

# PARAPSYCHOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

[This article is a paper read by C. W. Weiant, of Peekskill, New York, at the recent meeting in Mexico City of the American Anthropological Association, before the section on Culture and Personality.—Editors.]

SOME twenty years ago I had the temerity to read a paper on this topic at a session of the late Ruth Benedict's seminar at Columbia University. The reactions to that paper ranged from mild interest and good-natured tolerance to openly expressed hostility. One of my professors obviously felt that the sanctity of the seminar had been violated, and that if we were going to tolerate such discussions, we might as well forget about scientific method. What seemed to bother him most was that, if telepathy and clairvoyance are real, we might as well abandon all hope of resolving controversies between diffusionists and the upholders of independent invention!

The purpose of the present paper is threefold: (1) to summarize the development of parapsychology, (2) to take note of the influence of parapsychology upon anthropologists, and (3) to point out the desirability of cooperation between parapsychologists and anthropologists.

Parapsychology concerns itself with the paranormal. The phenomena studied may be physical (as when an object is moved by an unknown force) or mental (as when information is divulged by a person who cannot have obtained it through the known channels of sense). The first systematic study of such phenomena began with the founding of the Society for Psychical Research in London in 1882, by a group of scientists and scholars, each pre-eminent in his field. Among those who have served as its president we find the names of the physicists Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Barrett, and Lord Rayleigh; the French physiologist Richet; the psychologists F. W. H. Myers, William James, and

McDougall; the philosophers Sidgwick, Driesch, and Bergson; and the astronomer Flammarion. They conducted their investigations with all the scientific rigor at their command and were unsparing in their exposures of fraud. So meticulous were they, in fact, in maintaining a highly skeptical and critical attitude that some members of the society accused them of suppressing evidence and resigned in protest.

Parallel developments followed in other countries on both sides of the Atlantic. The Institut Metapsychique International with headquarters in Paris was designated by the French government as a public utility! Its leading lights were physicians. The psychiatrist Schrenck-Notzing became the foremost investigator in Germany.

A few of the early researchers maintained their skepticism to the end of their lives. Very few, however, failed eventually to acknowledge the reality of telepathy and clairvoyance. By 1935 Alexis Carrel was able to declare, "Clairvoyance and telepathy are a primary datum of scientific observation."<sup>1</sup>

Why, then, have so many scientists maintained a stubborn disbelief in their reality? The answer given by Gardner Murphy, writing of psychologists, is worth quoting:

A number . . . appear to take the position so well expressed by Hebb that it is not a question of evidence, for the evidence would, in its own right, be adequate. The trouble is that "ESP does not make sense." This is the position earlier taken by Faraday, Helmholtz, and other men of stature in science. The reply might perhaps be made, as Laplace suggested, that the amount of evidence which must be marshalled in favor of a hypothesis is directly proportional to its antecedent improbability. Since, in a sense, the antecedent improbability of the paranormal is for many psychologists virtually infinity, no finite evidence could carry conviction.

However much one may deviate from so strict a position when observing a phenomenon in one's own laboratory, those tutored in the systematic strictness of today's effortful movement towards physical models are hardly likely to be impressed when incredible phenomena are reported.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the present status of parapsychology is impressive. In 1955 the University of Utrecht established an Institute of Parapsychology and became the first university to create a separate chair in this field, with Professor W. H. C. Tenhaeff its first incumbent. In the summer of that year the university was host to the First International Congress of Parapsychology. The Congress was sponsored by The Parapsychology Foundation of New York, and Dr. Gardner Murphy, Director of Research, Menninger Foundation, served as president. Fifty-six scientists from fourteen countries delivered papers, all of which have been published. Yale University has honored a thesis in parapsychology with the degree of Doctor of Medicine. The universities of Innsbruck, München, and Bonn have accepted doctoral dissertations based upon parapsychological research.

What kind of research is now going on? As Gardner Murphy aptly puts it, no one now performs experiments "to prove ESP." The quest now is to define favorable conditions for the manifestation of the phenomena. Dr. Gertrude R. Schmeidler, of the Department of Psychology of the College of the City of New York, in collaboration with Dr. R. A. McConnell, of the Department of Biophysics, University of Pittsburgh, has made a study of the personality patterns of people who exhibit ESP and reported their findings in a book published by the Yale University Press.<sup>3</sup> Jan Ehrenwald, M.D., Associate in Psychiatry at Long Island College of Medicine, has made an intensive study of telepathy in relation to medical psychology.<sup>4</sup> At the University of Virginia School of Medicine Dr. Bachrach is investigating ESP response to auditory stimuli. At San Diego State College Dr. Bernard C. Kirby is investigating the possible role

of ESP in spatial orientation. At St. Joseph's College, Philadelphia, two biologists, Dr. and Mrs. Carl B. Nash, have a small parapsychology laboratory and are working on precognition. At Duke University Anderson-White is correlating ESP in school children with factors in the teaching situation. At the University of Liverpool Dr. Cedric Wilson conducts experiments with students under the influence of various drugs. At the College of the City of New York Dr. Joseph L. Woodruff studies the ESP factor in the unconscious performance of tasks. At Freiburg, Germany, Dr. Hans Bender studies the personality of sensitives, investigates veridical dreams, seeks to correlate ESP with color preferences, and concerns himself with psychic healing from the standpoint of social psychology, while in Munich Dr. Saller investigates ESP in relation to the eidetic imagery of school children.

Obviously, where there is so much smoke, there must be some fire.

Though anthropologists have frequently had the opportunity to observe seemingly paranormal phenomena, their attitude has been, generally, one of extreme reserve. I wish to note some exceptions. It was Alfred Russel Wallace who in 1876 persuaded the Subsection on Anthropology of the British Association for the Advancement of Science to accept a paper by Sir William Barrett entitled "Some Phenomena Associated with Abnormal Mental Conditions," after the Section on Biology had rejected it. It was he also who seconded a motion calling for systematic investigation of such phenomena. Failure of the motion to be carried led to the organization of the Society for Psychical Research.

Andrew Lang, perhaps best known to anthropologists as a folklorist and theoretician, took a positive attitude. In the final chapter of his book *Cock Lane and Common Sense* he states, "The anthropological test of evidence for the abnormal and rejected phenomena is thus amply satisfied. Unless we say that these phenomena are 'impossible,' whereas totemism, the couvade,

cannibalism, are possible, the testimony to clairvoyance, and the other peculiar occurrences, is as good in its way as the evidence for odd and scarcely credible customs and institutions."<sup>5</sup> He cites Darwin's testimony from *Cruise of the Beagle* that a Fuegian native on board an English ship saw his father, who was expiring in Tierra del Fuego.

The Italian anthropologist and criminologist Lombroso became the leading figure in psychic research in Italy. Beginning as an out and out skeptic, he ended by espousing the spirit hypothesis.

The French ethnologist Professor H. Trilles, in his monograph *Les Pygmées de la Forêt Équatoriale*, tells of an instance in which one of the natives gave an accurate description of Trilles' home in Paris and gave details of the final illness and death of Trilles' father,—information which was fully confirmed weeks later.<sup>6</sup>

In the summer of 1934 Professor J. J. Williams of the Boston College Graduate School presented at the Congrès International des Sciences Anthropologiques et Ethnologiques a paper entitled "Psychic Phenomena in Jamaica," which was later expanded into a book.<sup>7</sup> Here he cites a series of cases, as far as possible quoting the words of witnesses for whom he can personally vouch, as well as incidents which came under his personal observation. While the scientist can hardly accept Williams' theological explanation that the phenomena were the work of the Devil, his data should at least stimulate further research in Jamaica.

In this connection it is worthy of note that grants have been made by The Parapsychology Foundation for work in both Jamaica and Haiti. In Haiti a team of five physicians and five ethnologists are investigating paranormal phenomena demonstrated during Vodou ceremonies.

Peter Freuchen has indicated in his book *Arctic Adventure* that he has been in the presence

of paranormal phenomena among the Eskimos,<sup>8</sup> and Hallowell has acknowledged his inability to explain the mechanics of the shaking tents among the Cree.

The late Ralph Linton, in a personal communication, said: "I have been struck, myself, in my experience with primitive groups, with the surprising uniformity of their stories about what we would call psychic phenomena. Beliefs regarding these phenomena coming from groups who could have had no possible contact, are, nevertheless, so much alike that they suggest either an amazing limitation on the human imagination, or the presence of a common basis of observed fact."<sup>9</sup>

Lowie, in one of his last published papers, stated: "The sleight-of-hand tricks and ventriloquism in the phenomena just described tend to rouse the suspicion that shamanism as a whole rests on fraud. Yet independent investigators in different parts of the New World take the opposite view. The questionable practices seem merely designed to impress the crowd into accepting the reality of occult power of which the practitioners themselves are firmly convinced.

"The accounts of occult experiences by otherwise intelligent and trustworthy reporters cannot simply be brushed aside. They ring true, whatever may be the interpretation of visions and auditions. As my best Crow interpreter phrased it, 'When you listen to the old men telling about their mysterious experiences you've just got to believe them.'"<sup>10</sup>

The late John Reed Swanton, in announcing his retirement from the Smithsonian Institution, expressed his desire to devote the remainder of his life to parapsychology, in which he had long been interested. In a privately published monograph entitled *Superstition—But Whose?*, he gave a reasoned summary, based in part upon personal experience, for his acceptance of the reality of the paranormal.

Dr. William N. Fenton, of the New York State Museum and Science Service, who was kind enough to lend me his personal copy of Swanton's monograph, tells me that he has long been impressed by Indian clairvoyance and has found at least two subjects with remarkable ability.

Joseph Bram, a confirmed skeptic in this field, has presented a paper on spiritualism in Puerto Rico before the Section of Anthropology of the New York Academy of Sciences.<sup>11</sup> He treats most of the phenomena as pathological, concerns himself mainly with the sociological aspects of the matter, and comes to the not very original conclusion that the chief function of spiritualism is to reconcile man to the thought of death. It is regrettable that he seems not to have encountered, in the course of his investigation, a single unequivocal instance of paranormal faculty. I myself had better luck in Puerto Rico. With two friends I sat one night on the porch of a woman medium and listened with astonishment, as this lady described in detail my home at Peekskill, N.Y., including references to the location of trees and shrubbery, the colors of blossoms, the arrangement of furniture and pictures, an enumeration of the members of my family and their approximate ages, and even the correct diagnosis of an ailment from which my mother-in-law was then suffering. She referred also to intimate details of my personal life. The circumstances were such that only clairvoyance could account for her knowledge.

Ronald Rose has studied the ESP performance of the Australian aborigines, which is good, and their PK (telekinesis) power, which is poor. The results are published in his book *Living Magic*.<sup>12</sup> He is now engaged in a similar investigation among the Maori.

Mr. Stiles, of the Museum of the American Indian, recently back from one of his periodic visits to the Montagnais of eastern Canada, brings the tale that certain members of this group habitually repair to the woods, set up a log shelter about the size of a telephone booth, get inside

and, when the power is sufficiently strong, make contact with a friend or a relative who may be hundreds of miles away. A two-way conversation is carried on, seemingly by clairaudience. If no contact is made, it is assumed that the person with whom contact is sought has died. Oddly enough, while the process is going on, the shelter shakes in the manner described for the tents of the Cree. It certainly taxes the credulity of even a sympathetic listener to accept this report at face value, yet it comes from three independent informants: first, a trapper who has been in the Montagnais country for sixty years; second, a Roman Catholic missionary who insisted that he had seen such shelters and understood that they were so used; and, finally, the old Indian named William Poker, the head man of his group, who spoke through an interpreter after first insisting that no women be present. (Stiles was told that he feared ridicule from them, if they heard about it, although it was apparent that he spoke with great seriousness.)

As a final case, I can hardly resist the temptation to relate a couple of happenings in connection with the first National Geographic-Smithsonian Archaeological Expedition to Tres Zapotes. After we had spent some days in fruitless digging in the immediate vicinity of the Cabeza Colosal and had used a plough to tear up the small plaza situated between the giant head and the nearest mound, I was approached by Emilio Tegoma, one of our workmen, reputed to be the oldest man in Tres Zapotes. He assured me that he possessed the power to see things at a distance and things hidden. If we would listen to him, he would lead us to a place where we would find what we were looking for. He led us to what is referred to in our reports as the zone of the burials. Within twenty minutes after ground was broken here, the first beautiful and unbroken figurine of a Maya priest came out of the ground. Later, on a Sunday afternoon, when it had occurred to me that this might be a good man to consult for information on the history and ethnology of Tres Zapotes, although I did not know how or where I might find him on an off

day, he suddenly appeared at the camp, told me that he knew I wished to ask him some questions, and he gave evidence that he knew in advance what the questions would be. He mentioned also that a son of his had been shot and killed during the revolution, and that, although he himself was thirty miles away at the time, he knew at the very moment of the shooting what was happening.

I am fully aware that none of the casual impressions and anecdotal experiences of anthropologists which I have presented are the stuff of which science is made. Certainly none would be acceptable as evidence to the modern parapsychologist, eager to refine his methods and to produce repeatable experiments. Nevertheless, I feel very strongly that every anthropologist, whether believer or unbeliever, should acquaint himself with the techniques of parapsychological research and make use of these, as well as any other means at his disposal, to establish what is real and what is illusion in the so-called paranormal. If it should turn out that the believers are right, there will certainly be exciting implications for anthropology. We shall have to re-think Lang's theory of the origin of religion and magic. Students of culture and personality will find their field enormously expanded. The diffusion-versus-independent invention issue will hardly be affected, however. If telepathy and clairvoyance are dependent upon emotional rapport between sender and receiver, the likelihood of transmission over great distances approaches zero. The physical anthropologists, on the other hand, will have a multitude of new problems. Are there racial differences in ESP ability? Is there a genetic factor? Is it in any manner dependent upon neural organization? Can it be cultivated?

Overshadowing such questions, however, is the profound significance which parapsychological research may have for that newest of our subdisciplines *philosophical anthropology*. Here we should heed the warning of Dr. Ira Progoff, depth psychologist of the Drew University

Graduate School: "In these fields of study there is inevitably the question of whether genuine parapsychological phenomena have indeed taken place. But underlying this there is a more fundamental obstacle effectively holding back a break-through in the field of parapsychology. This is the pervading *metaphysical confusion* as to the ultimate nature and the cosmological meaning of parapsychological phenomena. . . . We must consider the possibility that the question of a spiritualistic versus a materialistic metaphysic may have placed certain basic issues in a false light. This juxtaposition is a historical fact as far as western thinking is concerned. . . . But this duality in the western mind may well be the most basic impediment to the advance of parapsychology. . . .

"We are here meeting a dimension of reality in the cosmos that is neither spiritualism nor materialism. It is a third way, a way of experiencing reality mediated by the depths of the psyche, and no metaphysical assumptions are necessary. Quite the contrary, when we have learned more about the modality of the symbolism that reflects the depths of the cosmos in man, we may have the information that will enable us to approach the ultimate and age-old questions of metaphysics in a new and wiser way."<sup>13</sup>

More concretely expressed, perhaps, is the appeal of Gardner Murphy in his opening speech at the Utrecht Conference: "Personally, I doubt whether parapsychology will be able to bring us this larger understanding of human nature by its own efforts alone. Rather, it seems to me, that the scientific spirit working through the methods of history and the social sciences, through the insights of the physical sciences, the biological sciences, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, and catching the spirit of the Rembrandts, the Beethovens, the Da Vincis who have described man not in sober prose alone, but in color, in tone, and in eternal principles of form, can lead us to an integrated conception of the nature of man more satisfying than that which we now possess."<sup>14</sup>

Only a few times in the history of civilization, it seems to me, has an intellectual challenge of this magnitude presented itself. How can a science which purports to be the Science of Man ignore it?

C. W. WEIANT

Peekskill, N.Y.

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## *REVIEW*

### IN BEHALF OF NOVELISTS

NOT infrequently a reviewer gets a book by a man who has spent fifteen or twenty years as a newspaperman—usually as a foreign correspondent of some sort, since the good writers often graduate to this level of journalism. The craft of the man is at once evident. He knows how to use words. But more impressive may be the sense of freedom in the book; the author has liberated himself from the strict limitations of newspaper work and is now able to set down all those long thoughts that for years have been slowly taking shape in his mind.

For such a writer, the novel is a satisfying form. At last he is able to say exactly what he thinks, and *all* that he thinks—all of it, that is, he can get on paper. He is no longer dealing with broken segments of life, but with continuities. There are such questions as what goes on in the mind of a soldier during a long war. Now the only obligation of the writer is to honest characterization. The disgust, the doubts, the wondering about whether anything worth while is being accomplished—all this, and then the external pressure to "go on," get into the story.

Usually, in such books, not the war and its battles, but the man and what happens to him, and what he feels and does about it, are the important things. The war is only a frame for the human experience—for the growth, the frustration and despair, and sometimes the awakening, of a human being.

If we could persuade ourselves that what makes a good book is the same as the thing that makes a good life—the perception and pursuit of value—we might be able to get rid of the double standard in our lives. It seems certain that the writer of a novel such as we have been describing feels this to be true—that he will regard the story he has put together as his real work, and not the "practical" tasks he has fulfilled through the years. So with the figures in many of the modern novels. It is not what they do, but what they *become*, that the book is about.

One could say, if one wanted to argue the matter, that in making this the theme of his story, the

writer is expressing implicitly an intuition of immortality, since the action is on the plane of *being* and has little or no dependence upon the objective circumstances of the protagonist's life. The latter are only the scenes and the provocations of what takes place. And if the ultimate values are in being, how can these dissipate at death, while the physical shell of the environment survives and goes on?

There is a habit in our culture of supposing that wondering about the possibility of immortality, or speaking of it favorably or with expectation, is some sort of weakness. In short, the chief argument against the idea of immortality, these days, is not old-fashioned materialism, but a *moral* argument. Real men, it is suggested, do not need this prop to their egotism, nor any assurance of personal survival. The idea seems to be that it is a mark of special courage and Stoic virtue to insist that there is no justification for a philosophy of enduring mind or spirit; that we have been born under blind, irrational law into an alien universe where what we account as precious is inevitably destroyed and washed away by the all-consuming entropy of physical law. The argument is something like Tertullian's defense of his Christian faith—"I believe, because it is impossible." What merit could there be in accepting only attractive or reasonable doctrines!

We are still fighting, it seems, the old war between science and religion—or between materialism and theology—although it is now an attenuated struggle, carried on through the habit of moral attitudes rather than by reason of positive conviction. To reject the idea of immortality almost by moral reflex is the response of the man who thinks he will become "soft" and possibly succumb to theological compromises if he allows himself any serious speculation about survival after death. In this case, however, it is the enemy, and not himself, who controls his intellectual behavior.

But enough of this argument. Another thing that emerges in many of the better novels of the day is the quality of freedom and independence in individuals. The good novel is written with a certain detachment from the conventional values of the prevailing culture. The action is often in terms of the contradiction between the human values of the

individual and the inhuman or *humanly indifferent* values of the culture. How does he cope with these contradictions? He may *seem* to go along with mass behavior, but all the time he is thinking, wondering, asking questions, even while he appears to conform. Some light is thrown on people of this sort in an old paper by A. H. Maslow, published in the *Journal of Social Issues* (1951, I). It becomes plain that Dr. Maslow's "self-actualizing people" are often the stuff of the better novels of our time. Dr. Maslow wrote:

A study of people healthy enough to be called self-actualizing revealed that they were not "well-adjusted" (in the naïve sense of approval of and identification with the culture). They got along with the culture in various ways, but of all of them it could be said that in a profound and meaningful sense they . . . maintained a certain inner detachment from the culture in which they were immersed. . . . All these people fell well within the limits of apparent conventionality in choice of clothes, of language, of food, of ways of doing things in our culture. And yet they were not *really* conventional.

In *Motivation and Personality* (Harper, 1954), Dr. Maslow adds to this portrait of the self-actualizing person:

His unconventionality is not superficial but essential or internal. It is his impulses, thought, consciousness that are so unusually unconventional, spontaneous and natural. Apparently recognizing that the world of people in which he lives could not understand or accept this, and since he has no wish to hurt them or to fight with them over every triviality, he will go through the ceremonies and rituals of convention with a good-humored shrug and with the best possible grace.

While such people could not be called "authority rebels"—"they showed no active impatience or moment-to-moment, chronic, long-time discontent with the culture or preoccupation with changing it quickly"—this, says Dr. Maslow, "was by no means a lack of fight." He continues:

Although they were not a radical group of people in the ordinary sense, I think they easily *could* be. First of all this was primarily an intellectual group (it must be remembered who selected them), most of whom already had a "mission," and felt that they were doing something really important to improve the world. Secondly they were a "realistic"

group and seemed to be unwilling to make great but useless sacrifices. In a more drastic situation it seems very likely that they would be willing to drop their work in favor of radical social action, *e.g.*, the anti-Nazi underground in Germany or in France. My impression is that they were not against fighting but only against ineffectual fighting.

Such people, Dr. Maslow suggests, "may be called autonomous, *i.e.*, ruled by the laws of their own character rather than by the rules of society." Now comes what he calls "the perennial question"—the question which relates Dr. Maslow's work to the content of the modern novel and sets the problem of the modern novelist:

"Is it possible to be a good or healthy man in an imperfect culture?"

Dr. Maslow answers:

It *is* possible for relatively healthy people to develop in the American culture. They manage to get along by a complex combination of inner autonomy and outer acceptance which of course will remain possible only so long as the culture remains tolerant of this kind of detached withholding from complete cultural identification. . . . Of course, this is not ideal health. . . .

The only trouble with this comment is that it seems to allow "the culture" considerably more authority than it deserves. The decisive "tolerance" should be that of the individual, not that of the culture. We end on this frankly Tolstoyan and utopian note.

## *COMMENTARY*

### THE TYRANNY OF "PUBLIC OPINION"

IT is a well-known fact that if Caryl Chessman should die next month in the gas chamber, it will not be because a majority of California citizens "believe" in capital punishment, but because of the laggard progress of legislative reform. Everyone admits that capital punishment will be abolished "eventually."

You could say almost the same thing about war. Everyone admits that war, like capital punishment, is a barbarous custom unworthy of civilized people. Everyone agrees that it will have to go, "some day." But not now, they say. There is always that "but."

It is this quality of procrastination which makes the sort of people Dr. Maslow writes about (see Review) of such enormous importance to any human society. Such people often become those who will *not* wait on "public opinion" when the issues are large and fundamental. Somehow, they have heard the voice of Leo Tolstoy, or the voice that Tolstoy himself heard, and they responded, each in his own way. Tolstoy wrote in *Christianity and Patriotism*:

If only free men would not rely on that which has not strength and is never free—on external power, but would believe in what is always powerful and free—in truth and the expression of it. If only men would boldly and clearly speak out the truth that has already been revealed to them of the brotherhood of all nations and the criminality of exclusive devotion to one's own nation, the dead false public opinion upon which all the power of Governments and all the evil produced by them rests would drop off of itself like dried skin, and make way for the new living public opinion which only waits that dropping off of the old husk that has confined it in order to assert its claims openly and with authority, and to establish new forms of life that are in harmony with the consciences of men. . . .

One free man says truthfully what he thinks and feels in the midst of thousands of men who by their words and actions are maintaining the exact opposite. It might be supposed that the man who has spoken out his thoughts sincerely would remain a solitary

figure, and yet what more often happens is that all the others, or a large proportion of them, have for a long time past been thinking and feeling exactly the same, only they do not say so freely. And what was yesterday the new opinion of one man becomes today the opinion of the majority. And as soon as this opinion becomes established, at once, gradually and imperceptibly, but irresistibly, men begin to alter their conduct.

This process is the sole source of the health of the human community. There must always be those who insist that the community measure up to *their* standards, who find the reverse arrangement morally intolerable. With Martin Luther, they say: "Here I stand, I can do no other." And because they can not, will not, the world submits to change.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves NOTES

IT comes as a bit of a surprise to find ourselves quoting Clifton Fadiman—not because of any particular prejudice against the gentleman, but because his contributions usually fall so naturally within the realm of orthodox conceptions that MANAS comment seems unnecessary. However, the following from Fadiman's "The Instructor" constitutes a concise statement of a view often expressed here:

I should like to set before you what may seem a crackpot notion: that the best place to teach philosophy is not the university but the elementary school; and that the ideal student of philosophy is the child from 8 to 12. It is he, not you or I, who wonders about the world: why it was made, who made it, what makes people different from animals, how we think, what it means to be brave or good or truthful, and so on. These are basically philosophical questions.

I am not asking that the child be turned into a philosopher at the age of 12. All I suggest is that somewhere along the route his fresh, active, inquiring mind be led to *wonder* about the universe, the world, his place in nature, and some of the statements that wise men have made about these matters. My conviction is that we have become a people who can *do* almost anything, but who are baffled when asked to consider the origins, meanings and consequences of our actions.

This national weakness in abstract thought is partly the result of our never having been confronted in our formative years with its content and its fascinations. The elementary school could do much to remedy this deficiency.

The important sentence is, of course, the first one, although we can imagine the annoyance with which many overworked elementary school administrators and teachers would view this recommendation. Yet if it is impossible for most of our hastily-trained teachers to comprehend why philosophy is essential to *total* education, from kindergarten on, this realization should be possible for parents.

When a child wonders about the origin of life, he is looking far beyond the meagre guesses of physicists and biologists, available in "a science lesson"—which are to be presented in their "proper" time at a later date. The question of the origin of the earth has involved the concern of divines and philosophers since the beginning of time, and this inquiry also touches upon the origin of *consciousness* and whether consciousness or mind is a primary or secondary quality. If the child learns nothing else, he should learn that *his* big question *is* a big question, and not "silly" because of his present ignorance concerning all that men have written or thought about such questions.

Recommendations like Mr. Fadiman's have been receiving attention in a number of experimental or radically different schools, chiefly at the high-school level. One of these is the Verde Valley School and Summer Camp in Sedona, Ariz. (an extensive review of the Verde Valley's intent and program appears in MANAS for Sept. 1, 1954). Recently Verde Valley was visited by one Dr. Franklin Patterson, a teacher of civic education at Tufts University Education Center. Dr. Patterson shows how philosophical, religious and scientific questions may be related in education:

Looking at the formal curriculum of course offerings at Verde Valley, both the established and the experimental ones, one finds a basic assumption that citizenship, within the terms used by the school, can best be learned academically through content that goes far beyond the political history and civics approach commonly found in public high schools. This assumption is spelled out in courses that open up for consideration the values of the classical cultural heritage, that deal directly with the principles and findings of anthropology, that encompass a study of comparative religions, and that deal with philosophical, ethical, and intellectual formulations with regard to the human situation.

In view of the fact that identity is a central developmental task of adolescents, and that identity is inseparably related to the clarification of values, I was impressed by this assumption and by the deliberate and creative efforts to implement it through relevant

course work. I found myself asking such questions as these about the curriculum of the public high school: Why can't cultural anthropology be opened up directly for public school youth? Isn't it possible for us to find ways to enable teen-agers in our public high schools to philosophize and speculate about the meaning of life?

Verde Valley was founded by Mr. Hamilton Warren, a graduate of Harvard in anthropology and business administration. Mr. Warren was also a member of the U.S. State Department and later an administrative assistant in the Office of War Information. One writer has described the founder's conception of the school:

Seeing as he did so intimately the utter futility of war as a means of settling international problems and recognizing the frequent inability of diplomacy to do much better, he (Mr. Warren) concluded that the world's great need was for leaders capable of understanding the basic factors of such problems. They must be people to whom human knowledge was basically a whole, of which the economic, social, geographical, historical, scientific, cultural and national aspects were simply parts. They must especially be people who have tolerance and understanding for the rights and views of others, based upon a firm foundation of conviction of what is good.

He felt that the great emphasis in modern education upon early specialization precludes the possibility of such broad cultural perspective. By and large, schools, he felt, were producing workmen, artisans and specialists rather than leaders. Thus he resolved to spend his life and what part of his personal fortune might be necessary to build a school to educate the leaders he felt were so sorely needed. Verde Valley is the result.

The young philosopher must early learn to resist the nationalist bias, and he must also desire to transcend religious bias. Verde Valley is consequently non-denominational, though it includes some Protestants, a few Catholics, some Jews, some Moslems, and a considerable number who profess no religion. Chapel meetings are planned to help "students see that the great truths of all the great religions are basically the same." Dr. Patterson continues:

The school prides itself on the international character of its faculty and student body. In the fall of 1958 persons in the faculty and student body included those with backgrounds in China, Germany, Iran, Pakistan, Czechoslovakia, the United States, Belgium, Argentina, Spain, Canada, Italy, Venezuela, Guatemala, Egypt, England, Mexico, Hungary, and Switzerland. The student group included one Negro, two Laguna Indians, one Navajo Indian, and several Asians. There is an assumption by the school that diversity of national and ethnic backgrounds in the faculty and student group in and of itself tends to contribute to the goals of international and intercultural understanding which the school pursues under the rubric of citizenship.

So Mr. Fadiman's notion is not crackpot at all, but perhaps one of the best that could be proposed.

## *FRONTIERS* Farewell to Chessman?

FOR those who have reached the point of saying they are "fed up with the Chessman case"—and this is a point for remembering that twenty-one other persons await legal execution in California—one view of the matter needs attention. The thing is, the only way by which you can get rid of Chessman is to set him free. If May 2 becomes his actual gas chamber date, he will live on and on as a martyr. A martyr to what? No one exactly knows. But the perseverance and audacity of his peculiar ego has made him "known" around the world, and to participate, even in a vague societal way, in the killing of a man you know touches a number of emotional chords.

It is hardly necessary at this time to explain to non-Californian readers of *MANAS* who Chessman is, or the setting of the scene. Chessman's first book, *Cell 2455, Death Row*, originally published by Prentice-Hall in 1954, went through six printings, was subsequently issued by *Argosy*, *Pageant*, and *Omnibook* in a condensed form; it appeared in a Perma Books edition in 1956, and has been published in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Austrian, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and Japanese. *Time* for March 21 featured Chessman against the backdrop of the gas chamber, giving a summary of arguments pro and con on capital punishment.

Thousands of telegrams and letters from foreign countries continue to reach California legislators and a much-disturbed Governor Edmund Brown. It is quite possible that the pro-Chessman sentiment in Latin America, France, and Italy is an extension of a feeling that the United States, so wealthy and powerful, should stand before the world as a symbol of the sort of clemency which not all other countries feel able to afford. At any rate, it is certain that most of the people outside the state of California, and a good many within it, are shocked at the thought of a

"vengeance murder" of a man who has already endured twelve years of precarious death-row existence. A few weeks ago we quoted a single sentence from the Paris *Le Monde*. The full text of the two paragraphs on Chessman from *Le Monde* illustrates the thoughts and emotions awakened abroad:

It was Rebecca West who, in one of her books, explained that the Anglo-Saxons have a feeling of lingering, morose pleasure in regard to the absurdities of their judicial system. This seems even more true of the United States than of Britain. Why must the most Puritan justice of all, by the very excess of scruple, by the blind, formal rigidity of the guaranties it bestows on the accused, transform so often capital punishment into a kind of ritual murder?

Whatever the nature of the misdeeds attributed to Caryl Chessman, whatever the degree of guilt, real or supposed, there is probably not one European whose feelings are not revolted by the idea that a man can now be cold-bloodedly sent to the gas chamber who was not only condemned eleven years ago, but who has been allowed to live, to grow, to recreate in the course of those eleven years in prison—another man, a new man who owes nothing to society. A man who will not be punished but will be assassinated.

*Time's* discussion of the Chessman story attributes the international furor to the fact that Chessman, unlike the other men and women now awaiting death in California's gas chamber, is widely known through *Cell 2455, Death Row* and its wide circulation. The *Time* writer calls the "book" pretentious and erratic," as literature. We agree. But it is difficult to escape the poignancy of 325 pages written by a man who may soon be prevented from writing anything more. And however distorted Chessman's ego, however much his conception of himself as an author may be confused by the circumstances which led to the publication of his books, he does write, in effect, for all those who face loss of life at the hands of any state. Chessman says he has "changed," while law enforcement officers who have dealt with him are entirely unconvinced that this is so. But when Chessman talks about change, he doesn't speak of breast-beating repentance. He speaks of a different kind of change, and there can be little

doubt that this man sincerely feels a principled repugnance for the death penalty. He has learned a measure of compassion, at long last, and is not insensitive to those who have left the condemned row on the last walk to death while he survives by reason of his own legal ingenuity. Let us look at *Cell 2455*:

You can't spend more than five years in such a place as Death Row and not change, radically. In time the place gets inside you; it eats its way in; it writhes around in your innards. And once it does, you'll never be the same again.

Do you doubt this? Do you think you could spend close to two thousand days, more than sixty months, well over five years, on the Row, fighting defiantly for survival, existing all the while in the very shadow of the gas chamber, and not change? That you could watch approximately half a hundred men take that last dreaded walk by your cell and believe that in some insidious way, it doesn't eat at your mind? That you could observe many of the doomed driven either insane or to the borderline of insanity by the stark fear of impending death and not feel the slugging impact upon your own personality? That you could see men hounded to suicide or attempted suicide by fear and depression and stay wholly impervious to the sickening tug of environment upon your own mental processes? That you could witness your fellow condemned suddenly, savagely attack their neighbors or yourself and personally remain aloofly indifferent to the gargoyle-faced goading and frustration? That you could observe the baffled minds and tortured emotions of others of this condemned fraternity laid naked and raw by the mocking imminence of death, and not experience an inner upheaval, an indwelling turbulence?

I had made up my mind the Row wouldn't change me, wouldn't touch me. It finally did. But don't mistake "change" for "break." I didn't break. And I didn't suddenly "see the light." I am suspicious of those who say they have. Successive crises can strengthen and constructively change the personality of even society's Chessmans, but this change doesn't take place in a magic moment midst the blinding glare of revelation. Revelation, when born of one crisis piled upon the other, can merely light the way; it cannot effortlessly waft you to a brighter and happier land. There remains a long journey to be made, a trying journey, and it is you alone who must make it.

The Quakers' "Friends Committee on Legislation" has entered the lists on Chessman's side, which is not surprising, since there is no more persistent force in the struggle to establish human decency than the Society of Friends. This committee, it must be acknowledged, has no axe to grind. Though Friends have always been opposed to capital punishment, they have investigated the Chessman case in great detail and with reference to the particular individual. A "Facts to be Considered" bulletin released by the Friends Committee says the following:

Chessman repeatedly has offered to stake his life on the outcome of a lie detector test of his claim to innocence. Three metropolitan Los Angeles newspapers insist that Chessman die. But it is significant that *their own court house reporters*, who personally knew Chessman and his case, have joined the world-wide clemency movement. Two of these reporters have advised Governor Brown that there is a strong likelihood that Chessman is *completely innocent* of the "red light bandit" crimes.

Chessman has killed no one. He has been sentenced to death for what was technically termed kidnaping for the purpose of robbery with bodily harm—and for *this* alone. Governor Brown has granted clemency in the other similar cases. (Wein and Langdon cases.)

There is no scientific evidence of any relationship between the mental illness of Mary Alice Meza and the acts of the "red light bandit." She was committed to a state mental institution 21 months *after* the episode, and a court psychiatrist who recommended commitment stated that "her schizophrenic psychosis would have developed *regardless*. . . . It has been established thoroughly and there is legal precedent for this, that when there is a precipitating cause for schizophrenia, the illness develops rapidly within a *very short time* after the precipitating event. In this case, the time interval between the precipitating event and the onset of her illness, also the deep-seated nature of her illness, indicates that it would have developed regardless of this episode. . . ."

Chessman for twelve years has been seeking a new trial. The death of the court reporter, prior to the completion of a translation of his highly personalized shorthand notes, made it impossible for the defendant to have an accurate record for an appeal. It is ironic

that a new trial can automatically be granted in our courts if a court stenographer is unable to finish his record in a *civil case*—but not when a man is on trial for his life!

People who have had an opportunity to know Chessman in prison point out that there is considerable evidence his outlook has changed considerably, that the image of him created by the press is neither accurate nor conducive to justice, that he has done much to rehabilitate himself, that his books have contributed to understanding the causes of crime, and, if his life is spared, that the process of rehabilitation will continue. Chessman has written Governor Brown (2-29-60) that he will be willing to die in the gas chamber if removing himself as a factor would lead the legislature to abolish capital punishment.

All these factors, as well as those inevitably a part of the issue of capital punishment, will keep Mr. Chessman alive in the minds of everyone who knows his story. He is neither hero nor martyr in the classic sense, but it is none the less true that if he is strapped to the lethal seat in San Quentin on May 2, a struggling bit of humaneness in thousands of people will grow cold with Chessman's body.