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THE "DESERT ISLAND" APPROACH

IT was a theme of the plays of Luigi Pirandello that the discovery of oneself, as one is, instead of as one thinks himself to be, is often the most shocking experience that can come to a human being. Pirandello's pessimism was obviously predicated on the assumption that a man's idea of himself is usually a falsely flattering one, so that self-revelation results in extreme psychological pain. In the drama, such self-discovery comes as a consequence of circumstances and events which strip away one's fond illusions, and this, perhaps, exhibits the difference between dramatic art and philosophy. The philosopher undertakes to find his essential being by a process of self-criticism. He looks as closely as he can at himself and his thoughts, in order to discover what he is about, and, if possible, what he *is.*

The most persuasive urging that we know of to philosophical research of this kind, published in recent years, is Richard B. Gregg's *The Self Beyond Yourself* (Lippincott—issued in India as *A Compass for Civilization,* by Navajivan). The search for the self, in Mr. Gregg's book, takes the form of an examination of one's basic assumptions. What do you believe and why do you believe it? Is there a difference between what you think or say you believe, and what you really believe? What, in short, are your first principles? Are you consistent about them? Where do they lead?

There are many ways in which this sort of questioning may be pursued. Sometimes the questioning is forced upon the individual by activities which bring an unexpected result. For example, there have been cases of devoutly religious young persons who were led from bewilderment to frustration to some sort of psychotic break by the study of general semantics. They found that, in the terms of their study, the word "God" had no longer any meaning for them at all! This was too much for them to bear.

From a religious point of view, semantic analysis is unquestionably iconoclastic, so that a happening of this sort does not tell us what was the "truth" of the matter. What it does show, however, is that these individuals were extremely vulnerable to critical examination of their beliefs, and that they could no longer "stand" themselves as they appeared to be when those beliefs were shattered. Possibly the beliefs shouldn't have been shattered, but needed reform instead. Perhaps the young persons in question were a bit neurotic to begin with. It is certain, at any rate, that philosophical self-examination ought not to unseat the reason, and that when it does, either what was examined, or the method of examination, had major defects.

Now it is also the case that considerable strength of character is needed for determined self-examination. Self-examination means a lot more than looking at one's "conscience," which is often no more than judging one's behavior according to some pre-established moral code. Real self-examination must decide upon the acceptability of the moral code itself. What is the motive for following the code? Is the motive itself acceptable? Where does the code get its authority? And, finally, by what standard will such questions be answered?

Very few pursue the search to this point. You get pretty "naked" and friendless if you go that far, for this is the point at which no one can help you. The common practice is to stop asking questions much earlier in the analysis, allowing one's unexamined inclinations to become the basis for all other judgments. The place where a man stops answering questions is usually reached when he begins to realize, if only subconsciously, that to

continue will mean to question the value of matters with which his entire life is bound up. These subconscious blocks represent the ground and foundation of his life. If they can be questioned, his whole life can be questioned, and it takes a strong man to question his whole life.

It is for this reason that we may call Socrates a great man, for he was able to question his whole life. In fact, Socrates held that the questioning of one's life is the true vocation of man. He maintained that by continuous questioning, a man protects himself from foolish, useless, or delusive enterprises, and enables himself to be always capable of absolute honesty. He also protects himself from the agony of disillusionment.

A man who questions himself must question a lot of other things. He must question everything which affects him, either directly or remotely. He is born, for example, into a community and society which maintains certain assumptions embodied in custom and tradition. A familiar pattern of behavior is expected of every individual in that society. The theory of government, the economic system, the prevailing ideas of justice and morality—all these are founded upon assumptions which must be examined. The Socratic man—the philosopher—can take nothing for granted. He may, in the end, decide to accept many of the forms of behavior and customs of his neighbors, but he will do so only after determining what his attitude is to be toward them and after finding reasons acceptable to *him* for his conformity. One good reason for conformity in certain relationships is that it may amount to simple consideration for others, who would be pained or confused by anything else. Socrates, for example, was always extremely courteous, even when challenging the ground of the beliefs of other men. He also exhibited an impressive loyalty to the Athenian State, even when exposing the corporate act of that State, in condemning him to death, as both stupid and unjust. It was Socrates' habit of questioning which enabled him to reject some of the beliefs and behavior of his countrymen, while accepting other things they were used to.

The imitation of Socrates is an ultimate form of the philosophic life. But there is another way in which, by use of the imagination, a man may pursue much the same questions. That is by adoption of the "desert island" method of research.

Suppose a couple of hundred people—chosen from your friends, from people in public life, or from anywhere, such that you get a sufficiently diverse population—were transported to some Pacific isle, and stipulate that there is no hope of "rescue" which they can look forward to. You should have a preacher or two, some businessmen, a couple of criminals, some politicians, poets, artists, teachers, and plenty of "ordinary" folk. The question is, what will these people now do with their lives?

The reason for the desert island is that this is an environment which sets definite and obvious limits to human ambition and expectations of familiar forms of achievement. What, for example, will happen to the man whose emotional energies have been entirely devoted to working for "national security"? He will have to find a new occupation. And the politicians will be unable to operate as in their previous life, on the basis of resounding slogans. The problems are immediate and practical. Of course, you can vary the circumstances and the population at will, to change the limits of opportunity for what we commonly call "progress.

Suppose you were there all by yourself. This is a very difficult situation—abnormal, in fact, since to be divorced from all contact is so bleak a prospect that philosophizing may seem silly. Yet the situation has its provocatives. A man so isolated would be driven to seek companionship with nature, making it reasonable to ask what are the potentialities, here? Would the final good, for such a man, be essentially different from the final good for a man who lives among a crowd of other

humans? The question is not altogether meaningless.

But, going back to companionship with the two hundred—the number needed, according to the sociologists, for a face-to-face community in which everyone is able to know everyone else pretty well—it seems clear that a lot of the complexities common to our society would be automatically eliminated. The question then becomes, how much of *ourselves* is eliminated along with the complexities?

There is a sense in which extreme isolation from the environment familiar to a man is very much the same as death. Presumably, death strips us of everything but—*what?* So, similarly, what will be left of us on the desert island? We shall have to eat and have shelter and clothing, of course.

The two hundred will find any number of new skills blossoming among them. People who once did only superficial things like counting money in a bank and computing interest may experience a sudden accession of new life, simply from learning how to be productive. You will have "admirable Crichtons" by the dozen. Human occupations, by becoming essential occupations, will increase the wholeness of life. No doubt typical human ambitions will reshape themselves to the limits of the new situation. The politicians will politick, the preachers will preach, and the teachers will teach. But politicking among only two hundred will afford less scope for rabble-rousing. A teacher can be engrossed with only one pupil, but how can you have political relations of any "significance" among only a handful of people? What sort of "ideology" can develop among two hundred? The politician, here, at least, will be apt to have to do a little something besides politicking.

The artists, perhaps, will be at home on the island. The artist will paint for two hundred instead of two billion people, having to ask himself if, after all, this matters so very much.

What we are finding out, manifestly, is that those who have been concerned with the mechanics of social and economic relationships haven't very much to do, on the island, but that those who deal with immediate human need will have plenty to do.

So much for the "public" side of life. In their private lives, the inhabitants of the island will experience similar expansions and reductions. The call upon inventiveness and ingenuity will be much greater for everyone. Each individual will have to learn to be much more of a man than he was in the mass society of the present, simply in order to survive. At the same time, every kind of pretentiousness will be cut to a minimum. Those whose self-esteem has depended upon a glib participation in the artificialities and frothy "culture" of a mass society will suffer immediate deflation. Bohemia will no longer exist, nor any of the mannerisms of the little coteries which are created by such phenomena as women's fashions, the movies and the television industry. Likewise the spurious aristocracy of high finance will be dissolved, and every kind of status which results from the skillful exploitation of a mass population. Everyone, in short, will have to submit to the external compulsion to live a simple life.

The real service which a device like the "desert island" performs is that it obliges us to consider how much "stripping" we can endure. The "stripping" process is of course a standard one for philosophers who are also mystics. Stripping is essential for discovery of the essential meanings of existence. There is a sense in which the philosopher is engaged in a race with experience. He tries to anticipate the meaning of what is to happen before it happens. If he can do this, he may be able to maintain his balance. For example, the investors in the stock market who lost everything they owned in 1929, and who thereupon committed suicide, were simply unable to conceive of a life which could go on without what they had lost. They were vulnerable to this kind of stripping. To be vulnerable to stripping is

not of course very different from being vulnerable to acquisition. A person can be ruined by having too much, "too much," in this case, meaning possessions which he does not need or cannot use for some constructive purpose, so that they become confinements or preoccupations instead of tools.

Socrates never acquired much of anything, probably because he could never see any point in acquisition. He had nothing to gain, as a man, from possessions, and therefore nothing to lose.

Socrates, it is true, is not a figure who appeals very much to common sense. Why, when there are "worlds to conquer," should we see how little we need to get along? Would you tear down all the great buildings, erase the monuments of technology, and plant all the people of the world in little face-to-face communities far away from one another, as Lao-Tze proposed? If there is any sense to the natural world, some of that sense must be that nature is there to be used!

This is a difficult argument to meet. The philosopher might meet it with a paradox. He might propose that the discovery of the self is possible only through exactly the sort of involvements which this objection proposes; that the mistake is not in the achievements of man, but in supposing that the achievements *are* the man. No human being, it is true, can accomplish much of anything without putting some of himself into what he does; the philosopher says only that a man can't put *all* of himself into what he does without suffering self-destruction. What a man makes is finite and limited, and what is finite and limited always goes to pieces, and then, if he has lost himself in his creations, the man goes to pieces, too.

But even this explanation strikes a moralistic note. The fact is that we are able to feel completely "right" or natural only when the resolution of our difficulties is not theory, but reality; when, through a creative act which engrosses the whole nature, we fulfill some deep relationship with the world around us, yet, at the same time, are able to envision other relationships and do not feel inextricably "tied" by what we are doing or have done. The solution of difficulties, whether logical or practical, comes, then, only from moment to moment, and represents the balance arising from actions which are ends-in-themselves, without ulterior motives.

For the man who still has longings and dreams, the ideal of complete "detachment" has an air of unreality, and to long for "detachment" is as bad as the longing for anything else. Any kind of longing looks toward a life in the future or in the past. Yet it is natural for human beings to long. Perhaps the answer is that we may long as men, without distorting our lives, if we can preserve some "longingless" center of awareness that never forgets that all longings wear out and die. Here, perhaps, is the meaning of pathos, and the rare beauty of a passing glory—both an exquisite part of human life.

The value of the examined life is not that it leads to the suppression of high dreams, or to the abandonment of achievement. The examined life is a life in which it becomes increasingly difficult for a man to do things, to pursue ends, for which, in some obscure department of his being, he feels only contempt. This is what the stripping process can achieve for a man. And it is surprising how much of his life a man can control, once he decides what it is he wants to do with it, and what, on the other hand, is not worth doing.

This is the same as saying that when a man makes a determined effort to eliminate the compulsions to unworthy or useless behavior that he has himself introduced, he finds it much easier to eliminate the compulsions introduced by circumstances. Or, to put the matter in another way: men are captives of their circumstances, "victims" of their environment, *partly* because they want to be—because they are captives to things in themselves which match up with the compelling forces in their environment.

There is always *something* a man can do to be free.

There is, however, one kind of voluntary servitude to the superficial, the unnecessary, and even the unnatural, to which the self-respecting individual may consciously submit. In a world largely constructed of interlocking techniques of captivity, you can never escape entirely without taking leave entirely. To break entirely with undesirable processes, you would have to find a desert island in fact, or seek some lonely refuge with an acre of land and a goat. We have no doubt that the really great reformers had very little personal need of reform—that, indeed, they found their patience tried by the mechanics and machinery of reform which their age and country seemed to require. The means of reform, at best, are no more than the vocabulary of ideals and motives in use at the time.

Such men are like Plato's philosopher who re-enters the cave, not because he feels at home there, but because other men do. So, just as a man who is looking for the truth learns to have a wise patience with his own longings, until he understands exactly what they mean, so the philosopher acquires patience for the longings of the world, working with them as they are.

This is the mood, in fact, in which Plato concludes the ninth book of the *Republic*. The ideal city which Socrates has been discussing with his companions, the latter finally realize, is a *tour de force* of the imagination. As Glaucon observes, it "exists in idea only." He adds, "I do not believe that there is such an one anywhere on earth!"

Socrates replies:

> In heaven there is laid up a pattern for it, methinks, which he who desires may behold, and beholding, may take up his abode there. But whether such an one exists, or ever will exist in fact is no matter; for he will live after the manner of that city, having nothing to do with any other.

REVIEW
FAILURES OF "THE OATH"

LOYALTY BY OATH, a Pendle Hill Pamphlet by Hallock Hoffman, offers a condensed history of the loyalty oath—from the days of kings who were tyrants to the "loyalty committees" of present-day State legislatures. Mr. Hoffman endeavors to prove that oaths never work, that—

> They have never guaranteed loyalty, or protected those who demanded them from disloyalty. They are contrary to the nature of man and to that view of the good society on which our Republic stands.

Mr. Hoffman begins with Henry VIII's notorious requirement of a new religious allegiance from his subjects when he severed connections with Rome in order to marry Anne Boleyn. In its wake came unrest, intrigue, and plans for revolution from the ranks of those who were forced to sign. Finally King Henry, having done away with Anne Boleyn some two years later, prepared a new pledge of lifelong fidelity in behalf of the new successor to the king's bedchamber.

In 1679 a further Act was prepared "for preventing dangers which may happen from Popish Recusants." The Act required that loyal subjects should in no way tolerate "the doctrine of the incarnation of the body and blood." By 1678 the formula for testing religious loyalty had become quite elaborate:

> I doe solemnely in the presence of God professe testifie and declare That I doe make this Declaration and every part thereof in the plaine and ordinary sence of the Words read unto me as they are commonly understood by English Protestants without any Evasion, Equivocation or Mentall Reservation whatsoever and without any Dispensation already granted me for this purpose by the Pope or any other Authority or Person whatsoever or without any hope of any such Dispensation from any person or authority or without thinking that I am or can be acquitted before God or Man absolved of this Declaration or any part thereof although the Pope or any Person or Persons or Power whatsoever should dispence with or annull the same, or declare that it was null and void from the beginning.

Now we come to the Quakers and other men of conscience, who did *not* adhere to Catholic doctrine, but who refused to take this oath, on principle. Mr. Hoffman writes:

> It was this kind of oath that George Fox and William Penn refused to take. They, and hundreds of other Quakers, went to jail because they would not swear, even though they believed the statements about the transubstantiation the oath would have required them to make. They would not be compelled. They declined to promise to believe tomorrow even what they believed today. They had given themselves wholly to the leading of Truth, as revealed to them through worship and waiting for the spirit of God. If their understanding of the will of God should direct them in the future to accept the doctrines of the Catholic fathers, no promise to any man must bind them. The higher loyalty to God prohibited their unreserved loyalty to any man.
>
> But chiefly, they would not be compelled. For them, God did not give man the right to extract a promise by force. Force was brought against them, but they persevered. In the end, because they were unafraid, and their cause appealed to the sense of justice in their fellow Englishmen, the oppressive laws were repealed.

In his *Treatise of Oaths* (1675), William Penn wrote:

> ". . . when men grew corrupt, they distrusted each other, and had recourse to extraordinary ways to awe one another into truth-speaking, as a remedy against falsehood; else, what need had there been of an Oath, or any extraordinary way of evidence, when every syllable was freighted with truth and integrity? . . . if swearing came in by perfidiousness, distrust, dissimulation and falsehood, it is most just that it ought to go out with them; . . . Honesty needs neither whip nor spur; she is security for herself; and men of virtue will speak truth without extortings, for oaths are a sort of racks to the mind, altogether useless where integrity sways."

"What about the people," asks Mr. Hoffman, "who like to take loyalty oaths? Some men say they enjoy every opportunity to make a public declaration of their loyalty. For them, the loyalty oath is not the creator of the love of country; it may be a chance to speak that love, but if it is, it is a strange tongue. The language of love is

affirmative. What lover sighs to his beloved, 'I love you, and always will, and hate those other people, and always will'?"

An interesting document in loyalty-oath lore is the comment of Senator John H. Dent, Minority Leader in the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, during debate on the infamous Pechan Bill. Dent's remarks reflect the dilemma of most politicians, as well as, in this case, the integrity of a conscientious American:

> Mr. President, I would be derelict in my duties to the Democratic Party if I did not vote for this piece of legislation today. I agree in principle and in fact with statements... [of opponents of the bill.] This legislation should not be before us today. . . I cannot permit my party to be further stigmatized as a party friendly to un-American activities... [My] vote in 1945 . . . [against "removing the communists from the ballot by legislative act"] was vindicated, because it was declared unconstitutional, but all the newspapers and the people in my community, who felt that they were doing what they thought was right, burned me in effigy upon my front lawn and, although I was characterized as a Red and a near Red or a "pink," or whatever you want to call it, there was never an apology made to my family, there was never a word of retraction made after the bill was declared unconstitutional. So, . . . in the face of that injustice, in fairness to my family, I will vote for this legislation . . . We are living in a day when men will hide behind the decent emblem of patriotism to do things that they would not do openly, but as a leader of my party I must subscribe to the days that we live in. . . Mr. President, I will vote for this measure because the injustices of the day demand me to vote for it.

Mr. Hoffman concludes with an explanation of why many Quakers will always stand and be counted among those who fight the *principle* of the oath, whatever its content:

> The loyalty oath is magic. It depends for its power on fear. Those it entraps, both the swearers and the sworn, are possessed by fear. Men cannot be both afraid and free. To be free they must be in possession of themselves alone—or of themselves and of God.
>
> What the loyalty oath does, and all it does, is to extort a confession of non-intention. A free man cannot make such a confession without surrendering his rights of private belief and personal conscience. That Quakers generally abhor violence is conceded by most non-Quakers. That they should with such convictions refuse to say so under pressure is incomprehensible to those who favor loyalty oaths. What we object to, those of us Quakers and others who don't like loyalty oaths is not what is said, but the conditions under which we must say it. We oppose the force and violence of our government, applied to the conscience of its citizens.

COMMENTARY
TIME OUT

THERE are moments when we wonder what Socrates was like when he was not going about among the Athenians, asking his troubling questions. Or, to say the same thing in another way, after writing an essay which pursues (or, more modestly, tries to pursue) the method of Socrates, we begin to think that the novel is a vastly superior form for this kind of inquiry. The novel allows for intervals of "living" between those climaxes of insight from which we learn. The novel dresses moral problems with the intimacies, conflicts, and even the comedies of human relationships, making its conclusions, when they dawn upon the reader, seem the natural fruit of the story.

How deadly to be continuously "questioning" oneself! No time for poetry! No time for romance! Just those measuring questions and moral judgments!

Yet the people who have this faculty—you may meet one or two, in a lifetime—are the least self-conscious in the tiresome sense, and they have more natural joy, more humor, than all the others. This is what the essay (or maybe it is just the ordinary essay) fails to convey—the full, rounded life of the essentially wise. The questioning process, for the person of maturity, is no more a "deliberate" or studied practice than the drop of the little pieces of colored glass in a kaleidoscope as you turn it. The wisdom or the maturity lies in the completely natural way of assessing or questioning—it is a level of life rather than a collection of virtuous practices.

Years ago we came across a strange book concerned with the life of insects—*Instinct and Intelligence,* by Major R. W. G. Hingston (Macmillan, 1929). The author writes with extraordinary competence on a fascinating subject, but most interesting of all is his theory, noted by Bertrand Russell in the Introduction, "that instinct began in a reasoned act which gradually became unconscious." Russell, of course, finds this a bit ridiculous, but the Major's opinion seems as reasonable as anything the "fortuitous concourse of atoms" boys have to offer, and is an explanation which has plenty of parallels in human experience. The intuitions of the wise, for example, are surely of this order, for, if not, where did the wisdom come from? The mind of the "naturally" just man is a mind long schooled in habits of impartiality, until, at last, he forgets the exercises and becomes simply just.

Wisdom, like wit, is always direct, effortless, spontaneous. But it would be an intolerable offense to us poor mortals to be obliged to believe that this quality was not somehow, somewhere, *won.* So the stuffiness of the essay will have to plead the poor virtue of a growing pain, a mere rehearsal, or an imitation of the example of great men searching for the good.

Friendly poets continue to send MANAS verse, although we do not—or almost never—print it. And here is a case in which the essay acquires great desirability, for we often wish that the poets would write a little prose along with their poems, so that we could more easily discover what they care about and what they mean. A stubborn skepticism holds us back from reading most contemporary poetry—prejudice or willful blindness, it may be, we stick to that—yet here are some lines by Grove Becker that break the rule:

> Curious boughs bend to my passing,
> the branches overhear. My love is common gossip.
> I cannot hide my laughter anywhere.

Poetry sometimes provides the image of man simply being human, forgetful of past, unasking of future, vulnerable, yet strong, a well of possibilities but with no impatience for the unattained. A man who is simply being a man sheds comparisons as a flower at its first full blooming—he is more, as correspondents occasionally remind us, than any essay can contain.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
EDUCATION IN CRITICAL THINKING

THE suggestion that we investigate *Everybody's Business—Our Children,* by Mauree Applegate, has proved a welcome introduction to the need for cultivating a critical faculty in the very young. Miss Applegate thinks that integrity of character cannot be separated from the desire to think evaluatively. Since "character-building" is admittedly a process that can begin with young children, both at home and at school, the subject of how a child's critical capacities may be encouraged deserves attention. Miss Applegate writes:

> Critical reading and thinking can and must be taught during the first eight years of an elementary school child's life. Only as it becomes part of a child's pattern of learning will critical thinking become a part of his living. An American's only weapon against propaganda is his ability to think and read critically. He must armor himself against the inroads of unscrupulous or coercive advertising, clever propaganda, and the misleading treatment of news in unethical newspapers. The attitude of "Why?" and "What is the source of this information?" and "What is behind this opinion?" must be always with him. He must doubt as he reads, as he listens and as he looks. Like the Pilgrim Fathers, he must take his weapons with him wherever he goes—to the radio, to the television set, to the town meeting, to the religious service, to the movies, to the labor temple, and to the corporation board meeting. He can no longer have a whole-hearted respect even for what his senses tell him. Like the Quaker of old, he must believe hardly anything he hears and only half of what he sees.

A constructive critical attitude, of course, must be encouraged in the home. The child first learns the habit of questioning from his parents, and unless the original impulse is given in this way it may prove difficult for a teacher of thirty or more pupils to accomplish much in this direction. However, a parent's preparation to help a child to critical awareness is not so different from preparation for good citizenship. No one can vote or speak his mind intelligently on an issue of public concern unless he endeavors to "think all around" the question. And as Miss Applegate puts it, "it is good for every conservative to read at least one liberal newspaper in addition to his favorite conservative newspaper. What he reads there may be distorted, but this very distortion may enable him to see more clearly the issues at stake. A newspaper at either extreme, left or right, works like a distorting mirror at a fair. It may reflect only the truth, but it enlarges some parts of the truth and compresses others. Reading a paper that has a policy sharply different from his own will help any intelligent reader to see the truth more clearly. The reforms which are effected in a democratic country are often brought out first in liberal papers. The liberal ideas of one era tend to become the conservative ideas of the next."

Miss Applegate's suggestion to teachers is that, beginning as early as the first grade, they should encourage the children to wonder about whether what they hear is really true—and then the approach should be, "Let us find out together." Practical suggestions for the later years include the following:

> When statements clash in a class, and each speaker is sure he is right, train the children to seek sources of information immediately and read orally to prove their points.
>
> Clip an article on a startling current happening from both liberal and conservative newspapers and let the pupils of the upper grades see how the treatment of the news twists public opinion. Making a practice of doing this throughout a school year greatly sharpens the critical reading of youngsters. It is better to clip articles from such papers than to let young children read the entire paper.
>
> Keep on the lookout for headlines that twist the meaning of the items that follow or that use such words as *goon, wap,* etc., to prejudice readers before they read the article.
>
> Make a collection of headlines that mislead.
>
> Read articles in *The Readers' Digest,* and talk about the phrases and words that color your opinion for or against the authors' viewpoints.

> Distribute advertisements to each member of the class and let the children look for the words and phrases that make the public want to buy. Let each child rewrite an advertisement without the selling words and notice how the sales appeal lessens.

It is not surprising to find that Miss Applegate warns against teachers and parents placing too much reliance upon the "I.Q." on the principle that "it is a parent's and a teacher's business to accept children's endowments, which they cannot do much about, and to work on children's habits, about which they can do a great deal." She says:

> I have a feeling that the less said to children of the elementary school about their intelligence the better. The only part of our intelligence with which the world is concerned is that which we use. Life does not say to us, "What is your I.Q.?" It judges us by what we deliver. The boss at the factory is more impressed by our output than by our intelligence quotient, and our community judges us more by how we act than by what we know. The only help we can get from knowing a child's I.Q. is a rough estimate of his capacity to learn.

A child of a high I.Q. is not necessarily immune to propaganda, either the political or the advertising variety, unless he can think critically and feels that his integrity as an individual depends upon exercising this faculty. His technical intelligence, in other words, will not save him from becoming a cog in someone else's machine.

Miss Applegate's emphasis reminds us of discussion here some years ago regarding the teaching of "Controversial Issues" in high school classrooms. The high school student often needs help in getting away from the all-too-prevalent prejudices of his parents and grandparents—and needs to know that any subject in the universe *can* be discussed without bias. And for those who are privileged to encounter a high school instructor who knows the value of free discussion, the kind of early-age instruction suggested by Miss Applegate is invaluable preparation. What we all need most, parents as well as adolescents, is the capacity to evaluate our *own* opinions critically. The child who is not afraid to be proved "wrong" can become the adult who is never fearful of looking critically at his own ideas.

Miss Applegate also encourages the very young to work for the things they want. Becoming a part of the adult world means "critical thinking" more than it means anything else, but financial responsibility is another important accomplishment. When discussing the purchase of a costly toy or conveyance, Miss Applegate remarks that the child needs to be protected against the effects of a too "lean" or a too "generous" allowance.

> If he wants something special—a bicycle, for instance—which takes long planning, he should, if possible, help to earn the money, no matter how rich his father is. Many a man who got his money the hard way ruins his son or daughter the easy way. Children need to learn early how to work and how to go without this in order to have that. They need the maturing influence of regular chores or jobs fitted to their age and development. They need encouragement in developing new work projects. They need to learn the responsibility that goes with borrowing ahead on an allowance.

All in all, *Everybody's Business—Our Children* (Row, Peterson & Co., 1952), is a mine of useful suggestions for parents and teachers. Miss Applegate teaches education at La Crosse State Teachers College in Wisconsin, but her book is singularly free of "educationist" jargon.

FRONTIERS

Against the Grain

THERE is something about scientific reports, tabulations, and "experiments" that seems so alien to Love, Ethics, Values, and Altruism, that your reviewer felt a distinct skepticism as well as an uneasy discomfort in taking up the papers presented at a recent conference sponsored by the (Harvard) Research Society for Creative Altruism. Love is indeed the theme of more than one of the papers, along with other transcendental topics, and one does get the impression that these delicate conceptions occasionally come in for some rather rough treatment in being dragged through the processing devices of the scientific method. What is interesting, however, is the compulsion under which these distinguished contributors to the conference felt obliged to confess their transcendental interests.

In the first place, the very existence of a "research society" for the investigation of creative altruism is a symptom of the times. Twenty years ago, such a group would have been almost unthinkable, and even today, there are doubtless many in conventional academic circles who regard this body as something of an oddity. Yet thinking of this sort has been slowly making its way against the grain of the scientific temper, and bringing all sorts of strange combinations of the humane spirit with the dehumanized and behavioristic techniques of the scientific method.

An account of the attitudes of the charter members of the group provides interesting confirmation:

> First, almost without exception, each of the members, in his own professional life, had been reaching for answers to the same questions, had braved the scorn or belittlement of colleagues and friends, and was ready "to stand up and be counted" for his convictions.
>
> Secondly, even among the charter members themselves, there were inadequate concepts and vocabulary to make for an easy consensus.

The Founder of the Research Society for Creative Altruism is Pitirim A. Sorokin, emeritus professor of sociology, Harvard University. The program of the Conference, which was held in Cambridge last month, connects Mr. Sorokin's interest in altruism with the fact that, in I918, he was saved from a firing squad in Russia by "the altruistic action of a former student." In 1949, when Mr. Sorokin was helped (by Eli Lilly and the Lilly Endowment) to form the research group, he proceeded on two assumptions: (1) "That none of the prevalent prescriptions against international and civil wars and other forms of interhuman bloody strife can eliminate or notably decrease these conflicts"; and (2) "That . . . unselfish, creative love, about which we still know very little, potentially represents a tremendous power . . . provided we know how to produce it in abundance, how to accumulate it, and how to use it."

The platform of the Society declares the ineffectiveness of "conventional" solutions for human problems, unless supported by an informed recognition of moral law:

> Universal education, good will, high-minded protestations and a plethora of organizations dedicated to peace and the welfare of mankind are all essential—but will be effective only when armed with more efficient knowledge of the moral laws and more efficient tools for their application to the affairs of man.
>
> The Society believes man can make the earth one morally, can transmit to all peoples new knowledge of the moral laws, and will thus enlarge his concept of the moral universe and its creator.

A certain awkwardness attaches to comment on this enterprise, arising from the feeling that, after all, "altruism" needs no endorsement from official science and academic authority. If we are to overlook this anomaly, it must be on the ground that the "moral qualities" of human beings will gain overt recognition from the sciences only through acceptance by some such "admissions committee," so that, when the writer of a scientific paper wishes to refer to "altruism" as something

which presumably exists, he can give a reputable source for the claim in an appropriate footnote. The phenomena of man's psychic capacities have been slowly making their way to recognition by this means, through the labors of Dr. Rhine and others, and probably a similar procedure is necessary in regard to what the Society bravely refers to as the Moral Law.

The meaning of all this seems to be that if you are to gain the ear of a scientific audience, you must practice a certain conformity and wear badges of allegiance to certain well-established techniques of "discovery." But there is nevertheless a justification for "all this." Where among contemporary institutions will you find any rigor and discipline, besides the fields where science is practiced? The study of altruism could hardly be delegated to organized religion, since such matters have supposedly been the special prerogative of religion for nearly two thousand years. Religion, in the conventional sense, cannot help—cannot, that is, lend *order* to the enterprise—for the reason that conventional religion is largely responsible for the elimination of the "moral qualities" from the scientific picture of the world and of man. The excesses of Christendom in the name of "morality" or "righteousness" will have to answer for the extremes of atheistic and materialistic reaction, so that some other channel of re-entry into serious thought must be sought for the "new" philosophy.

With this apology, then, for the curiously institutional approach to altruism and moral law adopted by the Research Society, we may turn to the papers themselves. (These papers are all to be published in a volume devoted to "the 1957 Conference on New Knowledge in Human Values," to be issued by Harper and Brothers in 1958.)

Most of the contributors have appeared in quotation in MANAS during recent months. They include Gordon W. Allport, Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Jacob Bronowski, Theodosius Dobzhansky, Erich Fromm, Kurt Goldstein, Robert S. Hartman, Gyorgy Kepes, Dorothy Lee, Henry Margenau, Abraham H. Maslow, Pitirim A. Sorokin, Daisetz T. Suzuki, Paul J. Tillich, and Walter Weisskopf. At the cost of neglecting particular insights, we shall endeavor, here, to present a theme which is explicit in two of the papers, and hinted at in others. These two are the papers by Walter Weisskopf, professor of economics, Roosevelt University, and Abraham H. Maslow, professor of psychology at Brandeis University. For the theme itself, however, which is by no means new, we draw on another, much earlier work—*Of Fear and Freedom,* composed by Carlo Levi while confined in Italy under the watchful eye of his Fascist captors during World War II.

Of Fear and Freedom is a devastating analysis of both totalitarian politics and totalitarian religion, written in a somewhat poetic cipher for the protection of its author. Discussing the human situation, Levi proposes that man "begins" by arising from the primeval chaos, from the unity of undifferentiated life. Human existence represents a kind of suspension between the unity of the past and the ideal unity of the future—a unity constituting a return to the One, but with the individuality we have fought for and gained, which we did not have in the mother sea of life. The institutions of society are means by which we relieve the pressure of this suspension. In religion, for example, we find symbols of the unity we long for. The sacraments are supposed to symbolize ultimate religious experience. But the difficulty with symbols is that they may be taken for the "reality," and there is no more debilitating substitution which human beings can practice upon themselves. To "settle" for a symbol—this is what happens when a man allows his religious beliefs to take the place of and ease the struggle for self-realization. In the name of individual achievement, we allow a kind of "virtue-by-association" to do service for the strenuous course of self-creation which our natural evolution or development as human beings demands. From the viewpoint of Levi's analysis, this amounts to

falling back into the undifferentiated sea, to *losing* our individuality, while wearing only the painted face of pseudo-spiritual man. This is the terrible deception imposed by institutional religion, and, in other terms, by the totalitarian state. Both advertise conformity as a way of achieving what is in fact denied.

Now to the papers submitted at the Conference on "New Knowledge in Human Values." According to Mr. Weisskopf—who is, let it be said, a most unusual economist!—the human situation is essentially characterized by self-consciousness, which produces the tensions in man's life. Self-consciousness generates a sense of self, a sense of separation, and a corresponding longing for union. Union, he says, is *the essence of ultimate values.* Throughout life, a man may gain "moments" which represent union—"peak experiences" through which, by some transcendental paradox, the finite and the infinite meet. The closing of the "split" brought to human life by consciousness is the goal. As Mr. Weisskopf puts it:

> . . . the union of opposites and the harmonization of the basic existential split are the goals of human striving and form the essential content of ultimate human values. There are however, two avenues towards this union which I shall call *union downwards* and *union upwards.* These two avenues stem from two basic tendencies of all living matter: a *regressive* tendency towards the dissolution of the existing state and the restoration of a previous, less complicated state on the one hand, and a tendency toward *individuation* on the other hand.

This is the heart of Mr. Weisskopf's paper, but its full development in the Harper volume is worth waiting for, since the elaboration is both imaginative and original—if not especially "scientific"!

On this foundation may stand all sorts of "value-judgments" concerning the present-day black-out of individuality in the cloud of conformity. The paper is a metaphysical argument for individuality from the postulated nature of man.

It is probably not altogether fair to select from seventeen pages of manuscript by Mr. Maslow the lines which confirm and amplify in another way this sort of thinking. Yet it is the *scheme* which stands out in both papers. Maslow speaks of "the low Nirvana and the high Nirvana, the primitive communion of regression, and the communion and unity of progression and of transcendence." Mr. Maslow's "self-actualizing person"—the phrase is probably destined for over-popularity—is one who finds "moments of eternity" all along the spiral path of development: "It is true that there is a single, ultimate value or end of life and it is *also* just as true that we have a hierarchical system of values, complexly related." He adds:

> We are again and again rewarded for good Becoming, good growth, by transient states of absolute being. . . [or] "peak experiences." . . . Now, this is like rejecting the notion that a Heaven lies someplace beyond the end of the path of life. I do reject that, for my paper. Heaven, so to speak, lies waiting for us throughout life, ready to step into for a time and to enjoy before we have to come back to our ordinary life of striving. And once we have been in it, we can remember it for ever, and feed ourselves on this memory and be sustained at time of stress and tragedy.

We have run out of space. As one last suggestion, it occurs to us that if you were to go back into antiquity and gather up an assortment of Neoplatonist and Gnostic thinkers, and then set them down in a room in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, instructing them to make their reflections comprehensible to the twentieth century, you might get something like the guarded deliberations of this Conference held under the auspices of the Research Society for Creative Altruism.