

THE IRON AGE

IT was a custom among the ancient Spartans to send out secretly into the countryside a selection of their ablest and most promising young men, armed only with daggers, with the instruction that they were to hide during the daytime, but at night were to fall upon all the Helots—who served the Spartans as slaves—they could find, and kill them. On one occasion, Thucydides relates, some two thousand Helots were spared by the Spartans and promised their freedom for their bravery. The Helots were honored with garlands and led from temple to temple, and then, without explanation, they suddenly disappeared, the manner of their deaths remaining a mystery.

In *Zero*, a study of the history and techniques of terrorism, by Robert Payne (John Day, \$3.50), the author describes the process of destruction followed in the death camps of Germany during the war:

At Helmno a large mansion surrounded by woodlands was chosen as the place where the prisoners were received. As the trucks unloaded, a representative of the Sonderkommando made a short speech, promising good treatment and adequate food. "You must not be afraid of us; we have your interests at heart." They were then reminded that they were dirty after a long journey, and told to take a bath while their clothes were disinfected. The rooms on the first floor of the mansion, where they were taken, were made pleasantly warm. Half an hour later, wearing only their underclothes, they were led downstairs along corridors where signs read *To the Medical Officer* and *To the Bath*. The arrow beneath the words *To the Bath* pointed to a door, and beyond the door lay the gas-wagon. Guards were waiting just outside the door to club the prisoners who refused to enter the wagon. Three hundred forty thousand men, women, and children were exterminated at Helmno.

What is the merit of examining these horrors once again? In Mr. Payne's book, while the horrors are repeated in some detail, it is not done in order to surfeit the reader with the gruesomeness of twentieth-century nihilism, but for the more constructive purpose of reaching some measured

conclusion about the meaning and cause of nihilism. It is time such a book was written. Other books which list the facts of endless destruction and incalculable cruelty—books like David Rousset's *The Other Kingdom*, the anonymous *Dark Side of the Moon*, and the reports of the Nuremberg Trials—are the raw material of the sort of inquiry that Mr. Payne has undertaken, but they are only that. *Why* such things have taken place, and, as Mr. Payne is careful to point out, are taking place today, is the important question.

With the young Spartans, the hunting of the Helots may have been some kind of "game" intended to initiate them into the practical arts of bloodletting, in which, as history tells us, they became extraordinarily proficient. And at the distance of two or three thousand years, their exploits take on a somewhat stylized and legendary character. The Helots left no literature to proclaim their dignity as men. In the story, they play the part of gymnasium pieces on which the Spartans "worked out," and they were also useful as drudges on the farms. That is the way classical literature tells about it, and that is the way we accept it. But when five or six million Europeans are systematically destroyed—when the "industrial" processes needed to bring about their extermination became so extensive as to interfere with the efficiency of the Nazi war machine, and yet were continued—this abhorrent idea is almost beyond the power of the modern mind to comprehend.

It is really a problem of the nature of man, for there is as much mystery in the capacity of human beings to inflict such unspeakable evils upon one another as there is in the tales told of the spiritual greatness and power for good of a Buddha or a Christ—the difference being, of course, that we are forced by current history to believe in the evil, while the good is known to us only as scriptural assertion or from oral tradition.

Terrorism, as a branch of psychological science, Mr. Payne makes clear, is a method of reducing the individual to a cipher. The theologies devised to justify and support the terrorist or nihilist credo may be various, but the practical result is always much the same. The Nazi death camps belonged to the logic of an inexorable punishment for the Jews—they were to be made to feel their guilt and to suffer a kind of living death before they were finally exterminated. The program of the Soviet concentration camps differs in that while they, also, are intended as punishment, and as a means of devaluing the individual, an expedient advantage is taken of the prisoners in these camps: they must work at tasks useful to the Soviet State before—rather, *as*—they die.

The camps, however, are rather a part of the "technology" of terrorism than an explanation of its basic theory. For this, Mr. Payne goes back into the nineteenth-century to a strange Russian youth, Sergei Nechayev, who was author, with Michael Bakunin, of *The Revolutionary Catechism*, on which the theoretical as well as practical ruthlessness of all later nihilism seems to have been based. There is a sense in which "romantic" is a term of opprobrium, meaning an unwillingness to face the realities of human experience with discipline, and in this sense, the nihilist is the worst sort of romantic. He is the embodiment of the inverted Promethean will—instead of wanting to create the forms of human freedom, he determines to destroy all forms of social relationships in the *name* of freedom. He is like the oriental fanatic who, as an act of religious devotion, hurls himself under the wheels of the car of Juggernaut, except that he wants to grind an entire social order to powder. Then, he says, from the dust, may arise another way of life, created by the emancipated workers. As one of the last paragraphs of the *Revolutionary Catechism* puts it:

. . . the [revolutionary] society has no intention of imposing on the people from above any other organization. The future organization will no doubt spring up from the movement and life of the people, but this is a matter for future generations to decide. Our task is terrible, total, inexorable and universal destruction!

The nihilist program is always "realistic" toward acts of destruction, utopian toward what is to happen after the destruction. It is often pointed out that, almost invariably, instead of freedom, the nihilist creates a rule of the terror through which his destruction has been accomplished. Not just Dachau and Buchenwald and the 455 other concentration and death camps instituted by the Nazis were ruled by terror, but all Germany was held together by the grip of fear. Toward the end of the war, Germany, as several have said, was one vast concentration camp in which were contained still more concentrated centers of the administration of terror. For the Nazi ideologists, as their defeat became increasingly apparent, the war took on more and more the aspect of a rite of total destruction. Destruction is simple, uncomplex, and it is within the power of man. He can give himself completely to an act of destruction, while telling himself that in what he does is reflected the grandeur of creation. Destruction is the easy way to a sense of power—it is the pact with the Devil, the will to purge the world of its misery by destroying *everything*.

It would be a mistake to suppose that nihilists and terrorists are ordinary men, although, as Mr. Payne observes, all men have something of the nihilist and the terrorist in them. Nechayev, Lenin, Hitler, his principal examples from recent history, were all men capable of a kind of impersonal ardor. The nihilist may be a fanatical egotist, but with this difference, that the power of his life comes from some sort of "feeling" about the sufferings of others. But this feeling is early transformed into the ferocity of hate. He begins by hating a particular class or nation or race, and ends by hating, in almost the same terms, everyone who opposes him. But what the nihilists do is to be distinguished from the actions of common criminals for the reason that they create a nihilist ethic to justify themselves and to attract followers. It is foolish to call such men mere brigands and thieves. Brigands never start great movements of revulsion by capturing the imagination of the world's hopeless millions. The nihilist knows some kind of a secret which gives him access to the victims of frustration and alienation. People who have surrendered themselves to fear are easy prey for

the nihilist's propaganda. They have already recognized as supreme the weapon which he has learned how to use to perfection.

Further, it is difficult to be sure that the nihilist does not believe his lies, at least some of the time. He has the intensity of religious conviction, and it is this which his followers feel, which gives them the faith they hunger after. He believes in his act of destruction, and they, having fear in themselves, believe in his belief. There is indeed a vicious circle in the development of nihilistic attitudes. Not to believe in the power of destruction is to declare a certain immunity to fear—and yet, this power of destruction is itself the only salvation from fear that the convert to nihilism admits. If I, he says to himself, can become so terrible that everyone fears me, then I shall have no one to fear; and I shall be master over all men! or, through my leader or my State I shall participate in this rule instituted by the power of destruction.

Quite possibly, we shall not understand the problem of terror until we have worked out some comprehensive explanation of the power of theology over the human mind and adopt a serious approach to the old, old mystery of good and evil in human life. It should be evident that the nihilist is first of all a theologian with an absolutist theory of evil. He thinks that evil is rooted in some men and in the systems they have made, and that the way to get rid of the evil is to destroy the evil men. He is another Jehovah, bent upon destroying the first-born of his tribal enemy, in order to strike fear into their hearts and to demonstrate his supreme power over them. A theology is a theory of supreme power and of how that power is used to wipe out the evil and establish the good.

It is theology, then, which has laid half the world in ruins and condemned the other half either to poverty or to extreme anxiety in relative comfort. Guns and bombs—even atom bombs—are not what menace the world, but ideas in the minds of human beings: the idea that destruction can purify, that evil can be killed, that fear is a weapon that can be made to serve mankind. Even from the depths of the Peter and Paul fortress where the Tsar put him, Nechayev "wielded vast and secret power over the destinies of

the foremost revolutionary society in Russia." After nine years of confinement he regained connections with the outside world through prison guards whom he converted to the revolutionary cause. He became a legend in the Russian underground, inspiring and directing plots against the Tsar, and planning the coming revolution.

Nechayev died in 1883 at the age of thirty-five, after spending eleven years of his short life in prison. But his "work" went on. His *Revolutionary Catechism* was used by the Tsarist police in the forged Protocols of Zion; he was admired and copied by Lenin, and his doctrines filtered through various sources into the mind of Adolf Hitler. The history of his influence is the history of how hate for some men grows into hate for all men; of how the doctrine of power through terror, at first directed against the evil in the world, eventually is directed against all human beings, as the very principle of order.

If to what Mr. Payne reports in *Zero* are added many things he leaves unsaid, it becomes difficult to avoid the conclusion that the modern world recognizes as the most powerful those who have the most contempt for human beings. This is the equivalent of saying that Nechayev has converted or half-converted the world. The importance of Mr. Payne's book lies in the fact that it may be the beginning of a type of study of modern history which, as it develops, will make it impossible to ignore the direction in which we are moving. The simple truth seems to be that the Nechayevs of the world cannot be fought with their own weapons without making over the world in their image. To refuse to use his weapons will be, of course, an ultimate decision—a choice that will become possible only when the facts are seen and recognized. And that choice, when it comes, will mean the end of fear, even if men take it only because they see, at last, that there is nothing else to do.

Letter from **SWITZERLAND**

GENEVA.—In June 1950, the OIR (*Organisation Internationale des Refugie's*) is scheduled to cease activity, its duties being assumed by some other organization.

At this time, despite the most strenuous efforts of the OIR, there will remain some 150,000 refugees still homeless and in need of care. Many of these are what are called "difficult cases," *i.e.*, old people without financial resources or friends, men and women who have no longer any nationality. There are the sick and the infirm and the blind, all unable to work. On the other hand, there are the intellectuals and the artists who are automatically refused by the committees of "screening"—a heartless method of selection which one officer of such a committee told us thoroughly revolted him. It was, he said, treating human hearts like so many oranges rolled down a board containing holes of various diameters. The oranges were chosen according to their size, regardless of their quality!

While the manual worker finds a job without too much difficulty, the professor, the doctor, the writer and the engineer, as well as trained specialists and professional men and women, meet with almost insurmountable obstacles because they demand special conditions. Few employers are either sufficiently far-seeing or philanthropic to engage those whose financial return must remain hypothetical at least for a time.

Yet the OIR continues to hope and to present new plans for the amelioration of such situations. During the three years of its existence, it has found homes for more than 880,000 refugees.

Those still held in prisons and in concentration camps present a problem whose tragedy is as great as is their own obscurity. It is one of the cruelest marks of our epoch of wars, hot or cold, that traffic in human lives resembling the slave trade should be so prevalent.

Let us hope that the labours of the OIR will not be allowed to end thus abruptly before their task is accomplished.

SWITZERLAND CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

THE GREEKS HAD NO WORD FOR IT

THAT more and more of the classics of literature are becoming available in inexpensive, paper-cover editions, along with the Westerns and whodunits, is one of the happier aspects of mass publishing. Even a four-color process illustration on the front of Thoreau's *Walden* cannot possibly dilute the contents, although one might wish that the publishers had dared to include the essay on Civil Disobedience, as is the case with some other editions. And now, the Mentor Classics have brought out the W. H. D. Rouse translation of Homer's *Iliad*, making it available for thirty-five cents. Dr. Rouse calls his version "a translation into plain English of the plain story of Homer," and there is no denying that his somewhat lighthearted treatment of the conquest of Troy has felicities which the American reader will enjoy. It is put, as the publishers say, into "colloquial English prose," and while readers with a secret respect for the Olympians may wince a little when they learn that Pallas Athene is known to her best friends as "Bright Eyes," instead of the bright-eyed one, much can be forgiven a man who attempts an honest fidelity to the Homeric spirit.

We brought this subject up, however, to pick a quarrel with Dr. Rouse, for his habit of suggesting to the reader that when Homer says Zeus, he means *God*, is enough to spoil the book for anyone who wants to keep his pagans pagan, and leave their rehabilitation as monotheists to those who are interested in that sort of thing. The word God has its own peculiar overtones to a modern reader—overtones not found in Homer and which ought not to be put into the *Iliad*. Comparison of the Rouse translation with other renderings and a brief consultation with a student of Greek have produced the suspicion that Dr. Rouse made it a rule to translate the oblique cases of Zeus as "God," instead of simply, Zeus—why, only God (or Zeus) knows.

The Greeks, like the ancient Hindus, distinguished between the ubiquitous creative potency of Nature and the Supreme Spirit or unknown God. Zeus, the ruler of Olympus, father of an almost endless progeny of lesser gods and half-gods, is no more the Father Æther of the philosophers and the Roman poets than Brahma, the personified power of generation and universal creation, is Parabrahm, the ineffable One of the Hindus. Plato is well known to have included "two Gods" in his philosophy—the Artificer who figures in the *Timaeus*, and the impersonal Good, or One, of the *Republic*.

Homer, however, is principally a story-teller. *His* gods are all too human actors in the story of Achilles, playing favorites among the mortals, deceiving one another, and generally cutting up, so that a careful translator will make a special effort never to confuse the reader by suggesting, when Zeus, or even *Theos*, is mentioned, that Homer is referring to the All-High. But Dr. Rouse is not that sort of a translator. When Hector, dying upon the battlefield, warns Achilles that he may be able to direct the wrath of the gods at his conqueror, if Achilles does not treat his mortal remains with respect, Dr. Rouse will have it the wrath of a singular deity—"God's wrath"—that Hector threatens. The translator apparently *wants* us to suppose that the Greeks were "monotheists," instead of unregenerate pagans with a host of gods to choose from.

In another place, when Hector is valiantly attacking the Danaans, there is the rhetorical question: "Who first, who last fell before the devastating onslaught of Hector Priamedes, when God gave him victory?" Homer says it was *Zeus* who afforded Hector this opportunity for glory. Dr. Rouse could at least have said "the God." Again, when Iris is reporting to Hera the words of Zeus, Dr. Rouse makes her use the phrase, "the Lord God." In the text, there is only the expression, the son of Kronos, meaning Zeus, and the "Lord-God" part is sheer invention of the

translator. Perhaps he thinks an Old Testament flourish adds zest to the Homeric tale.

Whatever their excesses in mythological exuberance, the Greeks never tried to chain the idea of ultimate Deity to an anthropomorphic personage such as Jehovah. They had their Jehovah in Zeus—wrathful, jealous, and on occasion crafty—but when the Greeks came to philosophize, they put aside the attributes of Zeus as inappropriate to metaphysical considerations. Plato, it will be remembered, thought that Homer might be a bad influence on the young, because of the unseemly behavior of the gods as Homer describes them. "For if," Socrates argues, "our youth seriously listen to such unworthy representations of the gods, instead of laughing at them as they ought, hardly will any of them deem that he himself, being but a man, can be dishonored by similar actions; neither will he rebuke any inclination which may arise in his mind to say and do the like."

Plato here fortifies our complaint, for if the highest honorific terms of the religion of English-speaking peoples are applied to Zeus, he inevitably gains a special dignity that does not belong to him—or else, the reader is assisted to misconceive entirely the role of Zeus in Greek religion, by an unwarranted exaggeration of his "divinity."

This anxiety to make over ancient pagans whom we admire into pious monotheists extends throughout the entire literature of Christendom, from Justin Martyr, one of the earliest of Christian scholars and apologists, to the modern Christian Platonist, A. E. Taylor. Justin sought to prove that even the Sibylline oracles foretold the coming of Christ, and Taylor attempts a Christianization of Plato by some candid special pleading. In Taylor's *Platonism and its Influence*—a particularly enjoyable book—the author first admits that Plato's argument against atheism speaks throughout "of 'gods' rather than of God." He then says:

At most the argument would go to prove that there is one soul which is the greatest and best of all, a supreme "God of gods." That Plato was personally a monotheist, however, seems plain from the fact that when he is speaking with most moral fervour and earnestness, he so regularly says not "gods" but God, just as Socrates in the *Apology* always speaks of his mission to the souls of his fellow-Athenians as laid on him not by Apollo, nor by "the gods," but by God.

But Taylor is constrained to add that "God is definitely said to be 'the best *soul*,'" and as there are many souls, it follows rather that Plato is more of a polytheist than a monotheist, according to the development of this argument. Plato's "proof of God," Taylor notes, is the same as his proof of soul, which is that the universality of motion in the universe testifies to some sort of prime mover, and this can be nothing else than soul, which he defines as "motion which moves itself."

While on the subject of the religions of antiquity, it seems worth while to do justice, also, to the religion of the earliest Romans—or to their religion as reported by Plutarch in his *Lives*. In the account of Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, after Romulus, Plutarch describes the religious institutions established by Numa as part of his "task of bringing the hard and iron Roman temper to somewhat more of gentleness and equity." Among the gods and goddesses in Numa's pantheon, "he recommended to the veneration of the Romans one in particular, whom he named Tacita, the silent; which he did perhaps in imitation and honour of the Pythagorean silence." Plutarch continues:

His opinion, also, of images is very agreeable to the doctrine of Pythagoras; who conceived of the first principle of being as transcending sense and passion, invisible and incorrupt, and only to be apprehended by abstract intelligence. So Numa forbade the Romans to represent God in the form of man or beast, nor was there any painted or graven image of a deity admitted amongst them for the space of the first hundred and seventy years, all of which time their temples and chapels were kept free and pure from images; to such baser objects they deemed it impious to liken the highest, and all access to God impossible, except by pure act of the intellect. His sacrifices, also, had great similitude to the ceremonial of

Pythagoras, for they were not celebrated with effusion of blood, but consisted of flour, wine, and the least costly offerings. . . .

Despite their alleged "materialism," the Romans were better equipped, philosophically, to interpret the heroic literature of the Greeks than most modern readers. The famous Roman antiquarian, Marcus Terrentius Varro, said that there are three kinds of theology, or "discourse about God." The first is poetic theology, made up of tales of the gods and their doings, such as may be found in Homer and later Greek poets and their Roman imitators. The second is civil theology, involving the orthodox observances of a State religion, and prescribed as a means of maintaining order. Both the Greeks and the Romans had civil theologies, representing the official worship of the State. The third is natural theology, "taught," as Taylor says, "by philosophers as an integral part of the truth about the reality of things." Taylor adds:

It is only this last kind of theology which Varro regards as having any claim to be true. The established view about mythology, as early as the days of Herodotus, was that it had been made up by the poets, whose sole object in their stories was not to instruct but to interest and amuse. Civil theology, again, has nothing to do with truth or falsehood; it is the creation of the magistrate who sanctions certain feasts and other ceremonies with a view to nothing beyond their social utility. As Scaveola the pontiff had said, in a very Roman spirit, there is only one kind of theology (the civil) which is of any social utility, and it is not true.

The Bible, for all its majestic utterance and, in places, great moral depth, is nothing if not an indiscriminate mixture of all three kinds of theology. For this reason, Dr. Rouse's intrusion of Biblical phraseology into Homeric fantasy can hardly add to our understanding of the *Iliad*, and it is certainly misleading with respect to Greek literature, philosophy and religion.

COMMENTARY **THE PEACE EXPERTS**

WE have no difficulty in seeing what is wrong with Nazi or Communist dictatorships, but we are vulnerable to another kind—the dictatorship with authority based, not upon blood-and-soil mysticism, nor upon "the materialistic interpretation of history," but upon an imaginary projection of the scientific method. In the United States, we expect the man who has "the facts" to exercise authority. We even expect him to adopt the "bedside" or the "fireside" manner in telling us what we must do. But, as Robert Oppenheimer suggests (see *Frontiers*), there is no science of politics, and to rely upon political experts amounts to a technical surrender to the fascist ideology. As Lin Yutang said years ago, in *Between Tears and Laughter*:

By claiming possession of "facts" alone, the prestige of science is at once transferred to the bureaucracy of the political elite, and a halo of sanctity descends upon it. Unless . . . the confusion of the facts of physical science with the facts of human society is dispelled, the public in a modern democracy will always be at the mercy of the specialists and experts, economic and political, A layman is a man who suggests that a thing can be done, and an expert is one who knows exactly how a thing can't be done. Consequently, peace experts are people who try to convince you that there can be no peace. Consequently, if you leave peace in the hands of the experts, we shall have to go on fighting forever.

Dr. Lin draws an unforgettable picture of the top-ranking diplomat. All day long, he sat in his palatial, sound-proof office. Foreign diplomats came to whisper the latest information about the policy of their governments. Advices came to him by wire and telephone from all parts of the world. As the "facts" poured in; he would murmur to himself, "How very interesting!" Finally, at the end of the day, there was the press conference:

Armed with the air of military secrecy, he went forth to battle.... At the critical moment, he barked, "I know all the facts." The argument was unanswerable. The diplomat had all the facts, the press did not have them; He could not tell the

facts, moreover, except in a White Paper to be issued four years hence which the press correspondents would be at liberty to challenge if they liked.

If he told the facts, it is likely that a world would die. But a thousand conspiratorial fears would die, also. It will take time, perhaps, but eventually men will realize that a world kept alive by the secrets of a political elite is not a world fit to live in.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

ONE of our subscribers has been mulling over the arguments of Col. Ford-Thompson on behalf of corporal punishment for children, and raises some important questions:

How about human dignity? A man who is slapped feels insulted and humiliated. Isn't it logical to suppose that a child being slapped would also feel humiliated? How about the slapper in the eyes of the child? Isn't he going to lose face as an ideal mentor? How about the slapper in his own eyes? Isn't he going to feel embarrassed? Will not a child who is slapped use the same technique on his fellows to express his displeasure ?

It is possible that the questioner has not read both commentaries on Col. Ford-Thompson's work, appearing here (Jan. 4 and March 8). Col. Ford-Thompson, it was pointed out, is four-square and rock-ribbed against parents' "expressing displeasure" by any form of physical violence. For, as we indicated (Jan. 4), the parent who loses his temper—or, in other words, becomes emotionally involved—*must be prepared to himself take the same punishment for the loss of his temper*. Anger and loss of emotional control are number one on Colonel Ford-Thompson's list of "bad" things.

Next, we need to remember that every form of discipline given recognition by Ford-Thompson was one decided upon through prior consultation with the child, thus taking away most conventional emotional associations with physical chastisement. Receiving Ford-Thompson's discipline was something like the Spartan boy showing that he was man enough to endure without flinching a certain physical trial.

But the subject of human dignity raises a very important point. While some children may adopt the Spartan rule, and feel, moreover, a constructive sense of importance from the fact that they have participated in the decision as to the terms of punishment, others *may* nonetheless feel

some sort of psychic violation of personality when struck by another—no matter how impartial, or even kindly, the mind behind the hand. We should say, unequivocally, that in such instances the child should not be subjected to this particular sort of discipline, no matter how well accepted by the rest of the group or the family. Remember, Ford-Thompson's principal point is the child's *participation* in creating the forms of discipline that will be used.

While we are talking about "slapping," it might be mentioned that some attentions of this sort are similar to a dash of cold water in the face, and in some instances will undoubtedly bring children out of tantrums that might otherwise be detrimental and prolonged. But the parent who hopes that he is well enough controlled to do such a thing without anger or annoyance of his own would do well to apply it to only one stipulated sort of misbehavior, rather than to any one of a number of the child's actions. If it is associated with nothing save excessive crying or "temper tantrums," the child may accept it as meant—an effort to help him transcend his temporary lack of control by application of a therapeutic shock treatment.

Col. Ford-Thompson, himself a parent, is on his own admission an educator in a big hurry; he believes that the hope of a regenerated society lies exclusively in children, and that we must devote ourselves strenuously and immediately to "character training." An article by him in the February *Aryan Path* (published in Bombay, India) makes clear his reason for feeling that we have no time to lose in securing the best sorts of personality conditioning:

Efforts to change the adult population's attitude to life will, I fear, bear as little fruit in the future as in the past. . . . individuals have no objection whatsoever to *other* people being improved according to worthy principles; though the fact that the other people do not want to be improved for the benefit of society, at the expense of habits of life which give them satisfaction, rules out the improvement of adults by these means. But what of the children? Most parents have no objection to their children being brought up

and trained to behave according to worthy ideals, and it would be perfectly *possible* to concentrate on the education of children from the point of view of character training. Nobody objects to their being trained, although violent prejudices may be aroused when methods of training are discussed.

The subject of corporal punishment, in relation to Col. Ford-Thompson, incidentally, should impel the realization that disciplinarians are not necessarily unkind. Nor are those who allow the greatest amount of self-expression to the child necessarily full of the greatest warmth and love for the younger generation. We cannot altogether judge the humane quality of an educator by the methods he uses, but only by the philosophy of the method. Many parents have presented inflexible exteriors to their children out of a conviction that their deepest love can best be expressed through securing a stiffening of the young spine. And, conversely, many are those who excuse their disinclination to probe the difficult problem of discipline by championing the cause of "freedom" for the young.

So, though we have often maintained in this column that it is not really a parent's task to "discipline" a child—rather to encourage him to strive for self-discipline—these notable exceptions must be mentioned. The kind of educator we always object to is the one who pretends to be doing something he is not; the parent who strikes a child in anger and passes it off as necessary discipline is a menace not only to the child but to the whole of society; he is fine potential material for some home-grown Nazi movement of the future.

While some parents can manage to chastize their children with impersonality and impartiality, nonetheless the only sure guarantee against the parent's self-delusion is the effort to achieve self-government through the child's participation in decision. Subsequently, the terms of self-government decided upon by parent and child together may be very strict, yet at the same time human and sympathetic. We know of no better

expression of this ideal than one found in *Amiel's Journal*:

Self-government with tenderness—here you have the condition of all authority over children. The child must discover in us no passion, no weakness of which he can make use; he must feel himself powerless to deceive or to trouble us; then he will recognize in us his natural superiors, and he will attach a special value to our kindness, because he will respect it. The child who can rouse in us anger, or impatience, or excitement, feels himself stronger than we, and a child only respects strength. (Entry for Jan. 6, 1853.)

FRONTIERS Science and Politics

ONE thing that Robert Oppenheimer of the Princeton Institute of Advanced Studies did, and did well, in his address at the Awards Banquet of this year's Science Talent Search, was to scale down to something like a sensible proportion the expectation of what "Science" may do for us in the future. Far too many scientists and spokesmen for science, as Anthony Standen recently made devastatingly clear (in *Science Is a Sacred Cow*), participate in the cultural delusion that the techniques of research are so many Aladdin's Lamps that need only to be rubbed a little harder to make the world over into whatever sort of brave, new world we should happen to want. Why this delusion exists—and it is peculiarly a *modern* delusion, apparently without parallel in pre-scientific times—should be a question well worth pursuing; one that would lead, perhaps, straight into the psychology of religion, and the yearning of human beings for an impersonal theory of knowledge, as contrasted with the diet of Revelation and miracle mumbo-jumbo imposed upon the Western mind for so many centuries; but here we have space only to note that, whatever caused this popular delusion, Mr. Oppenheimer is not one of its victims, and that he is doing his best to spread a more rational view of the possibilities of science.

In this address (printed in *Science* for April 14), he said:

To what extent is there a play on the word *science* which can mislead us and take us up false roads when we speak of this science of human relationships? Is there anything we can learn from the relevance of science to politics?

If we are to answer these questions, and answer them honestly, we must recognize important and basic differences between problems of science and problems of action as they arise in personal or in political life. If we fail to recognize these differences, we shall be seeking magic solutions and not real ones. We shall delude ourselves into laying aside

responsibility, which it is an essential part of man's life to bear.

In most scientific study, questions of good and evil, or right and wrong, play at most a minor and secondary part. For practical decisions of policy, they are basic. Without them political action would be meaningless. Practical decisions and, above all, political decisions can never quite be freed from the conflicting claims of special interest. These too are part of the meaning of a decision and of a course of action, and they must be an essential part of the force of its implementation.

Political acts are unique acts. In politics there is little that can correspond to the scientist's repetition of an experiment. An experiment that fails in its purpose may be as good as or better than one that succeeds, because it may well be more instructive. A political decision cannot be taken twice. All the factors that are relevant to it will conjoin only once. The analogies of history can provide a guide, but only a very partial one.

These are formidable differences between the problems of science and those of practice. They show that the method of science cannot be directly adapted to the solution of problems in politics and in man's spiritual life. . . .

In this eminently sensible discussion, Mr. Oppenheimer has, perhaps without quite intending to, given us his definition of politics. Politics, he implies, is not the same as education. A failure in politics is final—it is not a step in the education of human beings. The failure may instruct, but the political act and the political end are immediate—they are political in virtue of the fact that they can *not* be repeated. Political values do not belong to the Eternal Verities, but are goods of the moment, of the Here-and-Now. A man does not become a candidate, nor a party campaign for him, in order to gain wisdom: they do it to gain office and power. Politics, in short, unlike education, knows no counsel of perfection. Politics has no traffic with the ideal of perfectibility, but deals expediently with the multiple and conflicting imperfections of the moment; if it did not, it would not be politics.

What, then, can science do about politics, about problems of immediate action?—for Mr.

Oppenheimer's address is largely concerned with this question. The relevance of science to politics, he says, is in its spirit. "Science is not based on authority. It owes its acceptance and its universality to an appeal to intelligible, communicable evidence that any interested man can evaluate." And, he suggests, the political credo of democracy is founded upon the same principle. It is here, in this common foundation of method, that science and politics are allied:

Our own political life is predicated on openness. We do not believe any group of men adequate or wise enough to operate without scrutiny or without criticism. We know that the only way to avoid error is to detect it, that the only way to detect it is to be free to enquire. We know that the wages of secrecy are corruption. We know that in secrecy error, undetected, will flourish and subvert.

In another place in his talk, Mr. Oppenheimer makes what seems to be an extremely important point about the effect of science, through its application as technology. It has, he says, changed many things which were once "natural" hazards and difficulties of human existence into actual evils. Why should they now be called "evils"? Because scientific progress has made it possible to eliminate them entirely, and this capacity for control transforms them into *moral* problems. For example:

Poverty has always been an ugly thing, and in its extremes a desperate one. Today, it is an evil, in the sense that it lies within human hands and human hearts to abate it. Science can provide us, for the first time in history, with the means of abating hunger for everyone on earth.

The point is well taken, but there is another side to this question. What about the extraordinary waste that seems to be the inevitable accompaniment of the political administration of modern technology? What Mr. Oppenheimer says about technological advance has been true, not just during the past twenty years, but significantly so for at least a century. It is worth asking whether the poverty and hunger on earth, today, are really less than they were a hundred years ago. The wars of the twentieth century are of course

the principal cause of modern poverty and malnutrition, but the *kind* of wars that create such want is also a contribution of scientific technology.

It seems almost a mathematical equation that modern technology, in the hands of its administrators, eventually takes away whatever advantages it produces, leaving us about where we were, materially speaking, but much worse, morally, for exactly the reason that Mr. Oppenheimer points out—the deprivations we suffer now have a *moral* origin, instead of arising from unchanging factors of the physical environment.

Thus the scientific release from the drudgery and want is an empty victory, and we are brought back to the initial problem of bettering our politics, and the practical administration of our lives. Here, the lesson of science, Mr. Oppenheimer says, is open covenants, openly arrived at. Error must be detectable, and in order to detect error we must know what is going on and be free to talk about it and to object to as much of it as we want.

At this point, the trap closes. This is the crucial issue, and Mr. Oppenheimer, who knows perfectly well how the trap works, discusses it only in the terms of big generalization. Fortunately, our society is still free enough to allow the kind of discussion of this issue that may keep us a self-conscious people, if not a self-governing people, and we conclude with an extract from Dwight Macdonald's commentary on the manufacture and dropping of the atom bomb, which appeared in his magazine, *Politics*, for September, 1945. It leaves us, of course, in a dilemma, but it is more Mr. Oppenheimer's dilemma than Macdonald's or ours.

The bomb produced two widespread and, from the standpoint of The Authorities, undesirable emotional reactions in this country: a feeling of guilt at "our" having done this to "them," and anxiety lest some future "they" do this to "us." Both feelings were heightened by the superhuman *scale* of The Bomb. The Authorities have therefore made valiant attempts

to reduce the thing to a human context, where concepts such as Justice, Reason, Progress could be employed. Such moral defenses are offered as: the war was shortened and many lives, Japanese as well as American, saved; "we" had to invent and use The Bomb against "them" lest "they" invent and use it against "us"; the Japanese deserved it because they started the war, treated prisoners barbarously, etc., or because they refused to surrender. The flimsiness of these justifications is apparent; any atrocious action, absolutely any one, could be excused on such grounds. For there is really only one possible answer to the problem posed by Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor: if all mankind could realize eternal and complete happiness by torturing to death a single child, would this act be morally justified? . . .

Nor was President Truman reassuring when he pointed out: "This development, which was carried forward by the many thousand participants with the utmost energy and the very highest sense of national duty . . . probably represents the greatest achievement of the combined efforts of science, industry, labor and the military in all history." Nor Professor Smyth: "The weapon has been created not by the devilish inspiration of some warped genius but by the arduous labor of thousands of normal men and women working for the safety of their country." Again, the effort to "humanize" The Bomb by showing how it fits into our normal, everyday life also cuts the other way: it reveals how inhuman our normal life has become. . . .

Only a handful, of course, knew what they were creating. None of the 125,000 construction and factory workers knew. Only three of the plane crew that dropped the first bomb knew what they were letting loose. It hardly needs to be stressed that there is something askew with a society in which vast numbers of citizens can be organized to create a horror like The Bomb without even knowing they are doing it. What real content, in such a case, can be assigned to notions like "democracy" and "government of, by and for the people"? The good Professor Smyth expresses the opinion that "the people of this country" should decide for themselves about the future development of The Bomb. To be sure, no vote was taken on the creation and the employment of the weapon. However, says the Professor reassuringly, these questions "have all

been seriously considered by all concerned [i.e., by the handful of citizens who were permitted to know what was going on] and vigorously debated among the scientists, and the conclusions reached have been passed along to the highest authorities.

"These questions are not technical questions, they are political and social questions, and the answers given to them may affect all mankind for generations. . . ."

It would be unkind to subject the above to critical analysis beyond noting that every statement of what is contradicts every statement of what-should-be.