremist. If history justifies his premonitions, well and good. But if, on the contrary, history takes the other turning, he must either march forward into the dead end, or

ignominiously turn back, repudiating ideas which have become part of his personality.

If *The God That Failed* contained no other article than Silone's, its appearance would still be a memorable occasion. We select Silone's as the best of the contributions, both from an intellectual standpoint and because of its non-intellectual appeal to the understanding of the average man. Silone grew up in a mountainous district of Southern Italy where, from infancy, he witnessed the oppression of the poor under a misnamed "democratic" system:

> The phenomenon which most impressed me, when I arrived at the age of reason, was the violent contrast, the incomprehensible, absurd, monstrous contrast between family and private life—in the main decent, honest, and well-conducted—and social relations, which were very often crude and full of hatred and deceit. Many terrifying stories are known of the misery and desperation of the southern provinces (I have told some myself), but I do not intend to refer now to events that caused a stir, so much as to the little occurrences of daily life. It was these commonplace minor events that showed up the strange double existence of the people among whom I grew up, the observation of which was one of the agonizing secrets of my adolescence.

The general population, in other words, *desired* to live honestly, but political pressures forced them either to give up their land and means of livelihood or to support corrupt candidates for political office. The small land owners and artisans felt helpless and feared to cry out against injustice. Through Silone's eyes, we see that these acquaintances of his childhood were not cowards—they simply carried the weight of past centuries on their backs. It seemed particularly difficult for the peasants, who were Catholics, to institute liberal reforms, since the Church, as well as the State, represented reactionary power. The Italian peasants lived, as Silone says, in "a curious situation" which was "based on a deception of which all of us, even the children, were aware; and yet it still persisted, being built on something quite apart from the ignorance or sympathy of individuals."

Communism seemed to mean a promised *end* of political deceit for millions of such peasants—and also for some politically sensitive members of the cultured classes. The appeal is thus described by Crossman:

> The intellectual attraction of Marxism was that it exploded liberal fallacies—which really were fallacies. It taught the bitter truth that progress is not automatic, that boom and slump are inherent in capitalism, that social injustice and racial discrimination are not cured merely by the passage of time, and that power politics cannot be "abolished," but only used for good or bad ends. If the choice had to be made between two materialist philosophies, no intelligent man after 1917 could choose the dogma of automatic Progress, which so many influential people then assumed to be the only basis of democracy. The choice seemed to lie between an extreme Right, determined to use power in order to crush human freedom, and a Left which seemed eager to use it in order to free humanity.

Silone was always an idealist, actually, and as such became a revolutionary force *within* the Communist Party, as in the cases of the other intellectuals of the breed described by Crossman, who were suspected and attacked by the doctrinaire party members. Silone's present Socialism is a synthesis of his experiences before, during, and after Communism. He characterizes the content of his present faith in what we feel to be a remarkable passage:

> My faith in Socialism has gone back to what it was when I first revolted against the old social order; a refusal to admit the existence of destiny, an extension of the ethical impulse from the restricted individual and family sphere to the whole domain of human activity, a need for effective brotherhood, an affirmation of the superiority of the human person over all the economic and social mechanisms which oppress him. As the years have gone by, there has been added to this an intuition of man's dignity and a feeling of reverence for that which in man is always trying to outdistance itself, and lies at the root of his eternal disquiet. But I do not think that this kind of Socialism is in any way peculiar to me. The "mad truths" recorded above are older than Marxism; toward the second half of the last century they took refuge in the worker's movement born of industrial capitalism, and continue to remain one of its most

> enduring founts of inspiration. I have repeatedly expressed my opinion on the relations between the Socialist Movement and the theories of Socialism; these relations are by no means rigid or immutable. With the development of new studies, the theories may go out of fashion or be discarded, but the movement goes on.

Richard Wright's contribution to *The God That Failed* is also worth special attention. In learning of Wright's association, first with Communist literature and then with the Party as an active member, readers will be carried along by both sympathy and fascination. For Wright was nearly a grown man before he discovered that it was even *possible* for "white" persons to regard any Negro as a human being of potentially equal stature. He first saw the Communist program as the only hope for his people and for other racially "inferior" groups. He began to write for the *New Masses* and for *Left Front.* But Wright, like Silone, was a thinker before he was an advocate; he asked embarrassing questions and raised subtle issues which angered Party officials. Finally he was denounced and excluded from a May Day celebration. He suddenly grew *out of* Communism, yet he carried, through that transition, a compassion for his former "Communist" self. Wright's description of his reflections as he left the scene of the May Day parade may serve as our conclusion, and, it may be hoped, as an introduction to the book itself:

> I remembered the stories I had written, the stories in which I had assigned a role of honor and glory to the Communist Party, and I was glad that they were down in black and white, were finished. For I knew in my heart that I should never be able to write that way again, should never be able to feel with that simple sharpness about life, should never again express such passionate hope, should never again make so total a commitment of faith.
>
> The procession still passed. Banners still floated. Voices of hope still chanted.
>
> I headed toward home alone, really alone now, telling myself that in all the sprawling immensity of our mighty continent the least-known factor of living was the human heart, the least-sought goal of being was a way to live a human life. Perhaps, I thought, out of my tortured feelings I could fling a spark into this darkness. I would try, not because I wanted to, but because I felt that I had to if I were to live at all.

COMMENTARY
THOSE WHO DID NOT FAIL

A RATHER serious mistake occurred in last week's MANAS, due, apparently, to hurried proof-reading. In the first sentence quoted from Hannah Arendt on the French Existentialists (page 8), which should have read—

> *L'esprit sérieux*, which is the original sin according to the new philosophy, may be equated with respectability.

—the word "responsibility" replaced "respectability," giving a practically incomprehensible turn to the paragraph. So far as we know, the Existentialists have had little to say on the subject of Responsibility, which can hardly play an important role in what seems to be a philosophy of despair.

While contempt for respectability is nothing new, it may be remarked that the chief misfortune of "respectable" people is their inability to understand those who rebel against conventional standards. Rebelliousness, although seldom constructive, may nevertheless be a symptom of deep-lying weakness in the established order. Take for example the book, *The God That Failed*, considered in this week's Review. Quite likely, the people who need most to read what these distinguished thinkers have to say about the reasons for their temporary alliance with Communism, will never see, perhaps never hear, of the book. Yet these six men are the sort of men who, sooner or later, have the best chance of awakening the non-communist world to its chief points of vulnerability.

It may be said—fairly, we think—that men like Ignazio Silone and Richard Wright were taken into the communist movement by motives which are wholly admirable; and that it was these same motives which brought them out again—the motives which place them, today, among the most valuable contributors to the ideal of a free society.

But, strangely and tragically, the free society in which we live pays far more attention to those ex-communists who have passed from one totalitarian system of thought to another—from dogmatic politics to dogmatic religion—not recognizing that the exchange of one orthodoxy for another accomplishes no liberation of the mind at all. R. H. Crossman edited a book about a "God" that failed, but the book is really about some *men* who did not. In our age of anxiety and confusion, when men of wide sympathies and unusual capacities preserve both their sympathies and their freedom of mind, the achievement is notable and only a lack of imagination can keep us from recognizing it.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE pleasant task of reading a book like Robert Ulich's *Educational Thought* (MANAS, Feb. 13) encourages appreciation of the broadening perspectives of contemporary educators. The world has managed to struggle through and beyond two stages of culture inimical to breadth of perspective: In some countries, at least, the absolutist control of education by the Church is a thing of the past; and today, there is evidence that numerous influential teachers have outgrown vehement factionalism in respect to educational theory.

The progress we are now able to summarize, then, has been the result of a relative "coming of age." There is no sudden way to become mature; both as individual youths and as a young culture, we seem to have to go through phases of emotional allegiance until we are able to separate ourselves from them sufficiently to understand them. Plato called the highest quality of the mind "noëtic," meaning that ability which allows man to view events and other beings "abstractly"—from a standpoint beyond immediate personal advantage or temperamental enthusiasms. Educators, we may think, reach the reflective stage of self-consciousness more easily than others, for the teacher is comparatively free from the driving pressures of competition, and thus the best of his thinking and the best of intuitive perception seem able to join hands.

We can be sure that such efforts toward synthesis of the best methods lead naturally to an attitude which can only be termed "philosophical." Perhaps the reason why the word "philosophy" itself has for so long been regarded without interest, or even with distaste, is because of its unfortunate association with the rigid categories of conventional religion. Philosophy should be, primarily, a spirit—a spirit of inquiry, and of broad hospitality to instructive truths, wherever found, and no matter by whom championed. Something of this attitude has characterized the development of "social" studies in the United States. Our historians have tried to be sociological historians, endeavoring to present the past in terms of the innumerable interlocking factors that produce the unique characteristics of any given age. History, on this view, is not to be understood simply in terms of politics—by accounts of battles or who won them—but only by seeing the interplay of intellectual, moral, cultural, economic, and political factors, and their combined effect upon the average man. With each year, progress in such social studies is bringing youngsters a better idea of the way in which "history" is really the means of learning about *present society.*

What, however, may this kind of progress mean to the Child? Centuries ago the goal of education was "salvation" of the child's "soul." The child was supposed to "study" in order to be saved; or rather, he was indoctrinated in the "way" to salvation. He was taught about all manner of "evil" things, so that he could avoid them, and his mind was shaped to rigid belief in both the dogmas of the Church and the dogmas of his pedagogues, so that he would not stray from the path of salvation. In no sense was he supposed to study in such a way as to expand, or even discover, his own individuality through independent thinking.

A vast transition in education began after the Renaissance and the social revolutions of the eighteenth century. But the new emphasis, wherever the schools had completed the transition from Church control, was upon the supposed political verities or "absolutes" of the "nation." Thus, instead of being "God-centered," education became for the average child, politically centered, and usually State-centered. This was still the salvation-psychology. Only the *nature* of salvation, and the agency by which it was to be made possible, had changed. Happiness was to be discovered by the realization of a model society—the "Heavenly City" of the political

philosophers—and its perpetuation by armed strength.

The age of enthusiastic faith in Salvation by Politics produced school texts blinded to many sociological realities. In the United States, the War of Independence seemed so obviously a wonderful thing that its statistics became a sort of catechism. Names of battles and of generals were learned because these stood as symbols of a sort of political godhead. No other nation could possibly compare with ours, nor was anything short of divine inspiration responsible for the American Revolution. As this trend moved into its most fulsome phase, the purposes of God became increasingly identified with the manifest destiny of America—"God Bless America." But this, too, was a phase. By the time God was blessing America the most, a rival theory of progress had taken hold in education: "Johnny, do you realize that in this land of opportunity you may grow up to be President?" "Study, so you, too, can be a famous and wealthy man."

The swing to individualism brought an acquisitive temper which finally came to replace the nationalistic influence. The child studied, not in order to be saved by God or politics, but to become eminent. "Rugged Individualism" was the romantic notion of each man "against the world," and another road to Heaven, metaphorically speaking. *Get ahead*—ahead of everyone else—was the drive, just as nationalism meant, "Get beyond other nations and peoples." Neither ruthlessness, chicanery, nor economic exploitation were seriously deplored if one Succeeded. Of course, this was not official doctrine, but the children learned it just the same, by indirection. They were studying in order to conquer—who or what mattered less than that some kind of an impressive "victory" be achieved.

The fact that we now have a social-centered and child-centered trend is due in large part to those educators who analysed the previous orientations and stood out against them. Today, such men are still doing their best to create a broad, impartial viewpoint in children as antidote to the fear-of-war emotionalism which threatens to combine the worst elements of all the other immature "trends" which have gone before. The "Social Studies," for instance, are fine things, as far as they go, for the development of social, racial and international tolerance. They can go, in the future, as far as we encourage them to go.

FRONTIERS

The Disenchanted West

NEARLY 150 years ago, in 1807, when William Jones first rendered into English the Hindu classic, *The Institutes of Manu*, this pioneer translator told his readers that an understanding of Hindu custom and belief would be of practical value in the administration of a colony destined to "add largely to the wealth of Britain." Now comes another scholarly Britisher, a man with manifest affection for the Orient, who offers similar practical counsels. In a recent *Frontiers* (a liberal political weekly of the West Coast), Robert Payne tells us that we shall lose the struggle for dominance in Asia unless we learn to understand Asia's peasants.

> We need [he writes] to study their faiths, their rituals, their stories and their legends, for it is clearly quite useless to attempt to understand Asia through Asiatic politicians. We must go to the roots, and the roots are to be found among the peasants. A whole new world lies open to us—the mind of the Asiatic peasant, which it is in our power to conquer for freedom, or to abandon to totalitarian bureaucracy.

However, lest it be thought that a sagacious manipulation of Eastern folklore in behalf of the West is all that Mr. Payne is interested in, we should say that his books on Asia give plenty of evidence to the contrary. The Payne that is hardly revealed in this brief *Frontiers* tract is the Payne of *Forever China* and of *Revolt of Asia*—both volumes being necessary reading for an understanding of modern Asia, in particular, modern China and Indonesia, just as Edmond Taylor's *Richer by Asia is* necessary for an appreciation of modern India. Dispensing, then, with the expedient purpose of Mr. Payne's article, we may turn to its content, which is intensely interesting.

He is concerned with the role of legend in the life of the people of Asia. It is difficult for the average Westerner to gain any conception of the atmosphere of revered tradition which pervades the East. Events which to us may seem trivial and unimportant take place for the Easterner on a stage hung with the scenic splendor of a vast and living pantheon. The leader of the people jostles unearthly forces and may easily, whether intentionally or not, incarnate into some respected myth which adds a celestial dimension to his stature. In Indonesia, the popular leader, Soekarno, drew upon this reservoir of moral strength:

> The forces which Soekarno controlled were the forces of legend. He appealed to the epic heroes of the Madjapahit Empire, to the stories of the Ramayana and the *Mahabharata*, *th*ose enormous fairy-tales which were first written in India and then subtly altered to suit an Indonesian audience. He gave the Indonesians a belief in themselves by appropriating ancient legends and showing that it was still possible for the peasants to behave like the heroes. . . .
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> Something of the same thing happened in India when first Gandhi and then Nehru found themselves regarded almost as deities. . . . We talk glibly of how Gandhi became a legend in his lifetime, but it was a very complex legend indeed, with roots at many layers of Indian history and in many hidden corners of the Indian consciousness. There is a sense in which Gandhi had no real existence: he was the crystallization of a million legends and a million dreams.

The United States is notably a country without the element of legend in its past. The lore of America is compounded of Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, the Lone Ranger, and Dick Tracy. There is more, of course much more; but the psychological foundations of the United States were laid at the rational level, the level of the reflective thinking of our Deist Founding Fathers. We have no "Father-Image," and do the best we can by showing an almost unnatural interest in the fortunes, marriages, and deaths of the British royal family. In simple and familiar terms, Ben Franklin's lightning rod came the closest of anything we know to linking the American people with the primordial forces of nature. We simply do not understand the exotic pantheism of the East, out of which has grown an endless series of polytheisms which place behind the ordinary

affairs of life long passageways of wonder and mysterious expectation. It is not a question of who is "right," but a question of both our hungers and theirs. So long as the West is haunted by fears and frustrations, it can hardly claim to have hit upon important truths which the Orient lacks entirely. And if the East is deceived somewhat by its will-to-believe, the instinct of wanting a world with wonder and infinite possibility in it may be sounder than our tirade of negations.

And so, Mr. Payne says, if we want to get along with the East, we had best understand its love of splendid dreams:

> In all this the West is faced with the fact of its own relentless ignorance. A flood of books has appeared, all claiming to tell us what is happening and what will happen in the Far East. The columnists pontificate in their perpetual void, and the political analysts talk a great deal of sense about the lines of force in the Far East, about production quotas, non-ferrous minerals, and so on. But the oriental is still moved by conceptions which have very little place in the western mind. He sees himself at the beginning of a new age, when the influence of Asia will be exerted all over the world. He knows that his country is young, though it is three or four thousand years old. He believes that it is possible to live in an industrial age while at the same time acknowledging that the gods and heroes inhabit the world. He demands that political theories should be presented to him in a form which is exciting to his imagination.

Why not? Who is to say that the Eastern theory of human greatness has less validity than the Western view? Buddha and Jesus Christ were both Easterners—and taught, it might be added, the same glorious ethics to their respective worlds. Between the lines, Mr. Payne seems to be suggesting that the West suffers from an impoverished imagination—and this is probably true, for men of imagination are always able to understand the feelings of others, however alien their heritage of tradition. In any event, we shall probably learn a great deal from the East during the next fifty years, whether or not we become clever enough to find justifications for our foreign policy in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata.*