VOLUME V, NO. 35
AUGUST 27, 1952

HEALING THE SPLIT

SOME time ago, a student of religion urged us to discuss the problem of Evil. We made some sort of attempt, as we recall, but one that probably gave as little satisfaction to our readers as to ourselves. The subject is portentous and ponderous. It is possible, if you are so inclined, to be engaging about sin, but not about evil, and certainly not about upper case Evil.

It ought, however, to be discussed. People write and read articles about frustration and anxiety, but they are really concerned with the mystery of evil. For the evil in human experience confronts us with the basic challenge of life: Are we able to look upon the world and our role in it as a rational affair? The greatest religious philosopher of all time, Gautama Buddha, addressed himself to this question, finding an affirmative answer. We think it hardly possible to improve on his answer, yet times, the forms of human experience, and the moral vocabulary of man have greatly changed during the twenty-five hundred years since Buddha lived. The wisdom of the ages may be preserved in the great classics of religious thought, but its understanding has always to be in terms of the local idiom of time and place.

Our version of the problem of Evil, then, will be in the contemporary idiom, but whether or not it will square with the Buddhist canon we have no clear idea.

What precipitated this plunge into metaphysics (you can't discuss Evil without metaphysics) was a letter from a reader which sets the general problem of the contemporary man of social and moral intelligence. It is so deftly couched in the terms of today's commonly acknowledged values that it is worth quoting almost entire. He writes:

> As a modern-type liberal, I am imbued with opposition to dogma of any nature, and this feeling seems prevalent in the intellectual stratum in which I move. The results, however, don't seem to be so hot. As a practicing scientist, I can agree with Dr. Mather's remarks [quoted in MANAS for July 2] in that I fail to see why "science" should have a philosophy at all. To me it seems that the scientific method is a tool, pure and simple, and that, as he says, is neither moral nor immoral. However, the use of any tool has implications which do involve evaluations and the refusal of the scientist, *qua* scientist, to attempt to evaluate the effects of his work, seems to me as indefensible as the attitude of the individuals who originally started our dust bowl. A few, such as Dr. Einstein and the Atomic Scientists, have made attempts in this direction, but my impression is that the vast majority of practicing scientists and engineers have far less social consciousness than any equally highly educated group in the country. This relates to my original point in that the abandonment of any dogmatic philosophy seems to have led to the abandonment of any philosophical education whatsoever for the students. In the four technical institutions with which I have been associated, the reasons for pursuing a scientific career were stated as *(a)* it is interesting and/or (b) there is a lot of money to be made at it. I don't know how this strikes you, but I find it discouraging.
>
> Your review [of Motley's *We Fished All Night]* brings back to mind *Knock on any Door,* which I read some time ago. This seems to me one of a series of recent novels reflecting much the same spirit, among which I would include *The Naked and the Dead, The Young Lions* and, more recently, *Missing. I* can't for the life of me see that these books, well-written though they are, have any justification for being written in the first place. All they seem to say is that whatever one does, nothing good comes of it and the only characters in them who avoid destruction are those who are quiet and inconspicuous enough to keep from getting caught in the works. I am getting a little het up about this because this type of art form seems to be spreading and has, within the past few months, invaded my favorite recreational reading: science-fiction.
>
> Maybe we are, as you suggest, passing through the doldrums, but it seems to me that if I can't find anything great and noble to do with my life, I will

> devote same to digging a blamed good ditch or running an elevator with precision and *éclat* and get some satisfaction out of it. I can't believe that a society whose leaders and writers ignore the positive values in what we have, is in any position to receive any great philosophical notions. Some appreciation of the smaller values must precede appreciation of any larger ones, and I think that in this, if anywhere, lies the salvation of our country, though I'm blamed if I can figure how to work it.

This is something more than a plain man's account of Evil. A plain man will wonder why taxes are getting so high, why the war in Korea threatens the lives of his sons, and why, from an over-all view, there just doesn't seem to be much of a future for anything, any more. But here, in this analysis, we have an account of a basic split in our lives—a cultural split, if you will—between, on the one hand, our intuitively felt ideals, and, on the other, our theory as well as our practice.

Our society is riotously wealthy in the practical means to what we suppose is the Good Life. Technologically, that is, we are the most rational people in the world. But, using these means, we don't seem to make our lives very good. We are not reaching ends we can be proud of. Our correspondent doesn't go far toward defining the best ends, but he indicates clearly enough the feelings of a large number of people with respect to the existing patterns of living.

What we lack, then, after the most favorable assessment of what we are and have, is a sense of genuine satisfaction, a conviction that our lives, singly and collectively, are moving toward worthy ends. By means of the spirit of freedom, we have broken out of two closed systems of absolutism—religious absolutism and political absolutism—and we swear by the principle which set us free—the principle of "opposition to dogma of any nature." Yet, gaining freedom, we seem to have lost the sense of direction which we hoped would take us to ends that our freedom would make it possible to reach. We seem to have kicked over and broken up into kindling our Jacob's Ladder to the stars. While we have rid ourselves of the theories of Cosmas Indicopleustes—we no longer believe that when the angels weep, it rains on earth—the H_2O theory of rainfall is as uninspiring as Cosmas' was ridiculous.

Back in 1948, Richard M. Weaver, in *Ideas Have Consequences*, put his finger on one aspect of the barrenness of modern thought. He wrote:

> It is characteristic of the barbarian, whether he appears in a pre-cultural stage or emerges from below into the waning day of a civilization, to insist upon seeing a thing "as it is." The desire testifies that he has nothing in himself with which to spiritualize it; the relation is one of thing to thing without the intercession of the imagination. Impatient of the veiling with which the man of higher type gives the world imaginative meaning, the barbarian and the Philistine, who is the barbarian living amid culture, demand the access of immediacy.

The poetry and imagination in some scientific men burst out in various ways, but are always carefully suppressed in relation to the "things" with which science itself is primarily concerned. "Thingness," for the scientist, is the sacred attribute of scientific reality. To draw in any sort of transcendence would seriously threaten the scientific method, opening the door to all sorts of apparitions, theological and otherwise. So, the poetry of the scientist is not *serious* poetry, but more in the nature of "esthetic expression," or simply "escape." Serious poetry reaches after inward or transcendent reality; it dares to declare and to affirm matters of immense consequence for human beings. This tends to antagonize the scientist, *qua* scientist, for how can he have confidence in an approach which implies that *his* method of exploring "reality" is of negligible importance?

We can hardly blame the scientists, however, for wanting to hold on to their victory over dogma and blind belief. And just where would we find a check on extravagances of the poetic imagination, if we abandon scientific definitions?

The dilemma becomes extreme when we search other and past cultures for evidence of what is missing from our lives. Richard Hertz, in *Man on a Rock*, has some passages which convey

the temper of cultures which were not split by alternations between oppressive tyranny and aimless freedom:

> Chinese peasants, moving into the mountains every morning to gather tea, sang a hymn in honor of their enterprise, which they compared to a pilgrimage to the Western paradise. The Volga boatmen "accepted the universe," and the women of Madagascar acted, when they cultivated the rice fields, like bayaderes trying to please a god. . . .
>
> The medieval fraternities of workers in Flanders and Lyons . . . rolled the stone from the tomb of their narrow space; their triumph over the refractory material of the world was not mere routine, but was understood by them in its vast metaphysical connotations. Work interpreted as spiritual discipline gave these people a superhuman patience, detachment from results.

And what, after all, is our correspondent's attraction to "digging a blamed good ditch," or "running an elevator with precision and *éclat,"* but a twentieth-century quest for a way of pleasing "the gods," with or without "hymns" or "vast metaphysical connotations"?

The ancients held that the origin of evil lay in the severance of primordial Unity, in the emergence of the Many from the One. Always, they said, there is that in the fragment which hungers after the whole, and being only a fragment, it must learn to recover the whole through harmonious relationships with all the rest. Evil is only the dissonances men make in trying to satisfy that hunger, which is an intrinsic expression of life as we know it.

In past ages, the harmony was sought in ritual and through the symbolism found in daily activities—a man's work was somehow connected with the larger relationships of life, mirroring the laws and processes of nature. A sense of the meaning of existence was generated by human activities which refined and revealed the essences of experience—a kind of alchemy. This was best accomplished by heroes, who stood as ideals for the rest of mankind.

Today, however, we stand amid the ruins of the symbolic structures of history. This seems to have come about, partly as a result of the misuse and perversion of symbols by the teachers of religion, and partly from an acceleration of intellectual development which has rendered us almost incapable of accepting a merely symbolic explanation of our lives. So, we are confronted by a new version of the primordial rift. The old bridges from the Many to the One will not support the weight of our doubts, and we now experience the deep feeling of evil which isolation always brings.

If we turn from religious symbolism to Idealist philosophers, we are instructed that the Whole is not some far-off reality, but is within ourselves—that, in fact, we have never left it, but only *think* we have. And here, they say, is the secret of both our evolution and the ubiquitous One Self. This may be metaphysics, but is it "philosophical dogma"? It does not sound so to us.

German Report

[The following communication is from a MANAS reader abroad who writes to describe the circumstances under which the youth of Berlin—and, in some degree, the youth of all Germany—are obliged to grow to maturity.]

Guenther is a lad of twenty-one. During the war, while his father was absent, he was sent to various camps for evacuated children. In the last of them, in Austria, his "educators" simply ran away when the end came. The children tried to survive by stealing. What other means had they?

Home in Berlin, Guenther found an abnormal situation. It was easier and more profitable to gamble on the black market than to toil in the ruins of Berlin. Later, when the black market disappeared, and when jobs were scarce, it was tempting to collect old metal in the ruins and sell it. Twice Guenther was sent to jail for such activities.

Now, he is once more free. His father hopes that Guenther is now on his way to a decent life. But recently I met Guenther in the street, and asked him what he was doing. He was on his way to the football field. Generally, he was doing nothing. A job? Impossible! He is not even on the list of those who get a dole, as his father has a fixed though moderate salary. He has no chance to get a job. The labor office will give jobs only to those in whose cases the dole can be saved.

So Guenther will continue to live on his father, doing nothing. Some night, in his juvenile desire to do something to contribute to the maintenance of the family, he will slink into one of the innumerable ruins and try to find some scrap iron which virtually belongs to nobody. If caught he will be given two years of hard labor, for relapsing. The judge will say that the boy has made no effort to adapt himself to society.

Guenther will wonder about a society in which a young man is denied the chance to do any productive work. But for him, this society is absolutely "normal"; he has never known any other.

There is Helmut. He has no parents. As a refugee from Silesia, he came to Berlin toward the end of the war. Some people gave him shelter, but unfortunately they were of the criminal class. When he learned that his younger brother was still at Breslau, he set off, traveling some 120 miles on foot through a territory partly occupied by the Russians, partly by the Poles. He found his brother in the ruins of Breslau and took him to Berlin, all the way on foot. Of course, the two boys lived on what they found and took. Their sister was in Austria. Helmut went there by train, but without a ticket, finding her after a long search. He brought her to Berlin. Helmut, you see, is not without energy and pluck, but this is scarcely a good education for a lad of sixteen. Soon he was in jail for stealing.

In March, 1951, he was released, which meant for him, as for many, that now his troubles began again. There was no job for him. Several times he came to see me, saying: "I do not want to steal. But what can I do?" In December, he committed a theft out of sheer despair. Two months later, he was once more in a situation from which he saw no way out. He was refused even the very small dole, as now the labor office wanted to "investigate" whether he was really in need—which would occupy weeks. So he went to the police, delivering himself with the words: "I do not want to steal again, but I do not know what to do. Please arrest me, to get me off the street. I committed a theft some months ago." There was no comprehension on the part of the judge. The boy was given two years of hard labor, the prosecutor calling him a professional criminal with no other ideals than doing damage to others. I wonder if he will make a fresh start and become a member of the so-called "normal society" after this experience.

I will tell you no more sad stories of this type. I know many of them. But remember: Such boys presently will be called into a European army, to

defend the free nations, the achievements of Western civilization, and the "American way of life," which certainly has not been theirs. Let us look at the moral aspect of this East-West conflict, of this defense of democracy.

During Hitler's rule, Germans were educated to hate. The Jews, before all, then the pacifists, the socialists, the Russians, the Americans—all the world was to be hated. On May 5, 1945, this came to a sudden end. It was no longer allowed to hate anybody, excepting the Nazis who had had to be glorified until the day before. However, there were many Germans who abjured hating. Especially among the younger generation, the comprehension that one has to live in peace with everybody is still rather strong. But for the past two years all the "authorities" have been trying to incite the Germans to a new wave of hatred.

In the East, the Americans are the scapegoats. Everything and anything is their fault. When potato beetles damage the harvest, the Americans have dropped them. I know a man who earns his living in the Eastern Zone by giving non-political talks about the Alps, the life of the birds, and on similar topics. But he has always to add a few words about American imperialism if he is to get new engagements. Not that the public likes this—not in the least—but those who organize his meetings would not classify him as "politically reliable" should he omit criticism of the Americans.

In the West, the situation is scarcely better. Here you must criticize Communism, and the Russians everywhere. The American-owned broadcasting station RIAS thunders incessantly against the Russians. Hatred has nearly become a religion.

Imagine the influence of such policies on a nation that has only recently emerged from the ocean of hatred that Hitler had created. A young man, entirely non-political, told me that immediately after the signing of the Contractual Agreement at Bonn, there was a reaction in the East, as was expected. It was, however, purely defensive, not aggressive. In their mad fear of spies—there are many of them—the Russians began to interfere with the residents of the few houses situated within the Russian Zone, but under the administration of Western Berlin. As West-Berliners are no longer allowed to enter the Russian Zone, those people, few as they were, could not go from their homes to West-Berlin and back. To this silly interference the British reacted by erecting wire entanglements around the big building within the British sector where the Russian-owned broadcasting station is housed and which by the 1945 agreement belongs to the East. The personnel could leave the building, but nobody could enter it, so that the people were threatened by hunger.

This lasted only a few days. After conversations between the Russians and the British, an agreement was obtained and the ban lifted. But during those few days the following incident occurred. Imagine the wire entanglement around the main entrance of the building. Within the wire enclosure, a Russian sentinel, rather frightened, while outside were some British MPs and the German crowd. One man, apparently drunk, crawled through half the wire entanglement and began to hurl stones at the Russian soldier. The mob applauded fervently. The Russian was hit at his knee by a rather heavy stone; there he stood, bewildered, rifle in hand, not knowing what to do. The mob howled ferociously at him. My friend, who told me the story, said: "Leave that man alone! Let the Allies settle the controversy between themselves, it is not our business." Immediately the mob set upon him, shouting, "A Communist agent!" The German police interfered, seizing the young man and taking him away to save him from the mob. They let him go home later, soon realizing that he was not a Communist but only a man who could not stand by while a mob threw stones at a single individual.

Remember that the "Allies" originally came to this country to "re-educate" the German nation. Here is a recent result. In the prison of Werl there

is a former general of the dreaded SS, by the name of Kurt Meyer. For the crimes he had committed during the war; an American Military Court gave him a life sentence. Now Lieut.-Col. Macdonald, who had acted as prosecutor at the trial against Meyer, has started a campaign to let him go free on condition that he serve in one of the West-European Armies.

We do not know in which country Meyer committed his crimes. Probably it was Russia. Now it is as if Macdonald has said to him: "You have acted like a criminal; that is why I sent you to prison for the rest of your life. But if you are willing to do it again as our ally, we shall give you the chance."

Can the Russians be expected to believe in the good will of the Western Powers, who are preparing to let loose against Russia the same war criminals who are not yet forgotten by the Russian people? Can we Germans, "reeducated" as we are, be expected to want our boys put under the command of a man who a few years ago was condemned as a criminal? The moral slum of modern political life cannot be better demonstrated than by the affair of Kurt Meyer.

There you have the environment of German youth. A sort of political nihilism is getting hold of them. Their leaders of the Nazi period failed. The old political fossils who emerged after the surrender of 1945 try to continue where they left off in 1933, as if Hitler had not existed. A young man with any awareness cannot take them as models. And the Allies, the liberators—yesterday loathing militarism, to-day praising and practicing it; yesterday giving all sorts of preference to German pacifists, today once more banning them from travel as "suspect"—no, the Allies have no moral influence any longer. The most intelligent among the youth of Germany are resolved not to follow anybody, but to decide for themselves.

REVIEW
SELF-CORRECTIVES AND SCIENTISM

VENTURING into the haunts of the higher intellectual echelons, we wish to call attention to articles currently appearing in *The American Scholar* and in *ETC.*, a review of general semantics. The Spring 1952 *American Scholar* reports verbatim a brilliant public discussion of "The Application of Scientific Method to the Study of Human Behavior." The men addressing themselves to this question are impressive intellects—Crane Brinton, professor of history at Harvard; B. F. Skinner, professor of psychology, also at Harvard; A. L. Kroeber, a distinguished anthropologist; Hiram Haydn, editor of *The American Scholar;* and Joseph Wood Krutch, professor of dramatic literature at Columbia. It is Mr. Krutch's contribution that we particularly admire, for Krutch, despite his monumental erudition, seems to have been inspired on that occasion to formulate basic criticisms of "scientism" in a manner as simple as it is vital.

At the outset, Prof. Krutch confesses a "distrust of the growing emphasis of social and other sciences." "It seems to me," he remarks, "that we are getting to a stage where the most powerful influence on society is exercised by a group of people who make all their value judgments casually, arbitrarily, without thought, without consideration, because they say—oh, well, I am a scientist, and science is not concerned with those things."

The argument then runs: Because of their assumption of superiority to those who make "value judgments," the social scientists risk misleading both themselves and an overawed public. Prof. Krutch feels that this attitude could easily lead, although imperceptibly, to totalitarian methods of social control:

> . . . I should like to add, particularly in view of what has just been said, that there is both what the social scientist deliberately does, and the additional evil of what he does without quite intending—that is to say, the things he does because he tends to lay the greatest stress on those elements in human life which are most predictable, which he can best deal with, and consequently tends to bring into the foreground those things, and to push into the background others which, to my mind, are equally or more important; that just because a thing is measurable and predictable he tends to say, "Well, that is something that is really important," and something else which is much more difficult to predict and deal with, he tends to push aside.
>
> The result is that society tends to be put more and more in a situation where the manageable things are the things which everybody concerns himself most with, and the manageable people come to be considered the most important people, so that all our techniques are going to be directed toward that element in the population which is most predictable, most malleable, most amenable, and government, society, education, even, will concern themselves less and less with that minority which is least predictable—whereas, according to my prejudices, those are the people who are most important.

Irving J. Lee's review in *ETC.*, dealing with the historical development of general semantics, nicely complements Prof. Krutch's contentions that "value judgments" are dangerous as well as insecure when they are merely accepted from a past heritage. The recent "past" is a past dominated by scientific specialists; and since they, too, are human, their own group dogmas and preconceptions have also been much in evidence. Prof. Lee, however, establishes criteria which charge every scientist with the responsibility of constant self-evaluation and correction, and which apply equally to the areas of religious and cultural prejudice. He feels that the scientific approach to a man's orientation in respect to philosophy and values requires answers to the following questions:

> *a.* Does he ever go beyond his present premises and knowledge to face facts and theories which are different?
>
> *b.* Is he disposed to listen to others to discover what "they have in mind" instead of arrogantly assuming that he knows without the investigation?
>
> *c*. Does he respond in trigger-fashion without analysis of situations, or does he exhibit the control which accompanies delay-of-reaction?

d. Does he expect to find things and people alike, unchanging, or are his expectancies attuned to the possibilities of difference and process? Is his thinking in terms of fixed types, kinds, categories, or does he take account of graded variations?

e. In his moments of painful "emotion," anger, hatred, fear, shame, indignation, or envy is he aware of the object of his feeling? Does he respond to the object in its setting or is he responding to some associated label or verbal definition of the situation? Do his feelings of being afraid, hurt, insulted (which may be justified in any one situation) freeze into chronic resentments and fears as if the stimulus continued, or does he seek to fix the feelings in space-time, thus forcing re-examination and attack on the chronicity?

f. When faced with the necessity of making decisions, is he willing to experiment and act in terms of what is known, or does he take refuge in postponing action until "all the data are in"?

g. When faced with problems requiring solution does he tend to *think by verbalization*, projecting ready-made linguistic schemes onto the facts under consideration, or does he *think by visualization*, directing his attention to pictures and situations *without words*, thus involving the structural aspects unrestricted by the verbally-defined categories?

Both Mr. Krutch and Mr. Lee, it seems to us, contend that the "Rule of Reason," which is supposed to have been in force since the Enlightenment, did not really put in anything like a convincing appearance. A man we once knew—who, incidentally, made no particular claims to intellectual superiority—remarked in a letter to a friend that the first requirement of the seeker for truth is to "make clear and clean his own mental perceptions and conceptions," which is as useful a statement of the issue as we have encountered. But how is one to go about this fine work? A determination to be devoted to the quality of incessant humility would be a good start. "Be humble," says one rendition of Eastern scripture, "if thou wouldst attain to wisdom. Be humbler still when wisdom thou has mastered." Then, and perhaps in consequence, we may come to see that *the history which surrounds the man is not the man.* The ideas, the "climates-of opinion," which press upon us from our mental environment are not "the truth." The history which surrounds us, the group-impressions and prejudices, are like psycho-intellectual suits of clothes—sometimes comforting us when they seem "well cut," but always a psychological threat because of our unfortunate susceptibility to being beguiled by "high style."

The psychology of "high style" in intellectual attitudes has wormed its way into the sacred halls of scientific learning, while Philosophy—which is supposed to ignore fads and fashions in the search for truth—has languished under a neglect not unlike its treatment during the ages of theological domination. Perhaps "general semantics" is in part a manifestation of "high style," too, but in such versions of semantic discipline as that supplied by Prof. Lee, valuable means of self-correction are made available.

COMMENTARY
PROGRESS BY PROGRAM?

THAT the "Rule of Reason" has yet to be widely adopted by the Western World (see Review) is far from being a new discovery. For at least a generation, representatives of the scientific outlook have been arguing that it is both foolish and unjust to accuse "Science" of adding to the confusion of the modern world, since it is in those regions of life where the confusion is greatest that the scientific method has never been applied. Not less science, but *more,* is their reply to the charge that a civilization oriented by scientific ideas is bound to fall into bewilderments. Do not, they say, blame science for the failure of the world to profit by the facts and processes which have been known to scientists for years.

It was G. K. Chesterton, we think, who answered critics of Christianity by saying: "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has not been tried." Similar defenses are sometimes offered by advocates of socialism. Anti-Stalin communists maintain that the Russian revolution was betrayed by the present rulers of the Soviet State; and H. G. Wells insisted that the workability of socialism could not be tested except on a world-wide scale.

The logic of these various arguments seems sound enough. If the program of a man or a party requires the cooperation and conformity of an entire civilization in order to be successful, no one can say that the program is a "failure" until the cooperation and the conformity have been forthcoming. But more important, perhaps, than this logic is the premise from which it grows. What about elaborate programs of human betterment which require almost universal assent?

The West has the habit of defining changes for the better in institutional terms. The dilemma of the scientific reformer or the Christian reformer or the socialist reformer is that he wants to make people believe and act in a certain way, yet—due apparently to human stubbornness, ignorance, backwardness, or, possibly, to an innate resistance to any kind of imposed pattern of behavior and conviction—"the people" are reluctant to conform. The reformer then has to choose between "education" (which is notoriously slow), compulsion (which amounts, practically, to fascism), and a frank admission of failure.

Examples of the "fascist" solution are all too familiar. "Education" we have with us always, the common criticism of this method being that unless the reformers capture the schools (or are kept out of the schools), we shall make no progress that way. The confession of failure is perhaps illustrated by the recent trend among Christians to return to the pre-liberal theology of despair and the "saving remnant." The world, the neo-orthodox imply, is so saturated with evil that we, as merely human beings, cannot hope to change it very much. Salvation is really in God's hands, and the faithful can only do their best through contrition and prayer to sway His will.

A non-institutional approach to human betterment would avoid the dilemma of the reformer by returning the problem of development to the individual. The reinstatement of the responsibility of the individual would doubtless prove difficult, but how else are we to break ourselves of the habit of waiting for some outside savior to end our difficulties?

The root of the problem, however, lies in the prevailing idea of what man is and what is "progress" or "growth." What we think on these subjects will inevitably shape all our other problems.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

IN our relationships with children, whether as parents or teachers, moral and psychological questions which appear theoretical at the adult level often become matters of immediate practical concern. Take for instance the common tendency to "lie" or suppress information or feelings. Though we live in a society erected upon innumerable misrepresentations and distortions of truth—modern advertising being an obvious case in point—we, personally, seldom feel ourselves continuously and directly responsible for this situation. When a child prevaricates, however, it becomes evident that the whole structure of our educative relationship is in danger. Not that this same conclusion should not apply to the prevarications of society in general—but since "society" holds us directly responsible for what our children do, we are apt to feel it especially necessary to know the truth of what they do and why they do it.

Parents can be deeply troubled by their children's falsehoods, even after hearing the reminders of the psychologists to the effect that much of childhood "lying" is simply an overflow of creative imagination. Most parents certainly think that they desire their children to be truthful, and will even go so far as to try to impress upon the young that nothing "bad" can be as bad as failing to tell the truth about it. Patiently, and they think disarmingly, parents will repeat again and again their appeal to the child to be "perfectly honest." Then, if falsehoods still occur, the parent feels injured, and perhaps disturbed by the ominous thought that the future may yield no improvement.

But no one is eager to "tell the truth" if he is aware that the telling will have an unpleasant effect. When a child hears from a parent that only "the whole truth and nothing but the truth" will avert punishment, the parent has not yet discharged his full psychological obligation. We are not entitled to conclude that if, after such a "man-to-man talk," the child *then* prevaricates, it is obviously a case of naked perversity. For this may not be perversity at all, but rather a simple manifestation of the urge for self-protection. A child instinctively knows whether or not a parent will *inwardly* disapprove of something he has done and he instinctively knows, also, that, as studiously "fair" as the parent tries to be, such disapproval will manifest in an increase of surveillance. This, in turn, implies an increase of suspicion, and no one likes to live in an atmosphere of suspicion. So far as the child can see, every time he reveals that he has done something "wrong," the parent's suspicion increases—and the child is usually right, for parents like to harbor illusions about the moral superiority of their children over other waifs, and they *become* more suspicious subsequent to any disillusionment.

Parents who whine at their children or loudly complain at childish disregard of home duties will always receipt for youthful misrepresentation of both deeds and spontaneous feelings. But a young child is no more morally guilty in trying to avert a deluge of complaining disapproval than is a man who tries to avoid keeping an appointment in a storm. What we suspect parents have to learn, admittedly no easy task, is that the *psychological atmosphere* generated by them in their relations with one another and with their children is the real cause of most "lying."

We are reminded of some pointed statements on this subject in A. S. Neill's *The Problem Family*. Neill felt that his first task was to create for the children under his care an atmosphere which was conducive to truth-telling. He claimed that most parents "perpetually live with their nerves on edge." We all may, indeed, live with our nerves on edge for any one of a multitude of reasons. The tempo of competition is often enough of itself to produce this result. Marital difficulties also contribute their tensions, and few

parents are able to conceal overt signs of quarreling from the young.

We talk about "understanding the child," and about the need of impressing children with our desire and capacity for such understanding, but the plain fact is that there can be no understanding on a theoretical basis. We have to have time and patience to re-enter the mental and emotional world in which the child lives, and above all, we have to have a genuine desire to do so. Desire, in turn, presupposes spontaneous interest, and if our own personal problems are uppermost in our minds we will not have much real interest in understanding the workings of the pre-adolescent psyche. Without sufficient patience or time, we try to govern our child by directives, complaints and accusations. These are the usual manifestations of the never-successful practice of "disciplining from above." Neill writes that:

> The child disciplined from above will express its hate of authority by annoying its parents, and indeed much childish misbehaviour is a visible proof of wrong treatment. . . . If there is hate in the home he accepts nothing, or he accepts things negatively and is destructive and cheeky and dishonest. World neurosis begins with parental discipline in every sphere. At the moment I am trying to tell parents that the future of humanity rests with them. If they continue to ruin the life force in their children by arbitrary authority, crime and war and misery will go on flourishing. If they continue they will lose the love of their children, for no one can love what one fears. Children are wise; they will react with love to love, but with hate to hate. They will react easily to discipline of the team type.

It is Neill's contention that few of us recognize the extent to which we employ the "army type of discipline"—a discipline which produces all that is bad in human nature. Just because we don't have formal court-martials at home, issue stockade fatigues and punish by forced labor and detention does not necessarily mean that we handle children in a way fundamentally different from that of an army staff—which also excuses itself on the grounds of "emergency" and being always in a hurry.

There are, of course, many aspects to the discipline question. One correspondent recently suggested that normal growing up may involve meeting a bit of "stiff parental Opposition":

> Parental "caring" may take "bad" forms—suspicion, jealousy, opposition, denial—but a child has a mind. He can see all this badness, and contend against it. The very contending may help him. Without this strong contrast of even an alien standard, the child has nothing against which to check his own inclinations. He grows up, still a child, still accepting sweetly a frictionless world. The vacuum of indifference and 'anything goes" (no hard facing of stiff parental opposition), may produce spineless personalities—like a chick that has never had to break open his own shell.

There are certainly elements of psychological truth in this argument, but we think that, for the majority of homes, Neill's counsels are more to the point. While parents who reflect no fundamental convictions about *anything* may induce more thoughtlessness in their children than other parents who have strong, even though erroneous, convictions, the real issue is not in the convictions at all, but rather in the method of asserting them. A bad form of asserting convictions or opinions is never anything but bad; that is, whether a belief or opinion is valid or not, the child will react with deception to any attempt to *force* him into a predetermined mold of behavior which he had no part in designing.

FRONTIERS

The Shadow of Philosophy

WILLIAM H. HUDNUT'S article, "The Scandal of Dogmatism," in the *Christian Century* for July 9, expresses a normal human being's wholesome dislike for the idea of being utterly dependent upon a force outside himself and entirely beyond his control. Having read in a recent volume by Emil Brunner the sentences: "Sin is the destruction of communion with God. . . . Man is incapable of healing the breach between himself and the Creator," and other passages with similar content, Dr. Hudnut writes in vigorous rejection of this dark doctrine of human impotence.

It is an old quarrel, of course, which will doubtless continue for as long as there are interpreters of "God's word." The surprising thing about this article is not its defense of what we suppose is "liberal Christianity," but in the militant rejoinders it evoked in later issues. The argument in the *CC's* correspondence columns over Hudnut's article is a notable illustration of the tendency of some men to announce and revel in the complete helplessness of human beings. What possible explanation can there be for pleasure found in self-abasement?

One of Hudnut's critics declared, "Only as a man recognizes his complete dependence upon God can the process of salvation be instituted." Another argues that "if the human creature is actually *able* to overcome his sinful predilection, then what need is there for God's grace. . . ? And what meaning then has the atonement?" We do not question the "theological" validity of these objections; it is rather the psychology of human helplessness that is of interest. The person who says, "I am nothing, God is everything," is indulging an emotional all-outness which, so far as we can see, has very little to distinguish it from the habit of some men to throw themselves like projectiles into other bottomless pits of emotional experience. There is the spurious "commitment" of the man who goes out to get drunk with a kind of pseudo-gallantry—he is giving his "all" to drink—and the equally familiar surrender to a "stronger power" of people who glory in their insatiable emotional appetites.

We have made no study of what Dr. Freud calls the "death wish," but here, it seems to us, are basic illustrations of what it means. For a tentative analysis of the forces involved, we suggest that the basic psychological drive in human beings is for *unity*, but since there are various psychic levels in man, so there are various unities which may be sought. A man can lose distinct awareness of himself as a separate individuality in a number of ways. The awareness of individual independence, and therefore, of individual responsibility, gives us psychological pain in hours of weakness, making us seek a unity which will overcome the emotion of self-disgust; whereas the same awareness may be transcended through the joy of creation, when we are able to feel strong—to meet life as it comes to us.

A man who habitually feels that he is a failure as an individual is likely to choose a God in whose omnipotence he can find the peace of oblivion. He dies as a free-agent, and is reborn "in God." Sin, then, for such a man, lies in denying both the omnipotence of God and the impotence of man. This is the only sin the weak man feels capable of avoiding, so he makes it the worst sin of all, in order to shine with a special virtue.

When an entire civilization adopts this doctrine, as in the Augustinian and Calvinistic tradition, a peculiar psychological struggle ensues, for not all men born into that tradition will find it easy to accept. Some rebel against the "helplessness" theology, and develop heresies and schisms which seek to withhold at least some independent moral power and personal integrity for themselves. But the heretics are at a serious disadvantage: They cannot say, with a grand flourish, "God is everything, I am nothing." Their affirmations are lacking in beautiful simplicity. They have to say "God is everything," to remain in the Christian fold, then adding, a bit

inconsistently, "but I am *something*, too!" At which point, a stern orthodoxy shouts, "Well *what* are you, miserable sinner?" The only "Christian" reply that can be made—not a very impressive one—is offered by Dr. Hudnut:

> Of course we are dependent on God, but let us not overemphasize this truth to the point of excluding our high duty as responsible persons to cooperate with God in working out his purposes for our lives and the world. God is dependent on us too! Let no confession of our own relative impotence blind us to the fact that there are many things in this world that God does not do, cannot do, without our help.

How one cooperates or divides one's labors with Omnipotence is not a problem we feel able to discuss. It does not seem to be a natural problem of human life, but one resulting from the artificialities of the dogma of Creation. The only real solution seems rather to eliminate either God or man altogether. That is, either God must be everything, and man nothing, as the "helplessness" theologians claim, or the substratum of reality which is sometimes called "God" must be as present in man as in anything else, and not regarded as a separate, overshadowing "being." The latter solution, of course, abolishes theology, and will hardly gain popularity in the churches, or among those for whom religion is an escape from hateful individual responsibility.

This general controversy has another aspect, however. It seems that every theological extreme is in some sense the distorted reflection of a philosophical principle. There is a weak way to abandon oneself to God's mercy, and there is a strong way to forget oneself in working for high objectives. Both these positions have a "total" character. The emotion felt by the "sinner" who glories in his wretchedness, whose only elevation comes from his willingness to crawl—and to declare before the world that crawlers alone have hope of pleasing God—is somehow a base imitation of the impersonality of the philosopher—the man whose mind is too occupied, whose heart is too generous, for him to worry about whether or not he is a "sinner."

It comes to this, then, that every noble emotion has its lower, mindless counterpart, and every philosophical idea its theological corruption. The sense of oneness gained by the pantheist, in rare moments of rapport with the rest of life, may be short-circuited through fear and self-hate into the dumb adoration of the creature for his creator. The reciprocity of all learning, the interdependent circle of experience, becomes, for thwarted beings, the dogma of the Vicarious Atonement, with all its subordinate machinery of creeds, sacraments, churches and priests, invented to complete the logic of human impotence.

The real saviors, then, if this analysis be acceptable, are those who prove the competence of man to save himself; who not only preach, but exhibit, the logic of individual moral strength. And, with or without the sanction of the churches, we suspect that Jesus of Nazareth was this sort of a savior, along with a number of others who loved their fellow men.