

## TOWARD A GOLDEN AGE

EVEN if there were no "Fortean Society" to celebrate his name, Charles Fort should be remembered for arranging the strangest parade in history—the parade of the "damned facts," the facts excluded by the prevailing theory of knowledge and theory of the "possible." As Fort put it, on the first page of his *Book of the Damned*, "We shall have a procession of data that Science has excluded."

No one should go through life without having read this book—whether to enjoy a brilliant confirmation of his own suspicions, or to have his complacent confidence in the "authorities" badly shaken. It is peculiarly a book of the twentieth century (published by Boni & Liveright in 1919), expressive of the heightened self-consciousness of our age. While there have been countless books about natural oddities and wonders, from Pliny's *Natural History* to Charles Gould's *Mythical Monsters*, Fort's *Book of the Damned* is much more than this. It is, more than anything, a satyric commentary on the narrow band of experience which the orthodox in any age use to circumscribe the "real." It is not, however, a bitter book. Fort is rather Olympian in temper. "My own notion is," he writes, "that there is very little deliberate misrepresentation in the writings of scientific men: that they are quite as guiltless in intent as are other hypnotic subjects."

Men like Fort accomplish a necessary catharsis for a civilization which is heavily burdened with the solemnity of its achievements and the righteousness and finality of its opinions. There are certain difficulties, of course, in accepting everything that Fort says, or seems to be saying. But Fort's real discovery has nothing to do with accepting or being "for" or "against" his voluminous reports. Fort is really concerned with smashing façades of opinion concerning the nature of things. He writes about "Science" for the

reason that, for the past hundred years or so, Science has presumed to tell us about the nature of things. Fort's "damned facts" seem vastly disturbing to a lot of scientific assumptions; they are a collection of square pegs in a universe of round holes. And we, for our part, shall have to leave them as they are, except for a wondering appreciation of Mr. Fort's talent as a priest of the improbable, a midwife of the impossible.

It is his method which interests us, here. Not only "facts" achieve damnation in the world of respectable opinion. There are damned *ideas* and *attitudes*, as well. This is an elementary verity of psychology, within the recognition of all. People tend to ignore ideas which make them feel uncomfortable—which, one way or another, unsettle their feelings of self-esteem, but a watchful man can often catch himself in these little—and some not so little—tricks of personal bias. The scientific method is, in part, comprised by a set of rules for overcoming such human limitations. But when neglect of certain areas of reality, of certain reasonable conclusions, is made into a philosophical system, or a political or social system, then, from being a mere foible or personal weakness, this tendency to bias may turn into a tremendous falsification of human experience—an institutionalized *lie*. Reading Charles Fort, we are able to laugh a bit at the objects of his criticism, the orthodox professors. We cannot, however, gain much entertainment, today, from Sidney Hook's analysis of authoritarian psychology, which first appeared in an article of his in the *Modern Monthly* for April, 1934. Mr. Hook is so right:

Official communists are quick to accuse other communists who disagree with them and criticize the official line, as "counter-revolutionists" because their criticisms are sometimes seized upon by non-communists. The ground offered for the use of such harsh terms is the principle: "Subjective intentions

are irrelevant in judging an action; only the objective consequences must be considered." If this principle is assumed as a postulate then it requires only one plausible material premise to get both a startling and an amusing conclusion. The argument runs:

(1) Subjective intentions are irrelevant in evaluating an action; only objective consequences must be considered.

(2) A political mistake, by definition, has counter-revolutionary objective consequences.

(3) If *S.*, our leader, makes a political mistake, he is a counter-revolutionist.

(4) But *S.*, our leader, cannot be a counter-revolutionist.

(5) Therefore *S.*, our leader, is in political matters infallible.

The conclusion in a weakened form permits *S.* to make only little mistakes, *i.e.*, those that have no serious consequences.

I submit that if postulate (1) and material premise (4) be granted, then the conclusion cannot be avoided. Official communists *insist* upon postulate (1); and the material premise (4) is assumed on psychologically necessary grounds by all who join a revolutionary party.

Thus the infallibilist psychology of the loyal communist, who cannot possibly show an interest in the essentially *human* qualities of his fellow men—qualities originating in *motives*, which are "subjective intentions." Not only communists exhibit this tendency. All men who believe that the good society must ultimately be shaped by some externally applied system of order are bound to assess other men, not by their personal character, but by their political opinions concerning the particular system of government which has been proposed. If you want to irritate a system-advocating reformer or revolutionist, start talking to him about the importance of kindness, personal integrity, consideration for others, and the need for comprehension of the difficulties under which all men struggle. He will soon be angrily calling you names, or politely ignoring you. For the system-fascinated reformer, these ideas represent the Dark Age of human opinion. And when such reformers or revolutionists come

to power, they establish a terroristic rule of "objective morality" of the sort Mr. Hook outlines in his syllogistic analysis.

While on the subject of "objective morality," we cannot forbear recalling the Philadelphia Christ Church declaration (referred to here last week) that, "Millions of people, now indifferent to God, are thereby giving unconscious aid and comfort to communism." It would not be difficult to construct a syllogism something like Mr. Hook's with this statement occupying the place of (2). Any institution which adopts a "get-tough" policy in its campaign for prestige and power usually gets around to adopting this device of "objective morality" as a weapon in controversy. The irony, of course, is in the fact that *Christ's* Church here imitates a communist technique.

But it is not only a communist technique. Every time a man in public life attacks a liberal or any critic of the national policy of the United States by saying, "Joe Stalin must be laughing over this," he is using the "objective morality" method of attacking the opposition. Not what is true, but what is expedient—this is the basis of objective morality. Of course, for the communists, there is no other truth but the politically expedient, for communism derives its first principles from political ideas. Democracy, however, has a different origin. Democracy deliberately declares that some regions of life contain values which are beyond the realm of political determination; this is the meaning of the Bill of Rights in the American Constitution; so that for those who claim to be supporters of the American way of life to use communist techniques in political controversy is about as subversive as you can get.

Now and then you come across a man sharp enough to catch himself in some major psychological deception, and honest enough to admit it openly. The late Trigant Burrow, a psychoanalyst of some distinction, was such a man. In his book, *The Social Basis of Consciousness* (1927), he describes an incident

that *might* have been duplicated by practically every analyst in practice, but has not, for obvious reasons. Dr. Burrow was teaching psychoanalysis to a group of students, a procedure which involved analyzing the students. One youth, a bit "impertinently" or aggressively, perhaps, demanded that their positions be reversed—that he, the student, have opportunity to "analyze" Burrow, the teacher. Burrow agreed, but soon discovered, as the erstwhile student bored in with questions, that his (Burrow's) personal resistance to the process made the session almost intolerable. He felt the assumption of "authority" on the part of the student to be unforgivably offensive; but, instead of pulling "rank" on the student and calling the whole thing off, Burrow turned the experience into a luminous awakening for himself. He realized why similar reactions had been produced in his subjects, and honestly concluded that the "chair" of the analyst is a mere symbol of authority which may endow the analyst with a feeling of status to which he has no real claim at all. The status of authority, he observed, has peculiarly delusive power, for it helps those who attain that status to imagine they have knowledge, and this, in turn, prevents them from recognizing their real ignorance. In his own case, he felt, this ignorance was exposed when he lost his emotional stability because of the questions asked by his student. Dr. Burrow expressed his conclusion in the learned language of his profession:

It has not yet been recognized . . . that we who are psychoanalysts are ourselves theorists, that we also are very largely misled by an unconscious that is social, that we too are neurotic, in so far as every expression but that of life in its native simplicity is neurotic.

Unlike most other men, Dr. Burrow was willing to develop the implications of this face-to-face experience, in which he was stripped of his professional authority.

What is at issue, here, is the power of group opinion. One of the *bad* reasons for joining groups is to avoid the pain of discovering one's own biases and correcting the errors in one's own

thinking. If you can find a group that makes the same mistakes as yourself, fear of exposure can be replaced by the self-righteousness of group approval. Once identified with a group which obtains its unity from certain basic delusions, or certain half-truths, the member becomes able to excuse almost anything in himself so long as he believes that his actions serve "the best interests of the group." Suppose, for example, a wealthy operator of one of the great agricultural empires of California's fertile valleys has labor trouble. Quite possibly he may, as a human being, tend to feel a measure of guilt about the living and working conditions of his help. But if the situation reaches the open conflict of a strike, he will probably find himself psychologically unable to think the issue through in terms of simple justice. His membership in an employer organization throws in the question of his loyalty to other big farmers, to the banks and other major institutions involved in the economics of California agriculture. These institutions are represented by the men he has dinner with, drinks with; they make up "society," so far as he is concerned. Such a man is likely to suppress in himself any latent desire to regard the issues of the strike impartially. Accordingly, he will deliberately evade any sort of face-to-face encounter that might force him to see the issues more clearly. His organization deals with strikes in terms of stereotypes, and if he deviates from organization policy, he is in a sense attacking himself. So, out of consideration for himself and his conscience, he tends to believe the worst of the strikers, and the best of himself. He succumbs to the habit, that is, of meeting his problems in institutional terms.

The psychology of war, of course, is the master-product of institutionalization. In war, deviation from national policy and publicized aims becomes little short of treason. Face-to-face encounters with the enemy which might correct some of the delusions over which the war is being fought are practically impossible, and lest the humanitarian imagination of some of the people

stray speculatively toward a friendly thought about the people we are fighting, the enemy is continuously represented to us as a depersonalized brute of unspeakable cruelty and endless deception.

One more illustration of the disturbance of stereotyped opinion: In Donald Powell Wilson's *My Six Convicts*, the author describes an experience with a Negro prisoner at Leavenworth who obviously possessed some kind of "occult powers." The investigating psychiatrists realized this, for Hadad (the name of the Negro, who was several times a murderer) proved it to them by arresting for twenty-four hours epileptic convulsions of a number of the patients in the psychiatric ward of the prison hospital, simply by an act of his will (or by whatever process such things are accomplished). In any event, the psychiatrists were convinced.

The interesting thing about this situation is that here were two properly authorized and degreed doctors of the mind who were confronted with a knowledge of practical psychology on the part of an avowed criminal—a knowledge which was so far over their heads that they had no idea how to explain what he did, and even less of how to do it themselves. Besides being able to stop the convulsions of epileptics, Hadad could simulate death in the approved fashion of Oriental yogis. The prison doctors were about to carve him up as part of the routine autopsy of the institution, when Hadad raised up on the slab and said, "I'd rather you didn't, gentlemen." His Oxford English was not the least of his attainments. The psychiatrists, to their credit, made no bones about being unable to cope with Hadad, although we suspect that, since this miracle-worker was kept under lock and key, they probably felt a little easier about giving a thoroughly impartial report of their experiences. Although Hadad's exploits belonged in the category of damned facts, he was at least in captivity. Suppose people like Hadad were running around loose!

Some day, some "Fort" of cultural anthropology will compile a book of the psychological and cultural facts which are damned by the rules and regulations of orthodoxy and respectability in all areas of life. The ethical ideas and attitudes suppressed by church morality will be listed along with the forbidden thoughts prohibited by nationalism. In this book, the unmentionables of Communism will have a place beside the heresies of free-enterprise economics, while the unforgivables of psychological science will share space with the realities concealed by ignorant superstition. When will it be published? In the Golden Age, of course.

## *Letter from* **SOUTH AFRICA**

JOHANNESBURG.—When a national convention of the leaders of South Africa prepared a constitution for the union of the four provinces in 1910, it endeavored to protect the rights of the different sections of the population by including in the South African Act certain Entrenched Clauses, and also laid down the statutory procedure whereby alone such clauses might be changed: this required a two-thirds majority of both parliamentary houses sitting together, as contrasted to the bare majority in each house necessary for ordinary legislation. Such provision as these entrenched clauses was considered necessary in view of the divergent interests of the different sections of the population, and it was under such safeguards that the four provinces agreed to enter into union.

Among the Entrenched Clauses was one which protected the long cherished right of the coloured people in certain areas of the Cape to vote alongside the European population. Since the Act of Union the coloured community in those areas has so increased that the representation of the constituencies in which they live is now swayed by their vote. Regardless of past pledges, last year the government introduced legislation to place the names of the coloured people on a separate electoral roll in order to give them separate representation. This Separate Voters Bill was passed by a bare majority in each house, instead of through the procedure laid down by the constitution as essential for any amendment of an Entrenched Clause.

The present storm in South Africa broke early this year when the Judiciary declared in the Appeal Court that the Separate Voters Bill was null and void, and the government replied by the introduction of a bill to set up a new High Court of a political rather than a judicial nature. This new court will without any question be called upon at an early date after its institution to reverse

the decision of the Judiciary. Such procedure on the part of the government has destroyed the confidence of black and white people alike in South Africa, as well as of the outside world. If parliament is no longer subject to the constitution under which it came to power, it clearly seeks to sweep away the democratic tradition to which it is committed. Many ministerial outbursts have been made, calling it intolerable that parliament should be subject to the legal decision of the judges, and the opinion has been freely voiced in many Nationalist quarters that judges who decided against the interests of their own political party were traitors. Thus has the consternation of the general public been carried yet further. The Judiciary in South Africa has always had a high reputation for integrity among both Europeans, and non-Europeans, and to destroy its powers brings the whole country consciously a step nearer to anarchy.

The events of the past few months have shown the government to be swayed by extremists who, regardless of the will of the people, the law of the land, or of any moral or spiritual sanctions are determined to set up a dictatorship. The parallel to the procedure adopted by Hitler in the 1930's to establish the Nazi dictatorship is too close to be ignored. The next few months are likely to be critical as opposition to the government increases. The Torch Commando membership has grown enormously and now includes many who previously owed allegiance to the Nationalist party or who held aloof from politics. A coalition has been formed between the Torch Commandos, the United Party, and the Labour Party to work for the defeat of the government. But the democratic forces have been slow to organise resistance. Already many measures have been introduced and passed into law which place dictatorial power in the hands of the government. The fight will be long and bitter. Loss of freedom places a premium on freedom. There is at least the hope that the value of freedom now being realised by so many white people in South Africa may encourage them to

perceive that there is no justice in their cause unless they are also prepared to fight for the extension of freedom for all men in South Africa, irrespective of their colour.

Thus and thus alone can South Africa move toward an era of cooperation and understanding among its many races. Thus and thus alone can a bulwark be built against tragedy and bloodshed which would engulf all races alike. The truth of Christ's injunction that whosoever seeketh to save his life shall lose it is most palpably true in the affairs of a multi-racial society. It is a cause for thankfulness that the English churches through their Christian Council are making strenuous efforts to expose the falsity of the claim of divine sanction for policies of racial discrimination so often made by the Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa. But more will be required of these Christians. Only a widespread willingness for any sacrifice that others may live fully can bring the message of love inherent in the Christian gospel to act as a solvent in the bitterness which today rules in so many South African hearts.

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## *REVIEW*

### PERIODICAL REVIEW

AN unforgettable theme in two of Ignazio Silone's books, *Bread and Wine* and *Seed Beneath the Snow* (which, with *Fontamara*, form Silone's great trilogy), is the saddening disclosure that the Italian people no longer trust one another. Human relations were so debased by Fascist rule, and doubtless by other elements in Italian life, that the people, the common people, gave up serious thought and attempts at serious communication almost altogether.

Something like this fate has overtaken the people of the United States in relation to all discussion of the Korean war, of Red China, of Formosa and the role of Chiang Kai-shek, which rises above the level of nationalist slogans. Expression, to be acceptable, must be in blacks or whites. Anyone who attempts to untangle the twisted skeins of cause and effect, to evaluate events in terms of long-term honesty and justice, becomes suspect simply from his effort at impartiality.

One would suppose, for example, that Justice William O. Douglas of the Supreme Court would be above suspicion. Yet, within a month or two, a Catholic Bishop felt obliged to reprove his co-religionists for branding Mr. Douglas as a communist sympathizer. What had Douglas done? He had been critical of the foreign policy of the United States in Asia.

How does one go about finding the "taint" of communist sympathies? Senator Karl Mundt, of South Dakota, has made the answer to this question seem quite simple. In the *Progressive* for July, Eric Sevareid, CBS news commentator, reports Sen. Mundt's views and counsels, as found in the *Congressional Record* Appendix for Jan. 24:

Sen. Mundt skips over the obvious signs such as party membership or treasonable actions and says:

"Your yardstick for measuring a suspect is his attitude on the issues of the day."

Sen. Mundt says it is your solemn duty as a citizen to measure "your union boss, supervisor, next door neighbor, Congressman, Senator, or anyone else you can observe, directly or indirectly." But first you must accept Mr. Mundt's tidy premise that, "Each issue has a pro and an anti-Communist point of view."

There is no space to list the various test "issues" cited by Mr. Sevareid, but one of them will do as a sample. If the man being observed for untrustworthy symptoms wants a big Army, Navy, and Air Force, watch him closely. The Communists would like a large deficit for the U.S. Federal Government, and military spending will produce the deficit. You are to apply this sort of test to a number of issues, and if you get a "pattern," then, according to Sen. Mundt, the suspicion is well on the way to confirmation!

We wonder how Justice Douglas would rate on the Mundt loyalty scale.

A portion of a recent address by this eminent jurist appeared in the *Nation* for May 31, under the title, "Revolution Is Our Business." Justice Douglas believes, with Abraham Lincoln, that "the Declaration of Independence was an instrument forged not only for the benefit of Americans on this continent, but one destined to lift the weight off the shoulders of men the world around." Having recently returned from a trip to the Middle East and Asia, where he visited the villagers of several lands, Justice Douglas writes:

You cannot go into those villages and be there a week without taking sides. You are either for the landlord or you are for the peasants.

. . . out there in the Middle East and Asia, people like us who have come from the bottom of society, as all of us have, would not have any opportunity.

We would have no schools for our children, we would have no doctors or dentists to take care of ourselves or our families; we would have no hospitals; our income would be barely enough to live on.

We would be tied to a farm tenancy system in which the owner of the land would get a net return of about 90 per cent on the crop and we would get 5 per cent or 10 per cent—a bare subsistence. He would

own our land, our houses, our oxen, our plows, our water. He would own our souls.

That kind of a system is not going to survive.

People are on the move. I did not fully appreciate that until I got to the Middle East and spent three summers there and saw what was happening in the villages. People are on the march.

Who are their champions today? The underground Communist Party. Why aren't we their champions? . . .

A writer in *Eastern World* (April, 1952) tells of the practical effects of land reform in a rice-growing district of the Hopei province of China. From a region dominated by four landlords it had become "a community of 96 land-owning families." The landlords were allowed to retain land sufficient to support their families, provided they worked the land themselves. Production rapidly increased in this area. The writer, Peter Townsend, explains:

Of many peasants I questioned, the answer of one was the answer, in many ways, for all. "When I've never put more than 500 catties of fertiliser," said one old peasant, "this year I've put a thousand." An evil of landlordism, neglect of the land by landlords preoccupied by rents and peasants whose initiative had been killed by exaction, had been overcome. They worked longer hours. Possession of land made the fruits of toil accessible. Neither good weather nor chance could be credited with the fact that their first post-land reform harvest was 15 to 20 per cent higher than the previous one. It was simply that Sun Yat-sen's cry of "Land to the tillers" was now time-tested. Its application to tens of thousands of villages and the crop increases consequent upon it were the biggest factors in balancing China's budget.

Concluding, Mr. Townsend notes that the Korean war, far from disturbing the Chinese revolution, has consolidated its gains by evoking a national spirit strong enough "to sweep into the current of national endeavor many who might have come to it more slowly and cautiously."

An American, Randall Gould, who was in Shanghai at the end of World War II, describes in *Eastern World* for February how the flow of goods from UNRRA and ECA to Chiang's

government "did not so much rebuild China as tear down the morals of Chinese officialdom." These benevolent gestures, made in disregard of the advice of the foreign business community in China, were misunderstood by the Chinese:

One important consequence was to convince the common people of the country, yearning for overdue land and governmental reforms which the Nationalists were forever promising but never delivering, that Chiang Kai-shek was under the thumb of the foreigner, particularly of America. We who knew more could almost feel wry amusement at such an interpretation, natural but contrary to fact; had we controlled Chiang Kai-shek he must, in spite of himself, have done better!

This misinterpretation was completed by the foreign supply of weapons to Chiang's ill-paid, poorly-trained and discontented forces, who rather promptly disposed of many of these weapons to their Red foes by sale or surrender. (Many, probably most, of the "volunteer Chinese fighting United Nations armies in Korea have been former Chiang men.) Thus in their final drives the Communists were helped by the dissatisfaction of the countryside, the lack of fighting spirit among the Nationalists, and the, mostly American, arms taken over as welcome additions to their own scant supplies.

Other articles in *Eastern World* call attention to the fact that Chiang, on Formosa, is receiving a fabulous amount of American financial aid. The seven million people on Formosa are getting, per capita, more than twice as much as any other country in the world. This, despite the fact, noted by Marc T. Greene, that "Even the U.S. White Paper on China stated that a good part of the \$500,000,000 given to Chiang to bolster his currency was placed in private bank accounts here, there, and elsewhere, by 'grafting officials'."

*Eastern World*, let us add, is a sober British journal devoted to Eastern affairs. Its writers exhibit no particular illusions about Soviet Russia, some of whom question searchingly whether the benefits to the Chinese peasants under Communist rule will continue. After all, thus far the land reform is actually a "free enterprise" program rather than an application of "Communism"! The real point, however, is that, for hundreds of

millions of Asiatics—the people who Justice Douglas says "are on the march"—the United States now seems to stand for Western imperialism and for feudalism, while the land reforms are taking place, today, under Communist auspices. These are the unpleasant facts. In Douglas' words:

There are revolutions that are sweeping the world and we in America have been in a position of trying to stop them.

With all the wealth of America, with all of the military strength of America, those revolutions cannot be stopped. . . .

We have been supporting corrupt reactionary regimes, putting money behind governments that are vicious governments, reactionary governments, wasting the wealth of America, trying to underwrite the status quo, trying to stabilize the situation, as our officials sometimes say. . . .What we are doing is not succeeding while Russia seems to be having political success after political success. Russia has been winning by default.

Can the great ideas devoted to freedom, equality, and justice—the ideas which are at the root of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States—penetrate the cloud of fear and suspicion? Can they get by Senator Mundt's "test" of "subversive" activities? One wonders.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **"TRUTH FINDING"**

THERE is nothing new, perhaps, in the statement in this week's "Children . . . and Ourselves," that "the real aim and object of the human being is to discover as much of truth as he can for himself," yet so many MANAS discussions emphasize this point that a rather conscious consideration of the idea seems in order.

It can hardly be doubted that the confusions of this age arise from difficulty with the idea of "truth." Our civilization seems to oscillate between a shallow optimism in finding the truth and a discouraged pessimism which abandons the objective altogether. The "average man," on the other hand, tends to neglect the question on the assumption that either the church, or science, or both, may be entrusted with finding the answers.

Usually, when people discuss a problem of this sort, the conversation is dominated by those who sit back with a "show me" attitude toward every proposal hoping for a positive solution. This seems a great mistake. In a world with so many compounded uncertainties, the aggressive demand for "proof" is surely a little childish. Nobody has any real "proofs," these days—certainly, no proofs of the two-plus-two-equals-four variety. Yet everyone, both True Believers and Skeptics, must apply *some* standard to the problems of daily decision.

It would seem much wiser to give another kind of attention to the question of Truth. *What sort of evidence would we accept as indicating the truth, supposing the evidence were available?* If we devoted our energies to this inquiry, we could stop wasting time with pseudo-philosophical denials and lazy avoidance of the actual issues before us.

To formulate to ourselves what we actually know, or think we know, and what we regard as evidence of truth, would be a discipline of the highest value to us all. First, we would probably

recover from the institutions of science and religion much of the authority of personal decision which, through the centuries, has been delegated to them. We might recover, too, a realizing sense of the self-reliance on which the successful practice of democracy depends.

We should be humbled, it is true, but we would also be strengthened, and, being strengthened, become less vulnerable to fear. It is even possible that a basic inquiry of this sort is at the root of our hope for world peace.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

IT is an ungracious task to criticize the works of educators, since educators in general deserve consideration as consecrated to the welfare of future generations. There are times, however, when it seems advisable to examine some of the characteristic limitations and failings of the present educational climate, as reflected in current volumes.

We have at hand a book, *Teens—How to Meet your Problems*, by John and Dorothea Crawford (Woman's Press, New York, 1951), addressed to any adolescents who can be persuaded to read it. While there will be some young people able to find here many helpful suggestions concerning mental and emotional troubles, we detect other elements which need critical evaluation. For instance, there is considerable emphasis on the danger of allowing oneself to feel "too different." The general import is that one needs, above all, the feeling of belonging to the crowd. The adolescent is advised to:

*Carefully list the good ways you are LIKE other people. Write down these points, make the list as complete as you can. This will help you realize that you are not quite as "different" as perhaps you imagined.*

Then, to balance the ledger a little, the Crawfords advise that in addition to noting one's "weak points," one should review apparent marks of superiority:

*Now list whatever points about yourself seem BETTER than those of other people your age. Everyone has such points, at least one or two, so that is not bragging. Do you run more swiftly, sing better, write clearer, hammer a nail straighter, or what? Counting up your better points will do you no harm.*

There is nothing startlingly wrong here, perhaps, but if the reader feels that the end and aim of all this counsel is to encourage the teenager to *adjust* to group mores, there is room for

grave questioning. And in the Crawfords' context, even the "BETTER-than-others" listings cover purely quantitative differences, rather than the more important ones of essential temperament.

Belief in the importance of individual integrity, of the natural "come ye out and be ye separate" basis of courageous minority opinion, should logically be the supreme value for the educator concerned with the sort of democracy conceived by the founders of the American Republic. Adjustment gained through a deliberate erasing of spontaneously different ideas and values may bring relief from "tension," but it will not enable a child to grow up knowing his own mind. As Justice Douglas has recently remarked, the trend of our age is dangerously toward a conformity in youthful opinion, since the young, like many of the rest of us, are beginning to fear to entertain any thoughts which deviate from what is supposed to be "good American" thinking. The Crawfords try to avoid this trap by wheeling in the concept of God, but this seems to us simply to extend an already unsatisfactory arrangement. The thought is that God is able to appreciate our differences, even though society requires conformity:

*Believe in something far bigger than yourself. It is a wonderfully encouraging thought to remember that God not only created you, but that He always values you and counts you as His own, whatever your peculiarities.*

So the adjustment is double-edged. We adjust to the elements most common in our society and, for whatever further adjustment is needed, we turn to God. Thus the first suggestion of the Crawfords seems to be airtight—there are two complementary ways of avoiding feeling "too different." They state that "such feelings never are hopeless" and that "the earlier you catch them the sooner you can clear them. Other teens' success in meeting such troubles will give you courage to meet yours too."

We have always objected to the intrusion of the God-idea as a belief which should simply be

taken for granted, and for this reason were particularly happy to discover Marguerite Harmon Bro's *When Children Ask*, a book determined to present fairly both the standpoint of the religious believer and the standpoint of the non-religious. The Crawfords, however, say, "Of course, ask God for clearer insight and direction in all the affairs of your life." The "of course" indicates the strength of the authors' bias!

There are some bits of good advice in *How to Meet Your Problems*, even for those who feel wary about the conventional religious orientation of the book. An easy-to-grasp discussion of "malicious gossip" and "cutting remarks" is certainly useful, either with or without God:

In fact, many apparent grown-ups at times resort to cutting remarks, sneers or malicious gossip, in place of more outright rage against adversaries or opponents. The inner bodily reactions in these forms of anger may be just as injurious as open anger. Simply camouflaging the reaction in less obvious behavior does not lessen the harmful effects of prolonged anger on your nervous system and organs.

Yet the Crawfords state that "preventing anger completely is impossible in real life," which reminds us that the typical religious approach to human failings has always emphasized man's weakness and sinfulness when he is unaided by supernatural power. We like to think that anger *can* be prevented—that man is himself enough of a God to outgrow the immaturities that make anger possible!

The real issue raised by the Crawfords has to do with the idea of conformity. We are inclined to think that the repetition of conventional opinions and counsels of conformity have little place in education. We certainly meet the "will to conformity" in the pressure of thousands of orthodox opinions every day of our lives, and in education lies our best hope of surmounting the narrowness of opinions so engendered. Some of the greatest men have been those who were denied early years of formal schooling, the unusual father-son relationship of James and John Stuart Mill being but one famous example. We

think that encouraging independent opinion and avoiding counsels of conformity are important because the real aim and object of the human being is to discover as much of truth as he can for himself. And truth can never be handed on from one generation to another in the form of conventional stereotypes. Transmission of truth is impossible without an element of *discovery* for each individual.

The psychological mechanics of "truth finding" seem to revolve around the puzzlement encountered when one discovers the existence of contrasting or conflicting ideas, leading to search for a synthesis, for better answers than those previously provided. How can there be "discovery of truth" without such stimulation of thought? The young person whose tendency to feel "too different" is not suppressed by advice to adopt the patterns of conformity will certainly have more problems than his acquiescent fellows—but he may discover that his divergence is the very breath of life to him, and to his usefulness to others.

## *FRONTIERS* Psychology and Athletics

WE have often wondered if psychologists of several hundred years hence will not display tremendous interest in the phenomena of twentieth-century athletics. For there are two entirely distinct psychic trends which meet in modern sports, both of them characteristic of Western civilization and both of them worth investigation for one seeking deeper knowledge of the human being. First of all, it would seem impossible to deny that part of the lure of sports comes from the hero worship always accorded disciplined men. All great athletes undergo rigorous self-denial, and live with that sort of single-pointedness that, when reflected in other channels, we call "consecration." The quality of fearlessness, too, belongs to the athlete, a quality which the ancient *Bhagavad-Gita* of India lists as the first prerequisite of the disciple of great wisdom. Universal tradition also honors highly the capacity to hold a high pitch of concentrated energy throughout a contest. Athletics may even be said to provide for the play of that intangible quality which enables men to reach new heights when the challenge is the most difficult.

For all these reasons, we think a case can be made for athletics as symbolic of some essentially religious or devotional ideals. Even those who do not themselves perform, but who are yet genuinely thrilled by Herculean achievements in one or another sport, may gain some kind of an affirmation in respect to the wondrous capacities for strength and determination locked up in each man, such inspiration, in turn, perhaps aiding them to disregard the commonplace disappointments of their own economic and social struggles. But because modern sport is primarily an emotional phenomenon, and because, for this reason, it succumbs so easily to institutionalization, we also find innumerable examples of one or another form of what is called "corruption," typified by scandals in regard to "rigged" basketball games, prizefights, etc. Sport, like religion, whenever taken as an end in itself, tends to destroy the capacity for ethical thinking. Furthermore, when the capacity for ethical thinking is diminished, a sort of mania is likely to emerge—the mania which occasionally causes collegiate student-bodies to attack the student-bodies of other schools with uncontrolled destructive force. In many ways modern sports do

serve as exciting drugs. Some spectators, unfortunately, thrill to the dangers and injuries of sports more than to anything else.

These reflections are prompted by an editorial by the Los Angeles *Times* sports editor, who quotes extensively from an article appearing in the *Christian Century* by Dr. Ralph Hutchison, president of Lafayette College. Dr. Hutchison, a former football coach, contributes what amounts to a defense of intercollegiate athletics under the title, "Football: Symbol of College Unity." He contends that highly publicized "amateur sports" at the collegiate level need to be judged against the background of present-day social confusions rather than on the basis of some absolute standard. "Had we our choice," he writes, "perhaps none of us would elect football as the emotionally integrating symbol of the campus. Some have declared that philosophy should be the symbol." But, Dr. Hutchison continues,

. . . there is reason behind this weird and unguided development. The same period which saw football develop has also seen a social and intellectual disintegration on the campus.

Before football, college men lived in the same dormitory in small colleges, ate at the same commons, studied the same required curriculum, sat under the same professors, listened to the same classroom jokes, underwent a common intellectual and social experience.

But in the years since football, the curriculums have become diversified and there are numerous electives and options. Nowadays few men can be found who study the same courses, to say nothing of sitting under the same professors.

Campus social life has been broken up into fraternities and clubs and "houses." Men march out together in the commencement recessional who have never had a class together or a common social experience. Frequently they have not even met.

Football is the one universal experience which developed on the campus in this period of intellectual and social disintegration.

Dr. Hutchison obviously believes, as does the *Times* sports editor, that mass emotional phenomena which provide a sense of unity in cooperative enthusiasm are extremely valuable. We should ourselves put the matter differently, maintaining that the low common denominator of ambition engendered

by a purely emotional *esprit de corps* inhibits the development of those capacities of individual integrity and creativity which are more precious than any thing else. We do think, however, that Dr. Hutchison indirectly suggests a useful method for analyzing modern athletics. While sports as we presently know them may be bad for society as a whole, they provide opportunities for a kind of discipline and will-development which might otherwise never be encountered.

For these reasons, perhaps, those who write of sports find evaluation involved in contradictions. A typical example is furnished by George Sklar's *The Promising Young Man*, a novel which explores (like Lampell's *The Hero*) the effects on the young athlete of today of hysterical adulation of the crowd. In a summarizing chapter, after depicting the moral decline of a youngster who rose to international fame in tennis circles, Sklar indicates how easily a man whose concentration of energy is entirely focussed at the level of physical accomplishment and "crowd-pleasing" can "lose his own soul":

The young man of promise was no more. The hard, essential core, compounded of his stubborn drive and zest, of a purpose and will to achieve, of hopes and dreams, of a larger vision and confidence, was gone. A moment of weakness, a first small yielding—and a crack opens; one concession generates a chain of other concessions, allowing the corruption to seep in, to infect its center. The once sound core becomes hollow, the integrity frittered away, the degenerative process complete. And the whole personality, capable of so much when charged with a positive purpose and drive, becomes a scattered nondescript, a confused and unsure thing, no longer able to realize even its most developed capability. . . .

Lost, lost, the thousands of young men of promise, the many thousands who yield to the siren song and the rainbow chase, spending their young energies, dissipating their capabilities forever unrealized and unfulfilled, the mainstream of their lives diverted into side channels and thin, trickling streams.

But Mr. Sklar obviously did not write 330 pages simply to attack the false values of the sports world. The author knows something of the particular sport he writes about—knows it at least well enough to give his readers an appreciation of the basic beauty of a game involving intense skill, and to convey the authentic

thrill in battles of will, strategy, and endurance which occur in competitive tennis. Sklar's admiration for the sport, which so nearly balances his disapproval, is worth understanding. Perhaps the secret of it is that his young hero, although beset by family problems from his middle teens, later by marital problems, and facing a world disrupted by political confusion and international war, is able, when he plays tennis, to feel "as if the world has shrunk to the simple confines of the court's rectangle." Here, on the court, at least, the issues are clear. To be a "good man," a man able to be proud of himself, one has only to give his utmost concentration to the task immediately at hand. He stands completely on his own, and, in knowing that he is capable of meeting the needs of the match, he is able to feel both exaltation and contentment. This kind of contentment, we must remember, is bought and paid for by the exertions of a fighting heart, and is not altogether false. It cannot safely be ridiculed nor labeled inferior to any form of social or economic security so far devised. The athlete escapes back into simplicity, to a kind of primitiveness which is not of itself destructive. He may thus express an urge felt by the majority of mankind—the urge to eliminate, at least for a time, the bewildering distractions of an unbalanced civilization.

Finally, the corruption in modern athletics, as dealt with in such books as *The Promising Young Man* and Lampell's *The Hero*, will never be lessened by attempting to purge or "reform" athletics. Relatively speaking, there is probably less "wrong" with athletics than with many other things. The real trouble is clearly a lack of philosophical orientation in our culture generally, which prompts men to frenzied search for that which should be sought with patience and understanding.

We must not forget that the Greeks, whom we all profess to admire, gave us, along with a lineage of profound philosophy, the great tradition of sport. Even the Buddha, in his youth, was admired for his greatness as an athlete. The qualities of self-discipline must indeed be very necessary in the development of the "whole man," so that in any effete crowd the genuine athlete stands out—he has built into his character a fundamental kind of strength.