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THE PRINCIPLE OF HUMAN SURVIVAL

THE meaning of the crisis in this as in every other age lies in the deep human need to look unrelentingly at the questions which we have consistently refused to examine, and at the difficulties which we carefully ignore by pretending that they do not exist. There is of course a whole range of mechanistic or deterministic explanations for the decline and break-up of civilizations. The analogy of organic mortality has its uses in the study of societies. It seems certain, for example, that whatever the scope and possibility of human freedom, some kind of naturalistic framework establishes the coordinates of both individual and collective life. What now needs consideration, however, is the fact that we know little or nothing about how an intelligent society might adapt its behavior to the grid of historical *cycles;* we have, in short, no normative basis either for measuring the restraints imposed by nature or for anticipating the potentialities of an association of imaginative and creative human beings.

There is a simple solution for situations of this sort. It is that records of human potentiality are set by trial and ordeal. If you want to find out how high a man can jump, despite the law of gravity and other practical considerations, you set a bar between two posts and start jumping. If someone has already done this, you look up the records of past achievement in an almanac. You never assume, however, that an old record cannot be bettered. Hardly a week goes by, even in these degenerate times, when there is not reported some feat that outdoes the past.

So, whatever the report of history in respect to the cycles of civilization, there is always the possibility that human resolve, ingenuity, and courage can improve the record. What we learn from the past may make the frame, but it is no evidence that we have reached the *limit,* of what men may do in the present.

The sources, then, of achievement lie in the undefined possibilities of resolve, ingenuity, and courage. These qualities are notoriously mysterious. They might be taken as names for the incommensurable factors in human behavior. When you examine them, you are inevitably drawn far afield from familiar processes of cause and effect. They are not, it must be admitted, popular objects of research, mainly because they are not *objects* at all, but subjective attributes of human beings. It is fair to say, therefore, that they represent one of the unexamined aspects of human life in our time.

How do we succeed in ignoring these qualities? The answer is again simple. Our civilization systematically ignores all elements of thought which are essentially incommensurable in character. Take for example three leading ideas which are continually voiced in Western civilization, yet are seldom critically examined: The idea of God, the idea of Happiness, and the idea of Progress. All the contradictions of our lives, all the inconsistencies in our behavior, all the frustrations of our hopes, are somehow swept away, piled up and hidden behind the façades of these unresolved questions—for that is what they are: *unresolved questions,* not conclusions at all. They are not ideas you can *use* in constructive thinking. They can be made to signify almost anything you choose, and therefore they mean exactly nothing to authentic human intelligence.

It is in the context of this kind of relevance that we turn to an article in the London *Observer* for March 17. The writer is Dr. John Robinson, a bishop (Woolwich) of the Anglican Church. His title is: "Our Image of God Must Go." Attacks on the god-idea of orthodox religion are nothing

new. What is new and even epoch-making about the publication of this article is the fact that it comes from a clergyman of orthodox religion who says he speaks for others within the Church. He ends his appeal by saying:

> I am well aware that what I have said involves radical reformulations for the Church in almost every field—of doctrine, worship, ethics, and evangelism. This is a dangerous process, but immensely exhilarating; and the exciting thing is that it is not being forced upon the Church from outside but is welling up from within.

Briefly, Dr. Robinson is ready to abandon the idea of God as a supernatural Person. He founds his argument on the views of a German pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was hanged by the Nazis in 1945. What needs to be remembered, in reading the following, is that it appeared in the popular weekly review section of an English newspaper:

> Modern man has opted for a secular world: he has become increasingly non-religious. The Churches have deplored this as the great defection from God, and the more they write it off, the more this movement has seen itself as anti-Christian.
>
> But, claims Bonhoeffer boldly, the period of religion is over. Man is growing out of it: he is "coming of age." By that he doesn't mean he is getting better (a prisoner of the Gestapo had few illusions about human nature), but that for good or ill he is putting the religious world-view behind him as childish and pre-scientific.
>
> Bonhoeffer would accept Freud's analysis of the God of religion as a projection. Till now man has felt the need of a God as a child feels the need for his father. He must be "there" to explain the universe, to protect him in his loneliness, to fill the gaps in science, to provide sanction for his morality.
>
> But now man is finding that he can manage quite happily by himself. He finds no necessity to bring God into his science, his morals, his political speeches. Only in the private world of the individual's psychological need and insecurity—in that last corner of "the sardine-tin of life"—is room apparently left for the God who has been elbowed out of every other sphere. And so the religious evangelist works on men to coerce them at their weakest point into feeling that they cannot get on without the tutelage of God.

Now comes a paragraph which will puzzle many readers; it represents the sort of theological equivocation which may be either profound mystical truth or simple, self-contradicting nonsense. At any rate, it is the means by which an English bishop is able to become a breaker of popular idols:

> But "God is teaching us that we must live as men who can get along very well without him." And this, says Bonhoeffer, is the God Jesus shows us, the God who refuses to be a *Deus ex machina*, who allows himself to be edged out of the world on the Cross. Our God is the God who forsakes us—only to meet with us on the Emmaus road, if we are really prepared to abandon him as a long-stop and find him not at the boundaries of life where human powers fail, but at the centre, in the secular, as "the 'beyond' in our midst."
>
> Another way of putting this is to say that our mental image of God must undergo a revolution. This is nothing new in Christianity. The men of the Bible thought of God as "up there," seated on a throne in a localized heaven above the earth, and it was this God to whom Jesus "ascended."
>
> But with the development of scientific knowledge, the image of the God "up there" made it harder rather than easier to believe. And so, very boldly, Christians discarded it. I say very boldly, for in order to do so they had to go against the literal language of the Bible.
>
> For it they substituted another mental image—of a God "out there," metaphysically if not literally. Somewhere beyond this universe was a Being, a centre of personal will and purpose, who created it and sustains it, who loves it and who "visited" it in Jesus Christ. But I need not go on, for this is "our" God. Theism means being convinced that this Being exists: atheism means denying that he does.

In arguing that this "image" must also go, Dr. Robinson turns to Julian Huxley and Paul Tillich for support. He quotes approvingly Huxley's *Religion without Revelation:* "The sense of spiritual relief which comes from rejecting the idea of God as a superhuman being is enormous"; and from Tillich's *Shaking the Foundations* he produces this passage: "The protest of atheism

against such a highest person is correct." Tillich is also the source of a quotation which conveys for Dr. Robinson the idea of God that he can and does accept:

> Tillich has shown that it is just as possible to speak of God in terms of "depth" as of "height." Such language is equally symbolic. It may speak more profoundly to modern man brought up on "depth psychology." Indeed, I believe that this transposition can bring fresh meaning to much traditional religious symbolism. Tillich talks of what is most deeply true about us and for us, and goes on:—
>
> "That depth is what the word God means. And if that word has not much meaning for you, translate it and speak of the depths of your life, of the source of your being, of your ultimate concern, of what you take seriously without any reservation. Perhaps, in order to do so, you must forget everything traditional you have learned about God, perhaps even that word itself. For if you know that God means depth, you know much about him. You cannot then call yourself an atheist or unbeliever. For you cannot think or say: Life has no depth! Life itself is shallow. Being itself is surface only. If you could say this in complete seriousness, you would be an atheist, but otherwise you are not."

Now it is true that there remain enough obscurities and anomalies---God is not a "highest person" but nonetheless a "him"!—in these statements to confuse the ordinary reader and to dull the sharp cutting edge of Dr. Robinson's rebellion, but the fact remains that both he and Tillich have made a case for Pantheism against Theism.

The letters of comment printed in subsequent issues of the *Observer* show that there is indeed a ferment of changing opinions among English Christians. What is bound to come out, sooner or later, from discussion of this sort, is the clear recognition that the idea of God and the idea of Man are interdependent conceptions. You cannot effectively change one without changing the other. If you reduce the role of God, you must extend the role of Man. If you eliminate God, you must divinize man. This is the solution chosen by Julian Huxley, who adds his comment to the discussion in an article in the *Observer* for March 31. "Dr. Robinson," he says, "is surely right in concentrating on the problem of God, for God is central to Christianity." Yet he finds Robinson's statement, "God is ultimate reality," objectionable:

> This is just semantic cheating, and so vague as to be effectively meaningless. God is a hypothesis constructed by man to help him understand what existence is all about. The God hypothesis asserts the existence of some kind of supernatural personal or superpersonal being, exerting some kind of purposeful power over the universe and its destiny. Today the God hypothesis has ceased to be scientifically tenable, has lost its explanatory value, and is becoming a burden to our thought. It no longer convinces or comforts, and its abandonment often brings a deep sense of relief.
>
> Many people assert that this abandonment of the God hypothesis means the abandonment of all religion and all moral sanctions. This is simply not true. Though gods and God in any meaningful sense seem destined to disappear, the stuff of divinity out of which they have grown and developed remains.

Mr. Huxley justifies his use of "divinity" by suggesting that it represents the "religious raw material" of human experience, whose awesome and sometimes psychologically overwhelming phenomena gods and God were invented by man to explain, and continues:

> With the growth of knowledge, most of these [phenomena] have ceased to be mysterious so far as scientific explicability is concerned (though there remains the fundamental mystery of existence, notably the existence of mind). However, it remains true that many phenomena are charged with a magical quality of transcendent or even compulsive power over our minds, and introduce us to realms beyond ordinary experience. They merit a special designation: for want of a better, I use the term *divine*, though this quality of divinity is not supernatural but *transnatural*. The divine is what man finds worthy of adoration, that which compels his awe.

What is of general interest in this series of articles in the *Observer* is the fact that the whole range of dynamics in religious thought has been opened up for public discussion. The present epoch differs from earlier periods of history in this extraordinary fact—that the foundations of culture

and society may now be subjected to critical examination, an activity which is totally subversive to one kind of social organization, but a prime sign of good health in another.

The shakers of human societies have always been men who went about asking questions. Socrates is a type of this man in the ancient world. Bruno and Galileo asked the questions which, as men attempted to answer them, brought an end to the Middle Ages. Luther raised other questions with similar effect. The issue which determines that a society must die, or shows that it has the qualities necessary to survival, is whether or not it can tolerate fundamental questions. These questions always deal with the same basic matters: What is *real;* what is the goal or end of human striving, which is actually a definition of *meaning;* and what are the *processes* by which meaning is fulfilled.

It has been customary, in our society, to refer questions of "reality" to some specialist—a clergyman or a scientist, or more recently a military strategist. Matters of meaning or of ends are gathered up in the rosy glow of "happiness," which is a hypothetical supreme euphoria to end all lesser euphorias, usually left undefined, since a critical examination of happiness would surely expose its unsatisfactoriness as a worthy end of human life. These ineffectual accounts of the ground of reality and of human goals leave the way clear for a riotous freedom in the development and choice of means. We need not concern ourselves with consistency between means and ends for the simple reason that we have not considered our ends with any seriousness. Any end convenient to the means we are good at will do. The logic of the means is exceedingly impressive, and even if the end this logic leads to is not a very good one, we'll find some way of patching it up when we get there!

There is a sense in which Westerners are very nearly as bad as the Communists in their neglect of the idea of "reality" and their uncritical attitude toward the ends to which their means are leading. When a Westerner returns from a visit to the Soviet Union to tell us that we must give up the idea that Soviet citizens are seething with a desire to revolt, that most of them feel they are doing quite well with their collectivist politics, having already reached many of the goals set by the Revolution, and being prepared to go on to more pretentious objectives—when he tells us this he is really saying that the Soviets are indeed like ourselves; they are not questioning their primary assumptions, but devote all their energies to perfecting their means—which turn out to be surprisingly like the means we have given so much attention to developing.

There is a curious kind of comfort in this comparison, since we can at least assure ourselves that the Soviets are made of the same common human stuff as we are made of, and have before them the same kind of struggle for survival that lies ahead for the West. The great need is of learning or daring to ask the really important questions.

The first question that needs to be renewed is: What does it mean to be a man? If Dr. Robinson, the Bishop of Woolwich, should turn out to be right, or partly right, how will this affect our conception of the good life? If there is no personal God, then we are not "His" creatures, and we belong—to whom or what?

The answer of Humanists like Julian Huxley is that we belong to ourselves—and to one another. But what he is likely to admit is that some new emergence of awareness will be necessary before the human race can become invulnerable to theological temptations. Unlike the older rationalist utopians, Mr. Huxley seems to leave room for nonbiological evolutionary possibilities. And why should these not exist? Man has a psychic structure as well as an organic structure, and the processes of our lives as *humans,* as distinguished from our lives as physical organisms, may be subject to rhythms, transitions, and progressions belonging to this order of experience.

We do not of course know about these matters. But that is a negative way of stating the principle of survival in human societies. The life principle of humanity is the uncertainty principle, since this is the principle of *growth.* The man, the culture, the civilization which refuses to ask the basic questions is cut off from growth. When a civilization stops growing, stops asking questions, it must get out of the way to make room for the development of more viable forms of life.

It is in this stretch of uncertainty—from what is to what may be—that moments of truth occur and seeds of common insight are dropped into the rich soil of common wonder.

Meanwhile, there is a pleasant irony in the fact that all the means we have established, which have been absorbing our lives, do not suddenly collapse because we no longer are sure what to use them for. They remain in fairly good order, spinning their wheels, waiting for the driver to make up his mind. We can keep them going while we learn how to think. In fact, the activity of tending the machines may save us from the madness which comes from loss of direction. The machines have given us many things, and now they may give us a little time.

REVIEW
PHILOSOPHICAL BOOKS

Nanda

relate to the central concern of MANAS—an

MANAS, Mrs.
transcendental philosophy. The following from

> The human race is now entering upon a new
> impelled by the forces of evolution itself, it must
> human organism dominated by a reconciliation of
> to make a qualitative leap into a higher form of
> individual consciousness as we know it, or otherwise
> field, potential for incarnation, and achieving
> What to some is mystery and inscrutability, to others
> process.

The Credo Series

> Osiris. It is the inner Eye. Man sees in two ways:
> *seeing*
> envisaging. He possesses in addition to his two
> intellectual Eye. And it is the of this inner
> of the nature of things; for that which was shut fast
> And we become aware that to believe is to see.

are Rene *The Torch of Life*
Fromm's Dr.

references to the specialized fields he has

thought has another dimension, as Robert Kirsch's
Times

> That his work in this book is filled with
> virology is not surprising. What is surprising, and
> man, the elusive wholeness which often escapes the
> process. In this, he accomplishes something which,
> scientists have failed to acknowledge: the spiritual

Dr.
limitations of the "scientific" view of bettering
Mirage of Health
Anshen's World Perspectives Series). He says in
The Torch of Life:

> program for the genetic improvement of man is that
> we want to become nor where we want to go. In fact,
> effectively about these problems. To a large extent
> universe and of life, The discussions about
> continuously emergent novelty, an open future, not
> the most profound meaning of the evolutionary
> creation, in which man has become the most

Erich
touches all history, all philosophy, all religion and

by the scope of this undertaking. In
Chains of Illusion,
of a universal nature has been partially known for

clarity. He writes:

> different places in the world between 1500
> 500
> in India,
> philosophers in Greece. The experiences lying
> precisely the same; in fact there are not even two
> But they were essentially the same; and yet they were
> Buddha did not speak of a God at all; Lao-tse spoke
> Enlightenment. The Greek philosophers spoke of a
> mover. On the other hand, the Egyptians and the

> Hebrews used an entirely different concept; having the tradition of centralized yet small states with a powerful royal figure, they conceived of a supreme being, the ruler of heaven and earth. The Hebrews fought against idols, they prohibited making any kind of image of God; Maimonides, their greatest philosopher, a thousand years later declared that even to mention a positive attribute of God was not permissible. Yet the thought concept of God as the form under which the inexpressible was expressed, was retained in Judaism and in Christianity, and thus became the dominant concept of religious experience in the Western world. Many in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries protested against this thought concept, together with their protest against kings and emperors. In the enlightenment philosophy and in the new humanism, the experience underlying religious tradition was expressed in nontheistic terms—in the concern for man, rather than in concern for God. Yet the concern was the same. It was a concern for man's full development, for making him an end and not a means, for creating the social conditions for the spiritual development of man. The socialism of Marx, Fourier, Kropotkin, Owen, Jaures, Rosa Luxemburg, and Gorki was the most important genuine religious movement of the last hundred years. The breakdown of the humanistic tradition, beginning with the World War of 1914, almost completely destroyed this nontheistic "religious" movement. Nietzsche said that God was dead; what happened after 1914 was that man was dead. Only in small circles and among a few individuals did the humanist spiritual tradition continue; its greatest representatives in our time are men like Gandhi, Einstein, and Schweitzer.

We have not yet explored the other three volumes of the Credo Series presently available, but are prepared to respect them in advance. Both *The Torch of Life* and *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* certainly merit a more extended treatment than this introductory review can provide.

COMMENTARY

PAUL GOODMAN'S latest book,
Live in Is Mine
here for two reasons. First, this is editorial space,

importance to the editors. Second, we want to
Goodman's way of living

value because it supplies the needed information.

democratic freedom to the full. While he is
he is not an alienated man. It is never necessary
without qualification what he does to make them
were to emulate Goodman in his devotion to the
we venture to say, would soon become the kind of
A colorful, culturally rich social community,
all its parts.

is a collection

during the past few years. Most of these
indignant. All of them are civil and all of them are
letters and other material, Goodman says in his

> They are the squawks of a Citizen. The society or I do not live there at all. The government, the publishing and communications, are my agencies as a
> *not*
> at least open to my voice and action, I am entirely in should be wiped off the slate.
>
> as citizens, as society-makers, in this existential established machinery of institutions and authorities,
> kind of individuals "in" society, whatever that means.
>
> *few*
> over the rest. Now even if these few—managers, other excellence, the situation would be disastrous, mind, enough attentiveness and concern, to deal with be, and has been, stupid standardization, stupid denominator of evaluation. There is no remedy concerned, intervening, deciding, on all issues and at

Mr. Goodman believes that "large numbers of
suggest is that the activity of only a few such
others. So we hold to our figure of five per cent.
Two per cent of eight million in 160,000. There
of them began to practice citizenship after the
immediate, dramatic, and immeasurably effective.

making his own

> I am, as is evident in these letters, a community must be diminished because it is too dangerous to live grow and adventure; that administration should be multiply sources of initiative and experiment, and face-to-face association in urban and scientific write letters to governors, I serve on a municipal opinion, there is no inconsistency.
>
> anyway they fill up most of our space. In so far as our interests of freedom—for the Common Law, the vote, we have no right to surrender our inheritance to boors

far as these institutions offer means and opportunity for free action, I am glad to belong to them or cooperate with them. Naturally, when they become clogs or hindrances, and when their overwhelming drift is in the direction opposite from ours, for instance inevitably toward war, then we cannot cooperate with them or we must actively try to stop them or even get them out of the way. Generally, as a rule of thumb, my experience has taught me that it is wiser not to abstain or quit, but to cooperate according to one's lights and get fired. This has an excellent effect on others who no longer thought that it was possible to be honest.

The book has five sections, dealing with the following subjects: (1) Money; (2) War; (3) Repression; (4) Lapse of Community; (5) Failure of Intellect. It would be pleasant to provide illustrations from each section, but we lack the space for this. Perhaps an interchange with the White House (from the section on "War") will do service as a general example of Mr. Goodman's method. In November of 1961 he wrote to president Kennedy:

Dear Mr. President,

I must object to a government statement, in the bulletin on Radio-active Fallout distributed by the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization. Speaking of fallout, the bulletin says, "It is merely a physical fact of this nuclear age. It can be faced like any other fact."

This sentence is false and misleading. Fallout—in the context in which this pamphlet is issued—is a *social* fact, not a physical fact. The advertising-man's tone, combining cajolery and inevitability, is quite contemptible on this subject.

May I ask you to have the passage deleted in subsequent printings?

Sincerely,

After receiving a reply from Battle Creek, by the Office of Civil Defense, Mr. Goodman wrote to the President again, summarizing his first letter and adding:

Today I receive from a Mr. G. D. Rich of the Office of Civil Defense in Battle Creek an extraordinary letter pointing out that "Many physical facts have social implications. It is important that all of us recognize the social implications of physical facts, whether they result from natural causes or the acts of man. . . . Please be assured we are concerned with the social implications of the physical effects of fallout."

Perhaps I did not make my objection clear (I think I did). I am not interestingly concerned with the social effects *after* the bombs have fallen, but with the social nature of dropping the bombs. "Physical facts that result from the acts of men," as Rich puts it, are social facts in their essence.

Therefore I must reiterate my request that you delete or alter the passage. Mr. Rich tells me in his letter that a reprinting of the pamphlet is "unlikely." If so, I wish you would find other means to disabuse the public of this officially sponsored falsehood.

Mr. Goodman is a delightfully unpredictable man. The reader has no way of knowing whom the next letter will be to, and no idea of what Goodman will say. We hope for the widest possible circulation of this book. If you want to know what sort of man wrote *Growing Up Absurd*, read *The Society I Live in Is Mine.*

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
EDUCATION IN RELIGION

consists of efforts to "transmit a heritage of faith" not one of investigating the validity of traditional however, that only a few centers of influence, conscience continue this approach. As various candidates for the clergy are increasingly hard to States. Ministers of the more settled Protestant seminaries. At the same time, there is increasing *about*

A passage from John *The Centaur* middle-aged reactionary expresses conventional high school youth:

> Minor states.
>
> blushing for himself but unable to halt, so anxious is stupidity and stubborn animal vigor embodies he has to keep Minor from turning his back, he has to Nobody does. Really." Yet in this boast, now that it father. In his mind he sees his father slip into a pit

In Mr.
his father, a high school teacher, as an inspired because of his integrity. And his father's belief in that Peter feels disloyal. Peter does not want to *believe,*

If Peter should find himself on a college approaches to education religion which are of view. We note from a UCLA catalogue, for Perspective," described as: "An analysis of the cultures of the East and West—Christianity, moral law; the effects of scientific reasoning; the "Religion Today," which purports to be "an contemporary life." Further description of this

> An integrated course of lectures focusing expanding world of accelerated change. The focus psychology, law, business, industry, art, music, poetry in modern. civilization. The major systems of
>
> Protestantism, Judaism, Orthodoxy, Buddhism,

Man has two
of metaphysical affirmation. There is the attempt source, of permanence. For some, "God" is such number of theories of immortality may serve the wrote: "The decisive question for man is: Is he telling question of his life. Only if we know that avoid fixing our interest upon
all kinds of goals which are not of real

Without arguing the point of whether one can Jung is also speaking of the need for a "sense of

permanence." Simply because an individual feels himself to be an agnostic does not mean that he is without inner longings for a truth or truths which are expressions of some fundamental realities. So Mr. Updike's Peter may feel more than filial piety in his discomfiture at rejecting the convictions of his father. He, also, let us assume, wants conviction concerning a "permanent" self. On the other hand, religious inquiry is also concerned with the potentialities of continual change and growth—through discovery, spiritual rebirth, and bold adventures of the mind. It is this aspect of the religious consciousness about which the most may be said. In a book such as Joseph Campbell's *Hero With a Thousand Faces*, one senses the continual thrust away from static forms of belief and self-definition, in the direction of new horizons. A passage from *Consider the Children* (Manwell and Fahs, Beacon Press), shows the liberal religionist's concern with this point:

> Must the modern child be left to flounder in superstition without guidance? Yes—and No! It does not mean that the modern child should be deprived of the guidance which our greater knowledge can give him; but it does mean that each new individual should be permitted to feel to the full the natural challenge in his own real contacts. In short, each child should feel the force of his own direct relations to the universe.
>
> It means, in this general area of life, as well as in all the other areas in which learnings may take place, that we can wisely give our major attention to the child's *having* these primary experiences. It means that as adults we will be alert to them; we will respect their significance; we will sympathize with the children in their feelings; and we will answer their queries not only in ways that will give them knowledge of facts, but in ways that will preserve the emotional challenge. It means, instead of evading these primary experiences by casual and cryptic remarks or by religious phrases which may dry up the feelings of outreach, that we will share with the child the little that he can understand and will let him know that there is more that we, too, keep wondering about. It means that we can trust the very nature of life to keep alive the child's yearning search. We will feel no need to hurry the growing, by giving words without meaning or by encouraging rituals that are mere copies of outward postures and word saying.

Implicit in such passages is the author's belief that the child is both Believer and Metaphysician at heart. Or perhaps we should say, with William James, that "the will to believe" is innate, making it easy for adults whose beliefs are fixed to transfer their opinions to their children. But this is a spurious process. The mind wishes to grow in its own way in its own time. A natural agnosticism should parallel the will to believe. When a youth attends a university his agnosticism is encouraged, but beyond the appeal to intellectual integrity, which agnostic orientation strengthens, there is another step or stage to be reached. Plotinus said that there are three stages in "learning to know." First is the state of mind represented by Opinion; second is the stage of science or Reason, in which opinions are examined critically; and third is the stage of Illumination, which is possible only when the stage of science or reason (agnosticism) has been passed. The misfortune for minds caught in a fixed religious pattern is that the critical stage of reason is neglected altogether, leaving no distinction between Opinion and presumed Illumination. It is the misfortune of the skeptic to believe that the third stage does not exist at all, that no illumination, save that afforded by criticism, is possible. The hunger of a *gnosis*, however, persists. And this hunger doubtless needs as much encouragement as the propensity for skepticism.

FRONTIERS

The Psychology of the Death Penalty

CURRENT TV and editorial debates concerning Governor Brown's bill for a four-year moratorium on the death penalty in California should be of direct concern to psychologists. Although the Assembly Criminal Procedure committee voted 6-4 in favor of the legislation (April 9) the future of this proposal is extremely dubious, apparently because many people are reluctant to give up their right to exact life in punishment. As a pre-vote discussion reported in the Los Angeles *Times* indicated: "Feelings about capital punishment appear to be solidly ingrained, and only about one person in five who favors capital punishment is willing to experiment with Gov. Brown's four-year moratorium." Why should this be? Some stray comments by H. L. Mencken may have application to this tough American righteousness:

> The "average American" assumes that Anglo-Saxons are a superior race; that Americans are God's chosen people with a divine mission in the world; that the common man is the foundation of a strong government; that obedience to constituted authority is the prime requisite of good citizenship.
>
> The mob-man, a savage set amid civilization, cherishes a code of the draconian kind. He believes firmly that right and wrong are immovable things—that they have an actual and unchangeable existence, and that any challenge of them, by word or act, is a crime against society. *(ETC.*, February.)

There are doubtless those who oppose the moratorium on capital punishment from simple conformity, even when a part of their nature rebels against the idea of controlled killing by the state. Erich Fromm (in *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*) suggests that many who would like to see capital punishment abolished have somehow felt it their "duty" to support the death penalty. He speaks of the "social filter" which "does not *permit* certain feelings to reach consciousness and tends to expel them from this realm if they have reached it." This can be illustrated:

> An example taken from a primitive tribe may serve as an introduction to the problem indicated here. In a tribe of warriors, for instance, whose members live by killing and robbing the members of other tribes, there might be an individual who feels a revulsion against killing and robbing. Yet it is most unlikely that he will be aware of this feeling since it would be incompatible with that of the whole tribe; to be aware of this incompatible feeling would mean the danger of being completely isolated and ostracized. Hence an individual with such an experience of revulsion would probably develop a psychosomatic symptom such as vomiting, instead of letting the feeling of revulsion penetrate to his awareness.

Legal and Criminal Psychology, edited by Hans Toch (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), deals with the emotional concomitants of punitive laws. In his introduction, "The Psychology of Lawmaking," Prof. Toch shows how easily feelings of revenge or hatred can become enshrined in social and legal respectability. An understanding of these psychological realities is manifestly necessary to any serious effort at legislative reform. Dr. Toch writes:

> People are *motivated* to pass laws. They pass laws which reflect their concerns. Laws frequently show signs of reflecting feelings of vengefulness or hatred. Psychoanalysts have speculated that such laws may express a hidden desire in the lawmaker to engage in the very practices he proscribes. In Gilbert and Sullivan's "Trial by Jury" the members of the jury express this type of feeling when they declare:
>
> Oh, I was like that when a lad!
> A shocking young scamp of a rover.
> I behaved like a regular cad;
> But that sort of thing is all over.
> I am now a respectable chap
> And shine with a virtue resplendent,
> And therefore I haven't a rap
> Of sympathy for the defendant!
>
> The extreme manifestation of vengefulness is the death penalty, which one cannot claim to have a rehabilitating effect. As late as March, 1960, a public-opinion poll showed well over half the adult male population of the country favoring the death penalty. Juvenile delinquency also draws its share of vengefulness, with strong public demand for curfews, physical punishment, and "toughness." Such demands become reflected in legislation, and therefore require study.

Since there is reason to think that a number of MANAS readers have devoted typewriter time to letters to legislators opposing capital punishment, the following communication by Elizabeth Koines, reprinted from the Pasadena *Star-News* of March 11, may be of general interest:

> We feel that the issue of capital punishment is of the greatest importance in a state which, despite its reputation for progress in other fields, continues to take the lives of many more persons than any other, while the trend in other states and nations has been toward abolition of the death penalty by tradition or legislation.
>
> The primary argument advanced in favor of the death penalty is that it is a deterrent to the commission of murder and other capital crimes. Paradoxically, murder is the one crime for which fear of punishment can seldom be a deterrent.
>
> Deterrence implies a logical analysis of alternatives which is generally not applicable to the crime of murder, although it may be to other crimes. In murders committed during holdups, the primary motivation of the criminal is apparently a fear of being caught at all, rather than an analysis of alternative forms of punishment.
>
> The threat of punishment is clearly not a deterrent to murders committed in a drunken state, and murders of passion. Evidence that fear of death is not a deterrent comes from statistics on the number of murderers who commit suicide or who turn themselves in.
>
> Twenty-seven per cent of Californians executed between 1938 and 1953 murdered their wives, mistresses, or girl friends. Psychiatric evaluations made at San Quentin prison have shown that a majority of those executed over a 15-year period were emotionally unstable, psychoneurotic, or psychopathic.
>
> It is clear that in these cases capital punishment was not a deterrent to murder, while there is no available evidence that murderers have been deterred. Furthermore, homicide rates in comparable states with or without the death penalty (Rhode Island-Connecticut, Michigan-Illinois) are similar, indicating that factors other than capital punishment determine murder rates.
>
> If, then, capital punishment is not a deterrent to murder why should California continue to impose it? Under present conditions, the death penalty is largely limited to members of minority groups, the poor, the less educated, those committing particularly repugnant crimes, and men.
>
> Justice demands equal treatment of all persons, yet members of our society are generally unwilling to take the lives of murderers who in other respects (education, position) are similar to them. Only one out of about every 50 murderers in California is executed.
>
> States retaining the death penalty are harassed by lengthy and costly trials, with repeated appeals. It is more expensive to execute a criminal than to maintain him in prison. Figures released by the California Department of Corrections reveal that abolition of the death penalty would actually save the state $150,244 over a 6-year period in administrative costs alone (1957 figures) .
>
> There is also the possibility, not as remote as some like to think, that innocent men may be executed. The state of Maine abolished the death penalty over 60 years ago, primarily because it hanged an innocent man.
>
> Rhode Island, which now has one of the lowest murder rates in the country, abolished the death penalty in 1852 after executing an innocent man.
>
> It is unnecessary to cite the moral and religious reasons for the abolition of the death penalty, since they are well known to those who would be persuaded by them. We ask that others consider the practical aspects of the problems and support the proposed moratorium on capital punishment in California.
>
> We feel that official energies should be devoted to the rehabilitation of criminals, the segregation of unrehabilitated murderers, and prevention of crime through social, economic, and cultural betterment.