

## WHAT HOLDS THE WORLD TOGETHER?

WHENEVER this question is asked with enough insistence, a new religion is founded to answer it, and when the new answer has acquired so many believers that it becomes a ritual instead of an idea, its meaning disappears and it has to be asked all over again.

From the point of view of "security," it is always a great sin to ask what holds the world together. Some people think they know, and don't like to be confused. This was really the crime of Adam in eating the fruit of knowledge of good and evil—it made him want to know as a man what he was supposed to believe as a creature. It was natural, therefore, for the lovers of certainty and security to represent the serpent, the tempter to spiritual discovery, as a symbol of ultimate wickedness, for what would happen if every man—all the sons of Adam—began to distrust the ritual answers of their religion and to seek spiritual independence?

Lucifer, Jehovah's competing deity, had a different idea of sin. Lucifer was convinced that the only great sin is *not* to ask what holds the world together, and his followers, through the centuries, have always been disturbers of placid belief. Both Lucifer and his scant forces of rebellious heretics would long since have been "contained"—silenced and shackled by the forces of security—were it not for the fact that history often takes the side of the questioning spirit. The security of ritual lasts only so long as time stands still, and as time never does stand still, but only seems to, epochs of unquestioning security are always brought to an end by a tumult of contradictions, and then the Luciferians with their questions take the field.

The struggle between ritual and questioning is complicated by the fact that the ritualists are well-instructed in their catechism, while the questioners

have only uncertainties to offer—uncertainties *and* a bit of the Promethean fire which makes them prefer the abyss of freedom to the peace of belief. The followers of Lucifer are also the authors of great follies and disasters to their fellows. They take risks. They exchange conventional for unconventional illusions. They chase will-o'-the-wisps and fall prey to the songs of sirens. They are guilty of nearly everything they are charged with except hypocrisy and cowardice. But one thing they never do, and that is betray their fellows into the sloth of moral complacency, nor will they knowingly accept or repeat any pious fraud as a means to "stability" or "peace."

Today, the scholars and champions of religious security are holding a new trial in which they intend to condemn and outlaw the questioning spirit. And here is the point: What they, or some better qualified Tribunal ought to do is inquire into the mistakes, the provisional answers and denials of the questioning spirit, instead of attempting to suppress it.

*Creed or Chaos* is the title of a recent book which purposes to restore the crumbling structure of modern civilization with the supports of ancestral religion. Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor, we are invited to conclude, was right. Instead of telling us that we have betrayed the Renaissance and its bright humanist dreams, such books claim that the Renaissance betrayed *us*. The Renaissance was an act of daring, and it was the daring which was wrong. Man needs the imperatives of dogmatic faith. He can never be left to "reason" things out. The defect printed upon us all by the sin of Adam may be hidden for a while, but eventually it bursts forth with redoubled fury to avenge the conceits of human beings who imagine they can achieve "progress" without belief. We need to acknowledge our sinfulness and humbly to seek Redemption. And

how shall Redemption be gained save by knowing about and believing in the Incarnation and the Atonement?

The logic of this appeal is supposed to be clinched by calling to witness the use of "false" dogmas by the rulers of totalitarian states. Totalitarian power, it seems, is to be taken as evidence that men need to be told what to do, have things explained to them. How can we any longer fail to see in the paroxysms of current history a final struggle between the true religion and the pseudo-religion of the omnipotent state?

This argument is not new, but it gains impressiveness from the moral circumstances of our time. It is a fact that the free-thinking revolutionary epoch of the eighteenth century established the theory of government by contract, and that the commercialism which pervades nearly everything that we do grows from this as from other forms of the bartering spirit. But the buying and selling which are explicit and overt in our society were implicit and only carelessly clandestine in the medieval society out of which ours was born. Even to the purchase of "salvation" by formal acts of piety was the commercial psychology hidden within the medieval order.

These books return to the Middle Ages to discover, not materialism and grasping greed, but duty, faithfulness and humble righteousness animating peasant, knight and lord alike, yet they contain no hint of psycho-moral analysis of the then prevailing modes of belief. They are only dressed-up and highly selective arguments from history. Every revolutionary novelty is exhibited in its ugliest light, with little or no notice taken of the moral energy which, from Peter Abelard on, was behind the revolt against rule by kingly status and priestly hierarchy.

But most of all, appeal is made to that awful loneliness suffered by so many men, these days—a loneliness from which, for some, even the comradeship found in war is a welcome relief. To escape from a struggle whose aimlessness is

widely suspected, and whose rewards—which are only material—are rapidly diminishing to tasteless adulterations, into a faith which pillows and consoles the desperate fear of personal failure: Is this such a bad bargain?

There are other persuasions, such as the idea that it should not cause much anguish to chain up the halfgrown god within us—this youth who will not listen to his elders and who is always asking impudent questions leading to unbelief. What has he done when we have let him loose for a while? He chops off the heads of dignified kings; he hires a band and buys a barrel of beer and calls it democracy; he prints a million books a day, with one of them worth reading, perhaps, and calls it education. He cares nothing for tradition, for propriety, for the "virtues," and he is always leading people into mischief. Why not admit that the world is held together by the will of God, and return in penitence to the great arching cathedrals where our souls wilt find peace?

Against this—against, indeed, every kind of "collective" belief—is set the credo of Socrates, of Giordano Bruno, of Whitman and Emerson, of all men in whom the questioning half-god somehow grew up to maturity; the men who, in the nature of things, have no churches and priests to urge them upon us, but only their free hearts and open minds to make them remembered. They, too, have held that man is a spiritual being, but no manufactured, dependent creature made in the "image" of the Father and subject to His destining will. What they knew of man and of the spiritual essence in all things came out of no scripture, but from themselves. It came freely, unedited by prudence, uncoded by church councils—the simple declarative utterance of men who had their own light. They offered no theology of "crisis" and no argument from history to persuade their hearers. They seem to have found a species of truth which is spontaneously born in the human heart whenever life is lived at a certain intensity. Voltairine de Cleyre, the revolutionary poet, captured something of this vision and set it down

just before she died of tuberculosis during the first World War. She wrote:

If you choose liberty and pride and strength of a single soul, and the free fraternization of men as the purpose which your life is to make manifest, then do not sell it for tinsel. Think that your soul is strong and will hold its way; and slowly, through bitter struggle, perhaps, strength will grow. And the foregoing of possessions for which others barter their last possibility of freedom, will become easy.

At the end of life you may close your eyes saying: I have not been dominated by the Dominant Idea of my age. I have chosen mine own allegiance, and served it. I have proved by a lifetime that there is that in man which saves him from the absolute tyranny of Circumstance, which in the end conquers and remoulds Circumstance—the immortal fire of Individual Will, which is the salvation of the Future.

To believe in man, in the spirit of man, may be the only way left for the vindication of man. The waves of revolution and social progress have rolled high, but they have receded again, as they always do, when men's faith is placed in something other than themselves. No god or political system or plan for world government can hold the world together unless men believe themselves to be gods who are able to hold the world together.

There is a kind of truth, however, in the theological analysis, and it seems necessary to admit it. Men do need a faith and an order to live by. The evil in the world does need an explanation beyond the scope of humanitarian doctrines of social reform. The dogmas of religion do seem to fill a void of longing in the human breast, and if we are not to have them, what will nourish those secret hungers which in the past have given the sacerdotal caste its terrible power over the masses of mankind? Are there other ideas, not dogmas, but principles, to take their place? Is it conceivable that the dogmas are themselves perverted principles?

At the outset it was suggested that Lucifer is a much maligned personage—a symbol for divine discontent. Lucifer forsook the Beatific Vision, the bliss of frictionless union with the One. He broke out of the charmed circle of ineffable

inactivity and, mingling with the creatures of the earth, made them into potential gods. For what is a god, except a being who distinguishes between good and evil, and chooses the good. And what is a devil but a god who chooses the bad. Lucifer, then, is Man, and the Garden of Eden allegory a not very intelligent confusion of the forces which of necessity are present in a moral universe.

The "Fall," then, or Original Sin, is the resolve to hazard experience for the sake of knowledge, and is no sin at all, but only a primeval process of the workings of consciousness in matter.

But with Lucifer taken as standing for human aspiration, where does evil come from? Ancient metaphysical systems say that evil is born whenever a unity splits into parts—whenever a germ swells from within and bursts into multiplicity—for then there is division, cleavage, separation, and the pain of broken bonds. Evil of this sort, however, seems a good and natural kind, like an ache in the muscles from work well done. What about the dark, malicious evils, the meaningless hates and the blind, irrational angers?

Here, the problem of partisan unities presents itself—what moralists have called illicit loves and the deadly sins of religious tradition. All these sources of agony seem to grow from unnatural attachments to the limiting unities of matter—the unwillingness to admit, with Gautama Buddha, that all compounds are perishable. In order to become a knowing being, man has to become also a feeling being, and in feelings lie both the salvation and the damnation of the lives we live on earth. When a man determines to feel rather than to know, he, becomes for that hour—for the term of his resolve—a damned soul. The only damnation a god can undergo, it seems to us, is bondage to some partisan unity. Thus Dante punishes the selfish lovers, Paolo and Francesca, by locking them in each other's arms for all eternity, for what is more painful than an exhausted and resourceless passion?

Lucifer, embodying the will to know, was and is the Incarnation for every human being, for Lucifer may be thought of as the dynamic alter ego of the sacrificial Christ. And the Redemption comes through that search for the order of things in human hearts which makes the presence of divinity in man a visible reality instead of an inner possibility. So Lucifer, the tarnished and calumniated god, as Victor Hugo suspected, is symbolic of the salvation that men hunger for, but can never have, so long as they seek it outside of themselves.

Why should a faith of this sort be any better than the traditional one? Apart from whether it is true or not—and we think that it, or something like it, *is* true—these ideas could never be the means of enslaving men to one another. Instead, they should help men to trust one another, to look for the strength behind the weakness, the nobility that is hidden from view. This faith would make an end, too, of the half-hearted and mechanical compromises between science and religion, for it would extend the radius of the scientific spirit into the realm of mind and moral philosophy.

According to an Eastern legend, the creation of the world came about from the great God, Brahmâ, thinking of himself as being this, that, and the other thing, until, by these various offprints of his self-identifying thought he had manufactured the world and all that make it up. Now if Brahmâ is a type of the creative energy in Nature, and if man is the individual instance, the microcosm, of that type, then there is more than shrewd moral psychology in the saying, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." It is even man's destiny to become whatever he thinks himself to be—and this is his nature, forever to recreate himself. If this be so, then the dogmas of religion may exercise an obsessive power over human life, and if they amount to a denial and repudiation—a rejection as "sinful"—of the basically *spiritual* attributes of Lucifer and Brahmâ, then man must indeed become sick in mind, in soul, and leave the mark of his titanic insanity wherever he goes.

This, at any rate, is a diagnosis that can dispense with miracles for the cure that it implies. We know of no other with this important qualification.

## *Letter from* **ENGLAND**

LONDON.—In general, it may be said that the people of this country have always been pacific, although they are liable, in common with others, to be aroused by appeals to defend the weak against aggression. However cynical a view one may take of all this, it is none the less true that there is no tradition of continental militarism in England, and conscription has always been extremely unpopular. Even as recently as May 12, 1949, an old Labour MP in the House of Commons (he has been a member for 29 years) could say in a debate on the Atlantic Pact:

I am a follower of Count Leo Tolstoy. My impression is that that great pacifist had more liberty to preach under the Tsar than he would get under the present regime....

I have lived too long to believe that pacts, printed instruments, and written agreements, can bring peace to mankind. . . .

He was not shouted down. Members of all parties paid tribute, as they have always, to Mr. Rhys Davies' sincerity.

So far as the Labour Party is concerned, the turning point in policy came in 1935, when Mr. George Lansbury, MP (a life-long pacifist), became officially the Leader of the Party in Parliament and the House of Commons. He decided to resign from the position, although much pressure was brought to bear upon him to remain in his post. He made a strong pacifist speech at the Annual Conference of the Labour Party in that year; but Mr. Ernest Bevin (then Secretary of the Transport Workers Union), who is the present Foreign Secretary in the Labour Government, replied in terms which left Lansbury without a single colleague who would speak in his defence. The General Election which followed soon after, however, saw Lansbury returned to Parliament with a record majority of 13,357. The whole story of this time is given in George

Lansbury's *My Quest for Peace*, published by Michael Joseph Ltd., London, in 1938.

Pacifism in Left-Wing politics has varied in its motivation. There are always the people who believe simply that the generous emotions of men are exploited on behalf of war by pecuniary interests; those who, with Norman Angell, believe that war impoverishes the world, particularly the workers, and does not even enrich the victors; a group of thinkers (a minority) who view the final explanation of war in terms of contest for power (Clausewitz' idea of the object of war as being "to overcome the will" of the other); some who think only of "historical causes"; and, in later years especially, perhaps, the group who think of war in biological terms—"inevitably an inherent part of human nature."

Only with difficulty have the present Labour Government been able to persuade their supporters to give them a mandate for the existing National Service Act. But it would be a terrible mistake to over-simplify the problem of this opposition. There is a complex of motives, including some who quite deliberately would like to see England disarmed for the triumph of Soviet Imperialism or Ideology, whichever one chooses to call it!

As for the pacifist, perhaps J. B. Priestley has put the case as well as anybody. In an essay "The Public and the Idea of Peace," contributed to *Challenge to Death* (Constable, 1934), Priestley called attention to the fact that nearly all pacifist propagandists make one dangerous mistake at the very outset—"that men will take enormous risks rather than be bored." He expressed his intense dislike of the "shallow loud-mouthed internationalists who have no tenderness for anybody or anything except themselves." I think that Priestley has said here what the average pacific Englishman feels about the "intelligentsia" who so often masquerade in pacifist clothes.

Some words of Dr. Carl Jung, perhaps, express the view of many. They occur in his *Essays on Contemporary Events* (London, 1947):

If collective guilt could only be understood and accepted, a great step forward would have been made. But this alone is no cure, just as the neurotic is never healed by mere understanding. The question remains: How am I to live with this shadow? What attitude is required to be able to live in spite of evil? In order to find the true answers to such questions a complete spiritual renewal must take place. And this cannot be imparted, one must strive to achieve it for oneself. No more can old formulae, which once had their value, be used blindly. For eternal truths refuse to be transmitted mechanically; in every epoch they must be born anew out of the soul of man.

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## *REVIEW*

### STORIES FOR CHILDREN

THE problem of stories and books for children is one that "adult" reviewers seldom discuss, although it is not essentially different from the problem of books and stories for grown-ups. A good book is a book which helps a man to reach into and beyond himself at the same time. If a book takes the reader beyond himself, but not into himself, it is generally about some sort of "environment"—it may be a theological environment, a geographical one, or some other, depending upon the region that is explored. If it turns his attention inward, but gives no reference-points beyond, it is only another exercise in egotism, whether obviously so or not.

The same general analysis can be applied to books for children. And as children are far more impressionable than adults—their minds are not yet full of the litter of the times, and to them, a "story" is a wonderful thing—the choice of books for children is of the greatest importance. Starting, then, at the beginning, with the untearable picture books for babies, we should like to raise some questions. What about the psychological attitude of the parents, soon communicated to the child, toward the twisted, bedraggled and food-stained "books" which are allowed to lie around on the floor, and which no one needs to take "care of"? Is a child of this age too young to learn by observation of the behavior of parents that *books* are things to be treasured and respected? Why not let the child tear up old newspapers, and reserve for books the idea of special treatment and care? Books are symbols of ideas, and it is conceivable that no symbol of this sort should ever be allowed to be devaluated in the child's mind. In these days of enormous editions of cheap, mass-produced books, it is difficult enough to dissociate the omnipresent mechanical bounty of the age from the rarity of great ideas.

While on the subject of picture books, it seems appropriate to quote from Lafcadio Hearn's essay on Faces in Japanese Art. Modern children's books are filled with illustrations, and at least some of these pictures merit Hearn's criticism of Western pictorial art in general. After having lived in Japan long

enough to appreciate Japanese drawing, he found the illustrations of English weeklies and American magazines "flat, coarse and clumsy . . . conventional, undeveloped, semi-barbarous." He continues:

The drawing seems to me coarse and hard, and the realism of the conception petty. Such work leaves nothing to the imagination, and usually betrays the effort which it cost. A common Japanese drawing leaves much to the imagination, —nay, irresistibly stimulates it,—and never betrays effort. Everything in a common European engraving is detailed and individualized. Everything in a Japanese drawing is impersonal and suggestive. The former reveals no law: it is a study of particularities. The latter invariably teaches something of law, and suppresses particularities except in their relation to law.

It may be said that this is a very mature form of criticism, as indeed it is, but a similar reaction to the literal detail of Western illustration is quite possible to the young. Hearn experimented by showing Western magazines to some Japanese children. One, a boy of nine, looked at the pictures and asked, "Why do foreign artists like to draw horrible things?" No monsters were pictured, but only figures voting at the polls. The child found them very ugly. A girl of eleven, shown engravings of drawings from rural life in America, thought that the figures looked like demons from one of the Buddhist hells.

This does not "prove" very much, perhaps, except that children who grew up in another atmosphere of artistic expression—a much finer one, Hearn thought—found Western illustrations repulsive. Possibly a single book of Japanese prints, carefully looked at together with the parents, would help the child to develop a sense of fitness in representation and offset in some degree the provincial opinions of most Westerners as to what is "pretty" and "artistic," and what is not. In any event, all parents should read this essay of Hearn's which appears in his volume, *Gleanings in Buddha Fields*. The fact that Hearn's Japan belonged to another, less Westernized generation need not interfere with the value of what he says.

But what of books, the stories themselves, for children? When it comes to making actual recommendations, one ought to feel, we think, a

diffidence or uncertainty. Most books, and surely almost all good children's books, are something out of the past—the past with which we largely have lost living touch. The wars of the twentieth century did much to destroy our sense of living continuity, but there is something else, besides, which contributes to this break. The old world of dreams is gone, killed, stamped into the dust. Roland and Oliver and Chevalier Bayard are ghosts of another age, and the modern child can see no great sense in men hacking at one another with great swords, or dancing around each other with rapiers in their hands. It is time for new dreams of human greatness to be born. The world itself has to contribute something—a touch of wonderment here and there to confirm the promise of the story. It need not be much, this sense of mystery, of sight of the horizon and beyond, but it is a necessity for children, if they are not to capitulate altogether to this bleak and sordid world of ours. How else are they to believe that human life is a great and fine and noble thing—and if they do not believe this, what will keep their hearts from withering into submissive acceptance of mediocrity?

It is easy enough to select books that will afford a juvenile version of our "cultural heritage"—identified by the Harvard Report on *General Education in a Free Society* as a judicious blend of Hellenism, Christianity, democracy and science—but this only passes on to the next generation the cultural discontinuities and contradictions which many adult educators continue to ignore. Obvious choices of stories for children would include tales of the Greek gods and heroes, of Asgard and the Norse gods, and of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Beneath the surface of these stories may be discerned a current of deep idealism and a tone implicitly suggesting standards to be lived up to, a quest to be pursued. But the heroic element in them is almost invariably identified with the martial virtues, and combat is the unending theme. The use of these materials for children ought to be prepared for by considerable reflection by parents on the inadequacy, not to say misrepresentation, of the martial virtues, today, as vehicles of idealism. With even the best versions of the myths, a certain

"transposition" seems almost necessary as the contribution of the parents—an emphasis, not heavily obvious, but clear, on the symbolic character of the conflicts and strivings of gods and heroes.

The test of every story would be the world it opens up to the child's imagination—is it a world worth living in? Does it help the flow of thought from what is to what might be? The stories need never be tiresomely "moral," for who would want to live in a world like that? There is good and evil in the world, and in little children, too, but there is something beyond good and evil in all humans, the creative fire, and the story ought to suggest it, however delicately.

Perhaps the best stories of all would be those that parents and children make up and tell to each other. This would not be something to do only when there is nothing else to do—after the "important" things are taken care of. To help a new culture to birth is hardly unimportant. To help a new mind to unique riches of the imagination is not something just for week-end leisure. Suppose all the books were burned, all the libraries closed and all the schools abolished—would we feel helpless with our children? Would we let them grow up unlettered, unspurred by dreams, uncontrolled by an inner order for their lives? Something *like* this has already happened to the adult world, and we would know it well if there were not available so many plausible substitutes for culture.

To think that we have to build a new culture for our children should not be an unattractive or frightening idea. It has been done in the past by people very much like ourselves. They found it easier, perhaps, because the rubbish of a score of worn-out and discarded idealisms was not lying all about, looking as though it still had life in it. But this, perhaps, is one challenge to adventure in our age—how to weave tales that grow with the movement of the heart's longing, and which, somehow, somewhere, will come true.



## *COMMENTARY*

### **THE WESTERNIZED EAST**

WHILE the treasurer of the Gandhi National Memorial Fund in India reports collections totalling more than nine crores of rupees, the judges in the trial of Gandhi's assassins have handed down sentences of death to two of the young men who participated in the plot.

This is according to the best Western precedent, although without the compulsions of imperialism. Money is seldom lacking to honor a great and merciful man, but to honor him by imitating him is relatively unheard of. Gandhi himself would have died a hundred times to abolish the death penalty, but the impersonal authority of the State and its laws seems to have greater importance than the motives and objectives of Gandhi's entire career. The cases have been appealed, so that there remains a possibility that the sentences may be commuted to life imprisonment, but the conventional pattern of "justice" thus far is an ironic commentary on the rigidities of social institutions.

Another unhappy sign of the times in India is the wave of suicides reported in the press. The Nagpur *Times* for June 26, seeking the causes, tells of "heartbreaking economic stresses, murderous social taboos, insufferable domestic situations, unbearable humiliations . . . all-round lack of sympathy and understanding, of an eclipse of humanity itself." Singled out for description are two cases occurring on the same day—both students unable to endure the shame of having failed in school examinations. A few days after, two more students sought the same supposed "relief" from their sense of personal inadequacy. What about a culture which allows certain superficial intellectual skills to attain this importance in the minds of the young?

No Western country can point to India with an accusing finger, least of all the United States, where there is a suicide every thirty minutes. Rather, developments of this sort show that the

delusions of the twentieth century are less and less subject to geographical and cultural distinctions. Animated by the same objectives, challenged by the same difficulties, human beings are very much the same, the world over; and their problems being the same, their welfare will be gained by the same means. To be overtaken by common disasters may be one way of bringing the peoples of the world to a sense of their underlying unity. There are better, wiser ways, perhaps, but so far we have not taken them.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THE feeling of some parents and educators that each child should be treated as a distinct and unique "individual" still needs to be infused into innumerable educational relationships as yet unleavened by this idea. It is obvious enough that our primary and secondary schools, and even our universities, are ill-equipped to practice this theory, because of the continuing dominance of compartmentalized learning, and because of the shortage of teachers, but even a parent with only one child can fail in a manner which has no such extenuation.

The average teacher gives each pupil only incomplete or partial attention. Of course, if the child deviates from accepted norms of classroom behavior, or falls far below or reaches far above the classroom scholastic average, he is apt to receive some special attention, but otherwise he gets attention simply as part of a group. "One of my sixth-graders—you know, they all read the comic-books—said this the other day," may be a natural enough remark, but it can easily conceal unthinking acceptance of the dogma that sixth-graders, like Russians or Germans, have only a group identity. The parent has less excuse than the teacher for giving a child inadequate attention, for the parent's "classroom" is much smaller, and yet abstracted or partial attention is what most children get from their parents. "Oh, yes, they ask questions all day at this stage, but they don't pay much attention and it doesn't matter much what you say to them," is a parental counterpart to the teacher's remark.

It is a rather curious fact that children who are left entirely on their own by their parents and given virtually no attention at *any* time may often develop better integrated personalities than those subjected to alternations of pretended concern and preoccupied indifference. It may be legitimate to proceed on the assumption that we should give a child *no attention at all*, unless we are prepared to

give him the full awareness of our mental energies, and full effort in understanding him. The parents who hold their minds in complete receptivity to any question asked by a child are probably few, and yet it is these few who really apply the philosophy of "treating a child as an individual." When we answer a child's question chiefly with a view to silencing the questioner so that we can return to interests of our own, we do something which is very confusing to the young. If the parent pretends to the role of guide and plays the part only spasmodically and halfheartedly, the child's mental energies are thrown into the same sort of confusion as attends the emotional nature when love alternates with indifference under circumstances which the child cannot understand.

The most important thing which the adult can give to the child is a sense of consistency and continuity. Upon this all learning depends, and we do not "treat someone as an individual" unless we treat him as an individual all the time. To take particular pains to understand anyone, child or adult, at certain periods or moments only, means that our relationship with that one is shaped on the basis of our own moods and feelings. We do not have a relationship, actually, with *him*; rather, the "relationship" is but an extension of feelings and thoughts in our own mind. The child should know whether or not he has undivided attention. While he can understand that there are times when an adult's other responsibilities make conversation impossible, he needs to feel that when conversation does take place it is genuine and whole-hearted.

The implications of the foregoing may seem to conflict with the idea—previously expressed, here—that the child needs to learn to accept the fact that the emotional aspect of love is something which must be *earned*, that it cannot be expected to be always exactly the same, regardless of his or his parent's behavior. But it seems quite possible for a parent to be closely concerned with the development and refinement of his child's intellectual energies, while regarding spontaneous

expressions of feeling in this way. Both these attitudes seem naturally based upon a conviction of the importance of rationality in the achieving of human maturity.

If parents wonder why children ask fifty or sixty questions in the course of a morning without showing any great interest in the content of a parent's response, they might consider the possibility that their own bored replies on previous occasions have set an example of superficial interest, which the child is now imitating. A child should not be regarded as "naturally" satisfied with superficial answers. We teach them to be "satisfied" with such answers, when we could just as well teach them to probe into their experiences until something worthwhile and thought-provoking emerges.

It is very possible that an evolution out of conventional, compartmentalized education must await teachers who grow to maturity in families which recognize the need for giving full attention to the child, whenever they have any attention to give. In the average school, the child may often be mildly antagonized by a teacher, not only because the teacher enforces certain annoying rules associated with the compulsion of the public school system, but also because the child senses that the teacher is dealing with him as part of a group mind, rather than as an individual mind. Attention is given to the requirements of "grade five" or "grade six" or "grade ten," rather than to those of the individual, and the teacher's attention, being so vague, seems a form of pretense or hypocrisy to the child.

Children who have full attention given to their questions will ask fewer and fewer and think more and more about the answers they receive. Moreover, they will probably develop a much more retentive memory, for memory is a faculty which seldom operates well unless we select from innumerable bits of information and experience the things which seem of greatest importance and concentrate upon them. The parent who recognizes this is the only one qualified to

consider himself as "guiding" the child properly; likewise, only the teacher who applies this principle in the classroom to the best of his ability is qualified for the responsibility of instruction.

## *FRONTIERS* Aspects of ESP

ANYONE who has done a fair amount of reflection on the subject of telepathy, and by a little reading has kept in touch with the progress of experiments in extra sensory perception, is likely to be convinced that, in the next few years, the pendulum of thought will swing to general acknowledgment of some sort of superphysical reality. Two years ago, in *The Reach of the Mind*, Dr. J. B. Rhine of Duke University felt obliged to say that "Science does not, in this year of 1947, accept ESP as established, though many individual scientists do." Were he writing today, he might put the matter a little differently. The die-hards remain skeptical, of course, but it is doubtful that the majority of scientists still maintain that the study of apparently non-material powers of mind is nothing more than dabbling in "superstition."

"ESP—Fact or Fancy," an article by Prof. Robert A. McConnell in the August *Scientific Monthly*, is good evidence of a change of attitude on the part of scientists in general. No publication has been more capably disparaging of the Duke University experiments in telepathy than the *Scientific Monthly*, and the admission of this article to its pages—not in rejoinder to some attack on the ESPers, but as a forthrightly favorable report—may be taken as a virtual stamp of approval from a stronghold of scientific orthodoxy.

In a way, one may regret the removal of ESP from the catalog of scientific heresies. Its impending elevation to an area of respectable research will almost undoubtedly mean the start of voluminous publication of dull papers and treatises, as scientific orthodoxy and mediocrity take over the *psyche*. The time-servers will proceed to do for the soul what unimaginative Freudians have done for love, attempting by every means possible to make the flights of the mind submit to routine "techniques." The quest for "good subjects" will be pursued with avidity and great universities will send out scouts to find psychic "material," in much the same acquisitive spirit as athletic departments now hunt out backfield players for their football teams.

Such things are to be expected when a commercial civilization embraces the idea of the soul—and it is difficult to see how telepathy can be widely acknowledged without recognition of the soul, or some

version of it, at least. About a hundred years ago, an even less attractive fate overtook the Spiritualist Movement, which began in 1848 with the wonderful phenomena of Kate and Margaretta Fox—two little girls of Hydesville, New York, whose "rappings" astonished the world—and ended in fraud, mutual recrimination and commercialized mediumship. The core of fact in spiritualistic phenomena may remain—it was recognized by the few investigators like Crookes and James who were willing to ignore popular prejudice—but the possibility of a more profound understanding of the nature of human beings through the study of Spiritualism was soon destroyed by the Spiritualists themselves. There is hope, however, that some of the lines of contemporary psychic research will be able to avoid the morass of sectarianism and commercial exploitation. While nineteenth-century investigators for the most part disregarded the possible moral implications of Psychic phenomena, another spirit is manifest among scientists now working in this field.

Dr. Rhine's book, *The Reach of the Mind*, includes a brief sketch of psychic research in the West since the founding of the London Society for Psychical Research. In general, the work of psychic researchers was opposed by academic psychologists. Dr. Rhine presents in his survey the interesting bit of information that Dr. John E. Coover, whose experiments at Stanford are so often quoted against the existence of telepathy, ignored certain positive elements in his findings, and he "simply remained silent when corrected." The only psychologists who manifested a determined interest in telepathy throughout the period of its extreme unpopularity were William James, William McDougall, and, to a lesser extent, Freud and Jung. Dr. McDougall, who went to Duke University from Harvard, became, as Dr. Rhine says, "the leading champion of parapsychological study among the psychologists of the twentieth century." The reason for this direction of McDougall's interest is clear from what he wrote in 1923:

Unless Psychical Research can discover facts incompatible with materialism, materialism will continue to spread. No other power can stop it; revealed religion and metaphysical philosophy are equally helpless before the advancing tide. And if that tide continues to rise and advance as it is doing now, all signs point to the view that it will be a

destroying tide, that it will sweep away all the hard-won gains of humanity, all the moral traditions built up by countless generations for the increase of truth, justice and charity.

Alone among the older generation of modern psychologists, McDougall never gave up his conviction of the possibility of a unitary, purposive being, a being quite properly called the *soul*, as the causal agent in human behavior. His *Body and Mind* is practically the only book by a modern scientist which seriously discusses the idea of the soul in the terms of scientific inquiry. This volume contains devastating philosophical criticism of the prevailing forms of scientific materialism—but the average scientific reader seldom appreciates any sort of philosophical reasoning, so that McDougall's book was mostly for the record rather than a direct influence on thought.

The important consideration, here, it seems to us, is the ethical motivation which launched the program of psychic investigation at Duke University—a motivation which Dr. Rhine continues, making the work there something more than just another research project. Dr. Rhine is convinced that "the most urgent problem we face today" is "*the need for an effective morality for our ethically confused world, a morality founded on a basis which we can respect intellectually.*" The pertinence of psychic research is made clear in a paragraph:

Our treatment of people obviously depends on what we think they are, as does our treatment of everything else. No other way would be intelligent. Our feelings for men depend on our ideas, our knowledge, about them. The more we are led on the one hand to think of our fellowmen as deterministic, physical systems—robots, machines, brains—the more heartlessly and selfishly we can allow ourselves to deal with them. On the other hand, the more we appreciate their mental life as something unique in nature, something more original and creative than the mere space-time-mass relationships of matter, the more we are interested in them as individuals, and the more we tend to respect them and consider their viewpoints and feelings. our interpersonal relationships are elevated to a level of mutual interest, of understanding, of fellowship.

It is this orientation of purpose lying behind the study of extra sensory perception which gives genuine promise of a new base in scientific inquiry into the nature of man. Further, the direction taken by this

form of psychic research suggests the value of *self-study* and self-experiment, rather than the usual mechanistic approach of the sciences to "objects" of investigation.

Prof. McConnell notes that "ESP ability is a vagrant, unpredictable thing," and asks: "Why do some people have it and others not?" The question, *What am I?* should not be too remote from such problems, and this question is the really important one, for it is now well known that what people think of themselves largely determines what they think of others.

Much more is involved in these implications of psychic research than the progress of a branch of scientific psychology. We live in an epoch of disenchantment, of brutalization of mankind—of reversion, through disgust for hypocrisy, to an elementary earthiness in which men seem to find what has long been lacking from their lives—a simple if barbarous honesty. There is reason to think that a ruthless, destructive force of Nature is at work in the affairs of men, tearing away the superstructures of debased theologies, slowly bleaching the tints of sectarianism and undermining all the superficial "niceties" of our debilitated and neurotic culture. Conceivably, the emergence of a practical idealism connected with the scientific study of man may serve as a balancing factor in this collapse of the old forms of civilization.

While Dr. Rhine makes no imposing metaphysical "claims" on behalf of the evidence for extra sensory perception—"What has been found," he says, "might be called a psychological soul"—this very restraint and divorce from theology may be the means of gaining interest for the soul as an experienced reality rather than a doctrine or dogma. It is at any rate a starting point for a new view of man's nature, and one that has nothing to fear from the brutal iconoclasm of the age.