

## WHY WE BELIEVE

A HUMAN BEING is a believing individual. He is also an unbelieving individual, but before he is an unbeliever, he is a believer.

The believing state of mind is a natural state of mind for human beings. It starts in infancy. As soon as the child is able to understand the communication of the mother, it believes. In school, the child believes his teacher. Most people believe the spoken and the written word. They *want* to believe. They want to be able to feel that people tell the truth. Being able to believe is a form of being at home, of belonging, in the human community.

We all of us have engagements with the unknown. To prepare ourselves for meeting the unknown, we question the people who have already fulfilled those engagements. Education, as a community undertaking, anticipates the questions likely to be asked by the young about what is unknown to them. Education attempts to provide a symmetrical view of the world of experience which lies ahead for the young. And since the world is infinitely varied, with forms of experience that cannot be safely predicted, the educator is often obliged to reduce the answers he gives to general principles, insofar as he can. That is, he generalizes on the nature of the experiences which the young are almost certain to encounter. He makes accurate and final generalizations about matters which are known without doubt, taking them from the reliable knowledge of science and technology. He also makes generalizations based upon moral tradition and common ideas of good and evil. There is a mixture of technical knowledge and moral tradition which we call *law* that is transmitted in professional schools and to the general public by the agencies of government. Taken together, then, this general body of transmitted beliefs is the substance of culture and civilization.

Why do we, on the whole, accept these beliefs? The child believes his mother and father because of the bond of love which unites parents with offspring.

The child feels this love with an immediacy which declares the nature of the child's universe. The child and the youth believe their teachers in school because of their perception of the general intentions of the educational process. There is a natural good will toward the pupils of a school. The children come to school expecting to be helped. Their parents, whom they believe, have told them that schools exist to give them an education.

In a like manner, the member of the political community starts out with belief and faith in its government, which exists to supply a form of order and security to his life. The principle of its being is public service.

There is a sense in which the human being's tendency to believe what he is told is as basic to his life as the animal's response to his instincts. When an animal is confronted with a situation in which his instincts prove misleading or useless, his natural functions break down. In effect, he cannot live in this situation.

Something of this sort happens to human beings when they find that they can no longer believe what they are told. There are two grounds for the breakdown of human faith—a tolerable ground and an intolerable ground. The tolerable ground has to do with accuracy. The child may discover that his parents make mistakes, telling him with the best will in the world things which are nevertheless not true. The intolerable ground has to do with deliberate deception. When the child discovers that there are times when people may *lie* to him, through interests which are against the child's interest, he suffers a shock. He must now learn that trust is a feeling which he dare not extend to others indiscriminately. He now has the difficult problem of deciding whom he can trust, and under what circumstances. This is a basic encounter with evil. From this encounter the child begins to form decisive opinions about the world in which he lives—the world in which he must survive and get on.

The child and the young, therefore, enter upon a cycle of *testing*—testing to find out the means by which they must discriminate. Young and older persons as well continue this testing throughout their lives, combining their own conclusions about the world—their world—with their own motives, which are much like other peoples'.

People encounter deceit and betrayal in the behavior of the political community, so that the testing goes on here, as well.

Two problems in general emerge for those who interest themselves in the problems of the political community. There is the problem of distinguishing between good and bad people, and another problem of distinguishing between good and bad methods of dealing with political issues.

The naturally believing child or man, when he first recognizes that he has been deliberately deceived, is likely to conclude that he has met with a bad or rotten person—an evil portion of the universe. His impulse is to seek out a place or relationship in which there are only good people; or, if he has some power, he may decide to try to replace the bad person with a good person.

Another level of reflection leads to a wondering about the method of government under which the evil is encountered, and whether there might be a better method. So far as we know, the ancient Greeks were the first to investigate and classify the different methods of government. By this time, of course, there was considerable sophistication concerning the mixed quality of nearly all human beings. The unevenness of human behavior, morally and otherwise, was taken for granted. Effective thought about methods of government obviously requires a theory or judgments concerning human nature.

At this level, when evil occurs, a man will not respond so much by an attempt to identify the evil man responsible as he will look at the system under which the evil appeared. He will assume that a certain amount of evil is a fixed ingredient in the social community, and that the problem is more a question of how to control it or hold its effects to a minimum, than how to eliminate it entirely .

There is still the problem of evil men, but dealing with them as *personal* problems becomes an impossible task. The propensity to evil in all men is a far more serious problem to cope with than the few very evil individuals. The system, therefore, assumes great importance. Questions about systems of government can be dealt with as general problems, in a somewhat scientific spirit. The Greeks approached the problem in this way, and so did the philosophers of the eighteenth century. The great question asked by the eighteenth century was: What sort of political arrangements will both control the evil and encourage the good in human beings? The answer made was, the Social Contract. Certain assumptions about all human beings are implicit in the social contract idea. The slogans of the French Revolution—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—embody the emotional element in the beliefs about the nature of man on which the social contract is based. Break the chains! Set men free, and they will naturally seek the good! The dream of the eighteenth century was of the nobility of *natural man*, unrestrained by the political and religious masters who arbitrarily ruled over him, by "divine right."

Here was a new level of belief, strong with the ever-renewing power of human hope. Now, at last, men had found out the *truth* about human beings! Now would come into being the heaven on earth all people long for, where no man would want for anything, where each would have enough, and so have no wish to take from anyone else, by force or by guile.

Then came the slow disillusionment of the nineteenth century, followed by a new doctrine of the nature of man and of the world. New truths were proclaimed and another generation of believers was found—"from each according to his ability, to each according to his need," was the more precise assurance of the socialist revolution. It found the greatest response in certain areas of the Old World, where the previous cycle of beliefs—in liberty, equality, and fraternity—had had less direct effect on the social order. The Communists proclaimed that they would accomplish two or three revolutions in one—the Industrial Revolution, the eighteenth-century revolution, and the twentieth-century social

revolution—which would bring not only equality of opportunity and before the law, but equality of economic status and benefit as well. We are now witnessing the testing of the truth and believability of this claim.

It seems obvious that the energy which accomplishes great historical change comes only from the resources of human belief. Men who do not believe much of anything will not do much of anything. It is the vision of truth which stirs them to action. The great upsets of history come when one portion of the world falls into a slough of unbelief, while the other is filled with the zeal of a new faith. A society of men without positive beliefs tends to be a society of men without hope, and this is an emotional vacuum which cries out to be filled. In lieu of positive beliefs, there is always the emotion of fear, and since fear is commonly regarded as a despicable or at least unworthy emotion (a feeling which seems to cause men to "give up"), the motives of fear are usually dressed up in the rhetoric of a more respectable emotion. The late Senator McCarthy gave us ample instruction in how this is done. He exploited fear, but he talked of loyalty and love of country.

We have been looking at great political changes in the light of the power of human beliefs, but there are other aspects of man's behavior as believer and unbeliever. There is the general attitude of people toward authority or "truth." One of the puzzling differences among people lies in this attitude. There are those who find themselves incapable of questioning any authority beyond a certain point. They are the ones for whom Ulysses, in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, speaks far better than they know:

O! when degree is shak'd  
Which is the ladder of all high designs,  
The enterprise is sick. How could communities  
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,  
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
The primogenitive and due of birth,  
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,  
But by degree stand in authentic place?  
Take but degree away, untune that string,  
And, hark! what discord follows. . . .

The differences of men on the questions of authority and conformity are, we suppose, a matter of how one obtains his feeling of security, or whatever it is that makes him feel "safe" or at home in the world. The first man to think about questioning the principle of the political order under which he lived was probably hated and feared by his fellows, while later generations looked back upon him as a hero. Abelard was hunted across Europe by angry clerical authorities because he dared to display for examination the contradictions he found in Christian interpretations of Scripture. Tom Paine was a target for the anger of many men, not all of them religious, because he questioned well-established opinions. Obviously, "security" for him lay in his need to question, to seek a better source for his opinions than traditional belief.

There are many ways to classify human beings, but this one, according to the role of belief and truth in their lives, seems much more important than most of the others. The way a man regards the prevailing beliefs of his time, and the conventional authorities, affects practically all his other important decisions. And if he is fearful of change, he will usually conceal his motives, and argue strongly from some other ground against the possibility of change. The man who wants to look carefully at all popular beliefs before he accepts them is not necessarily against them; he may decide that they are true, or at least constructive; but he is often considered a threat to the community because he represents the mere *possibility* of a challenge to the status quo.

What makes men of this sort, and why are there so few of them?

Is there something like an evolutionary process in human life which is slowly bringing mankind to some plateau of independence from traditional belief, as a common psychological endowment? Is it only distinguished individuals who have this role, and who shape entire epochs according to the strength of their convictions?

There can be no doubt about the fact that epochs take on a coloring which is characterized by either the habit of belief or the habit of unbelief. But even here, the nominal character of the epoch may be

belied by whole complexes of contradictions behind the general façade. Skepticism, for example, may start out as a philosophical position, in partnership with the determination to wrest the truth from nature by actual experience of its secrets, and end as no more than a methodological rule in a scientific specialty, the practitioner of which seeing no contradiction between the professional standards of this branch of science and his faithful adherence to some supernaturalist religion.

Nevertheless, the expression, "climate of opinion," does have a distinctive meaning, and one aspect of the epoch which now seems to be coming to an end has been an initial tendency to doubt rather than to believe. The men who have typified the best of the prevailing attitudes of the period from 1850 to 1950 have been agnostic in spirit, unwilling to believe what they could not demonstrate, reluctant to speculate in directions which seemed to promise little opportunity for the gathering of decisive evidence.

What, then, happened to the natural tendency to believe during the epoch of skepticism? Among the leading representatives of the epoch, it was replaced by a new sort of belief—belief in a method of living in a world of uncertainties—in short, the scientific method. You could say that this development was paralleled in the political heritage of the eighteenth-century revolution. What the revolutions of England, France, and America accomplished was the establishment, in constitutional form, of a method of dealing with uncertainties in power. The executive branch of government received a carefully delegated and restricted power, which could be withdrawn. No one is allowed unqualified power, in a democracy. The exercise of power is limited by careful definition. Elected representatives receive instructions, through popular vote, by the people, who are sovereign. A public official is spoken of as a public *servant*. The trust of office is hedged by numerous checks and balances, by referendum and recall, and even impeachment. These various provisions, taken together, are plainly evidence of faith in a method, of belief in a system rather than a person, and of skepticism toward persons. The eighteenth-century revolution, in short, transferred

belief from a personal to an impersonal object. Not kings, but constitutions, would be the foundation of the good society. Not one single explanation, as in religion, but a principle of investigation, as in science, would be the source of certainty in the modern world.

What we must note concerning this transition is the intellectual and moral discipline required to sustain these new forms of belief. Already we have witnessed dramatic relapses among political orders back to the old belief in a personal leader, accompanied by the degradation which always seems to accompany atavistic trends in human societies. The impersonal scheme of self-government represented by democracy is rather a *framework* of human possibility set up in an extraordinary moment of history by a comparatively small number of remarkable individuals, than an actual creation by "the people," who all together decided upon a change. "The people" were provided with this impersonal ideal of self-government as a faith to live by, and invited to live up to it. But in order to live up to it, they have to *care* about it. This is what genuine belief means. It is a tribute to the genius of the builders of the framework that American Democracy has not yet collapsed from lack of devoted and intelligent support by the people. Furthermore, modern politicians seem to be doing their best to subvert the impersonal ideal of a *method* of government through their neglect of actual principles and their effort to gain followers by creating popular "images" of themselves. The full resources of modern psychology are made available to contemporary candidates for office, who often show more interest in understanding the weaknesses of the voters than in appealing to their intelligence.

The people sense these tendencies and cannot help but be vaguely dismayed by them. Their need to believe remains strong. They need to believe as much as they need to breathe, but the problem, today, is finding something to believe in. Their faith in the hierarchy of degree—the degree of kings and princes, and gods and priests—was broken on the wheel of experience. Their faith in the "story" of religion was broken by the new and impressive truths of scientific discovery. Their faith in freedom

has been weakened—not broken, but weakened—by human abuses of freedom; and their faith in elaborate systems of control of human greed and individualism has been checked by the anti-human traits of all such systems.

What is left to believe in?

One thing we can conclude from the record of the thousand years of modern history is the extraordinary resilience of human beings. Any other species, subjected to an equivalent amount of failure or disillusionment, would have long since become extinct. There have been many casualties of the breakdown of faith and the betrayal of belief, but one of the processes of human life is the continual reconstruction of the continuum of belief. Then, people buy the time to think things over with the lethargic permanence of their various institutions. The vital faith may go, but the institutions erected by that faith, which fostered it for a while, and finally became its tomb, do not disappear at once. Men can use their outworn institutions the way old men use worn-out bodies to good purpose.

A custom does not have the vitality of a sudden thought, but neither does it have the mortality of an exposed illusion. It goes on, like the good manners of a man who has a bad character. Customs, institutions, habits, keep men going in days of extreme uncertainty. The men who will shape the new beliefs of a society find ways of living in the interstices of the old society. Their real life is in their dreams of the future—of the schools they will found, the communities they will build, the peace they will cement with their good will and the good will of other men.

We can speak of these things in principle, easily enough, but the great question remains: What will be the substance of the beliefs of the future? History, we know, while it may borrow something from the past, never repeats the past. An old faith may be reborn, but it is never the same. A new system may have analogues in an old system, but it is never a simple repetition of the old system.

We shall probably always have a kind of belief in persons, or some persons, and a kind of belief in methods and systems, but these beliefs can never be

"total," as they once were in the past. To get a new form of belief, moreover, we shall have to satisfy ourselves concerning the origin and nature of deception—know *why* men have a tendency to deceive others and themselves—and we shall have to square the explanation we obtain with some broad conception of the meaning of human life which carries our thought beyond good and evil. We shall need, perhaps, another "framework" of human possibility as an ideal to live up to. And if we have a great ideal, we can afford some failures along the way. This much we know from the past.

## *REVIEW*

### THE CULT OF LEGAL MURDER

THE August 1959 *Harper's* had a compelling article by Dr. Karl Menninger concerning the social and ethical consequences of punitive criminal laws. (The climax of punitive law is, of course, the practice of capital punishment.) Dr. Menninger implied that the belief that a man or a tribunal can benefit society by execution is fundamental to totalitarianism and the antithesis of democracy.

A subsequent issue of *Harper's* reported that the Menninger article evoked a strong response from the public and from professional psychiatrists and criminologists, and we hope later on to report on the unanimity of opinion expressed by these "professionals." In the course of our own research, however, we encountered a book previously unnoticed in MANAS—Arthur Koestler's *Reflections on Hanging*, published by Macmillan in 1957. With hundreds of illustrations, Koestler shows that the attitude of the totalitarian mind and the attitude of those who favor retention of the death penalty are strikingly similar. Mr. Koestler's concluding chapter calls attention to the "monthly sacrifice" of human life by execution in "democratic" countries. All those who harbor sadism, anger or jealousy, all those who feel that only the threat of dreadful reprisal can protect their positions and persons, bathe unhealthily in the atmosphere engendered by the execution of the poor wretch whose "number is up"—and keep the cult of legal murder alive. The principal defenders of hanging in England have been the tradition-bound bodies of the nation, plus the neurotics in every walk of life who have not yet grown to human stature and are, therefore, unable to understand the basic meaning of the word "charity." Presently, however, as Koestler sees it, the general public is beginning to realize that we are due for another step forward in psychological evolution. He writes:

Despite the inertia of man's imagination and its resistance to reason and fact, public opinion is at long

last beginning to realize that it does not need the hangman's protection; that the deliberate taking of life by the State is unjustifiable on religious or philosophic or scientific grounds; that hanging by mistake will go on as long as capital punishment will go on, because the risk is inherent in its nature; that the vast majority of murderers are either mentally sick and belong to the mental sick ward, or victims of circumstance, who can be reclaimed for human society; and that the substitution of the life sentence for the death-penalty exposes the peaceful citizen to no greater risk than that of being killed by lightning in a bus queue, and considerably less than the risk of being a passive accomplice in the execution of an innocent or a mentally deranged person.

The gallows is not only a machine of death, but a symbol. It is the symbol of terror, cruelty and irreverence for life, the common denominator of primitive savagery, mediaeval fanaticism and modern totalitarianism. It stands for everything that mankind must reject, if mankind is to survive its present crisis.

There are many who, while not favoring any specific person's execution, still pervertedly savor the grisly details of death. The horror comics, as Koestler shows, are mild debasers of the psyche when compared with a murder trial. He describes the emotions which make the "legal murder" cult powerful:

There is a spoonful of sadism at the bottom of every human heart. Nearly a century ago, Charles Dickens wrote that "around Capital Punishment there lingers a fascination, urging weak and bad people towards it and imparting an interest to details connected with it, and with malefactors awaiting it or suffering it, which even good and well-disposed people cannot withstand." His contemporary, John Bright, knew that "capital punishment, whilst pretending to support reverence for human life, does in fact, tend to destroy it." And even earlier, Samuel Romilly said that cruel punishments have an inevitable tendency to produce cruelty in people. The image of the gallows appeals to their latent sadism as pornography appeals to their latent sexual appetites.

Newspaper editors who have to earn money for the proprietors cannot be expected to stop making the most of hanging, so long as hanging exists. In countries from which the death-penalty has vanished, this dirty sensationalism has vanished too, and murder trials do not get more publicity in the Press than cases of burglary or fraud now get in this

country. For the fascination of the murder trial, and its appeal to unconscious cruelty, lies in the fact that a man is fighting for his life like a gladiator in the arena, and in the thrilling uncertainty whether the outcome will be thumbs up or thumbs down. One only wonders why the bookmakers do not come in.

A short time ago, there was a national outcry against horror comics, particularly from the judges who defend the real horror of hanging. Yet a horror comic is always less exciting, because it deals with fictitious events, than the matter-of-fact statement that a real person, whose photographs we have seen, whose words we have read, has been officially strangled. The drawings of monsters and mad sextons enamoured of drowned blondes are less pernicious, because of their science-fiction remoteness, than the studiously sober report about the traces of brandy found in the executed woman's stomach. Moral deterrent, public example, reverence for human life—what bloody hypocrisy! So long as there are bull fights there will be *aficionados*, and so long as there are gladiators there will be a circus audience. There is a poisoned spray coming from the Old Bailey which corrupts and depraves; it can only be stopped by abolishing its cause, the death-penalty itself.

*Reflections on Hanging* is a remarkably complete volume for those who wish a reference work on the subject. Convincing statistics on the failure of capital punishment as a deterrent to crime are compiled from various nations and states of the United States. Paralleling these figures are other significant findings, such as the conclusion reached by a Royal Commission in 1950 that "murder is not in general a crime of the so-called criminal classes." Fifty years previously, Sir John Macdonell, Master of the Supreme Court in England, expressed himself in this way concerning murder: "I am inclined to think that this crime is *not generally the crime of the so-called criminal classes* but is in most cases an *incident in miserable lives in which disputes, quarrels, angry words and blows are common*. This crime is generally the last of a series of acts of violence." The Royal Commission simply confirmed, statistically, Macdonell's judgment.

Data obtained from the British Home Office and from Scotland Yard indicate that among 174

people who had been sentenced to life imprisonment for murder, 112 were later released after therapeutic work. Only one of these was alleged to have committed a second murder, and even in this instance his guilt was not proved. This is the *only* case of a reprieved murderer being convicted of a second murder in the course of the twentieth century!

*Reflections on Hanging* has two prefaces, Mr. Koestler's and another contributed by Edmond Cahn, Professor of Law at New York University. Mr. Cahn points out that Koestler's book, based chiefly upon conditions in England respecting capital punishment and involving criticism of various figures largely unknown in the United States, is an ideal book for the American reader. Cahn writes:

When Mr. Koestler denounces the social attitudes of English judges, we can read without antecedent bias, however we might smile or scowl if he were discussing American judges. When he commends or criticizes a Home Secretary in connection with granting or refusing a reprieve, the chances are we judge the incident fairly and with detachment. The political parties he mentions are not ours. His murder trials are held at a calm distance from our homes. Yet on every page, we are engaged in judging ourselves, for whatever is not literally in America is nevertheless about America.

Koestler's own preface indicates why he felt a special prompting to write this book:

In 1937, during the Civil War in Spain, I spent three months under sentence of death as a suspected spy, witnessing the executions of my fellow prisoners and awaiting my own. These three months left me with a vested interest in capital punishment—rather like "half-hanged Smith," who was cut down after fifteen minutes and lived on. Each time a man's or a woman's neck is broken in this peaceful country, memory starts to fester like a badly healed wound. I shall never achieve real peace of mind until hanging is abolished.

I have stated my bias. It colours the arguments in the book; it does not affect the facts in it. . . .

## *COMMENTARY* SOME OPEN QUESTIONS

A SENTENCE in the letter from Stanley Bean (see "Children") illustrates the questioning mood which pervades modern thought. He writes:

I feel that it is quite an open question as to whether schools as such, can play any important role in this process [of cultural change], or only reflect the tensions engendered by it.

Determining and measuring the influence of the various agencies of cultural change is a task which remains for the sociologists, reformers, and revolutionaries of the future to complete—if it can be completed.

In the past, judgments concerning this process have usually reflected the naive eagerness of enthusiasts. There has been little careful distinction made between the "is" and the "ought" of the process. Dogmas about man and society have dictated action. No one knows very much about rates of social change, nor which changes should be regarded as primary and which secondary, nor is there much agreement as to the direction which changes should take. All these questions require a framework of reliable assumptions about the nature of man and human good, before anything like precise answers can be attempted.

Impatient men say that we cannot "wait," and must do what we can to bring about changes. This is fine, but these impatient ones ought also to make some clear statements of what they know and what they don't know about the processes of change, instead of letting righteous emotion hide the general fuzziness on these matters. The conservative and the cautious, on the other hand, tell us that Nature Knows Best—by which they mean to let things "evolve" slowly, without plan or interference from "radicals." The conservatives wholly neglect the fact that the human condition today gives evidence that we have already departed far from Nature in our way of life—so far, in fact, that what is truly "natural" may be

anybody's guess. They also ignore the possibility that a passive attitude toward the good life may be essentially *unnatural* for human beings.

What is wanted is a theory of man and society which has all the symmetry and balanced dynamics of ancient conceptions of the traditional society, but with the factor of individual freedom and self-determination *added*—an almost impossible assignment, yet one that must be undertaken, since no other project can have a satisfactory result.

Meanwhile, we sail by intuition and what little experience or science we have accumulated on these difficult questions. The encouraging thing about the present is that we are at least beginning to get honest attempts at definition of the problem.



# CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

## LIBERAL EXPERIMENTS IN EDUCATION

Editors, MANAS: From time to time you report on various new ventures in education in this country and in others. Most of them seem to be exceedingly interesting. I share your concern about the state of the world, and the necessity for some fundamental readjustments in our view of man and nature.

I am searching (here at Harvard) for some light on the nature of the role education might play in a readjusted society. Heretofore the schools have been the main arm of cultural transmission irrespective of what the culture might be. My questions center around the role that schools might play in cultural transition. I feel that it is quite an open question as to whether schools, as such, can play any important role in this process, or only reflect the tensions engendered by it. But they do exert a mighty influence in individual lives, and individuals do bear the culture.

For this reason, I am greatly interested in many of the educational experiments to which you allude. What are these experiments attempting to do? Do they share some common concern regarding a "new society"? What is their conception of society and their ideas regarding the child? What are the methods that are used in carrying out their purposes?

In addition to formal school situations, there are many parents, or groups of parents, who are both concerned and doing something about their concerns in the line of new educational ventures.

I am interested in finding out about all of these "radical" ventures, and wonder if you can be of help. Could you suggest how I might contact these people? Might you publish my appeal for information? I would expect that many of your readers could be of help.

STANLEY BEAN

Cambridge, Mass.

Before listing various little-known volumes as part of the suggested bibliography which might prove helpful to this reader we might look at two questions he raises: "What are these experiments attempting to do? Do they share some common concern regarding a new society?"

The educational ventures discussed in MANAS do indeed appear to "share some common concern regarding a new society." Their founders and protagonists have felt that the two basic goals of education should be self-reliance and a self-induced conception of responsibility, both personal and social. To stimulate the child's innate capacities, the principal focus chosen for the imagination is a vision of "what might be," not the world that presently exists. And in the contrast between the ideal and the actual, various ways of assisting a transition to take place can be explored with enthusiasm. This is perhaps a way of saying that every truly liberal educational venture is deliberately utopian. Plato struck the keynote when he wrote in *The Republic*:

The city of which we are the founders . . . exists in idea only; for I do not believe that there is such an one anywhere on earth. In heaven, there is laid up a pattern of it, methinks, which he who desires may behold, and beholding, may set his own house in order. But whether such an one exists, or ever will exist in fact, is no matter; for he will live after the manner of that city, having nothing to do with any other.

We should say that what Plato had in mind when he wrote *The Republic*, then, suggests the natural or philosophic approach to "social studies." Children are not really too interested in the intricacies of government in a technological age—"the world that is"—but they may be genuinely interested in every sort of Utopia, each effort, whether imagined or real, to create a *different* kind of society. A good case can be made for introducing communism as a theory of a good society no later than junior high school or high school, so that the youngsters can come to some kind of understanding of the advantages claimed for a social structure that ideally holds all things in common. The advantages and disadvantages of private property in this context can readily be perceived and argued about, but unless one knows something of communist and socialist theory, he is completely out of touch with a vital inspiration of revolutionary movements throughout history. In other words, the child

must be assisted to find critical perspective on the culture in which he lives—and we shall say that it is the essence of the democratic ideal to foster such constructive criticism. It is the *lack* of encouragement of criticism in dictatorships called "communist" which is most destructive of human freedom.

When a child takes his schooling in the presence of a man or woman who is not afraid of the critical perspective, his own tendency to criticize will become enlightened—that is, he will begin to move out of the partisan patterns which characterize stagnation in either education or social life. He becomes a liberal instead of a rebel, because he is more interested in creating than in tearing down.

This attitude of genuine liberalism characterizes the works in educational ventures to which we have given chief attention in the past. One of the most interesting examples of the liberal mind at work in creating a new educational milieu comes by way of Homer Lane's *Talks to Parents and Teachers* (Hermitage Press, 1949). Lane, an American who moved to England and became the superintendent of the famous and controversial Little Commonwealth school, was a man who proved that a good teacher could regard every educational opportunity with a young person as if it were the first ever encountered. He had no pattern of approach or method, but he did have a sense of direction in relation to the psychological foundations of "Utopia." The Little Commonwealth was a certified reformatory, and Lane was invited there in 1912 as Director. By demonstrating that even the children who had been placed in a reformatory were interested in helping to create "Utopia," Lane likewise supplied inspiration to other liberal education experimenters.

A. S. Neill's *The Problem Family* (Hermitage Press, 1949) is a continuation and an extension of Lane's work. In 1947 a group of educators, including Goodwin Watson of Teachers College, Columbia, undertook a study tour of experimental

schools in Europe and England. Of Neill's school, Summerhill, Watson wrote: "The one school which every member of our Study tour will remember, after he has forgotten all others, will be Summerhill."

Another book in the same tradition is *Mr. Lyward's Answer*, by Michael Burn (Beacon Press, 1956). Lyward shows that the "urge to Utopia" is one of the most potent forces in ethical education—even among the backward and the criminal.

Moving up to another educational level, there is the account of Black Mountain college provided in Louis Adamic's *My America*. No one can read the story of Dr. Rice's remarkable achievement without feeling that this is what students of every age should be doing—threshing out their own "Utopia" with teachers and professors, operating in comparative poverty and running head-on into every sort of problem at first hand, from the ethical to the practical.

From Louis Adamic's account of Black Mountain one can turn with particular appreciation to Gandhi's writings on what he called "basic education," for the founder of Sevagram believed that "basic education" requires youths and adults to get together to *build* a school, evolve and improve their own rules and regulations, and participate in the community problems of the area.

Actually, one can find a correlation between these emphases and that championed at the University of Chicago by Robert Hutchins. Dr. Hutchins' "Utopia" wasn't to be a work of the students' hands, but a construction of a community of minds, and was to consist of ideas and ideals pertaining to a training and evolution of those minds. And yet, significantly, the University of Chicago under Hutchins became a closely-knit and progressive community, a constructive thorn in the side of reactionary institutions throughout the United States, and a Mecca for liberal and radical thinkers—who seldom turned up on anyone's list of young Communists, because they

had done too much thinking to fall into that particular trap.

Another book deserving mention is *The Challenge of Children*, by the Cooperative Parents' Group of Pacific Palisades Pre-School Division & Mothers' and Children's Educational Foundation, with an introduction by Robert M. Hutchins (Whiteside, Inc., 1957).

Readers who think they may be able to offer Mr. Bean helpful suggestions, or supply him with facts, are invited to address him at Harvard University, Lawrence Hall, Kirkland Street, Cambridge 39, Mass.

## *FRONTIERS*

### The Unity in All Things

LAST week's Review had this paragraph from *The Teachings of the Mystics* by W. T. Stace:

The most important, the central characteristic in which all *fully developed* mystical experiences agree, and which in the last analysis is definitive of them and serves to mark them off from other kinds of experiences, is that they involve the apprehension of *an ultimate non-sensuous unity in all things*, a oneness or a One to which neither the senses nor the reason can penetrate. In other words, it entirely transcends our sensory-intellectual consciousness.

It follows that the most important thing for the reader who wants to grasp the meaning of this statement is to obtain some kind of *feeling* of what it asserts. How is this possible?

Obviously, there is already some measure of feeling for this idea in the modern world, which accounts for the fact that more books about mysticism come out every year. There is also a lot of talk about mystical perception. Western thought is primarily intellectual in its approach to questions and problems, so that any idea which attracts attention gets extensively written and talked about.

But the "apprehension" Prof. Stace refers to involves something different from writing and talking. Having on hand as a recent acquisition Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's, *The Principal Upanishads* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1953), it occurred to us that some examples of how ancient Indian thinkers pursued this "apprehension" might be of general interest. Dr. Radhakrishnan's notes are certainly illuminating, even if the text, which comes to us from a great antiquity, is on occasion obscure. A discussion, here, of the Upanishads and their role in Indian thought might also be interesting to most readers, but it would take all our space. Our present intention is to give some quotation from the *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, which the editor says "is generally recognized to be the most important of the Upanishads" (some two hundred in all). Its theme is "the teaching of

the basic identity of the individual and the Universal Self." In other words, it declares "an ultimate non-sensuous unity in all things." In a note, Dr. Radhakrishnan speaks of the common assumptions which pervade this general view of the quest for spiritual knowledge, saying:

All objects of the world, earthly possessions, romantic delights, provide opportunities for realisation of the Self. . . . The *Sruti*, the text, is the basis for intellectual development, *manana*. It is a means subordinate and necessary to true knowledge; *nididhyasana* is the opposite of thoughtless diffusion. It prepares for integral purity.

Contemplation is not mere philosophic thought. It is a higher stage of spiritual consciousness. It secures the direct conviction of reality. While a teacher can help, personal effort alone can take us to the goal of realisation.

The Jaina and Buddhist systems also recognise the three stages of religious development. The three jewels of the Jainas . . . are right belief, right knowledge and right conduct. Matrceta says: "Nowhere except in your teaching is there the threefold division of time into hearing the Scriptures, reflection on their meaning and the practice of meditation."

Following is a portion of the text, taken from the fourth Brahmana of the second chapter of the *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, headed, "The Conversation of Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi on the Absolute Self":

1. "Maitreyi," said Yajnavalkya, "verily I am about to go forth from this state (of householder). Look, let me make a final settlement between you and that Katayani."

2. Then said Maitreyi: "If, indeed, Venerable Sir, this whole world filled with wealth were mine, would I be immortal through that?" "No," said Yajnavalkya: "Like the life of the rich, even so would your life be. Of immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth."

3. Then Maitreyi said: "What should I do with that by which I do not become immortal? Tell me that, indeed, Venerable Sir, of what you know (of the way to immortality)."

4. Then Yajnavalkya said: "Ah, dear, you have been dear (even before), and you (now) speak

dear words. Come, sit down, I will explain to you. Even as I am explaining, reflect (on what I say)."

5. Then he said: "Verily, not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear, but a husband is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear, but a wife is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of the sons are the sons dear, but the sons are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of wealth is wealth dear, but wealth is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of Brahminhood is Brahminhood dear, but Brahminhood is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of Kshatriyahood is Kshatriyahood dear, but Kshatriyahood is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of the worlds are the worlds dear, but the worlds are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of the gods are the gods dear, but the gods are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of the beings are the beings dear, but the beings are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of all is all dear, but all is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, O Maitreyi, it is the Self that should be seen, heard of, reflected on and meditated upon. Verily, by the seeing of, by the hearing of, by the thinking of, by the understanding of the Self, all this is known.

6. "The Brahmana ignores one who knows him as different from the Self. The Kshatriya ignores one who knows him as different from the Self. The gods ignore one who knows them as different from the Self. The beings ignore one who knows them as different from the Self. All ignores one who knows it as different from the Self. This Brahmana, this Kshatriya, these worlds, these gods, these beings and this all are this Self.

7. "As when a drum is beaten, one is not able to grasp the external sounds, but by grasping the drum or the beater of the drum the sound is grasped.

8. "As when a conch is blown, one is not able to grasp its external sounds, but by grasping the conch or the blower of the conch the sound is grasped.

9. "As when a vina is played, one is not able to grasp its external sounds, but by grasping the vina or the player of the vina the sound is grasped.

10. "As from a lighted fire laid with damp fuel, various (clouds of) smoke issue forth, even so, my dear, the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Samur Veda*, *Atharvangirasa*, history, ancient lore, sciences, Upanishads, verses, aphorisms, explanations and

commentaries. From this, indeed, are all breathed forth.

11. "As the ocean is the one goal (uniting place) of all waters, as the skin is the one goal of all kinds of touch, as the nostrils are the one goal of all smells, as the tongue is the one goal of all tastes, as the eye is the one goal of all forms, as the mind is the one goal of all determinations, as the heart is the one goal of all forms of knowledge, as the organ of generation is the one goal of all kinds of enjoyment, as the excretory organ is the one goal of all evacuations, as the feet are the one goal of all movements, as speech is the one goal of all Vedas.

12. "As a lump of salt thrown in water becomes dissolved in water and there would not be any of it to seize forth as it were, but wherever one may take it is salty indeed, so, verily, this great being, infinite, limitless, consists of nothing but knowledge. Arising from out these elements, one vanishes away into them. When he has departed there is no more knowledge. This is what I say, my dear": so said Yajnavalkya.

13. Then said Maitreyi: "In this, indeed, you have bewildered me, Venerable Sir, by saying that, 'when he has departed there is no more knowledge'." Then Yajnavalkya said: "Certainly I am not saying anything bewildering. This is enough for knowledge (or understanding).

14. "For where there is duality as it were, there one smells another, there one sees another, there one hears another, there one speaks to another, there one understands another. Where, verily, everything has become the Self, then by what and whom should one smell, then by what and whom should one see, then by what and whom should one hear, then by what and on whom should one speak, then by what and on whom should one think, then by what and whom should one understand? By what should one know that by which all this is known? By what, my dear, should one know the knower?"

The role of a scripture is to generate in the reader a phase of the sublime feeling hungered after by the heart. It is evident that the authors of the *Upanishads* understood something of the practice of this great art.