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BALANCE IS THE GOAL

PHILOSOPHY, or knowledge—although, for what we have in mind both are inadequate words—has two sides. Actually, for generalizations at this all-inclusive level no words are strong or deep enough, so the best thing to do may be to go on without bothering much about definitions. Philosophy, then, has two sides. It has two sides because human beings have two orders of awareness—they can look at the world and look at themselves. They can think about what they see and about what they feel, *and* about what they think. So there are two ways of speaking of "reality." It is a rare man who is able to balance out what he sees with what he feels, or what he feels with what he sees. Or perhaps it should be said that few men attempt this reconciliation, except at a superficial level. It is much simpler to live by either one or the other outlook and what appear to be its rules. So, in modern thought there are conflicting systems based upon these apparently opposed outlooks. There are systems of thought which rationalize the world revealed by sense perception, and other systems which attempt to order what men feel. When these systems are skillfully developed, they seem, at first glance, to be pretty complete. But any system which shuts out a large part of human experience is likely to have flaws, and in time the flaws become manifest, especially when they are reflected in habitual human behavior. When the disorder produced by these flaws grows intolerable, a great change or revolution in thought becomes inevitable. Usually, there is a wide swing to the opposite point of view. Instead of seeking balance, which is difficult, men reach for the apparent freedom of the other extreme.

This is an abstract account of Western thought over the past four hundred years. The first great swing, which began centuries ago, was from a corrupt and authoritarian religion of feeling to the hard-headed system of naturalistic observation of the external world, brought by the scientific revolution. Today, it is possible to detect numerous symptoms of a swing back toward the area of inward awareness. But many of the new advocates of "feeling" are just as cocky and all-knowing as the propagandists of science in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were, and they may be making even worse mistakes of exclusion and over-simplification. There will doubtless be a lot of casualties in this revolution—psychological casualties, emotional basket cases, instead of people killed on the barricades; and all because men who ought to know better insist upon taking a stand for one extreme or the other. As we said, the people who look for balance instead of an escape to freedom from the flaws of the past are few in number, while the pied pipers, who know the tunes of Dionysian revel, are many, some of them quite talented.

The proposition, then, is that a point of view or philosophy shaped by the influence of a great historical reaction cannot possibly be good enough; sooner or later it will be recognized as merely "reactionary." It does not represent independent thought; it does not seek balance, but expresses, instead, the impulse of sudden, irrational change, responsive to hungers, fears, and resentments, too often dressed up in the fashions of crowd emotion. Not all this reaction, but *balance*, is the goal, and for human beings this means the continually changing equilibrium of living, growing intelligence. It is not a static condition.

To get a clear idea of what it means to seek balance between the two sides of philosophy, we need exemplars, men who would neglect neither what they saw nor what they felt. Plato was surely such a man. Giordano Bruno was another. In recent times Ortega will qualify, and among

Americans we can name Joseph Wood Krutch. Others could doubtless be added to the list, but the quality of seeking balance is plainly evident in these men. They have the capacities of scientists as well as the imaginative power of poets and artists—men attentive to their feelings. Their work shows that they knew at least some of the secrets of control, which is a form of balance. Whether a human being can achieve final balance without going off to Heaven or Nirvana may be a question that needs answering, but here we shall say simply that these men understood the importance of seeking it, and that to appreciate and learn from them does not require us to measure the degree of their achievement.

What, in our own time, are the difficulties in reaching to balance? First of all, there is what seems a great difference between the two kinds of knowledge—between what is seen and what is felt. What you see can be measured—all sorts of things can be found out about objects of perception and put in engineering handbooks and various "how to" manuals. With knowledge of the stresses and strains typical of building materials, a working grasp of the geometry which applies, and a crew of craftsmen, you can build a house or a bridge or a highway across the continent. You have the exact knowledge necessary to do these and many other things. That knowledge is pretty much the same for everyone who wants to make a house or bridge, or a jet bomber, or a washing machine. An engineer in Detroit can send a letter to an engineer in Tokyo telling the man in Tokyo how to change the design of carburetor, and the Japanese engineer will build it so well that thereafter the man in Detroit may want letters from the Tokyo engineer on how to make other improvements. The fruit of this knowledge, which is exact, rooted in science, is tangible, demonstrable. So the philosopher of the world of the senses says that if you really want to *do* anything, you had better think about reality in terms of what you can see, measure, predict, and control.

Then along comes someone like Albert Schweitzer, man who can play Bach on the organ, heal the sick, and love his fellow men, and says that the root of human truth is or ought to be "reverence for Life." Is that knowledge) Schweitzer thought so and felt so. It was the most important truth he knew. What could he build with it? Well he built a hospital in Lambaréné with it, and the rest of us if we were so minded, could probably construct a harmonious, peaceful world with it. But reverence for life is not a knock-you-down-with the-facts-of-life sort of truth. It invites but does not compel. A feeling, moreover, is a private affair. Public emotions can be pretty scary things, as mobs and crusades have demonstrated. Of course, there are better sorts of public emotions, such as the ardor of a group of men working together for a common end, or a group of people singing "We Shall Overcome," but these are not common, and great responsibility is involved in stirring up public emotions. Anyway, a public emotion is not the same as a scientifically demonstrated public truth.

So a feeling about what is valuable or important is a private matter. You can write an essay or a poem about it, or live it out in life, but you can't put it on the blackboard and demand assent to it. It is not subject to measurement and its modes of demonstration are very different. But is it really "imprecise," as the scientific critic might claim? It is not precise the way an objective fact is precise, but a strong feeling is not "unreal" because it does not submit to the techniques of objective science.

Well, we have a kind of "seven-at-a-blow" quotation from *The Great Chain of Life* by Mr. Krutch, which seems to prove all sorts of things about the feeling side of philosophy; or, if it doesn't prove anything, will at least stake out a large claim for terribly neglected realities. At the end of this book, Krutch reminisces about how he came to write it. He says that he wanted to consider the characteristics and activities of living

things, and wondered how to begin. At that moment a cardinal sang outside his Arizona window. The air filled with the bird's delight. He mused about the importance of reproduction, getting food and shelter, the need for combativeness, courage and patience in the struggle of life—all typical, if a bit humanized in description, qualities of living things. Then he thought:

> But my cardinal proposed a different solution. Is any characteristic more striking than the joy of life itself?

Mr. Krutch was a scarred veteran of the wars with the mechanistic thinkers, the "nothing but" simplifiers, so he turned at once to what the opposition would say:

> No starting place is less usual or would have seemed less suitable to many biologists. Some would certainly prefer to begin with origins—with the simplest creatures now living or with the theoretically even simpler ones from which they evolved. Others might choose an abstraction, but the abstraction would probably be "the struggle for existence" or "the survival of the fittest." Pressed to name the most fundamental characteristic of life they would probably reply: "The irritability of protoplasm."
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> With them on their own ground I certainly had no right to quarrel. The cardinal and the robin do have to engage in a struggle for existence. The protoplasm in the cells of their bodies is, like that in mine, "irritable." But when I hear the word "robin"—especially when I hear a particular robin singing on a bough—I do not think: "Irritable protoplasm so organized as to succeed in the struggle for existence." I think that no more than when I hear my own name I think: "Member of the American middle class, subdivision intellectual, caught in an economy where he is not very comfortable and developing opinions which are the produce of his social situation." An equally significant sort of fact about both men and birds is that individuals are more or less happy, terribly glad or terribly sorry to be doing what they are doing, and capable of making more or less interesting comments on their situation.
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> With this fact science can hardly concern itself. Such facts are not measurable or susceptible of objective demonstration. But to men and to robins alike they are nevertheless very important and very real. If this were not so I do not think I should ever have taken much interest in either human or natural history.

Mr. Krutch seems to be contending that as a man becomes more and more of a scientist, this should not mean that he becomes less and less human in his interests and outlook, and feels obliged to make all his definitions in terms that exclude the human qualities of human beings from his idea of reality. There can be but little doubt that a scientific education today has this general effect. There is hardly anything in it to encourage awareness of consciousness or the feeling side of life.

It should be obvious that the entirety of modern education has been affected by this dehumanizing influence. There is a sense in which it tends to produce as its ideal a man who regards everyone he knows as some species of "thing," who has deadened in himself all feeling of awareness that other people, other forms of life, are living, breathing intelligences with hopes and fears, visions and anxieties, determinations and apprehensions deeply akin to his own. But such a man, disciplined to accept no subjective clues to the nature of reality, is a man made ruthless by cultural decision. How can he value in himself or other men what he hardly believes to exist at all?

Mr. Krutch, who taught at Columbia University for many years, was in a good position to comment on the effect of purely "objective" thinking on education. In his chapter, "Reverence for Life," he said:

> Unfortunately the scientific study of living creatures does not always promote either reverence or love, even when it is not wholly utilitarian in its emphasis. It was the seventeenth-century naturalist John Ray who first gave wide currency in England to the conviction that God made other living things not exclusively for the use of man but also for both his delight and theirs.
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> Unfortunately that laboratory biology which has tended to become the most earnestly cultivated kind of scientific study is precisely the kind least likely to stimulate compassion, love, or reverence for the creatures it studies. Those who interested themselves in old-fashioned natural history were brought into

> intimate association with animals and plants. Its aims and methods demanded an awareness of the living thing as a living thing and, at least until the rise of behaviorism, the suffering and the joy of the lesser creatures was a part of the naturalist's subject matter. But the laboratory scientist is not of necessity drawn into any emotional relationship with animals or plants and the experiments which of necessity he must perform are more likely to make him more rather than less callous than the ordinary man.
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> At best, compassion, reverence for life, and a sense of the community of living things are not an essential part of his business as they are of the more vaguely defined discipline of the naturalist. And for that reason it is a great pity that the most humane and liberal of the natural sciences should play so small a role in the liberal arts curriculum.

Mr. Krutch gives instance after instance of the indifference of scholarly men influential in education to the living, feeling side of life.

In another place, he shows that the biological version of the scientific point of view has only one reason for every act or impulse which finds expression among the countless forms of organic life—*survival.* Could there be a narrower, more *bigoted* reading of human nature? Or less adequate or more essentially aimless, from the consciousness or feeling point of view? Krutch comments on this article of faith:

> Ask anyone who professes this ultra-orthodoxy whether a dandelion or an ant is conspicuously "fit" for anything *except* survival and he will probably either look blank or, if he is ever so slightly tinged with philosophy, somewhat irritated. What else, he will demand, is there to be fit for? What does, what can, any organism want except to survive? Nature, he will add, is not sentimental and only a sentimentalist abandoned to meaningless subjectivity would ever talk about "beauty," "nobility," or anything else unless it has some demonstrable survival value.
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> As one leading American psychologist who prides himself on having got rid of all nonsense about "value judgments" and their necessity for human beings has put it: "The only value judgment which nature adopts for you (is) the factor of survival. . . . The one criterion which is thrust upon us is whether the group which observes a given practice will be here tomorrow." . . . .
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> Thus we go round and round in a dismal circle. Progress is inevitable because whatever happens is, by definition, progress. The fit survive because whatever survives is, by definition, fit. Modern animals are "higher" than more ancient animals because "higher" means "more recent." . . . Even today there are those who profess themselves content to remain within this circle. Such a person was asked in the course of a public discussion whether or not he would regard with complacency an evolutionary development in the course of which man himself learned how to be, like the ant, so mechanically and unchangingly efficient that all his intelligence and even his consciousness would fade away. He replied that he did not anticipate such a development but that if it should occur he saw no reason for being disturbed. Such a creature would be all the surer of "being here tomorrow" and that was, after all, the only criterion which could be applied.

It seems time for someone to get up on a soap box, or on some kind of eminence, and say out loud that it is just this sort of meaningless argument which led to the downfall of what was claimed to be, a few hundred years ago, "religion." The miracle is that so many people can be made to nod in agreement when such arguments are offered in the name of scientific authority. But perhaps it is just these people who, when they do swing loose from the confinements of scientistic nonsense, will be captured by the *Wow!* appeal of feeling without thought, emotion without form, which is the polar equivalent of the nothing but doctrines they have abandoned.

But such world changes of outlook always exhibit these extremes, and it is more important to consider the appeal for balance, and how it may be expressed. Mr. Krutch speaks in this mode when he says in his Preface:

> This book makes no pretense at being a treatise. I am not a trained scientist; only what is sometimes contemptuously called a "nature lover." I have drawn from books written by learned experts and also upon my observation of living creatures other than man in whom I have long delighted and with whom I have perhaps more sympathy than some of those who remain austerely scientific. If I express opinions on subjects which some will maintain a mere nature lover has no right to discuss, it is because, having read much and observed a good deal, I am sometimes

> forced to the conclusion that the whole truth is not always represented in certain of the orthodox attitudes. The intuitions of a lover are not always to be trusted; but neither are those of the loveless. If I have also sometimes given way to that irritation which the layman often feels in the presence of the expert, I hope it will not be assumed I have forgot an essential fact, namely that I owe to the experts the technical information I appropriate.

Mr. Krutch has in common with some others of his general persuasion the capacity to look at the world of the senses with appreciation, and with at least a measure of the skill and persistence of the scientific observer, and to do this without any loss of sensibility in the inner world of feeling and imagination where he is also at home. This is a characteristic of enlightened humanists, of whom we named several at the outset. Those who limit their outlook and philosophy to the world of objectivity, and their sense of reality to the measurable, seldom if ever enjoy this capacity for balanced, bifocal vision.

This we understand to mean, that where the end is balance, and not the triumph of a partisan view, the result is an enrichment of all perceptions and a continuous harvest of insights, by means of which the equilibrium which sustains far-reaching flights of thought becomes ever more dependable. The men who practice this sort of philosophy grow in both discipline and common sense, the one never exceeding the other, perhaps for the reason that in such individuals they are interdependent and inextricably allied.

How should science be taught? Perhaps with an entirely new beginning, taking the work of men like Krutch for examples at the outset. The assumption is that we need a science wholly redefined in terms of human interest, human concern, human good, and a science that is founded upon and cannot possibly exclude the primary realities of being human. We need a science that does not originate in militant and often angry reaction to the abuses of religion, and we need this sort of science not only for its own sake but also in behalf of authentic religion, whatever it may be. We need a science that grows in balance from its very beginnings.

REVIEW
MAN AND MYTH

THE Blaisdell Institute *Journal* for the winter of 1972 has in it two articles of general interest. One, a study of three lectures by Robert Bellah, a sociologist who teaches at Pomona College in California, is by an undergraduate student, David L. Smith. The other is a paper by Lynn White, Jr., medieval historian at the University of California in Los Angeles, dealing with the numerous cultural debts of the West to the various cultures of Asia. The purpose of the Blaisdell Institute and its journal is to seek greater understanding "of both the unity and diversity in man's great religious and cultural traditions," and his relationships in modern times, and to stimulate discussion of the cultural values involved. The *Journal* is published from 143 East Tenth Street, Claremont, Calif. 91711.

David Smith describes Bellah's development as suggesting or showing that American civilization has experienced three great ordeals or crises, being at present in the midst of the third. The first ordeal was marked by the Revolution, the second by the Civil War, while the third involves a breakdown of the sense of meaning and an inability to continue to live by the myths of the past.

It is Bellah's contention that we were not able to understand our best writers and poets of the nineteenth century—Melville, Poe, Whitman—and we are "still unacquainted with the central symbols of our own imaginative life." This means that "we don't understand the *myths* that condition our experience and self-understanding as Americans." What are those myths?

> In his first two talks, titled "America's Myth of Origin," and "The Myths of National Mission and Personal Success," he [Bellah] pointed up the essentials of the American civil religion from its beginnings in puritan and humanistic ideologies through the present. . . . In summary, Bellah begins by showing how America has always been a screen for the projection of Biblical archetypes; America is and always has been a mythically conceived entity. (And here, I hope none of our readers will founder at this use of the term "myth." Only remember, as Joseph Campbell wrote in the preceding issue of this Journal, that myth is not simply "other people's religion." Rather, it is that most basic mode of thought which conditions our experience of reality itself. It is the system of affect-images that tells us who we are and what sort of world it is we live in.)

It is a natural response to say to oneself, "Those people may live by myths, but *I* don't; I live by facts, or by a philosophy of life." There is something wrong with this reaction, since everyone does indeed live by a "system of affect-images" of the sort David Smith describes. It is probably the language we use that makes the idea of living by "myth" seem so tenuous and undesirable. "Myth," after all, is something opposed to "fact." Our very speech is controlled by the reality-theories of the past, so that even though we may agree with Whitehead that the exactness of the scientific disciplines is a "fake," we still use a language which minimizes the importance of every other way of thinking of "knowledge." This language was in the full swing of general use when thoughtful men like Jung and Cassirir and others began to recognize that the core of human action was inextricably bound up with deep feelings about the nature of things, and that these feelings could best be understood in terms of the relationships defined by the great myths, which are generalizations about the dynamics of human life, as distinguished from the generalizations about things and matter and energy that we call "science." But all the words available for speaking of the way men actually think and make decisions, as distinguished from the hypothetical rationalism and scientific method they pretend to use, were and are deprecatory or pejorative in feeling-tone. To say that a man lives by a "myth" is to say he lives by unreliable fancy, whim, uncritical belief or tradition. So myth means *mere* myth, and it may be impossible to get rid of this implication for at least another generation.

It ought to be the business of humanistic psychology to generate a new vocabulary which has disciplined meanings for terms relating to the way people really think, terms to take the place of "the system of affect-images that tells us who we are and what sort of world it is we live in," which, when you consider such a statement, is accurate enough, but made in a language borrowed from the days when positivist, objective thinking was the only kind of thinking that could gain a hearing. Inventing a few new words will not be at all sufficient; a self-sustaining humanist vocabulary which does not borrow from other disciplines is what is required. Plato, for example, had such a language.

Meanwhile, we are obliged to use the language we have. Mr. Smith gives the following summary of Bellah's idea of the American "myths":

> Before settlement, America was seen as the embodiment of Nature itself. It was the primordial paradise, the unfallen heartland, "origin itself." As Locke wrote, "In the beginning, all the world was America." Thus, America served as the abstraction to which all the hopes and fears of European man could be attached. For the puritan imagination, this naturally meant that America was the wilderness in which the New Jerusalem would be founded. As John Winthrop's sermons to the pilgrim colony show, these spiritual forefathers of ours saw themselves on a world-historical mission, they were the children of a new Exodus, out to found a pure community, a "city on a hill." Their goal was no less than to realize God's purpose on earth. A complex of Biblical images inspired them, and its development in the political sector was fascinating. The process went through crises of authority that neatly recapitulate the whole of Christian church history, beginning with the community of the elect and ending in secularization. Bellah's point, however, is simply that some such broad Biblical self-understanding has stayed with us, and still conditions our political thinking on its deepest levels.

But the old American myth can no longer order our lives. We have outgrown its archetypal images while we cling to them. A dark reading of them results:

> Bellah here quotes Hart Crane, one among many martyred poets, who saw early in this century that America faces a monstrous dis-ease, a force that "arises out of a past that so outstrips the present in vigor and imagination" that we are now psychically unprepared to deal with it. This monster is none other than the dark side of our Biblical self-understanding. It is what Walt Whitman pointed to when he asked, "Who will bridle Leviathan?" that "cankerous imperfection in a force inaugurating largeness." In short, the American paradise has become a demoralized hell, a chaos. As Bellah illustrates it: America was once able to call England "Babylon"; now we have the same charge thrown back at us by all the younger nations of the world.

Bellah's use of the great myth-maker, William Blake, comes very close to being a complete vindication of the idea of living by myth; since in these terms it is no longer simply vague tradition. Smith continues:

> But the American experience today is not characterized by chaos and moral disorder alone. There has been a loss of spirit as well, a growing sense of enervation and meaninglessness which is also linked to the devitalization of the myth. Bellah here uses William Blake's categories of single and twofold vision to explain how the myth has been emasculated. Single vision is the culprit, that is, the assumption that all the universe has a single, rational, clearly comprehensible order, and that no element of creation need retain an inscrutable or uncontrollable dimension. Its patron saints are Bacon, Newton, and Locke (and a particularly outrageous modern representative would be Ayn Rand). In essence, single vision is what passes today for common sense. In the early industrial phase in America, this "single" view of the world brought business and religion into ideological harmony. Success came to be viewed as the proper goal for man, just as in less secular times righteousness has been. An editorialist in the mid-1800's typified this attitude when he wrote that "Godliness is in tune with riches." But, as Bellah points out, psychology has amply shown that this sort of benign self-assurance is bound to lead to disaster. A "common sense," "single" vision of the world ignores the inhospitable, unconscious forces that are bound to be lurking in any superficially well-adjusted mentality. Such a posture can be maintained only at the cost of severe emotional and imaginative constrictions. Thus, under these constrictions, the energies of our national myth have been strangled, and Leviathan, so long repressed, rears his ugly head.

> In contrast is the second category, that of "twofold vision." It is the way of the man who maintains an openness to all elements of consciousness. He is one who is able to include all wonder and mystery into his life, who is able to see the world and see it as a meaningful whole, meaningful because it is alive. This is the way of myth in its fruitful and creative stage, when it still has its own life in the architectonic imagination. It is the way that leads to a true ordering of impulses without the necessity of repression. Thus, what Bellah calls for today is a "rebirth of twofold vision." We must rediscover the dimension of meaning in our lives if we are to go beyond the only alternatives America seems to offer us today: a life apart, a life of blind, inefficacious rebellion, a life of complacency under repression, or a life of quiet desperation.

Lynn White, Jr., who gave his paper at a meeting of the members of the Blaisdell Institute in Pasadena, spoke of the provincialism of Americans and Westerners in general who are unaware of the vast contributions of the Orient to modern knowledge. We have space for a sample of the sort of things he talked about:

> I shall speak only briefly of our debt to Islam. This evening we are next door to one of the great scientific institutions of the world. I wonder how many people at Cal Tech really understand the extent to which their daily scientific activity is rooted in the extraordinary tradition of Islamic medieva1 science. For about four or five hundred years the Muslims produced the greatest scientists of the world. And ironically, that Islamic tradition of science is more vivid today at Cal Tech than it is anywhere in Islam. Take a man like al-Razi, the great tenth-century Muslim physician, with an extraordinarily keen clinical mind. He knew Sanskrit medicine and he knew Greek medicine, but he was a great original observer. His enormous medical encyclopedia has almost vanished in the Arabic. It is gradually being recovered in scraps, whereas in the late thirteenth century it was translated into Latin and was immediately on the shelves of every dreadfully expensive doctor in Europe (and they were dreadfully expensive then as now). It was printed four times before 1500.

It comes as a surprise to learn that an Arab physician in Cairo discovered the pulmonary circulation of the blood in the thirteenth century, that Omar Khayyam not only wrote about bread and wine and "thou," but was also one of the world's greatest mathematicians in the eleventh century. The heddle-treadle loom came from China, also the spinning wheel. Paper-making was learned in the West by copying the Chinese, and paper-making made Gutenberg's invention a practical affair. The nine numbers and zero came from India, also trigonometry. Even the story of the tar baby, told by Uncle Remus, came from India, since it is of Buddhist origin and has profound moral meaning. The bow of the fiddle came from Indonesia, Gothic architecture from India, and the rosary, too! Dr. White concludes:

> From antiquity, we who belong to western culture have been deep in debt to Asia. That debt was greatly increased during the thousand years we know as the Middle Ages. Then, from 1500 to about 1950, we looted Asia's physical wealth. I suspect that during the next several generations we may find it more to our profit to appropriate some of her spiritual wealth, adapting it, of course, to our own tradition. This, as I see it, is one of the tasks of the Blaisdell Institute.

COMMENTARY
ORIGINS OF SCIENCE

THE modern theoretical physicist, Louis de Broglie, once remarked that progress in physics was in suspense because of a lack of essential words and images. And another writer, quoted in Herbert Kohl's *The Age of Complexity*, has pointed out that the creation of images and words is the work of poets, of men of feeling and imagination.

Science, in short, has its foundation in vision, in flights of the imagination, which, reduced to sober language, become hypotheses. Also in Kohl's book is an essay by Wallace Stevens on the poetic inspiration behind philosophizing. In the great days of the beginnings of Western science, this inspiration was rampant among the "natural philosophers." By the nineteenth century, however, the dominance of mechanism in science had made the play of poetic inspiration in science increasingly rare. "One understands," Stevens wrote, "why Victor Hugo said, in his time, that the stars are no longer mentionable in poetry."

A man who was both poet and philosopher, Giordano Bruno, was the one who saw the great implications of Copernicus' discovery. As Dorothea Singer says in her life of Bruno:

> To Bruno and to Bruno alone the suggestion of Copernicus entered into the pattern of a completely new cosmological order. In this sense Bruno not only anticipated Galileo and Kepler, but he reached beyond them into an entirely new world which had shed all the dross of tradition.

Wallace Stevens quotes some of Bruno's "poetic" science. Speaking of Copernicus' theory, Bruno wrote:

> By this knowledge we are loosened from the chains of a most narrow dungeon, and set at liberty to rove in a more august empire; we are removed from presumptuous boundaries and poverty to the innumerable riches of an infinite space, of so worthy a field, and of such beautiful worlds. . . . It is not reasonable to believe that any part of the world is without soul, life, sensation and organic structure. From this infinite All, full of beauty and splendor, from the vast worlds which circle above us to the sparkling dust of stars beyond, the conclusion is drawn that there are an infinity of creatures, a vast multitude, which, each in its degree, mirrors forth the splendor, wisdom and excellence of the divine beauty. . . . There is but one celestial expanse, where the stars choir forth unbroken harmony.

Here was philosophy, poetry, and the basis of much future science, yet rich in feeling, and ennobling in the reach of imagination. Such men seldom lacked for images and words.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SOCIAL STUDIES AT ROSE VALLEY

IN Grace Rotzel's book, *The School in Rose Valley* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1971, $8.95), two chapters are devoted to "Social Studies," one by the author, the other by a teacher, Peg Nowell. Without having much of an excuse for an opinion, we have always felt that "Social Studies" is a pretty pompous title for something taught in the elementary grades, but the way social studies are pursued at the Rose Valley School seems totally self-justifying. Everything done in this area is related to the lives of the children. The studies are conceived as having two purposes: one, to help the children to learn how to order their own lives in relation to others; the other, to give them some sense of the sweep of history.

At ten and eleven, Miss Rotzel relates, the children began to use parliamentary rules for a class organization, taking turns at conducting the meetings. The children solved problems by approaching them directly with common sense.

Usually, the problem of an especially difficult child was dealt with in staff meetings, since the school was willing to take on at least some children of this sort. The question of how much "harm" was done to the other children got argued back and forth, the upshot commonly being that the "harm" was mostly theoretical, since it couldn't be discovered. "It didn't hurt a child to see another child's problems; it seemed to contribute to his understanding." The teachers found they could rely a great deal on the judgment of the children:

> One year we took in a six-year-old who had been expelled from the public school because of his disruptive behavior. He had charm—and a body of hostility. He was also gifted and, to the children's delight, had wonderful building ideas; he also could produce more dissension than any three others. When the children couldn't cope, I would seat him on a chair and ask him to watch for a while until he felt he could go back to the group without fighting. One time, when I was unusually bothered, I put him in another room to give the children some peace. They came to me, reminding me how much he had improved and said, "Oh Rotzy, give him another chance. He's going to be all right." I did, and he was. I found that this was often the case: children are good at learning how to cope with other children; when they want a child to improve, he usually improves.

There is more on the good sense of children:

> A six-year-old in this sort of school gets an honest feeling of competence. When one boy told the group, "You can't do better than have me as stage manager; I'm very good at it," his egotism was based on fact. He was not an offensive boy. He was competent and knew it, and that was as it should be. He had learned about himself from experience in group activities.
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> Experience also fosters judgment. A parent told us about a six-year-old who was given money to buy a present for a seven-year-old. He went to a toy store and rejected one toy after another. Finally, a weary salesman said that he had the very thing, and showed him a truck which, wound up, would go until it struck a wall, reverse and go back, reverse and go back until it ran down. The six-year-old said, "It bores *me*, and he is a year older than I am." He ended by buying his friend an emery wheel.

"History" probably ought to begin with fairly personal things about the children and their own families. We know a little girl—a woman who was once a little girl—whose grandfather was a fine pianist. But before being a pianist he had been an organist, and when no more than a boy he had learned how to play the organ by practicing on an old hand-pumped organ that his mother and father had obtained for him. He practiced every day, sometimes for six hours at a stretch, while his mother pumped for him. It was no wonder that by the time he was seventeen he was the best organist in his state! This was a bit of history cherished by the little girl. The story of her grandfather working so hard to learn to play the organ became a part of her life.

How the community lives is a part of current history, and trips to stores, factories and hospitals fill out this picture. The children at the Rose Valley School went on many such trips—one each week. Then, next day—

> The morning begins with a discussion period. Here we talk about the needs of the town, how the schoolhouse could be improved, whether the water wheel could be made to run an elevator to the balcony, why the battery that supplied lights for the airport was run down this morning, etc.

Trips provide opportunity for many sorts of education. If a journey takes the group past a cemetery, discussion might later consider the meaning of death and different views about it. Land use could be brought up, the idea of cremation examined, with discussion of why some customs are difficult to change and last longer than they ought to.

The geography of the area can be a starting-point for imaginative expeditions in various directions. At Rose Valley reading a book, *The Story of Earth and Sky*, by Carleton Washburne, was part of social studies. We haven't looked at this book and don't know exactly how it treats the subject, but it recalls the work of an astronomer who teaches a course in cosmology in an adult education program, which he always begins by saying: There are two ways to explain cosmology: One is the scientific way, and the other is the mythological, and no one knows which is really the better way. That is the kind of thing that could also be said to six-year-olds, as a means of keeping their minds open, their imagination active, and preventing any sort of "finality" from standing in the way of future changes in thought about the world. This, too, is a part of social studies.

"Social Studies" as taught by Peg Nowell combined both the themes of this area—the sweep of history and getting along with each other. For illustration:

> One September, two sixth-grade girls who had studied the New World the previous year, announced that they did not want to learn about older civilizations; they felt that this would be a waste of time since there was so much they didn't know about the modern world. Others disagreed, and sides were chosen for a formal debate. The speakers prepared for this seriously, and the arguments were both lively and thought-provoking. After the debate the class voted for studying the past, but certainly with an improved understanding of "the uses of history." The losing side accepted defeat gracefully and enjoyed the year's work once it was under way. Of course, as was always true, we spent lots of time investigating and discussing current happenings. . . .
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> Whatever we were about to investigate, the start was always a group discussion, or a series of discussions. What do we already know? What would we like to find out? Is it really worth studying at all? The teacher had already placed around a few pictures and artifacts, chosen for their question-raising value. A list, in bold black printing, of strange new words such as "ankh," "dynasty," "shaduf," "acropolis," etc., was sure to arouse curiosity and a rush for dictionaries.

Putting on plays—written by and produced by the children, with the help of the teachers—is a major activity at the School in Rose Valley. And the reading the older children do to develop the plots and background of the plays is certainly an intensive course in history and social studies. All the curriculum is served by these plays. Miss Nowell writes:

> Why have we felt that dramatic experience is so important for our students? I believe that there are several values in this type of dramatics. Plays provide an opportunity for individual children to express their feelings, released, by virtue of being fictional characters, from the inhibiting pressure of speaking and behaving as they think adults want them to. At preschool level, dramatic play is spontaneous and continual. Being a mother, father or baby, a lion or a monkey, a fireman or a sailor, a small child acts out his feelings about himself and his world all day long. Singing and dancing games and the dramatizing of familiar stories let each child choose a role he likes and put into his characterization as much of himself as he wishes.
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> In the lower grades there is still much free dramatic play, and we encourage the acting out in pantomine of experiences and feelings. Short, simple plays give many a child the chance to discover that he can express himself as a cowboy or a goblin less self-consciously than in his own person. Our third grade's traditional, outdoor Indian play, which has a longer period of preparation and rehearsal, means becoming someone else for quite a while. A timid boy may turn for a time into a fierce warrior, or an over-aggressive little girl may become a gentle loving mother to her papoose.

No really good play can reach the performance stage without having a crisis of major proportions, and everyone learns from the long process of getting the play ready. The children learn skills in the only way they should—from wanting very much to do things well; and their minds are enormously enriched by the experience, as the next section in the book, on Creative Writing, makes plain. The children, it must be admitted, are pretty fine to begin with, and so is everything else about the school. But that is what makes the book about the School in Rose Valley worth reading.

FRONTIERS

Eastern Philosophic Themes

SOME months ago, a correspondent asked the meaning of the expression, "twice-born," and while an answer was given, we have happened upon a passage in Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (Oxford University Press, 1939) which amplifies the matter so clearly that it may be of general interest. In an exposition of Indian philosophy, Dr. Radhakrishnan says:

> The individual is already in possession of the truth. The part of the teacher is that of the midwife, to assist to bring the truth to clear consciousness. To become conscious of the world of spirit is to be reborn. *Brahmacharya* or initiation into *gayatri* [the path of return to the one spirit] marks the second birth. While the first birth into the physical environment involves disunion and separation, submission to necessity, the second birth represents the victory over the constraint of necessity and the attainment of union and liberty. It is life at a deeper level, the *jnani* or the man of insight has liberated himself from the bondage of fear of life and of death, from the prejudices of his time, of his age and country. As one with the universal self, he has the utmost charity and love for all creation. Things of the world do not tempt him, for he is freed from the bondage of selfish desires and passions. He has emptied himself of all selfishness. In a famous image, the Upanishads declare that the released souls become one with Brahman even as the rivers losing their name and form become one with the ocean.

There is an obvious parallel here, in the use of the term "midwife," with Socrates, doubtless intended by the writer, for the Platonic conception of gaining unity with the One is hardly different from that of the Upanishads.

The idea of a second birth of a transcendent sort is of course found in Christianity. In the third chapter of John, in answer to Nicodemus, Jesus said: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is sometimes interpreted as meaning the coming or awakening of Christ in man, as distinguished from materialized ideas of the meaning of a "divine incarnation."

In the East, "Twice-born" is the traditional honorific title of the initiated Brahman, one who has been taught hidden truths. In the *Anugita,* for example, there is the line, "Every one who is twice-born knows such is the teaching of the ancients," and the passage goes on to speak of the ultimate constitution of the universe. This is not to suggest, of course, that in these days of lost secrets and misused authority, the caste of Brahmins has kept such knowledge alive, but that such was the original role of those who accepted the responsibilities of teaching as their primary duty or *dharma.*

While we are quoting Radhakrishnan, there seems point in presenting his view of the extraordinary hymn from the *Rig Veda* which was given in part in the editorial for April 5. In another of Radhakrishnan's books, *East and West* (Harper, 1956), he sets forth the fundamental tendency of Indian philosophy:

> To be, to hold the soul in serenity is the end of man. There is in us the principle of subjectivity which is free from the pressure of external influences. Ordinarily we are automata; our words and deeds, our moods and emotions, our thoughts and ideas are produced by external forces. But man must learn to act from a different basis. He must become a different being. He must not be satisfied with what he is. He must be born again or renewed in his consciousness. He whose life is cumbered with distractions and luxuries is not necessarily on a higher level than he who pursues the inward way, grows from within, develops new qualities and powers that he does not possess now. Man cannot be satisfied with earthly possessions, not even with knowledge which instructs, informs and even entertains. He has another destiny, the realization of the spirit in him.

Radhakrishnan takes as the keynote of Indian thought the *Rig Veda,* which is older, he says, than Homer and the Old Testament. This Veda, together with the Upanishads, out of which the system of Vedanta later developed, antedates the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries, Pythagoras and

Plato. Of the hymn (X, 129) we quoted two weeks ago, he says:

> The metaphysical agony, which alone makes man great, bursts forth in the famous words of the Rig *Veda:* "There was neither being nor non-being. There was neither the air nor the sky above. What is it that moves? In what direction? Under whose guidance? Who knows, who can tell us, where the creation occurred, whence it cometh and whether the gods were only born thereafter? Who knows whence it hath come? Whence creation did come, whether it is created or not created? He alone knoweth, whose eye watcheth over it from the height of heaven, and yet, cloth he know?" These words of spiritual yearning, metaphysical unease and intellectual scepticism set the tone of India's cultural growth. The seers of the *Rig Veda* believe in a truth, a law which governs our existence, which sustains the different levels of our being, an infinite reality, of which all the different deities are but forms. . . .
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> The truths suggested in the Vedas are developed in the Upanishads. We find in the seers of the Upanishads, an utter fidelity to every layer and shade of truth as they saw it. . . . They affirm that there is a central reality, the one without a second, who is all that is and beyond all that is. . . . The Real, which is the inmost of all things, is the essence of one's soul. "Smaller than the smallest, greater than the greatest, this essence of being lies hidden in the heart of the creature." The one doctrine by which the Upanishads are best known to the outside world is that of *tat tvam asi;* the Eternal is in oneself. The Divine dwells in the secret places of the heart. "The ancient being, imperceptible to the senses, the Being deep in the unknown wrapped in shadows, dwelling in the abyss, lives in one's heart." By the reflection of the divine presence, the human individual becomes sacred.

Radhakrishnan, a man learned in the philosophies and religions of both East and West, shows quite plainly how these themes occur in Greek thought of the Pythagorean and Platonic tradition, and in the writings of certain Christian mystics.