

## SCIENTIFIC PHILOSOPHIZING

AFTER a lifetime of research and teaching in botany, Edmund Ware Sinnott, pioneer in the study of plant morphology, has begun to raise the sort of questions which challenge the basis of the modern scientific viewpoint. His Antioch College Founders Day Address (delivered in November of last year), sets forth a measured proposal for a new departure in scientific method. He asks, in short, for a hypothesis concerning the nature of living things which includes both life and mind as elements of reality. This is the sort of thinking for which MANAS, too, has been asking, in recent issues.

In this address (available in pamphlet form from Antioch College), Dr. Sinnott outlines the progress of biological science up to the present, then summarizes the concept of scientific method by means of which this progress was made:

The success of the methods used to gain [a more refined knowledge of man] has justified the working hypothesis that the body of every living thing, including his [man's] own, is a physico-chemical system which manifests the operation of those laws that are found in lifeless systems. Indeed, on any other hypothesis the scientific study of life seems impossible. The conclusions of this modern biological analysis obviously give strong support to the ancient philosophy of materialism which regards man as simply a mechanism, exquisitely complex but nothing more at last than a machine, with all that this implies as to his nature and significance. Whatever a biologist may believe intuitively, there is no doubt that the chief contribution of his science to philosophy in recent years has been its support of materialism. The old ideas that a living system differs fundamentally from a lifeless one through the possession of a "vital" quality or that the human body is built on a different model from those of animals are now most seriously challenged.

This straightforward and rational attack on the nature of life and of man cannot but command our admiration. Here at last there is emerging, one may say, a clear understanding of what man *really* is which will supplant the outworn and mystical ideas, rising from ancient superstition, that have so long

confused our minds. But the situation, of course, is by no means as simple as this. A materialistic view of man is satisfying scientifically but it provides no understanding of his most distinctive and important qualities—his reasoning power and his sense of freedom, of moral responsibility and of values. These are qualities of mind, of the psychical side of man. A machine should not be expected to display them.

Here we are impaled on the horns of an ancient dilemma that was never so troublesome as it is today. As scientists, the only hypothesis on which we can work is the uniformity and dependability of natural law, even in man. If this is not so, if law can arbitrarily be flouted, science becomes meaningless. As choosing, feeling, striving human beings, however, the only hypothesis on which life seems possible is that we are free, that our values have some significance and that the simple words "can," "want," and "ought" refer to something that is real and are not mere illusions. One of these two hypotheses must be invalid. We try desperately to reconcile them, to assume that for practical purposes one of them is true but for ideological purposes, the other; to keep them in two separate compartments of our minds and never let them mix.

We delude ourselves if we think that there is any comfortable way out of this dilemma. Whether recognized or not, it is there, and it will continue to plague us. The issue presents itself in many guises but especially in the question of freedom. By tacit agreement we do not discuss this very much nowadays, but such reticence is not because the question has been settled. "No other issue," says Prof. Gordon Allport, "causes such consternation for the scientific psychologist. One may look through a hundred successive American books in psychology and find no mention of 'will' or 'freedom.' It is customary for the psychologist, as for other scientists, to proceed within the framework of strict determinism, and to build barriers between himself and common sense lest common sense infect psychology with its belief in freedom."

Before examining Dr. Sinnott's cautious proposal for the restoration of "mind" to the natural world, we should like to go back a little more than two hundred years in the history of modern thought

to find what seems to be the origin of this fear of "infection." In 1748, the French philosopher, Lamettrie, published his notorious defense of materialism, *L'Homme Machine (Man a Machine)*. Lamettrie, however, as the most outspoken materialist of his time, did not fear "freedom," of which he was an enthusiastic advocate. His argument ran:

If Atheism were universally disseminated, all the branches of religion would be torn up by the roots. Then there would be no more theological wars: there would be no more soldiers of religion, that terrible kind of soldier. Nature, which had been infected by the consecrated poison, would win back her rights and her purity. Deaf to all other voices, men would follow their own individual impulses, and these impulses alone can lead them to happiness along the present path of virtue.

To further the cause of Materialism, Lamettrie sought support in the biological researches of his day. Disputing Diderot's (tongue-in-cheek) assertion that "one could slay the Atheist with a butterfly wing or with the eye of a gnat," Lamettrie argued that the wonders of Nature are not evidence in behalf of the existence of God, but have an opposite significance. The familiar "Argument from Design" left Lamettrie cold. *Nature*, he claimed, needs no assistance from a supposed "Creator." He told how Abraham Trembley, a Swiss naturalist, had shown the power of the fragments of a fresh-water polyp which had been cut into pieces, each to grow into a perfect and complete organism, capable of reproducing itself in a normal way. What need of God, he exclaimed, when Nature exhibits such extraordinary resources!

The potencies of nature were thus offered as an argument for materialism. The interesting thing about this eighteenth-century scientific polemic is that exactly the same sort of evidence has been offered in the twentieth century *against* materialism. Hans Driesch, a German biologist to whom Dr. Sinnott refers approvingly, began publishing the results of experiments with sea urchins about fifty years ago. He found that any fragment cut at random from the blastula (an early stage of the embryo) of a sea urchin always grew into a complete embryo. This and similar experiments became the foundation for a closely reasoned argument that the

functions of protoplasm cannot be explained mechanically. The organism, he held, is "a harmonious equipotential system possessing a vital individualizing *entelechy* which works through matter with a view to the whole."

Lamettrie, of course, did not foresee that the "atheism" he sponsored with such enthusiasm, when linked with what was to become the modern scientific world-view, would be transformed into a closed system of mechanistic causation, without room in it for the "freedom" he thought he was securing against the interference of the theological creator. But there can be but little doubt that the moral energy of the materialistic movement, arising from motives like Lamettrie's, gave modern materialism its widespread popularity and supplied a logical ground for the materialism of modern political movements such as communism.

The point, here, is that the fundamental motive of the love of freedom is more powerful in determining the *interpretations* placed upon scientific discovery than the "intrinsic" meaning of such discovery. It could and should be argued that *there is no intrinsic meaning* in scientific facts, apart from human purposes, and that the over-riding purpose in all human activities is the pursuit of freedom. Since the days in the nineteenth century when scientists first began to rationalize their method, we have become considerably wiser in our understanding of the complexities of human motivation. "Facts, justly arranged, interpret themselves," is a plausible expression, but hardly a true account of the origin of scientific hypothesis. "How odd it is," said Darwin, with more wisdom than some of his contemporaries, "that anyone should not see that all observation must be for or against some view, if it is to be of any service."

It was said above that the *over-riding* purpose in all human activities is the pursuit of freedom. This is obviously not the *only* purpose. When Gordon Allport speaks of the "consternation" caused among scientific psychologists by the question of freedom, he is taking note of a very natural devotion to "order" on the part of these professionals, who find it difficult to imagine how they can practice their science at all except "within the framework of strict

determinism." What Prof. Allport and Dr. Sinnott, however, are busy calling to our attention is that you cannot have freedom except at the cost of a little order. The beautiful simplicity of a mechanistic system has much to recommend it, but if you can't account for the action of human beings within it, then you must get rid of either the human beings or the system: you can't have both.

This is the mood of the pioneers of present-day science. Today, "Mechanism" and closed mechanical systems are the barriers to freedom. In the seventeenth century, it was the idea of God, the theological God of the elaborate and powerful church organization of that time, which made men seem unfree.

The problem today has far more subtlety, of course. In the seventeenth century, the alliance between the Church and the coercive power of the State—justified by the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings—was obvious and the injustices it fostered were direct and overt. The oppressions of Mechanism are of an entirely different character. Mechanism as the expression of "scientific philosophy" is slowly being recognized as a prejudicial influence through its far-reaching psychological effects. Mechanism, for example, makes a naturalistic ethics practically impossible. It makes the theory and practice of science amoral. It refuses, in short, the prestige and authority of science to any type of ethical thinking or philosophy.

Now since science is the chief form of intellectual activity and expression in our age, the divorce of science and ethics tends to undermine the foundations of responsible thinking. Ethics without science seems to be ethics without the dignity of a serious theory of knowledge. But men *need* ethics, today, as they have never needed them before. In default of a scientific ethics, it is quite possible that men will move in the direction of an abandonment of science. A plain desperation attends the affairs of men, these days, and in desperation men do things without counting the full cost. They may abandon their respect for science and the scientific attitude without realizing that this is the equivalent of throwing into the dust-heap the entire usufruct of modern civilization.

Thinking of this sort is at least partly responsible for the contemporary efforts to make the scientific outlook more hospitable to those qualities in human beings which feed and support man's ethical striving. Science can no longer *afford* to remain oblivious to the moral realities in human life, for the reason that human beings can no longer afford to support and practice such a science.

What this amounts to is a demand for the assertion of human values as primary values, and the redefining of the assumptions, fields, and methods of science in terms of those values. This, as Dr. Sinnott clearly points out, is disturbing to men engaged in an endeavor which has explicitly rejected those values in the name of freedom—freedom for research. What remains to be pointed out is that the rejection of human values by the scientists took place at a time in history when human values were so closely interwoven with theological claims and "values" that there seemed no other way to free science from theological supervision. Atheism and materialism may, therefore, have been historically necessary—even if philosophically ridiculous—but this is no longer the case, today. Is the freedom won for man by science now to be sacrificed to science itself, in the name of an outworn notion of causal relations and to preserve an oversimplified "orderliness" which was never really orderly because it wholly neglected the inalienable originality of the human spirit? Is science, like Jehovah, to condemn poor Adam for eating of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil?

Actually, the pursuit of freedom has been the overriding motive in human life throughout the history of both religion and science. From the early days of Christianity in the West, until the Reformation, the devotees of "orderliness" in religious thinking were kept busy suppressing heresy and establishing rules for the preservation of orthodox belief. A heretic is, quite simply, a man who insists upon freedom—freedom to choose for himself. In scientific thought, the interest in maintaining an area of freedom—and moral responsibility—for man has had multiple effects. This motive was undoubtedly the driving force in the thought of the Emergent Evolutionists, who

proposed that freedom is somehow the "novelty" which results from the complex interplay of mechanistically operating forces. Mathematical philosophers strained after the same result, although the rigor of their intellectual discipline obliged a somewhat compromised conclusion. The best they could do was to propose that, since mechanism, in man, is so vastly complicated in its operation, the tracing of effect back to cause becomes a practical impossibility, so that we shall always at least *seem* to be free and this similitude, they suggest, is "just as good as" real freedom, since we can never really know the difference between ultimately free and ultimately predetermined actions!

A characteristically ruthless solution found by hardier souls, mostly physicists and mathematicians, is the purely technical way out of the dilemma of the Positivists. Since science, they say, can know nothing of "Reality," but studies only the phenomena of sense perception, the question of freedom has no reality at all for science; or rather, science has nothing to say on the subject, and therefore, no responsibility in relation to this weighty issue. Thus the Positivist, according to his inclinations, which may be various, may remain indifferent to the question of freedom, or he may choose whatever set of religious or philosophical opinions appeal to him, without an attempt to relate them to his scientific activities. Not all Positivists, of course, permit themselves this casual attitude toward the problems of freedom and knowledge, and there are other, more constructive destinations to be reached along the road of Positivist thought, but the denial that science brings us any closer to ideal conceptions of the nature of things can easily be taken as a license to avoid any possible philosophical implications of science and scientific theory.

The point is that, whenever the implications of a system of belief which denies or tends to deny human freedom become plain, the result is either revolt and rejection of the system, or elaborations of the system to provide loop-holes through which freedom may enter. Even if the devices to admit freedom are weak and illogical, the strong human love of freedom lends them a validity not really present in the reasoning which designed them. Thus

the vulnerability of the "vitalists" to the charge of "sentiment" and "wishful thinking," and thus the slow multiplication of biologists of vitalist tendency who are becoming convinced that the scientist who is on the side of freedom is also on *the side of life*.

Dr. Sinnott is one, we may say, who discusses the situation openly, and, in order to avoid the logical weaknesses afflicting most of the attempts to smuggle "freedom" into the mechanist universe, is now proposing a postulate which will, in some measure, turn vitalist weakness into strength. He suggests the possibility that *mind*, as a natural principle, is present with, an intrinsic expression of, indeed, is the same thing as, *Life*. The essential characteristic of mind is purposive striving, and since the comprehension of the living world which biology studies is virtually impossible without this postulate, an entire universe of new possibilities for the life sciences is thereby opened for investigation. We have not read Dr. Sinnott's three books published since 1950—*Cell and Psyche*, *Two Roads to Truth*, and *The Biology of the Spirit*—and so are unable to say how far he has developed this idea in the direction of becoming an effective ingredient in scientific hypothesis. But of one thing we are sure: Dr. Sinnott stands at the portal of the biological science of the future.

## *REVIEW*

### DOOR TO MYSTERIES

IT was a happy thought of Bantam Books to bring out N. Richard Nash's *The Rainmaker* in a twenty-five-cent paperback edition. We don't know if the Paramount film of the same name captured the delicately whimsical quality of this slight but fascinating play, and we may even avoid finding out, in fear of disappointment or of blurring the impression which reading it creates. *The Rainmaker* may be thought of as a "Western" to which a strong infusion of Robert Nathan has been added; or, if you haven't read Nathan, Lord Dunsany.

The play is a light-hearted comedy about eternal types of human beings—dreamers and "realists." What makes it particular fun is that these types emerge in a conventional "Western ranch" background. You can read it in an hour, or less, but you can't stop thinking about it. This doesn't make the play either "deep," or "art," but as a story it is probably unforgettable. What it has, heaped up, pressed down, and running over, is the element of wonder. You keep wondering if that crazy character with his otherworldly wisdom, his harum-scarum past, and his role as a beneficent paraclete in the life of a lonely, unmarried woman, will actually *make it rain!*

This is what makes the play—the hope that magic works. You know, and everybody else knows, that believing in magic is silly. But you and everybody else will still enjoy *The Rainmaker*, which gives a secret life to the hope that magic is somehow possible. If you say that magic is all fake, then you cast yourself as the dutiful but dull brother who wants his sister's affairs kept on a sensible basis. If you hope too much, and get carried away, you cast yourself as the dreamy younger brother who lives in the clouds. But most people will be somewhere between the two.

This door into a world where anything can happen—where the wildest dreams can come true is essential to one kind of great literature: the

*door*, that is, not walking through it easily. The door is there, but you can't get through it. Not being able to get through it satisfies the demands of our rational nature, while the fact that it is there satisfies the human longing for mysteries behind the veil of everyday life. Great drama is played at the threshold of that door, giving hints, sometimes, about what lies beyond. And since hints can be given, we get the feeling that *someone* has gone through the door, into the other world; that it is not *just* a work of the playful imagination. But we daren't suppose that going through the door is easy. This would spoil the dream.

There is a curious kinship between *The Rainmaker* and an essay by C. D. Broad in the December 1956 *Journal of Parapsychology*. Prof. Broad is a distinguished English philosopher. He entered Trinity College, Cambridge, more than fifty years ago, which gives some idea of how long he has been weighing the serious doings and thoughts of his contemporaries. In this article, which is a review of half a century of psychic research, he begins by stating his own views—probably "feelings" as much as "views"—and here, if we mistake not, is another sort of instance of the role of "wonder" in the life of a man. We strongly suspect that the flavor in Prof. Broad's work—the touch he seems to have with real issues; the *value*, in fact, of his thinking—would not be there at all, were it not for this quality of wonder. When Mr. Broad started at Trinity in 1906, three of the "founding fathers" of the English Society for Psychical Research were Fellows of the College. It was considerably later, however, that his real interest in psychic research began. But at Trinity he did come under the influence of John McTaggart:

McTaggart, the Fellow of the College who directed my studies in philosophy, held that he could prove by purely philosophical reasoning the eternity of each human mind, and could show that its eternity would appear under the form of time as beginningless pre-existence and endless post-existence cut up into an infinite sequence of finite lives. He was by no means hostile to psychical research or unreasonably

skeptical about its findings. But he was quite uninterested in it, having a strong preference for the *a priori* over the empirical method of reasoning. I was not convinced by his arguments, and I feel in my bones that conclusions of that kind cannot be established in that way. But it is owing to McTaggart that I have come to take the doctrine of metempsychosis seriously.

Turning to psychic research, Prof. Broad continues:

When I reflect, I find it very hard to say what originated and what sustained my interest in the subject. Unless I am very much deceived about my own desires and hopes and fears, it is not and has never been bound up with a wish to gain assurance of human survival of bodily death. I have never been able to take a cheerful view of men's capacity for happiness as compared with their susceptibility to suffer and their readiness to inflict pain and misery, and I cannot regard myself or most of my fellows as conspicuously appropriate candidates for immortality. For my own part I dread survival rather than hope for it and should be relieved if I felt more certain than I do that death will be the end of me. Nor do I feel any keen desire that others should survive.

I cannot pretend, however, that my interest in the possibilities investigated by psychical researchers is *purely* scientific and philosophical. I do indeed hold, and I believe argued in my writings, that the dispassionate investigation of these alleged phenomena is of extreme intellectual interest and importance, just because they seem *prima facie* to conflict with nearly all the most fundamental presuppositions of the natural sciences, presuppositions which have worked and do work extraordinarily well, both in theory and in practice, over an enormously wide range. That alone should suffice to call forth in a professional philosopher with a scientific background an active interest in psychic research. But I am fairly certain that this has not in fact been my only motive.

Unless I am much mistaken, I find in myself a positive wish that the orthodox scientific scheme should *not* be adequate, and that there should be room for something which I can only describe as "magic." Cardinal Newman, in his *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, confesses that when he was a child he had often wished that fairy tales might be true. The kind of "fairy tales" which Newman managed to believe when he grew up are very different from those which I am inclined to swallow. But religion and magic probably

spring from a common root, and I think that I understand and share what he had in mind. I am sure that something of this sort, which I cannot describe more accurately, has been a motive more fundamental than mere intellectual interest in a few *prima facie* cracks in the otherwise seemingly water-tight system of scientific presuppositions. Being well aware of this emotional bias, I have striven to allow for it. How far I have succeeded I do not know.

Apart from the independent interest excited by this statement as a point of view, what Prof. Broad says has the added attraction of a revealing candor about himself. A fine sense of balance, we may think, requires that the "door" to mystery be no more easily accessible to him than to others; in his case, the barrier is created, not by an inability to "believe" in immortality, but in the curious fact that, given a choice, he would prefer *not* to believe in it!

Taking him at his word—and anything else would be presumptuous—we must conclude that he inclines to serious regard for the doctrine of metempsychosis, or reincarnation, out of sheer intellectual honesty. Denial of survival after death seems less logical to Prof. Broad than the "gloomy" prospect of another life.

But he has more to say:

I dread rather than welcome the prospect of survival. I doubt whether that would be the normal human reaction, unless the kind of survival in prospect were held to be predominantly and irremediably unpleasant. My own emotion is the reaction of an unusually timid, unenterprising temperament, moved more by fear than by hope or by any positive desire for experience, adventure, and self-assertion or self-sacrifice. Fortunately most men and women are wonderfully enduring and resilient, and many are surprisingly bold, enterprising, and adventurous. These characteristics are the outstanding virtues of quite ordinary human beings, and those who have them to a normal degree would almost certainly welcome the thought of survival and not dwell upon its risks. I suspect that those who positively desire extinction fall into two very different classes. The one consists of those who, like myself, are subnormal in these respects. The other consists of a few elite, such as the Buddha, who have gained, through long and strenuous experience and effort, an

effective intellectual and emotional realization of "the red mist of doing," and have thus earned, and (we may hope) won, their discharge.

We shall always enjoy reading Prof. Broad because, knowing of this curious switch—*his* impersonal devotion to logic and reason makes him tend to accept immortality or reincarnation rather than be against it—we shall expect him to hold unusual opinions and to defend them with great originality! We shall expect of him a liberated mind, because he is searching for truth the hard way, and his "hard way" is the way that most other people find easy. We may even confess to a bit of envy, since what is hard for him is no more than an attractive temptation for us! And if he, most modest man, classes himself as "subnormal in these respects," what shall we poor believers do for claims of modesty? The situation is impossible.

But his comment continues just and reasonable.

Whether or not a man will in fact survive the death of his present body, I think that the *conviction* that one will do so is for most men a morally useful belief to have, provided that the following two conditions are fulfilled. The first is that it should be a really effective conviction, capable of influencing one's actions, and not the mere conventional parroting of a verbal formula. The second is that an essential part of the belief should be that those ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, which are known to be beneficial or to be harmful to one's character, personality, and intellect in this life, are likely to have similar effects on the character, personality, and intellectual equipment with which one will enter upon one's next life.

The latter proposition is almost a necessary consequence of any seriously held belief in survival. For there is no sense in saying that the mind of a certain person has "survived" unless there exists after his death a mind whose character and dispositions are fundamentally continuous with those which he has built up during his life.

Provided that these two conditions are fulfilled, the belief is likely to be morally valuable, whether it be true or false. It has the peculiarity that, if it should be false, no one who holds it will ever be in a position to discover his mistake and thus to suffer

disappointment and disillusionment. Even if false, it will encourage behavior beneficial to one's character and intellectual equipment in *this* life; and, if it should be true, such behavior can hardly fail to improve one's prospects in the life to come. For these reasons, even if I were fairly sure that it is false (which I am not), I should hesitate to undermine it or to associate myself with measures tending to do so, unless it happened to exist in a specially terrifying or enervating form as to subserve (as it sometimes has done) sinister interests in the community.

Prof. Broad is indeed a nonconformists' nonconformist! He sails full circle in the sea of thought, and wonders, speculatively, if the dream of a life hereafter may once again be embraced by "sinister interests" and threaten to subvert the calm resignation of a happily agnostic community. We can't quite keep up with him, although the Brahmin threat of a round dozen of incarnations in the body of a worm for all those who neglect the proper due of the Brahmins, is doubtless what he has in mind.

In conclusion, and in mild retaliation, we dare to suggest that his "modesty," while not a pose, is more than a little of the Socratic kind.

**COMMENTARY**  
**STILL MORE ON "PHILOSOPHY"**

THAT the titles of three of the articles in this issue, and now—counting this editorial—four, involve the word "philosophy" is a wholly unplanned coincidence, but seeing them there might easily give one pause. Is MANAS overloaded with serious (read "dull") material? We could of course easily change one or two of the titles, but why, after all, should we apologize for stressing "philosophy"?

According to Miss Kathleen Nott (see *Frontiers*), philosophy is just beginning to recover from bad habits which have perverted it to unwonted and inappropriate purposes for something like fifty or seventy-five years. Its anxious pursuit of "exact certainty," in imitation of science, has been, she shows, both a folly and the expression of an inferiority complex on the part of philosophers. This made philosophy obscure, bad, and uninteresting, and gave it a poor reputation for the general reader.

Why, then, indulge the prejudice growing out of philosophy's bad reputation, and be shy about the word—especially since MANAS is itself an effort to restore respect for philosophy and to urge for it the meaning which Miss Nott implies?

The attempt of philosophy to "be like science" was of course doomed to failure. Science seeks mechanistic conclusions, as this week's lead article points out, while philosophy, being concerned with what is good for man, seeks conclusions of an opposite character. How, then, can philosophy ever become science?

But what both science and philosophy may share—bringing them rather close together—are the intellectual virtues of impartiality and clarity. For one reason or other, perhaps because scientists have sometimes been exemplary practitioners of these virtues, it has been supposed that the Scientific Method has exclusive title to them. This is of course nonsense. Philosophy, it might be said, is concerned with how freedom

may best be used, while science is a report on what results from actions already taken.

For man, that is, philosophy charts the future, and science the past. You don't *need* the idea of freedom to tell what has already happened, or what is certain to happen—which is a good explanation of how science was able to develop without it. But when you come to make choices about the future, a point of view which excludes the role of choice is nothing less than insanity. No wonder philosophy has been confused!

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF ROBERT M. HUTCHINS

A RECENT Meridian volume, *Freedom, Education, and the Fund*, collects Robert Hutchins' most significant addresses of the years 1946-56. For educators and others who urgently feel the need for a philosophical approach to "civil liberties issues," this book is an outstanding reference. Although his title indicates content on the purposes and activities of the Fund for the Republic, Mr. Hutchins is mostly concerned with using the Fund to illustrate the general dilemma of the outspoken intellectual today. For the truly cosmopolitan thinker—the man who seeks truth wherever he may find it—is compelled to defend his principles by defending men with whom he shares no common interest other than the right to be heard. By temperament and record, Mr. Hutchins is just about as many removes from being a Communist or a Marxist as one can imagine, yet it is precisely because he is not a political ideologue that he is able to turn ideological battles into educational ammunition. When he defends the theoretical right of a Communist to teach in an American university, he, and all who take this position, are not defending the Communists, but the right to dissenting opinion, as provided for in the Constitution of the United States.

Even for those who are familiar with the addresses contained in *Freedom, Education, and the Fund*—and it is unlikely that even Hutchins' most consistent admirers have seen them all—its brief introduction will be valued for its account of Hutchins' own life and his review of the essential principles at stake in academic or other civil liberties. He concludes the introductory essay as follows:

At a large meeting at which I spoke recently it was suggested that the address, printed in this volume, on the Bill of Rights would be much improved if it said that the Fund for the Republic was

set up to fight Communism by defending and advancing the principles of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. This would mean that if there were no Communists in the world there would be no need for the Fund, and presumably no need for the Bill of Rights when it was adopted. Admitting that Communism is most important and a most important threat to civil liberties, I believe it is still possible to say that your primary interest is in something else, like education or the general defense of civil liberties, without laying yourself open to the charge of un-Americanism.

Due process and the equal protection of the laws are the basis of our society. The Constitution provides for emergencies. The laws prohibiting espionage and subversion must be obeyed and enforced. If I insist that every person accused of crime must be given a fair trial, that accusation is not proof, and that the presumption of innocence extends to every man accused of anything, I do not expect to be called a criminal or pro-criminal or anti-criminal. One would suppose that the best way to display one's Americanism would be to insist on justice under the law. To insist on it only for those who are sure to get it anyway does not seem a profitable expenditure of energy. I should have supposed that the test of one's Americanism would have been whether one was prepared to insist on justice under law for the scurviest and most unpopular persons around. They are the ones who need it.

And if they don't get it, we may be certain that, if events run riot, eventually nobody will get it.

One address, "Education and Independent Thought," further develops the necessity for subtle distinctions in evaluating Marxist leanings or communist affiliation of a professorial candidate:

I do not know a great deal about the inner working of the Communist Party in America. It is represented as a conspiracy, with everybody in it under iron discipline, which I take to mean that its members and supporters have given up the privilege of independent thought and have surrendered themselves entirely to the Party. If this is so, a member of the Communist Party cannot qualify as a member of the university community in any field that is touched by Party policy, tradition, or discipline.

But what if we should find a member of the Communist Party who, in spite of this presumption,

did think independently? The fact of membership cannot and should not disqualify him from membership in the faculty of a university in view of the additional fact that he does not act as members of the Party are supposed to act. I cannot insist too strongly that the primary question in every case is what is this individual man himself, not what are the beliefs and activities of his relatives, associates, and acquaintances. When the life of the individual has been exposed before us for many years, and when he has neither acted nor taught subversively, the doctrine of guilt by association can have slight value. A man who is a bad member of the Communist Party may conceivably be qualified to be a professor, because he has retained his independence; and a good member of the Party may be qualified to be a professor if he retains his independence in the field in which he teaches and conducts his research.

I use these examples to make my position clear and not because they ever occurred in my experience. Whether I would have had the courage to recommend to our Board the appointment of a Marxist, or a bad member of the Communist Party, or a good member whose field was not affected by the Party line is very dubious indeed. But in the most unlikely event that such persons ever came over my academic horizon, uniquely qualified to conduct teaching and research in their chosen fields, I ought to have had the courage to say that they should be appointed without regard to their political views or associations. The reason why I ought to is that it is of the first importance to insist that the popularity or unpopularity of a man's political views and associations shall not determine whether or not he may be a professor. If we once let go of the Constitution and the laws as marking out the area in which a professor is free to operate as a citizen and of the ability to think independently as establishing the standard he must meet as a scholar, we are lost.

This passage, to our way of thinking, is the most balanced treatment of a ticklish theme we know of. Mr. Hutchins is not so much trying to establish a position around which others can rally as he is patiently explaining the nature of the problem. The solution is not easy—even for Hutchins, as he frankly lets us know—but it is mandatory, in the interests of "liberal education," at least to make clear that the problem is *not* simple. This is what our "younger generation" above all needs to know—and the younger generations to follow. How else is a youth to

comprehend the incredibly complicated difficulties encountered by a Nehru, who does his best to thread his way through clamoring partisanship? How else is youth to be prepared for decades in which the "threat" will be neither nazism nor communism, but something no one has yet even imagined? We must, in short, learn to show some respect for even another's delusions—or what we regard as his delusions—in order to recognize the truth which may be in them, so that we remain capable of fair dealing.

We should like to reproduce everything Hutchins says on Education and Freedom, but, lacking both space and permission, we close with some passages from his farewell address to the students of the University of Chicago:

One of the most interesting questions about the higher learning in America is this: why is it that the boy who on June 15 receives his degree, eager, enthusiastic, outspoken, idealistic, reflective, and independent, is on the following September 15, or even on June 16, except at Chicago, dull, uninspired, shifty, cautious, pliable, and attired in a single-breasted grey flannel suit? Why are the graduates of the great American universities indistinguishable, even by their grammar, from the mass of the population who have never had their advantages? Their grammar may perhaps be accounted for by the deficiencies of the American schools, the ineradicable marks of which are borne by our fellow countrymen to their dying day. But what about the intellectual interest, the willingness and ability to reason, the independence of thought and character, the

*Spirit of youth, alive, unchanging,  
Under whose feet the years are cast,  
Heir to an ageless empire ranging  
Over the future and the past—*

What about that? Why are the alumni organizations of the country, except that of Chicago, dedicated to the affectionate perpetuation of all the wrong things about their universities? Why do the massed graduates of American universities behave in the same way on the same kind of occasions as the massed followers of the most celebrated cultural institution of my native city, the Dodgers?

The answer must lie in the relative weakness of higher education compared with the forces that make everybody think and act like everybody else. Those

forces beat upon the individual from his birth up on almost a twenty-four-hour-a-day basis and constitute the greatest obstacle with which the schools have to contend; so that it can now be seriously argued that since education cannot cope with the comic book it should absorb it and substitute elevating and instructive comic books for textbooks. The horrid prospect that television opens before us, with nobody speaking and nobody reading, suggests that a bleak and torpid epoch may lie ahead, which, if it lasts long enough, will gradually, according to the principles of evolution, produce a population indistinguishable from the lower forms of plant life.

## *FRONTIERS*

### Rethinking Philosophy

CONTRIBUTORS to the British monthly, *Encounter*, reflect the view that amateurs are more interesting than professionals, whether in politics, serious writing, or philosophy. In an essay recently quoted by MANAS (Dec. 26, 1956), Dwight Macdonald commented on the superiority of English literary criticism, explaining that a good number of independent Britishers write because they feel like it and are able to say exactly what they think. Since there is less of a professional clique in Britain and less mechanized "staff writing," there is room for originality and noticeable variety of opinion. An *Encounter* article by a clergyman held that the ferment in religious thought seems to have left professional clerics unaffected, alone in an eddy off the main stream of reevaluation. And in the field of philosophy, Kathleen Nott, writing for last October's *Encounter*, has much the same thing to say when she remarks that "the disease of philosophy is that it has become completely academic and professional." Miss Nott, who is a "professional" author but an "amateur" philosopher, continues:

What is the cure, if any? I do not think it will be found within the walls of any university. What is required is that the amateur should come into his own again and rejoice in his status. This statement requires amplification. The amateur, or at least the anti-professorial need, is at least partially realised by both the other leading European philosophical developments.

It is not insignificant that the dialogue form was favoured in earlier philosophy. Questions and answers which spring out of the activities of living require both a dramatic and an inconclusive expression. Amateurs might take heart from this and help to unify the language again. A philosophical advance may now be expected to come rather from the literary and creative side than from the scientific. Philosophy in fact must become again what it used to be, an art, giving up the attempt to be what it cannot be, a science.

A talk delivered recently before a faculty group at the University of California at Santa Barbara, by Prof. Paul Wienpahl (a sometime MANAS contributor), is evidence that not all the "professionals" are satisfied with the categories established by their predecessors. His discussion centers on the relationship between the concepts of "God," "Free Will," and "Morality," with intent to declassify rather than classify—to reduce some of the formal arguments of philosophy and theology to expression that will allow anyone a place in the discussion. Relating elements in the Existentialist's position to the thought of both Augustine and Spinoza—an unusual twist—he shows that the psychological content of philosophy must be separated from its form, if it is to be grasped in contemporary terms. We reproduce some portions of Dr. Wienpahl's talk, then, as a contribution to that "re-thinking of philosophy" which seems so important. An educative religion is philosophical psychology, and must replace the old theological jargon with new definitions. This is often accomplished by a mulling over of just such familiar terms as "God" and "Morality":

The way of words is often difficult. For depending upon the manner in which we take them, they may be opaque or they may be transparent. When the way of the words is with "God," the way is dark when we take them literally.

If God created the world, how can there be evil? For, if God is good and if nothing can come from nothing, then there should be no evil. In dealing with this and other matters, St. Augustine invented a curious conception which came to be called the doctrine of predestination. The conception is this. God created man free in the person of the first man. By the wrong use of his freedom Adam sinned, thereby condemning all men to sin. Redemption is by God's grace. But not all men will be saved. For, by the initial act of man, we are all destined to sin and, thus, to be withheld from the Realm of Grace. And, as the creator, God must be completely free. Therefore, he does not have to save all men. Such a need would constitute a limitation on His freedom. Thus, you or I may or may not be saved. In either case our salvation rests not with us.

Yet embedded in the doctrine is the notion that morality involves freedom. God as the completely moral being must, *ipso facto*, be free, completely free.

The insight that God—to use this word now for the moral being—the insight that God can do no wrong appears after the Middle Ages, although it is usually blurred by the insistence that morality lies only in rationality.

Morality involves an act of affirmation (which Augustine called "faith," when he spoke religiously, and "will" when he spoke philosophically). One may then sense from this addition that morality is not simply a matter of reason and, hence, control. It is also a matter of becoming something and of stepping, thereby, beyond precedent (beyond good and evil). To speak without caution, one might say that a moral act is a creative act, an unique act. It is not an act which is a tracing out of a pattern laid down in heaven.

Thrasymachus, Hobbes and Spinoza were, each in his own way, right on this point: morality is conventionality. One is moral, in the sense in which this term is ordinarily used, when one is leading the shadowy life of a copy of the original. One is moral, in the sense which Augustine hazily saw in thinking of God, when one is the original. (In other words, the term "moral" is not indispensable.) Existentialists try to be God. In this lie their agony and their dignity.

A paradigm in this matter is the child-parent relation. The parent lays down the law. By this means the child learns. If he obeys he is a good child. In disobedience he is a bad child. As children we receive inevitably the impression that we are living out something which has been lived before. Then you see a new meaning of responsibility—responsibility to yourself.

This insight appears in Spinoza's conception that there is in reality no right and wrong. It appears in a way in the view of Kant and Hegel that when men are completely rational (and hence moral) there will be no need for laws and government—or for morality in the conventional sense. It appears later in an existentialist's writing as the man's seeing of himself. Only he who is free is "moral," is living not as a child, and is thus completely responsible. His acts are the unique acts, the acts for which there is no precedent.

This, it seems to us, is an original sort of "reconstruction" in philosophy; departure from the tendency to develop one "system" from another.

Returning to Miss Nott: "Preoccupation with system-making," she writes, "reflects an obsession. A system, too, is a side of ideas and leads to battle and the attempted overthrow of another side of ideas: while, if you are trying to prove something, you have to argue, and also to develop a strategy of argument, a process which always throws up smoke screens and obscures." Miss Nott is also notably "objective" concerning false notions of objectivity. She describes the historical trend which arranged the banishment of ordinary persons from the realm of philosophical inquiry:

What the logical analytical schools rightly proclaimed was that the standard of exact certainty, of truth, was scientific, depended on the organisation of activities which could be exactly repeated but which could not be finally described in a verbal language. This development of philosophy looks logical and coherent, and in terms of its professed aim it is so. But perhaps the quest for certainty was misleading; perhaps truth, in this sense, was never the natural or inevitable philosophical goal. If the philosopher had not been deflected from his natural and more nearly spontaneous pursuits by an attempt to compete with science on its own ground, he might not have reached the present lamentable case in which he is driven to despise or neglect what always used to be his other normal functions.

There is no sense in denying that the physical and mathematical sciences did provide us with exact standards of truth, of verification in the sense of control and prediction. The question I wish to ask is whether or not they did not also provide the philosopher, not through their fault, but through his emulation, with a kind of inferiority complex which led to an abnormal deflection of his *interest*. He became preoccupied with proof and certainty and progressively ignored the fact that both individually and historically it had been other inducements which started his philosophising.