

## HOW FAR BACK SHALL WE GO?

ANY serious thought about the need for and the function of institutions in human society sooner or later leads to the question, "How far back shall we go?" The question must be asked because it soon becomes evident that while most people seem to need the controlling or regulating influence of institutions, practically all the *social evils* endured by human beings are directly related to the authority of institutions and the misuse of institutional power. The question is phrased to suggest the difficulties which lie in a critical examination of institutions: Can we go back far enough in our thinking to conceive of men living without *any* institutions? How naked of ideas of authority can we dare to be? How much of an environmental vacuum can we tolerate on the question of who and what we are?

The answer to this last question seems to be, socially, not very much. While an individual may be able to live in a state of uncertainty regarding the nature of things and of his relationships with his environment, this kind of isolation from institutional authority is hardly possible or even conceivable for *societies*. And the only reason, probably, that an individual who has no clear ideas on these matters can endure his own uncertainty is that he subsists on the order supplied by the fixed ideas of other men. *Their* certainties give him an environment which has definable circumstances, with predictable reactions, so that he can adjust to them in a practical way while trying to figure things out for himself. This sort of relationship is illustrated by the man who is totally without faith, yet seeks the refuge of a monastery; or the man who, disbelieving utterly in the usefulness of the psychological mechanisms of modern economic distribution, hires out his talent with words to an advertising agency. There are preachers in pulpits who are in similar condition, and, probably, politicians in office. The more "ideological" the

activity, the more likelihood there is of there being men who pursue it professionally after they have lost their faith.

Every age has its distinctive moral problems, and this self-consciousness in relation to institutions may be the characteristic moral issue of our own age—what to do when one's personal convictions no longer mesh with the prevailing beliefs or institutional dogmas of the time.

But this is a private problem. Of course, there is possibly a sense in which public problems are private problems writ large, but private problems must be separated from public problems for the reason that a private solution is not a public solution. That is, the rigors a man imposes upon himself to solve his own problems can not be imposed upon society except by public authority. It is the tyrannical quality of social institutions that obliges us to question the nature and validity of institutional controls of any sort.

Reflections of this sort create the solid foundation of the anarchist position. They imply, further, that assumptions about the "good" society or social order ought to be of a very tentative character. And it is right here that the main problem lies.

The sense people have of *security* is an emotional reality. Its basis may be partly intellectual—that is, the explanation of how a man comes to feel "secure" may have rational formulation—but the first principles of the explanation lie deep in human feelings about what is real, good, and true. How, then, can you have an improvised and tentative view of social order, based upon an essentially agnostic or skeptical social philosophy, when the one thing that the emotional nature of human beings cannot relate to at all is *uncertainty*? Individuals, as we have

suggested, may be able to live in philosophic uncertainty, but a society cannot.

What is probably the oldest extant account of a solution to this problem is found in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The *Bhagavad-Gita* is a philosophic treatise on the difference between subjective and objective religion. It is a dialogue between the spiritual teacher, Krishna, and his disciple, Arjuna. At the opening of the colloquy, Arjuna finds himself in a situation very like that of sophisticated modern man. Arjuna *doubts* the morality of the status quo, but at the same time he doubts himself and his ability to find and live by an independent, private morality. Krishna urges him to emancipate himself from the popular morality—the orthodoxy which, in his lonely situation, Arjuna begins to find very attractive—and to find in himself the sources of security and self-reliance. Early in the dialogue Krishna tells Arjuna that when he has overcome all delusions he will at last be independent of the doctrines of religion and know within himself what is right for him to do. But, Krishna says, you will still be obliged to practice a kind of conformity. To explain this, Krishna makes himself an example for Arjuna's instruction, saying:

Even if the good of mankind only is considered by thee, the performance of thy duty will be plain; for whatever is practiced by the most excellent of men, that is also practiced by others. The world follows whatever example they set. There is nothing, O son of Pritha, in the three regions of the universe which it is necessary for me to perform, nor anything possible to obtain which I have not obtained, yet I am constantly in action. If I were not indefatigable in action, all men would presently follow my example, O son of Pritha. If I did not perform actions these creatures would perish, I should be the cause of the confusion of castes, and should have slain all these creatures. O son of Bharata, as the ignorant perform the duties of life from the hope of reward, so the wise man, from the wish to bring the world to duty and benefit mankind, should perform his actions without motives of self-interest. He should not create confusion in the understandings of the ignorant, who are inclined to outward works, but by being himself engaged in action should cause them to act also. All actions are effected by the qualities of nature. The

man deluded by ignorance thinks, "I am the actor." But he, O strong-armed one! who is acquainted with the nature of the two distinctions of cause and effect, knowing that the qualities act only in the qualities, and that the Self is distinct from them, is not attached in action.

Those who have not this knowledge are interested in the actions thus brought about by the qualities; and he who is perfectly enlightened should not unsettle those whose discrimination is weak and knowledge incomplete, nor cause them to relax from their duty. . . .

Those men who constantly follow this my doctrine without reviling it, and with a firm faith, shall be emancipated even by actions; but they who revile it and do not follow it are bewildered in regard to all knowledge, and perish, being devoid of discrimination.

But the wise man also seeketh for that which is homogeneous with his own nature. All creatures act according to their natures; what, then, will restraint effect? In every purpose of the senses are fixed affection and dislike. A wise man should not fall in the power of these two passions, for they are the enemies of man. It is better to do one's own duty, even though it be devoid of excellence, than to perform another's duty well. It is better to perish in the performance of one's own duty; the duty of another is full of danger.

This passage from the *Gita* is packed with social philosophy. It is not, however, *political* philosophy, since there is nothing said about social control; instead, the idea of "control" is warned against: "All creatures act according to their natures; what, then, will restraint effect?" From the social point of view, the *Gita* says, in effect: The wise man has no personal problems, so that the conventions of "duty," which are the means by which others meet their personal problems' need not be observed by him; and yet, he will observe them anyhow, since his example is needed for the guidance of others.

The obvious comment, today, is that Krishna's counsel to Arjuna is given against a background of assumptions about the nature of the universe and man, and about the meaning of action and the goal of life, which are not shared by modern man. This criticism must be admitted;

Krishna taught in a gnostic atmosphere, and we live in an agnostic culture. (Although Krishna says that the prevailing orthodoxy must be transcended, he does not say that it is *false*.)

There is nevertheless a sagacity rich with implications for the present in this portion of the *Gita*. Krishna says that people cannot be *forced* to grow up. He says that those who have outgrown the controlling institutions of a society must recognize the organic relation between institutions and mass human behavior; he implies that there is a *pace* of human development which institutional reforms cannot exceed; and he says that an emancipated individual who has the good of mankind at heart will not confuse the understandings of other men by action which is beyond their comprehension.

If we accept these propositions as sound social psychology, the question remains: What are the "right" social institutions for this epoch? What controls, concepts of order, teachings of moral obligation, will suit the average development of mankind at the present time?

Arjuna did not have to face this problem. Krishna did not have to solve it for him. Both could have reference to a vast and comprehensive disclosure concerning the order and meaning of life. It was a form of divine revelation, and while the Vedic teachings and their Upanishadic commentaries might afford great nourishment to the rational nature, the source of all this wisdom was still a "Revelation."

Nor was there any issue of good and bad political systems, in Arjuna's time. Morality was only a personal question. There might be good rulers or bad rulers, but no one wondered about good systems and bad systems. The individual, in those days, did not have to become "objective" about his social order. He had only to take a close look at himself.

Today we have to look at both. Today, in order to achieve any sort of satisfactory moral

philosophy, we have to reach some kind of conclusion about both the individual *and* society.

Now, to say that it has become necessary for individual man to form his own judgments about both man and society and the relations between them, is to affirm freedom of mind, freedom of conscience, as the primary value of human life. This brings us to another great dialogue—a dialogue in which the same question—the difference between subjective and objective religion—is examined from another point of view.

By the time that Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote *The Brothers Karamazov*, containing its extraordinary analysis of the question of moral authority in human life, the world had been through a great transformation. The social question had appeared, to become the primary issue in all questions of morals. To the question, What is a good man?, had been added, What is a good society? It had become impossible to answer one question without answering the other. The addition of this question to the already heavy burdens of human beings may be the most important fact of modern history, signifying a fundamental change in human consciousness—a qualitative change. From the philosophic point of view, it is a change from the theistic to the pantheistic attitude. The problem was no longer simply to understand the world; it was now to understand and to *change* it. Only the gods can change the world, since only the gods have creative power. The sense of competence to change the world extends the radius of human consciousness to include the world as the sphere of our being and theater of our action.

All this is implicit in Dostoyevsky's chapter, "The Grand Inquisitor," in *The Brothers*. The scene is a dungeon of the Inquisition in sixteenth-century Spain. The powerful Inquisitor has imprisoned the returned Jesus and now, in the secrecy of the night, he lectures Him for His mistakes. The burden of the Inquisitor's complaint to Jesus is that the Saviour over-estimated the capacities of human beings. He expected of them

a heroism of which they are not capable. To the silent Jesus before him, he says:

So long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly and so painfully as to find some one to worship. But man seeks to worship what is established beyond dispute, so that all men would agree at once to worship it. . . . Thou didst know, Thou couldst not but have known, this fundamental secret of human nature, but Thou didst reject the one infallible banner which was offered Thee to make men bow down to Thee alone—the banner of earthly bread; and Thou hast rejected it for the sake of freedom and the bread of Heaven. Behold what Thou didst further. And all again in the name of freedom! I tell Thee that man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find some one quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom with which the ill-fated creature is born. But only one who can appease their conscience can take over their freedom. In bread there was offered Thee an invincible banner; give bread, and man will worship Thee, for nothing is more certain than bread. But if someone else gains possession of his conscience—oh! then he will cast away Thy bread and follow after him who has ensnared his conscience. In that Thou wast right. For the secret of man's being is not only to live but to have something to live for. Without a stable conception of the object of life, man would not consent to go on living, and would rather destroy himself than remain on earth, though he had bread in abundance. That is true. But what happened? Instead of taking men's freedom from them Thou didst make it greater than ever! Didst Thou forget that man prefers peace, and even death, to freedom of choice in the knowledge of good and evil? Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause of suffering. And behold, instead of giving a firm foundation for setting the conscience of man at rest for ever, Thou didst choose all that is exceptional, vague and enigmatic; Thou didst choose what was utterly beyond the strength of men, acting as though Thou didst not love them at all—Thou who didst come to give Thy life for them! Instead of taking possession of men's freedom, Thou didst increase it, and burdened the spiritual kingdom of mankind with its sufferings forever. Thou didst desire man's free love, that he should follow Thee freely, enticed and taken captive by Thee. In place of the rigid, ancient law, man must hereafter with free heart decide for himself what is good and what is evil, having only Thy image before him as guide. But didst Thou not know he would at last reject even Thy image and Thy

Truth, if he is weighed down with the fearful burden of free choice? They will cry aloud at last that the truth is not in Thee, for they could not have been left in greater confusion and suffering than Thou hast caused, laying upon them so many cares and unanswerable problems. . . .

Dostoyevsky lays upon Jesus the full burden of responsibility for man's awakening desire for freedom and greater self-consciousness, which is more than we bargained for in selecting this quotation. The point, however, is that this self-consciousness is a fact; there is no returning to the "innocence" that existed before the Fall. Man has knowledge of good and evil; that is, he knows that good and evil exist; his difficulty is not from uncertainty about their reality, but from uncertainty as to precisely what is good and what is evil. And he has lost faith in the institutions which once gave him authoritative answers to his questions about good and evil. This is now the human situation.

Krishna and the Grand Inquisitor deal with the same facts of human nature, but from opposite points of view. Krishna regards his own state of perfect knowledge as the natural goal of development for all men. He regards the institutional arrangements and doctrinal teachings of religion as provisional—a compromise in the service of the weak, to be finally transcended through the inward development of the individual. He stands ready as the counselor for anyone who is ready to attempt the perilous course of subjective religion. He warns such aspirants that their anxieties and turbulent emotional reactions to the ordeal of self-reliance must not be communicated to the masses, who do not understand these things. But this subjective, self-reliant religion is nonetheless the goal for all men, to be reached by each one at his own pace and in his own time. Meanwhile, the popular institutional religion suffices for the great majority.

The Grand Inquisitor takes the view that the provisional arrangements contain the final word—not the "true" word, but the only Word that will

*work.* So far as the Inquisitor is concerned, the "truth" doesn't really matter, what works is what matters, and that is what he will teach. The essential difference between Krishna and the Grand Inquisitor is that the Inquisitor does not believe that man is a potential god. He has no developmental or evolutionary theory of human life. For this reason the Inquisitor's religion, or the religion he teaches, has no climactic moment when, for some individual, some Arjuna, *objective religion becomes subjective religion.* Krishna has a religion for the twice-born, the Inquisitor for the once-born.

Western civilization, we might say, is beginning to be made up of men who are looking for a conception of second birth, yet who have only a once-born tradition to draw upon. Twice-born religions exist, of course, and can be studied, but the terms of these religions are bewildering to the Western mind. The Eastern twice-born religions have the vocabulary of revelation and seem, therefore, incompatible with the spirit of freedom. It is this temper of being unable to take any idea "on faith," or at second hand, which makes the present the present, and not some other age. The very freedom we cherish makes it difficult for us to accept from Krishna anything more than his psychological wisdom, the soundness of which is easy to verify.

Meanwhile, there is the very practical problem of the design of institutions suitable for modern civilization—*institutions which will work*, and yet will not tell lies after the model of the Grand Inquisitor.

This is not a casual matter or an unimportant problem. Among a people who proclaim themselves to be "free," this problem cannot be left to chance or to fragmentary religious tradition.

In countries where there has been recent social revolution, as in China, new institutional authorities are exercising an extraordinary influence. We quote from the May *Views &*

*Comments*, a monthly published in New York by the Libertarian League:

The general picture of regimentation is graphically described by Dr. Sripati Chandrasekhar, prominent Indian social scientist recently returned from extensive travel in Communist China:

"Everywhere men and women of all ages are working day and night. They are dressed in blue trousers and buttoned up coats with collars like the uniform of Mao Tse-tung, the CP chairman.

"Hundreds of thousands of men and women in blue padded coats and trousers look like an endless army of blue ants scurrying to their appointed tasks. This dull uniformity numbs one's vision in the beginning. But soon one grows used to seeing a whole nation in blue uniforms.

"Another thing that no one can escape is the ubiquitous radio loudspeaker. The radio blares away at you in the bus, the train and in the trolley, in sleepers and dining cars, in villages, towns, and cities—just about everywhere.

"And what does this radio pour out night and day? It is the most important medium for approved news—news of the nation's progress, industrial output, how to make a smelter, how to defeat the American imperialists, how to be a good communist, how to be neat, how to denounce the rightists and a thousand other things, interspersed with Chinese opera and marching songs. The radio and relaying loudspeaker cannot be controlled and cannot even be turned off...."

The *Peking Review*, a Chinese Communist weekly published in English (Dec. 2, 1958), tells us, for example, how Kwangtung Province won back the leadership in the rat-race of production:

"Lack of understanding of the pace set in other parts of the country and their less-than-tops tempo were the chief reasons for Kwangtung's comparative lag. To win back their leadership in grain production, the people of the province adopted emergency measures, concentrated on close planting and in an intensive application of fertilizer. *For a hundred days or so the peasants worked, ate, slept out in the fields.*" (Emphasis added.)

We quote this, not to exhibit the sort of "competition" the West is confronted with in Communist lands, but to illustrate the fact that *some* doctrine of the meaning of life and *some*

vigorous concepts of duty and obligation will always fill the vacuum left by the dying out of past traditions of morality and meaning. The oversimplified materialism of the communist goals will, of course, have to be replaced with other controls, once the Chinese catch up with the rest of the industrialized countries of the world. When this happens, they will no doubt employ sociologists to think up "leisure time" activities for the people, and in all likelihood experience the same aimlessness and frustrations which now afflict the so-called "affluent" societies of the Capitalist West. The point is that such "tract-for-the-times" institutions have very little life-expectancy. When the times change, the institutions become useless, since their functions have become unnecessary. So, the problem is by no means solved or even helped by noticing the flurries of energy manifested by the consolidation of belated twentieth-century political and industrial revolutions. Men cannot identify their long-term interests and goals with these superficial doctrines. This is only the Grand Inquisitor's banner of "Bread" in another guise.

The time comes for every man when he can no longer identify with either the improvised slogans of revolutionary parties or the frozen morality of the status quo—and when, moreover, he finds the Bohemian alienation of the tired intellectual a miserable adjustment for his rootless life. It is then that he returns to the basic issue set by the age: What can we say about our lives, what can we tell our children, that we can ourselves believe in, and will not, eventually, become untrue?

## REVIEW COSMOPOLITAN NOVEL

ALICE EKERT-ROTHOLZ' *The Time of the Dragons*, first printed in Germany in 1956 and now issued in translation as a Signet volume, is reminiscent of one of Pearl Buck's major efforts—*Kinfolk*. A composite family—Norwegian, French and Japanese—experiences the fall of Shanghai, the introduction of Japanese control, and the final dominance of Japan by the United States. This is an absorbing book, rich in philosophical and cultural insights, distinctive for its subtle grasp of the compulsions affecting those who play the leading roles.

Mrs. Ekert-Rothholz' description of democracy's invasion of Japan grows out of first-hand observation of many of the conditions she describes. She seems to have formed her opinions without prejudice, even in respect to some of the Japanese war prisoners who had behaved so abominably during their time of power. The man portrayed in the following paragraphs had passed through progressive stages of fanaticism, and now, under the American Occupation, finds himself in an entirely new context, in which neither the *mores* of Imperial Japan nor those of America can give him orientation:

Perhaps it was Baron Matsubara's great good fortune that for the next five years he was absent from the revolving stage. As prisoner of the Allies he enjoyed certain benefits, of which his countrymen in freedom were sometimes deprived: time for undisturbed meditation, regular meals, and the chance to recover in a Japanese way from the hurtling plunge into inconceivable depths. Above all, Matsubara Akiro enjoyed, like the other war criminals, the priceless privilege of observing only from afar the transformation of Japan into an American-type democracy. Thus, during the five years of his imprisonment, he was spared—in contrast to the Imperial Family and the nobles of Tokyo—certain humiliations that were tragic and grotesque, although—or because—they stemmed from the educational desires of the occupying power. The atom bomb had accomplished the military victory; but General MacArthur and his military

moralists in Tokyo Headquarters were not content with that. This was logical enough, for the Second World War had not been an uncomplicated war such as used to be fought in the good old days, when after the victory people were satisfied with the acquisition of territory and new markets. The moralists of the United States of America tried to transplant to Tokyo and its environs the American Way of Life and the principles of democracy, precisely as they were taught in the West. Since moralists, in order to attain their ends, seldom spare money or material, the Americans poured vast sums in dollars, goods, and instructional materials into the "re-education" of the Japanese of all classes.

So far as we can see, the bumbling, patronizing way of the Americans in trying to "teach democracy" was not due so much to lack of sensibility as to the delusion that all good things can be accomplished by salesmanship. But a man may be an effective salesman and a very bad administrator or instructor. And because of this peculiar American ethos it was inevitable that many representatives of the United States Military Government would be incapable of thinking beyond the "salesman approach." This brings to mind a passage we have been saving from David Delman's *The Hard Sell*. These three paragraphs are the sort of self-indictment we may hope an increasing number of Americans are able to appreciate:

"Selling," Herb had once said, "is what God created when he looked around and saw He'd put a lot of Herb Brenners on His earth. Given a guy like me who never wanted to be a lawyer, who couldn't be a doctor, and who almost spends in a month what a teacher makes in a year, what would I do if I didn't have a sample case? Look at it this way. I've got certain pluses. I'm good looking. I'm shrewd; not intellectual, shrewd. I've got enough education to sometimes make people think I've had more. I like to talk, nobody scares me, and I'm so all-fired hungry for the buck sometimes I can't think of anything else. You know what that makes me? It might make me a passable something else, but one thing it makes me for sure—a goddam good salesman."

He also told George all the other reasons for being pleased with his calling—the reasons listed in the trade handbooks which usually had titles like *Selling: A Way of Life*; or *Thank God You're a*

*Salesman; or Selling and the American Flag*, and, reading them, George wondered how anyone could afford to be anything else.

Herb knew, for example, that he was "the persuasive partner of modern industry," that because of his ability to influence the way people spent their money, he enabled his manufacturer to produce in mass and thus lower the cost of his product to the consumer. He could tell you how he was helping to raise the standard of living; lower the rate of illiteracy; balance the budget; break down the color line, combat juvenile delinquency and foster good international relations all through selling. There was no end to the wonders selling could perform. As for the evils—the Garden of Eden had its snake Venus de Milo, broken arms. Why dwell on them? Herb asked. George did not think Herb accepted every bit of this, but modern industry, he was certain, had few partners as persuasive as his brother.

Mrs. Ekert-Rotholz provides an account of what so many Americans miss entirely in the evaluation of Japanese character. Since the Japanese are a patient and self-contained people, they began to rehabilitate *themselves* psychologically, and ultimately impressed thoughtful Americans. Mrs. Ekert-Rotholz writes of this Japanese renascence:

Now that the Americans strode the revolving stage and the bamboo people were eagerly learning democracy, millions of Japanese recollected the great hidden virtues which had in the past brought them happiness and serenity: their pleasure in nature; their ability to be content with little, so long as that little was gracefully presented; and their national discipline, which contains a mystic element of unconditional readiness to sacrifice. The power of Japanese humility, their lack of envy of American automobiles and foods, their feeling of identity with nature and their group, brought the twelve families and the millions of little families unharmed through the terrors and temptations of that perplexing matter called democracy. Japanese gratitude for every gift or act of friendliness, no matter how slight—this is perhaps the highest virtue of the entire people—proved to be a significant experience to a great many Americans whose good hearts and warm natures made them capitulate constantly to their defeated enemy.

## COMMENTARY CORPORATE UTTERANCE

MANAS receives from various countries a number of typical "information service" releases and magazines. These publications are put together with some care and are often well printed and beautifully illustrated. We do not read them. We have tried, but we cannot read them. They are "corporate" utterances representing an institutional point of view. Facts may be in them, but the truth is not in them. They have no life of the mind. They represent, not thought, but policy. They contain not even the minor inventiveness that was involved in making up the policy, but only the combed-down, carefully edited, completely safe statement of the policy itself. Good men may have made the policy, honest public servants may have written it out, and conscientious guardians of the public interest may have reviewed and approved it, but when it gets into print it is so dead, so void of imagination, that it is a kind of disgrace to everyone who had anything to do with it. The least you can do is ignore it entirely. It is not directed to the mind, godknows who or what it is directed to. It is certainly an insult to any kind of critical intelligence.

A couple of weeks ago we listened to something like this on the radio. The program was KPFK's review of the Soviet press—the kind of program that makes listener-sponsored radio a historic advance in communications. On this occasion, the review was of an article in a Russian literary journal, in which the writer was discussing American literature and what the Russians think about it. What was said was intelligible enough, and here and there made some sense, but the article quoted was almost an affront for the reason that the Soviet writer never expressed anything but a *corporate* opinion. When the writer said "we," she was by implication speaking for *all Russians*. This monolithic æsthetic is difficult to bear. It has about the same intellectual integrity as the literary effusions we get from Madison

Avenue, which are also corporate opinions, although animated by acquisitive rather than political purpose. As for the *moral* integrity of the Soviet expression—we must admit that the writer seemed filled with conviction. She is probably a True Believer, so that in this case the statement of corporate politics had more moral dignity than have most of the statements by the paid intellectuals of corporate commerce, who are hardly expected to believe personally in *anything* they say. An advertising copy writer would probably be humiliated by the suggestion that he believes what he writes. He would explain with some impatience that the agency didn't hire his conscience, but only his technical skill.

This is not meant to suggest that there can be no value in an utterance formulated by several men and subscribed to by many. The Declaration of Independence of the United States has both moral and literary qualities. Perhaps we shall have to admit that corporate utterance has a place in the declaration of principles, and that when men of high purpose unite to affirm a common ground of conviction, order, and intent, great human expression may result. The offense of which corporate expression is so often guilty, these days, is in saying too much or too little—too much, when it lays down group opinions concerning religion, philosophy, literature, and the arts; too little, when it exploits the massive power of public communications to flatter in a ridiculous way, and therefore make contemptible, what may be a quite good soap powder or canned soup.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### LETTERS AND COMMENT

A READER points out that the issues of religious belief and philosophical inquiry are endless—and that this is as it should be, unless one is looking for a finality which makes further thinking unnecessary. She continues, commenting on some recent MANAS material:

I have in mind at the moment the article (Sept. 30, page 5) regarding Brock Chisholm's ideas about children and religion, expressed in his book, *Can People Learn to Learn?* It is a magnificent article and Dr. Chisholm seems really to have touched upon a vitally important point of religious training and education when he urges the teaching to children of the precepts of all the major religions, leaving them free to choose their own way upon reaching maturity. This is also a way to root out prejudice. We have been Unitarians giving our children just this type of training for four years and have seen satisfying results from the broader training. . . .

Dr. Chisholm's most potent sentences included the following:

A generation brought up to believe in a God of the universe, who nevertheless enjoys being praised and "glorified" by mankind, which has existed for only a moment of time on one tiny satellite of one solar system among billions of others, can hardly be expected to be able to force themselves to think truly about the complexity of racial survival. It is so much easier to conform to earlier learned patterns and to leave all responsibilities to the "leaders" and to God. . . .

The damaging concept of the all-seeing and all-knowing God and the "fear of God," which he learns is standard for all good people, leaves him no alternative to trying to keep even his thinking good.

Fitting well with this are some ideas of Arthur Miller supplied by a New York *Times* interview printed on May 8, 1957. Mr. Miller is not stressing the bad effects of belief in the supreme authority of a personalized Deity, but, to our mind, he is talking about the same vices of authoritarianism. Views concerning foreign policy, domestic policy, cultural values, and ideas

about a proper homelife, all involve the same attitudinal factors and consequences.

Mr. Miller said:

I believe that once we assent to the idea that high policy alone is sacred, and that every other value can easily be sacrificed to it, we shall have abdicated our independence as writers and citizens. I believe we have by silence given this consent, and by silence helped to raise the state to a kind of power over all of us which it cannot have without crippling the soul of art and the people themselves.

Significantly—and this is no news, of course, to MANAS readers—it has always been the minority groups who stand out against the metronome control of too much sacrosanct "high policy." The Quakers, for instance, have an inspiring record of opposition to either Gods or States who wield "big sticks." The Unitarians, now joined with the Universalists, are performing a similar role, and this rather large "minority" among Christians contrives to do some excellent publishing by way of the Beacon Press. Considerable vision is needed to venture such publications as Joseph Morray's *Pride of State* and Viktor Frankl's *From Death Camp to Existentialism*.

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Another communication:

Perhaps other families would enjoy a bit of space on comparative religion for very young children. Jesus, and baby Jesus are the rage among the children, here. "Jesus loves all the little children" is the favorite song. We try to augment our little one's education with tales of Indian, Chinese, and heathen Gods, but we need suggestions on sources (bibliography). Preschoolers want to be devout. What will answer their need?

One helpful approach to comparative religious study—in a context easily adaptable to the needs of children—is developed in Theosophical literature. Nearly every public library, for example, contains copies of *Isis Unveiled*, and in the second volume (on page 537 of the original edition, reproduced in a current edition by the Theosophy Company, Los Angeles)

we find a parallel-column comparison of the stories of the three best-known Saviors—Krishna, Gautama Buddha, and Jesus Christ. One discovers from a few short summarizing paragraphs that the "basic stories" of these three are precisely the same. For example, all three were reputed to have come into the world by "virgin birth"; all three have either immediate or obscure royal ancestry, but are either born, or choose to live, among the lowly. Since much of *Isis Unveiled* is devoted to establishing the fact that humanity has a spiritual heritage of "one lip and one religion," such assertions as the foregoing are amply documented.

The general intent of *Isis Unveiled* is carried into the realm of child education in another Theosophy Company volume—in this case a small one, titled *The Eternal Verities*. This is a book for children to own, and its chapters give stories and legends concerning great Teachers of the past. For indication of the tone and language of *The Eternal Verities*, we quote these few sentences:

The time came when men must put their knowledge to the test, when the Gods departed and left them to work out their own destiny, as parents do now, when their children come of age. It was then that many forgot the Real, and began to think that forms and appearances were real, instead. Knowing the cycles when they can most help, great Teachers come from age to age to remind men of what once they knew of the Truths; they come to rekindle the light of Mind, that becomes dulled in the world of the senses, of things, and appearances. Our parents and teachers at school are all the time kindling the light of mind in us, but the Great Teachers belong to that highest order of being, once called "a colony of the Gods established here that the world might not become destitute of a better nature."

Or one can turn to Edwin Arnold's poetic rendition of the life of Buddha, *The Light of Asia*, or, directly, to Plato's wonderful dialogues on the trial and death of Socrates, so that young people may see and hear for themselves that the power to be a "Christ" is, perhaps, potential in all—and, during the endless stretch of past history, manifest in more than a few human beings.

Excellent contemporary background reading for parents and teachers will be found in Gordon Allport's *The Individual and His Religion*, C. J. Ducasse's *Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion* and Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

## FRONTIERS

### The Scope of Science

WE do not hear so much, these days, about the progress that might be achieved if everyone would learn to be "scientific" in his approach to human problems. While the value of the scientific frame of mind has not changed, its prestige has been considerably diminished by the uses made of scientific knowledge during the past fifteen years. No one in his right mind exactly *blames* the scientists for the havoc wrought by atomic energy, but it has become difficult to cast the scientists in the role of saviors of civilization. The truth, in psychological terms, is probably that we expected the scientists to do some miracles for us; they didn't do the miracles, but only what we told and hired them to do; so, while we can't blame them, we tend to feel that they have let us down. They're like all the rest of us, except that they're smarter in a special way. This is not only an anti-climax, it's also a bit annoying, so that when scientists preach, they attract only a small audience.

It is still important, however, to come to some conclusion regarding what can be expected of scientific inquiry, and important, also, to determine which matters ought to be referred to the scientists for the special treatment of their method, and which, if any, require another approach.

In the September *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Hudson Hoagland, a biologist, sums up a view widely held by scientists concerning the benefits of the scientific method. The following quotations are selected in an attempt to isolate the gist of what he says:

Quite aside from the social justifications of science in terms of its contributions to technology and medicine, there is a basic underlying assumption that science is concerned with discovering truth, and the separation of the true from the false, and that truth is intrinsically good. The idea that truth makes men free is an article of faith of most civilized peoples and

is a fundamental tenet of those concerned with liberal education. . . .

Our ability to live with our fellows has not improved, while our extension of knowledge and control of natural forces have increased prodigiously. Unless we learn to handle our aggressions more intelligently, our great cerebral cortices that have produced nuclear weapons may turn out to be a sort of phylo-genetic tumor bringing about our elimination as a species. . . .

All knowledge in itself is ethically neutral. The uses of scientific discoveries are seldom controlled by those making them. It is the citizen as consumer, business man, politician, or physician who controls their social impact. Major contributions of science and technology often carry with them dangerous and quite unforeseen social consequences. . . . Problems arising from advances in the sciences and technology are seldom met by scientific solutions. When the problems are not simply ignored, emotionally charged interest groups and irrational prejudices of a personal, political, or religious nature are customarily brought to bear. . . .

Science is a widely disseminated set of techniques for making meaningful configurations of limited aspects of experience. Its language and operational procedures know no national or racial boundaries. Does science *per se* have a professional ethics in its concern for truth, which if extended more broadly to human relations might substantially contribute to a better life quite aside from the technological and medical by-products of science? Anatol Rapoport has pointed out that the ethical principles inherent in scientific practice are the conviction that there exists objective truth and rules for discovering it. Moreover, on the basis of objective truth unanimity must be achieved by independent arrivals at convictions, not through coercion, personal argument, or appeal to authority. He considers that this represents a respectable chunk of an ethical system which might be spread beyond professional boundaries as an ethic for man.

Mr. Hoagland quotes a summarizing statement from Rapoport:

Science, like all other systems of thought, seeks answers to questions which men hold to be of importance. But, whereas, in other outlooks, answers are accepted that harmonize with particular world-views peculiar to different cultural complexes, science seeks answers which are reducible to everyone's experience. These cannot be answers based on

esoteric or mystic experience because such experience can be common to, at most, a few. These cannot be answers based on unquestioned authority because such authority remains unquestioned only to the extent that experiences that could lead to questioning are excluded. . . . In short, the irreducible answers to scientific questions can be potentially shared by all mankind.

If it be argued that science, historically regarded, can be shown to have accepted, and indeed, to have been dominated by, "particular world views," as is abundantly illustrated in E. A. Burtt's *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science*, Mr. Hoagland has an appropriate answer:

Every system of knowledge, including scientific knowledge, rests, Rapoport contends, on some system of fiction. But scientific knowledge, by definition, alone can survive the shattering of its fictions and when this happens it becomes paradoxically more organized rather than disorganized and demoralized. Its fictions are not sacrosanct. The keystone of its ethics is the pursuit of truth which he suggests is the basis of all ethical systems. The concept of the dignity and brotherhood of man which is common to many ethical systems is a condition necessary to the pursuit of truth. Science leaves no room for the rationalization of quasi-ethical totalitarian ideologies and racial hatreds. These are maintained by coercion and by exclusion of experiences supported by sacrosanct fictions which are shattered, once scientific enquiry is turned upon them.

Read carefully, this bill of particulars about science reveals some interesting things. For example, if you put together the claim that "objective truth" is accessible to science and the admission that science, like other forms of knowledge, rests upon "some system of fiction," what do you get? You get a theory of progress for science in which scientific inquiry gets closer and closer to the abstract ideal of "objective truth," but at no time can say that now, *at last*, it has been finally reached! So, the notion of objective truth becomes a somewhat mystical goal, seen in the distance through veils of representative fiction, which may be reduced in number, and refined, but never eliminated. You may get pragmatic, working truth in this way, but

never a final *objective* truth, which, in this theory, has become something like Herbert Spencer's Absolute.

Thus the special virtue of science, as here conceived, lies in its willingness to submit to revision. Scientific knowledge, *alone*, Rapoport says, "can survive the shattering of its fictions." But this is not true. The lore of mysticism is filled with instructions on how to weather the psychological storms which come to the aspirant as his religious fictions, his anthropomorphisms and other illusions, dissolve into nothingness. Mysticism is the discipline which is *founded* on the idea of shattering fictions, in order that a subtler perception may be obtained. So, this sort of "survival" is hardly peculiar to science, since it is the law of the mystic's progress.

But, Rapoport says, science differs from mysticism in that only a few men are or can be mystics, whereas scientific conclusions are by definition available to all—"reducible to everyone's experience." While some people would claim that every man is at least a *potential* mystic, we do have, here, a plain distinction between science and mysticism. Science is *public*. Mysticism is *private*.

Then there is the question, Are the deliveries of the mystic true, and can they be shown to be true, in some way comparable to the way in which the deliveries of science are shown to be true?

After all, it is not unreasonable to place a lazy man's confidence in a public truth. You can do a few experiments for the principle of the thing, but you couldn't possibly do *all* the experiments. Obviously, you have to take a great deal of science—nearly all of it—on faith. But the scientists are checking up on each other all the time, so that if you work at acquiring the scientific temper, you do all that is really necessary.

There is another distinction between science and mysticism. In mysticism you don't take anything for granted. By definition mysticism involves immediate awareness in consciousness of

what is to be perceived or realized. Verbal reports of mystical experience are poetic mysteries, not clear communications like the papers by scientific researchers.

In fact, the casual comparison of mysticism and science, as competing methods in the search for truth, is specious. In the casual comparison, the assumption is that both are looking for the same *kind* of truth. This has not been established. Occasionally a mystic may sound as though he were revealing a scientific sort of truth, and occasionally a great scientist makes reports such as a mystic might make—and this is to be expected, since scientists and mystics are also men with capacities for both public and private perception—but mystical conclusions are fundamentally different from scientific conclusions. On the other hand, mysticism may have *implications* for science (Newton got them from Jakob Boehme) and science may have implications for mysticism (see *What Is Life?* by Erwin Schrödinger, and dozens of other speculative works by scientists).

The difficulty with Mr. Rapoport's discussion—and therefore Mr. Hoagland's—is that it does not deal with the question of whether there exists some kind of truth which is not accessible to the method of science, and whether this kind of truth has any great importance to mankind. The discussion *implies* that only objective truth has importance, for the reason that it is the only sort of truth that can be possessed (in principle) by everyone.

Now this is a manifest prejudice—a prejudice which is made to appear as a virtue, apparently on democratic grounds; and doubtless on the further grounds that a truth available to everyone can always be subjected to public test.

What is missing, here, is even a passing notice of the fact that wise men are lonely men, that wisdom is not communicable in ordinary, objective terms; that the deep human hunger for knowledge of this sort is not satisfied by typical scientific reports. What is missing is the

admission that this private sort of knowledge represents a reality of which science habitually takes no cognizance because the "data" of this reality are intangible. Such neglect of mystical perception is in a sense a betrayal of science, since it represents a partisan devotion to those "limited aspects of experience" which can be processed by the scientific method, and an almost brazen indifference toward those aspects of experience which can not.