

## TO MERIT ETERNITY

SOMETHING more should be said of Unamuno—more than was said last week—and of him in relation to others. His declaration of "uncertainties" was likened to the Socratic claim of ignorance, yet Socrates was a man of great equanimity, while Unamuno—at least in his writings—seems to thrive while living in a tempest of doubt. He is full of exclamations of—not despair, for he does not despair, but of—his "tragic sense." One does not feel that Unamuno would welcome the possibility of sage-like serenity for human beings. He would probably show a proud, Spanish disdain for any sort of "peace of mind."

How then does he win his readers? By the power and integrity of his thought. Better than being "right" according to some metaphysical scheme is this unblinking honesty, this courage, this consistency in risking inconsistency. To read Unamuno well one must submit to his large-hearted Spanish embrace, at once brotherly and magisterial. He never compels, for he has too much respect for the stuff of the mind. He expects the same fearlessness in the reader that he has himself. In one chapter of the *Tragic Sense* he pursues the question of what immortality of the soul may consist in, and ends in the speculative fields of absolute consciousness, a universal Nirvana. It cannot be a heaven where departed souls unite with and spend eternity "loving God." How could they unite with the One Who is the All, and still "love" Him? Love is a sign of incompleteness, of inner need; where there is love there must be difference, so any state after death which continues throughout time must be attended by difference, and therefore by change, which is a necessity of consciousness. As he puts it:

But if matter, which is the principle of individuation, the scholastic *principium individuationis*, is once done away with, does not everything return to

pure consciousness, which, in its purity, neither knows itself, nor is it anything that can be conceived or felt? And if matter be abolished, what support is there left for spirit?

Unamuno wants something more—much more—than a personal assurance that there is a life after death; he wants a universe in which this conception is logically supportable, and he is willing to struggle with the problem of designing a cosmos hospitable to such solutions. He does not succeed, but neither does he despair. He comes, finally, to the view that what he really wants is the right to keep on trying, and this means to keep on living.

Here, surely, is a mind better by far than his inherited religion, which he philosophizes and refines with so much skill and determination. He is better than his inherited religion in the same sense that both Tolstoy and Dostoevski were better than theirs—as Tolstoy showed in his *Confession* and his *Critique of Dogmatic Theology*, and Dostoevski in the section, "Pro and Contra," in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Unamuno believes that men have not only the right but the obligation, and often an irrepressible tendency, to inquire into the nature of immortal life. He has little respect for the prudent orthodox, who say that mortal men should not presume to raise the curtain on mysteries where the Deity has left it down. This pious "agnostic parsimony," he says, has been common throughout the period between Luther and Kant. He then writes:

And nevertheless men have not ceased endeavoring to imagine to themselves what this eternal life may be, nor will they cease their endeavors so long as they are men and not merely thinking machines. There are books of theology—or of what passes for theology—full of disquisitions upon the conditions under which the blessed dead live in paradise, upon their mode of enjoyment, upon the

properties of the glorious body, for without some form of body the soul cannot be conceived.

And to this same necessity of forming to ourselves a concrete representation of what this other life may be, must be referred the indestructible vitality of doctrines such as those of spiritualism, metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls from star to star, and the like; doctrines which as often as they are pronounced to be defeated and dead, are found to have come to life again, clothed in some more or less new form. And it is merely supine to be content to ignore them and not to seek to discover their permanent and living essence. Man will never willingly abandon his attempt to form a concrete representation of the other life.

By "concrete," here, Unamuno hardly means "material," which this word often suggests, but rather something like "clear and distinct," even if at a metaphysical level. However, he sees the wisdom of Plato in adopting the form of "myth" for the consideration of matters which lie outside ordinary sense perception, and he titles a chapter "Mythology of the Beyond."

No more than Plato, however—or less than Plato, actually—does Unamuno arrive at a doctrinal account in his speculations. So it is at this level that we may return to a comparison of him with Socrates. In a final remark to the reader, at the end of the book, Unamuno says. "And may God deny you peace, but give you glory!" In other words, he regards the restlessness of inquiry, the insistence of a wondering spirit, the turbulence of an unsatisfied soul, as the sanctified condition for man.

Where shall we find this in the Socratic endeavor? In, perhaps, the *Meno*, yet not in Socrates, but in his listener, Meno, who complains that Socrates with his questions has upset and bewildered him. He likens Socrates to a sting ray which benumbs what it contacts. Socrates is amused by the simile and replies:

As for myself, if the sting ray paralyzes others only through being paralyzed itself, then the comparison is just, but not otherwise. It isn't that, knowing the answers myself, I perplex other people. The truth is rather that I infect them also with the

perplexity I feel myself. So with virtue now. I don't know what it is. You may have known before you came into contact with me, but now you look as if you don't. Nevertheless I am ready to carry out, together with you, a joint investigation and inquiry into what it is.

Since the rest of this sequence bears directly on Unamuno's problem, we quote it here. Meno takes up the dialogue.

MENO: But how will you look for something when you don't in the least know what it is? How on earth are you going to set up something you don't know as the object of your search? To put it another way, even if you come right up against it how will you know that what you have found is the thing you don't know?

SOCRATES: I know what you mean. Do you realize that what you are bringing up is the trick argument that a man cannot try to discover either what he knows or what he does not know? He would not seek what he knows, for since he knows it there is no need of the inquiry, nor what he does not know, for in that case he does not even know what he is to look for.

MENO: Well, do you think it is a good argument?

SOCRATES: No.

MENO: Can you explain how it fails?

SOCRATES: I can. I have heard from men and women who understand the truths of religion . . .

MENO: What did they say?

SOCRATES: Something true, I thought, and fine.

MENO: What was it, and who were they?

SOCRATES: Those who tell it are priests and priestesses of the sort who make it their business to be able to account for the functions which they perform. Pindar speaks of it too, and many another of the poets who are divinely inspired. What they say is this—see whether you think they are speaking the truth. They say that the soul of man is immortal. At one time it comes to an end—that which is called death—and another is born again, but is never finally exterminated. On these grounds a man must live all his days as righteously as possible.

Socrates here quotes Pindar and continues:

Thus the soul, since it is immortal and has been born many times, and has seen all things both here and in the other world has learned everything that is. So we need not be surprised if it can recall the

knowledge of virtue or anything else which as we see, it once possessed. All nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, so that when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge—*learned* it, in ordinary language—there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest, if he keeps a stout heart and does not grow weary of the search, for seeking and learning are in fact nothing but recollection.

It is at this point, in order to provide a demonstration to Meno, that Socrates questions Meno's slave boy, bringing out of him the essentials of the Pythagorean theorem. After the demonstration, Socrates tells Meno that mere opinions have only a dreamlike quality, but that under questioning, on many occasions and in various ways, what was only opinion can be transformed into knowledge. "This knowledge," he says, "will not come from teaching but from questioning. He will recover it for himself."

Is the conviction that this is true the source of the serenity of Socrates? It is certainly the reason he gives for devoted inquiry into knowledge and for care of the soul, which is the bearer of knowledge.

Unamuno's exhortation has a more stoical ground, yet there is still a family resemblance to the appeal of Socrates:

We must needs believe in the other life, in the eternal life beyond the grave, and in an individual and personal life, in a life in which each one of us may feel his consciousness and feel that it is united, without being confounded, with all other consciousness in the Supreme Consciousness, in God; we must needs believe in that other life, and endure it, and give it meaning and finality. And we must needs believe in that other life, perhaps, in order that we may deserve it, in order that we may obtain it, for it may be that he neither deserves it nor will obtain it who does not passionately desire it above reason and, if needs be, against reason.

And above all, we must feel and act as if an endless continuation of our earthly life awaited us after death; and if it be that nothingness is the fate that awaits us, we must not, in the words of *Obermann*, so act that it shall be a just fate.

Socrates does not need to deal with the delicate metaphysical problem of what happens to

the soul with the ultimate resolution of form; perhaps he or more likely Plato could have, but did not think the question pertinent in the Dialogues. Immortality is there understood in terms of the Orphic doctrine of rebirth, of palingenesis, the Empedoclean Ring of Return. It would be treated somewhat by Plotinus, in the *Enneads*, but the Platonic dialogues are practical works, having mostly to do with decisions in daily life. And we may note that here, for this doctrine, Socrates turns to inspired sages and poets. It is not in this case a "deduction," but a truth upon which other conclusions, such as the mandate for personal morality, is based.

But in the *Phaedo*, which is in large part a protracted argument for the immortality of the soul, Socrates says:

If the soul is immortal, it demands our care not only for that part of time which we call life, but for all time. And indeed it would seem now that it will be extremely dangerous to neglect it. If death were a release from everything, it would be a boon for the wicked, because by dying they would be released not only from the body but also from their own wickedness together with the soul, but as it is, since the soul is dearly immortal, it can have no escape or security from evil except by becoming as good and wise as it possibly can. For it takes nothing with it to the next world except its education and training, and these, we are told, are of supreme importance in helping or harming the newly dead at the beginning of his journey there.

Then, after reciting a mythic account of the after-death condition, Socrates resumes:

Of course, no reasonable man ought to insist that the facts are exactly as I have described them. But that either this or something very like it is a true account of our souls and their future habitations—since we have clear evidence that the soul is immortal—this, I think, is both a reasonable contention and a belief worth risking, for the risk is a noble one. We should use such accounts to inspire ourselves with confidence, and that is why I have already drawn out my tale so long.

It is at least conceivable that Socrates' sense of having profound resources in the moral order suggested by the Orphic tradition was at the root

of his calm, and that this sense of there being truth, and of the possibility of knowing it, was reinforced by the inner guidance he spoke of as coming from his *daimon* or "god," whose counsels he never ignored or neglected. There is, then, this difference between Unamuno and Socrates. Unamuno is born in an age of a very different sort; he has the hunger to know of a Socrates, yet is lacking in a tradition of wisdomism such as the Greek Mystery Schools provided, and must deal in his own way with the widespread skepticism which an unphilosophical religion has generated in European thought—not accepting the denials, yet respecting the critical, aggressive intelligence which has given them force. And for the subtler longings of his soul, he seems reduced to the Spanish mystics of Christianity for material to work with in his reflections. One might think that Unamuno would have been a sadly troubled spirit, save for the heroic strain in his thought. He seems an especially good example of the European mind at its best, at odds with its heritage yet animated by ceaseless determination and its own strength.

Indeed, there seems a sense in which all European thought, from its first beginnings with men like Johannes Scotus Erigena, in the ninth century, to the last great European system-builder, Hegel, has been an attempt to subject to reason the recalcitrant and unwieldy materials of the Christian tradition, until, in the nineteenth century, the initiative was finally taken away from the philosophers by the triumphant scientific thinkers with their positivist denials and the technocratic optimism for which Unamuno has such contempt. Unamuno, then, deserves attention, more for his manhood, his temper, and his integrity, than for his "doctrines," if he can be said to have produced any of these. His book is a fine example of a distinguished mind at work.

The "uncertainty" of Socrates was another sort; it was, one might say, more pedagogic in origin. He—or Plato—knew that "doctrines" could never be more than the starting-points of inquiry, but Socrates—or Plato—had a "gnostic"

aspect in his philosophy which does not seem at all present in Unamuno. If we credit the seventh epistle of Plato, it seems evident that he was convinced of the reality of inner sources of knowledge, and that he did not believe that the understanding of ultimate questions, once obtained, could be easily communicated. In this letter, he speaks of those who write upon final matters as being pretenders, observing:

Such writers can in my opinion have no real acquaintance with the subject. I certainly have composed no work in regard to it, nor shall I ever do so in the future, for there is no way of putting it in words like other studies. Acquaintance with it must come rather after a long period of attendance on instruction in the subject itself and of close companionship, when, suddenly, like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining.

The purpose of drawing a comparison between Unamuno and Plato—or Socrates—is, quite simply, to suggest that the power and value of a writer lie as much in the movement and quality of his mind as in its fruit. To honor only the "products" of thought, while neglecting the thought processes, is to make a mystery and a puzzle out of truth, whatever the truth may be. There is profound instruction in Unamuno's wrestlings with the dilemmas he finds in the conflict between reason and feeling; his struggle was not unlike the tension found by Isaiah Berlin in the mind of Leo Tolstoy, which he examines at length in *The Hedgehog and the Fox*. Berlin's title is taken from a Greek poet, Archilochus: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." The hedgehog, briefly, is the intuitive thinker who feels the unities of life, while the fox is a tough-minded empiricist who studies the world as he experiences it through the senses. Tolstoy was both; by nature a careful observer, he had the intellectual powers of a scientist, yet the longings of a mystic, or one who would like to verify in some way the feelings about reality of the mystic. This combination of inclinations required the same sort of reconciliation that reason and feeling involved for Unamuno, and both, one

could say, generated exquisite works from the resulting tensions. The controlled use of tensions is often a source of the greatest art.

One does not read such men simply to find out if they were "right" or "wrong." The correctness of any man's opinions can be no more than a way station in his development, and one ought not to be satisfied with progress reports. It is the direction in which he moves, the manner of his progress, the tools he forges to make his way, the sacrifices he offers to clarity, the disciplines he embraces to gain one-pointedness—these are the things that will outlive all his opinions by making them forever better, more accurate, closer to the truth.

The work of a man like Unamuno is a drama rather than a treatise, an evocation instead of a conclusion. Reading him is indeed like going to a play, a play with a cosmic cast. Toward the end of the *Tragic Sense of Life* Unamuno asks what may be the "moral proof" of the persistence of consciousness after death. His reply is characteristic:

We may formulate it thus: Act so that in your own judgment and in the judgment of others you may merit eternity, act so that you become irreplaceable, act so that you may merit not death.

## *REVIEW*

### TWO GOOD BOOKS

WE don't do much about "light reading" here, but one book we have come across recently was such a pleasant experience that telling about it is equally enjoyable. It is *The Bay of Noon*, by Shirley Hazzard, first published by Little, Brown and now available in a Pocket Book. It could be called a love story; love does come into it, like a wandering minstrel who sings when he ought to, but mostly Miss Hazzard presents a series of character studies. Everything happens in Naples, during the post-war period, where the main character, an attractive English girl, has come to work for the British military as a kind of secretary and translator. Her free time is spent in the company of an older woman, a beautiful Italian novelist, and the latter's friend and lover, an Italian maker of films.

There is little or nothing about politics although the young woman tells about the men she works for:

The mission I had accompanied from England was composed, for the most part, of military men. When I joined it I knew nothing of the professional soldier in modern times. Seething is the word I find for them: many of those people particularly the officers, were perpetually seething—with fury, with fear, and with the daily necessity of striking out before they could be felled by inapprehensible foes. Of this seething their profession was but the logical extension. (In fact, their attitude to their authorised enemies—Soviets, socialists, and agitators of all breeds—was tinged with a wistful worship "Catch them putting up with a mess like this" or "*They* wouldn't tolerate this setup for a second.") My London life, deficient as it had been, had not included those who perceived solutions in violent deaths of numberless others, and who passionately advocated this view.

Their cruelty could not be shamed. No revelation of its origins or its consequences abashed them. Armoured with the most brutal of emotions, self-pity, they were invulnerable to the human claims of others. . . . I had fallen to the lot of the English Colonel in whose office I sat. A great seether, he had been military attaché at any number of British

embassies, whose superior organization he often cited to us. He was small and trim, with a thin mouth beneath a thin bristle of mustache, shiny little shoes, and an upright bearing; taken together, these attributes conveyed a state of continual defiance.

One can see that winning the affections of this young woman would take a man of considerable character. Actually, the one who seems attracted to her gains nothing but obscurity for the reader as the story proceeds. But this hardly matters. Miss Hazzard is able to make small and ordinary events intensely interesting. In one place she describes a scene in a restaurant where the English girl, who tells us the story, is accompanied by her two Italian friends. A fortune-teller is visiting a nearby table, where the diners explode in merriment at what they are told:

"That's the kind of a future to have," Giocondo said to us. "It's got them laughing already, just the idea of it."

"It's not difficult to imagine what she's telling them." Gianni drew his fingers lightly along Gioconda's arm resting on the tablecloth.

Gioconda and I watched the other table. The affair grew more serious, the couple drawing together as they listened, sometimes glancing at one another and half-smiling to assure themselves that it was fantasy.

Gianni was bored. "It's utterly transparent. They pick out a few things that happen to everybody, and make a revelation of it."

"Psychologists, too," Gioconda agreed, "will often explain the most obvious things to you as if they were professional discoveries. What's alluring is the illusion, not even of power, but of authority. Isn't that what we want, from gods, priests, poets, even from those columns in the newspaper that answer letters? The possibility that someone really knows, and has got the upper hand of it all."

I said, "Some people do know more than others. That contributes to the impression that someone, somewhere, knows the whole thing."

"Neapolitans know a lot," said Gianni. "But they know it collectively. Break them up, take them away, and they're hopeless, just as stupid as anyone else. It's the city, the phenomenon of Naples itself, that knows something. It's like an important picture,

or a book—once you've taken it in, you can't believe there was a time when you didn't know it." He turned to me. "This will change everything for you, being here. Naples is a leap. It's through the looking glass." And I looked out at the oval mirror of the bay.

Toward the end of the book the reader is favored by another encounter with the Military Mind:

The importance of our work was constantly brought home to us. That was one reason why we doubted it. But mainly it was the level of presentation—in the narrowest, most belligerent context—that repelled our confidence; and the pathos of our superiors, their self-laudatory defending of the world from perils into which just such mentalities as theirs had plunged it. Lacking human reference, they reduced the most imperative matter to boredom: they might kill us, but they could never engage our interest. . . .

When our mission first came to Naples there had been continual talk about adjusting to the area—the word adjusting reiterated as if we were nothing more than a set of short-wave radios that could, with a bit of fiddling, be tuned in to foreign programs. The desirability of bearing up, or at least of not breaking down, had been impressed on us. It had never for a moment been intended that we should come to like the place.

It was at Bagnoli that I discovered the inertia of military men. As it was the habit of those warriors to deride as ineffectual the pleasures of the mind, a dynamism was implied in their own unreflective lives. Yet I would pass them, these men of action, huddled over milk shakes in the American restaurant in Santa Lucia as I set out for Spaccanapoli or would see them gloomily slumped there at the bar on my return from an expedition to the islands. The pastel girls might take a bus to Amalfi or Ravello, Germani would escort his children into the crater of Vesuvius, "for an outing" as he said, but the timid activists seldom ventured far from the base. They spoke of food, and of losing weight, some took photographs, some followed the stock market. Their clubs their PX, and a flat in a streamlined building within striking distance of these—that was, ideally, the pattern of the life of adventure: supine, incurious, complaining, they awaited the command that would animate them.

There were exceptions—which were made, if mild, the subject of taunts; and, if pronounced, the subject of a dossier.

This book is delightful from start to finish, and readers who are lucky enough to know Naples will probably enjoy it even more than others.

A few weeks ago—in MANAS for February 16—we gave attention to Louis Bromfield's book, *Pleasant Valley*, which told how this American novelist returned from France before World War II broke out, settling in Ohio, where he was born and raised, and set about restoring three old, exhausted farms in the Mohican Valley. The book must have excited a great many readers with the idea of doing something similar, for Bromfield was deluged with correspondence. As he says in the Preface to *Malabar Farm* (Harper & Row, 1947, and Ballantine paperback, 1970), which takes the form of an answer to one of the letters he received:

The sum total of letters and questions represented a mass of correspondence which, if answered or merely discussed intelligently and conscientiously, would have occupied all my time for a period of years. Since I have to make a living both by farming and writing, it was impossible to answer adequately and beyond mere acknowledgment more than a very few, so I am writing *Malabar Farm*, which is no more than a second volume of *Pleasant Valley* recounting largely what we have accomplished in the achievement, observation, and experiment during the period of nearly five years since *Pleasant Valley* was written.

Here we plan to speak only of the contents of the second chapter, which deals with the practical lesson Bromfield learned. The rest of the book is all interesting, and immensely valuable to anyone interested in going into agriculture, but this early chapter deals with the necessary revision of the author's original dream and is crucial for readers who need to make a go of farming as a way of life.

Bromfield started out with the idea of showing that general farming could establish the sound economics of both diversification and self-

sufficiency. He came back to Ohio from Europe, where the constant disruption of society by wars had made him well aware of the importance of self-sufficiency. Another reason for his dream was the fond recollection of his grandfather's farm, "where virtually everything but salt, pepper, coffee, tea, and spices was supplied from the farm and where the cellar, the attic and the fruit house were always groaning with food."

During the scarcity years of the war, the general farm idea worked well, but later he found that a farmer simply could not operate a diversified farm and compete on the market. The chapter tells how impossible it was on a farm of a thousand acres to do everything competitively and well. They could not afford the machinery required for efficient operation at the competitive level. Finally, they had to stop trying to be orchardists and poultry farmers and potato raisers, all at the same time for the market. They learned to specialize in what their kind of country could produce best, and get better at doing that:

Gradually as the fertility of the fields mounted, we found ourselves moving deeper and deeper under the pressure of common sense and economics into streamlined, efficient, specialty farming based upon small grains and grasses. We have become a factory for grass in all its forms—hay, grass silage, and pasture. Our livestock has become incidental to the main specialty. They are merely the factory which processes the raw material we produce in the form of grass. The factory in the livestock barns processes it into milk, cheese, veal, baby beef and dairy heifers which we ship to the eastern markets. Within another year or two we shall probably grow no corn at all, put the remaining corn into grass, buy what corn we need, and make money by doing so. We still raise oats and wheat because both give us at present a high-priced cash crop while we are reseeding meadows and because we consume a considerable amount of oats in our program.

Does specializing take all the "romance" away from life on the farm? It didn't for Mr. Bromfield. What he is arguing for, it should be made clear, is the survival of the family-size farm through specialization. The family-size *general* farm was starved out years ago, but good agricultural

practice can make a specialty farm pay, he says. This book is the story of how this was accomplished, although it should be added that five families, not one, lived on Malabar Farm.

Bromfield is thoroughly converted to the gospel of organic gardening, but he believes that some chemical fertilizers can be used to profit if there is sufficient organic material in the soil to prevent bad effects and help to convert it into plant nourishment. He has a long discussion of this question, based almost entirely on his own practice and experiments.

At the end of this chapter he adds that diversified farming on a small scale remains quite feasible at the subsistence level:

The general, widely diversified, and self-sufficient program is, however, admirably suited to the small-scale enterprise of industrial, white-collar and middle-bracket-income citizens with a few acres in the suburbs or in the country itself. This category of small, largely self-sufficient holdings is increasing constantly in numbers and it provides not only a bulwark of security but a source of strength for the nation as well. A well-managed small place with vegetables, fruit trees, chickens, perhaps a pig or two and a cow provides not only a source of large savings in the family food budget, but also is a source of health, recreation, outdoor life, and general contentment for the whole family.

In a note to this paragraph, Bromfield recommends *The Have-More Plan* by Ed Robinson of Noroton, Conn., as descriptive of the advantages of operating small family farms.

## *COMMENTARY* **STOICS ON THE SOUL**

IF one were looking for material for an argument against both Socrates and Unamuno, a source might be the Stoic philosophers, who spoke of hope for a future life as a vulgar comfort they disdained. The Stoics would be a good choice, for they, at least, have a dignity similar to that of the Athenian and the Spanish thinkers.

Most of the modern deniers have only mechanistic reasons for their skepticism. Their challenge of the idea of a soul existence amounts to a demand that evidence for it be produced on the dissecting table, ignoring the logical impossibility of a "proof" of a transcendent reality in material terms.

The Stoic argument is quite different. A man intent upon acting consistently with his divine nature, they say, will not submit himself to such concerns. Hippocrates, the great healer, died like other men. Alexander and Caesar, who slew so many, had to suffer death, too.

And lice destroyed Democritus, and other lice killed Socrates. What means all this? Thou has embarked, thou has made the voyage, thou art come to shore; get out. If indeed to another life, there is no want of gods, not even there. But if to a state without sensation, thou wilt cease to be held by pains and pleasures, and to be a slave to the vessel, which is as much inferior as that which serves it is superior: for the one is intelligence and deity; the other is earth and corruption.

Thus Marcus Aurelius, whose interest was in how a man conducts himself in this life. He would not speculate about what happens after death:

This, then, is consistent with the character of a reflecting man, to be neither careless nor impatient nor contemptuous with respect to death, but to wait for it as one of the operations of nature. As thou now waitest for the time when the child shall come out of thy wife's womb, so be ready for the time when thy soul shall fall out of this envelope.

Where will the soul then go? There is no answer from Marcus, save in the wondering of

commentators, one of whom remarks that the Roman philosopher's conception of "the nature of the soul of necessity implies that it does not perish absolutely, for a portion of the divinity cannot perish."

What is clear is that the Stoics would not examine the question, apparently thinking it either beyond or beneath them—perhaps both.

But they thought nonetheless of Socrates for his inquiry into the subject, quoting him often. And there was nothing in their philosophy inconsistent with the soul's immortality. Conceivably, their sense of participation in the Eternal was so intense that it seemed to them unnecessary to argue the matter.

## CHILDREN

### ... and Ourselves

#### WHAT TO DO ABOUT "SCIENCE"

SINCE science and its applications in technology play so large a part in shaping the human experience of the present and future, the question of how "science" ought to be introduced to the young is a vitally important one, and at the same time a matter that is difficult to subject to any sort of control. Any human activity that has been highly institutionalized becomes complicated in explanation, since whatever you say; the looming reality of its institutional forms and the familiar, unthinking ways of referring to them are everywhere encountered.

Yet an effort ought to be made to change the way people think of "science," for the reason that past ways of thinking about it have created so many problems. The idea of science is now closely related to ideology and various kinds of propaganda. For example, in the February issue of the *Newsletter* of the Society for Social Responsibility in Science, Ruth Mulvey Harmer writes:

According to the latest annual report of the National Agricultural Chemicals Association, schools are to be "the prime target" this year. They have been distributing some very persuasive materials for all grade levels—including comic books—and the chief weapon is a film entitled, *Norman Borlaug: Revolutionary*.

The most vocal opposition—alas—has been from the faddists. I spoke at a meeting of the National Federation here last weekend. It was a very strange experience. The "true believers" were there in droves! ditto the promoters from all over the country—the *Prevention* and *Let's Live* publishers, the vitamin salesmen, and the rest of the profit-seekers. . . .

These two paragraphs set a large part of the problem. Norman Borlaug believes that the reformers who want to ban the use of DDT are going too fast and will do great harm if they are

not stopped, and one can easily see why people who sell chemicals to agriculture call him a hero.

What happens in this case? "Science" is enlisted in the cause of the Solid People who want to save conventional agriculture and make a dollar while doing it. Meanwhile a rival science with its own champions—such as Sir Albert Howard and some others—are ranged on the other side. The same thing happens in the issues of nutrition, in the argument about white sugar, and in scores and hundreds of controversial matters. It is necessary to note, with Mrs. Harmer, that when reforms grow popular, they also become profitable, and probably begin to embody distorted or exaggerated claims.

The point is that a society which depends for its functioning on the balance resulting from adversary encounters is *bound* to produce this effect. So there have been scientists on both sides of a great many major controversies of modern times. The Atomic Energy Commission is supposed to be guided by scientific knowledge as well as the national interest, but a great many eminent scientists disagree with its policies. The various "think tanks" around the country, the first of which was probably the Rand Corporation, are expected to add science to the resources of the military and other arms of government, and to guide industrial and commercial enterprise. To suppose that no biases will develop in science of this sort seems incredible romanticism.

On the other hand, to declare that science must be kept absolutely free of application, in order to preserve its purity, would be even worse romanticism. There are always these two wings of opinion among scientists—those who are eager to apply it for human good, and those who believe that it will no longer be science when it reaches the hands of politicians and reformers—and there probably always will be, at least until another conception of science becomes current.

Meanwhile, there can be no question but that vast areas of human life, from agriculture to power production, from simple sanitation to

various aspects of modern medicine, and countless departments of engineering, have been enormously advanced by the development of scientific knowledge. This is not to say that there have not been accompanying problems, or that science has helped people to become "better human beings." It is simply that we can hardly imagine a life reduced to the level of pre-scientific or pre-industrial times, not because the simplicities of such an existence have no appeal, but because of the fact that widespread starvation, suffering, and death would almost immediately result for many millions of people.

What sort of thinking needs to be done about science in order to eliminate or reduce the ideological abuse of scientific claims or authority? This question, again, is hard to answer. The first polemical use of science was in all likelihood as a weapon against religious bigotry. One of Europe's first great scientists, Galileo, was the victim of religious authority which refused to acknowledge the realities that Galileo found out through his telescope. It was the persecution of early scientists by the Church which made later champions of science so determined to do away with religion altogether. This redressing of balances lasted until the twentieth century, when socialist revolutions were not only ranged against capitalism, but also against any sort of religious belief. The kind of "science" that could be used in this way is the kind that, as Jacquetta Hawkes said recently, has made metaphysics a dirty word.

Keep science "neutral"? This isn't really possible, and when an attempt in this direction is made it turns out that science is made to appear as an authoritative bastion of the status quo. The idea is that if you question what is, you are challenging the laws of nature.

With matters of this sort in mind, it becomes easy to see what Northrop Frye means by saying that when science becomes a part of everyday knowledge, it does so as myth, and ceases to be science. Is there any sort of science that is not susceptible to misuse? Which cannot possibly be

made into part of someone's mythology or partisan claims?

Instead of trying to answer this question, we might begin to think of science as a box of tools. A tool has no authority. It does not displace the skill or the responsibility of the man who uses it. A tool does not establish an opinion. It fortifies no dogma.

But this does not go far enough to help us to deal with the ideological use of science. For when a man asks, Is that a scientific fact?, he really means: Is it acceptable to and agreed upon by a body of men who are committed to the impartial pursuit of truth, and who have been trained in the use of the tools of investigation?

In other words, the integrity of scientists is the foundation of the prestige of the "scientific fact." Back, then, of the question as to whether a fact is "scientific" is the wish and need to be able to trust *somebody*, to find opinions that we can *rely* on. In terms of human emotion, the popular reliance on science is hardly to be distinguished from the kind of trust that used to be reposed in religious authority—in priests who are regarded as the proper interpreters of sacred writings or supernatural revelation. Obviously, uncritical trust is inappropriate in both cases.

But the fact is that childhood is the time when trust is wholly natural and indeed necessary. The child trusts his parents. Without trust and love, the child will hardly survive. At some point it is necessary for the young to become aware of the need for critical judgment, for skepticism, for independence of mind, and the introduction of this element is the responsibility of every parent and every teacher. But the beginning of teaching is always in terms of trust.

There are practical, everyday solutions to this problem which every parent and every teacher learns how to apply. The main thing, in respect to both science and religion, would seem to be to avoid teaching about either one of these areas in institutional terms. Religion is *not* a long list of

differing sects which practice different customs and have different views on great questions. These are forms which the religious spirit has left behind it, as people endeavor to turn their beliefs into sources of security or to put them to uses which are not really religious at all. The same could be said of the ideological applications of science. Science itself is not any of its techniques, nor is it, in the last analysis, any of the conclusions of scientists. The conclusions change, as a book like Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* has made plain.

Science is a temper of mind in human inquiry. As in the case of religion, it has a moral foundation. The authority of science tends to be lost the moment it is used for ideological or political purposes. When the authority of science is separated from the quality of the man who first inspired the trust, it may deserve no more respect than a hammer or a saw or any other tool.

## *FRONTIERS* It Happened In Maine

A MONTH or two ago a reader in the East informed us that we couldn't possibly be in touch with all the good things going on unless we followed his example and subscribed to the *Maine Times*. So, on the theory that all MANAS subscribers are truthful, balanced, and wise, we offered the editor of the *Maine Times* (it's a weekly) an exchange for six months, explaining how one of his readers had started this thing. Somewhat surprisingly, he agreed, perhaps because *his* reader is also *our* reader.

Well, the *Maine Times* has been coming along every week for about eight or ten issues, now. We looked at the first one, saw that it was well printed, nicely designed, and lively in content—much better in all these respects than the weeklies of years ago. Then we started giving the paper to a friend who has lived in Maine, with instructions to report on stories of general interest. Then, one week, we made a sort of mistake. That is, we started to *read* the paper—first, an article by the editor in which he finds serious fault (in a friendly way) with one of his contributors. Then, in the middle of that issue Feb. 25—there was a half-page picture of Scott and Helen Nearing in their living room in Harborside, Maine, with the rest of the page given to a fine review of Scott's latest book, *The Making of a Radical*. Scott Nearing apparently has plenty of honor in his own land. There's an article on the architect, Paoli Soleri, and what he may do in Maine if a certain sum of money ever gets raised, and almost a page on exactly how to make Boston brown bread and baked beans. The editor, John N. Cole, calls the *Maine Times* a magapaper, which will do until someone thinks of a better word. As a weekly it combines magazine and newspaper style, with a feature story instead of the latest news on the first page. In this issue, the feature is the slum area of Portland, Maine's largest city, and how it got that way. There is a

page on Goddard College's adult degree program, through which mature people can earn a B.A.

We especially liked the editor's reproof to his contributor. Apparently, she had done an article on how mean oldtime Mainers are to newcomers to the state. He objected to the dichotomy between old-timers and others, pointing out that every ten years the census reports the outmigration from the state as between 30 to 40 per cent, while the Maine population as a whole has been growing by 2 per cent for thirty years. At this rate, the entire population gets replaced pretty quickly! Who, then, are the true-blue Mainers? Of course, she was writing about people who have adapted to Maine's predominantly rural environment as contrasted with people who arrive fresh from the city with all their urban habits, needs and wants on display, sometimes ostentatiously. Hinterlanders in California see this happen, too, as farms and orange groves give way to the great blacktop invasion and high-rise buildings begin to dominate a once pastoral scene. It takes time to learn about country living.

This editor writes:

As one of the most blatant such "outsiders" to ever come to Maine, I can draw on my 14 years of personal experience here to refute your claim that Maine "natives" are little more than an evil-tempered, red-necked clan that makes the Snopes family look polite by comparison. It just isn't so.

I am the perfect test case. I arrived in Kennebunk, full of idealism and the desire to create change. I had the town newspaper to do it with. In my careening enthusiasm, I caroomed all over three towns, offending, I'm certain, almost every person I met. I was brash, critical, inaccurate, insensitive and even impolite. But not one single time, in dozens of meetings with Maine strangers each week, was I ever treated with anything but courtesy and consideration. When you consider that I carried on there for nearly three years, in small, coastal communities, the gentleness of my treatment by Maine people is quite a miracle. It could not, I think, have happened in any other state in the northeast. I, for one, have been convinced by my own experience, that there is no more tolerant, polite, gentle and courteous person

than the Maine "native," if you want to call him that. Which is not to say I don't recognize some of the mean qualities you outline in your story. They are there, of course, as they are in all of us; but they are not in the ascendancy in Maine people—I have thousands of encounters to prove it.

One of these was with an ancient old-timer named Charles Preble—there are or were Prebles in Pasadena, well known to everybody in town—who was a neighbor of Mr. Cole. Charlie Preble was old and very poor, but a good friend to Cole. He lived in an old "saltbox"—whatever that is—and died soon after Cole moved to another small town. Then—

One of his friends—also a "native"—called me and said Charley had asked that I help carry his coffin and bury him in the tiny burial ground in back of the saltbox. It was a harsh and sombre ceremony: none of the graves was marked, and we had to dig a narrow place for Charley so we wouldn't disturb his ancestors. I wept, not so much for the old man, but because I realized that his request that I help bury him was a final gesture of kindness—a last welcome from a "native" to an "outsider."

Well, it's pleasant to think that things of this sort can still happen anywhere in the country—that a man can be buried by his friends in his own backyard.

Perhaps, some day, Mr. Cole will find someone who can write a book about Maine that is like Dorothy Canfield Fisher's utterly delightful book on the Vermonters (*Vermont Tradition*, Little, Brown, 1953). Maybe, whether or not Mainers are unique—from as far away from New England as California, Vermont and Maine and New Hampshire all kind of run together—Mrs. Fisher's book will do for them, too. Meanwhile, the *Maine Times* comes out every Thursday from 13 Main Street, Topham, Maine, and people get it for ten dollars a year.