

## SOME ADMIRABLE HERETICS

WHILE Floyd H. Ross, professor of world religions at the University of Southern California, may not fully appreciate this title for a discussion in which his recent book, *Addressed to Christians: Isolationism vs. World Community* (Harper, 1950), figures so extensively, in setting down these thoughts, it seems to us, he has nevertheless joined an illustrious company of troublemakers for Christian orthodoxy. Ordinarily, books by Christians about Christianity are pretty stale fare, but now and then along comes someone who approaches this subject with fresh eyes and a fearless spirit, with the result that whatever he produces is so good as to persuade the reader that here is a "Christianity" well worth investigating.

Prof. Ross's style is far from dramatic; in fact, it is necessary sometimes to dig for his actual meaning, underneath the tersely constructed language with which he lays bare the anatomy of Christian belief and ecclesiastical custom across two thousand years. Yet the moral explosive is there; the challenge to honesty is there; and the integrity of a critical thinker who writes from principle looks out upon the reader from every page.

There is a splendid vigor in the writings of acutely honest men. We sometimes imagine that the religious literature of the Middle Ages was uniformly dull. Browsing through *Addressed to Christians*, however, one recalls other outspoken individuals who called themselves "Christian," but who are more worthy to be remembered as belonging to that wider community of the free and nonsectarian philosophic spirit. For example, there was Claudius, Bishop of Turin in the ninth century—a period of European history generally regarded as part of the Dark Ages. Bishop or no, Claudius mightily opposed the emasculation of individual moral responsibility—a condition which, from all appearances, it was the purpose of the Church to maintain. Claudius felt that the *apparatus* of religion was rapidly replacing the spirit of devotion. He frowned on the worship of

images, of pictures, of simulacra of the Cross. Belief in the mediation of the saints, in the authority of the Holy See, and the efficacy of pilgrimages seemed to him but ways of undermining the individual man's sense of responsibility. Claudius expressed himself in lucid and certain terms:

Let no man trust in the intercession or merit of the saints, because except he hold the same faith, justice, and truth, which they held, he cannot be saved.

Where, in modern apologetics, will be found the like of this extraordinary good sense?

God commanded men to bear the cross, not to adore it: they desire to adore that which they will not spiritually or bodily to carry with them. So to worship God is to depart from him.

Claudius seems to have understood the decadent *Zeitgeist* of his age better than any of his contemporaries. With his authority as Bishop, he ordered the destruction of all images and holy pictures throughout his diocese. When challenged by an angry populace, he replied:

If they worship the images of saints after the fashion of demons, they have not left idols but changed their names. . . . Why dost thou humble thyself and bow to false images? why bend thy body a slave before vain likenesses and things of earthly fashion?

God made thee erect. Other animals are prone and look earthward, but thy face is raised towards God.

His comments upon the mode of worship of Jesus have application today:

When these worshippers of a false religion and superstition say, For the memory of our Savior we worship, reverence, adore a cross painted and carved in his honor, they take no pleasure in our Savior except that which pleased the ungodly, the shame of his passion and the scorn of his death. . . .

The formal aspect of worship receives withering ridicule:

You worship all wood fashioned after the manner of a cross, because for six hours Christ hung upon a cross. Worship then all virgins, because a virgin bore him. Worship stables, for he was born in one; old rags, for he was swaddled in them; ships, for he oftentimes sailed in them; asses, for he rode thereon.

The patience of Claudius runs out:

Ridiculous these things are, and to be mourned rather than written. We are compelled to allege foolishness against the foolish; against hearts of stone we must cast not arrows of the word, not sage reasons, but volleys of stones.

On the apostolic succession and the authority of the Holy See, he has this brief conclusion:

He is not to be called apostolic who sits in the seat of the apostle, but he who fills the office of the apostle. Of them that hold that place and fulfill not its office the Lord hath said, The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they say unto you, that observe and do; but do ye not after their works: for they say and do not.

Claudius was hated, feared, attacked, tried, and condemned by his contemporaries of the cloth; but somehow he survived; perhaps the very vigor of his crusading spirit protected him.

Another pleasantly heretical figure who flourished during almost the same period was John Scotus Erigena, called by scholars the last champion of the Greek spirit in the West. Poole says of him (in *Medieval Thought and Learning*):

He is unrestrained by the habits of thought of his own age, in which he appears as a meteor, none knew whence. The mystery which surrounds him is appropriate for his solitary person. . . . His own time knows only that he was "a holy man" who came from Ireland and had achieved no ecclesiastical orders.

We know of no more rewarding exploration in past thought for the skeptical modern than an investigation of the writings of the ninth-century genius, Erigena, who first appears in religious history when called upon by Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, to perform a polemical chore in defense of the faith. Hincmar was bothered by an angry youth, held captive in a Benedictine monastery to fulfill the vow of his father that his son should become a monk. This youth, Gottschalk, had turned his turbulent

energies to developing the logic of the Augustinian doctrine of Predestination, and Gottschalk learned to argue for election to eternal damnation with considerable skill and enthusiasm. The enthusiasm the Church could put up with, but the skill it found perturbing. Gottschalk was too convincing, and so Hincmar retained Erigena to dissolve the youth's arguments with a superior logic.

Erigena rose to the occasion nobly. He not only dissolved Predestination, but he dissolved Sin and Hell, too. Predestination, claimed John Scotus, could not be asserted of God, for God is independent of time. The only predestination possible is by man himself. Human suffering results from the misuse of the will; hell is only the psychological result of separating oneself from the good. God, for Erigena, was a sort of benevolent Absolute, hardly capable of any of the feats of personal achievement attributed to Him by the Church. Actually, punishment comes not from God but from the misdeed itself. Repeated misdeeds finally bring a man to separation from the stream of life.

Obviously, a theological system of this sort has no need of priests. Intermediaries between God and man are so much excess baggage. As soon as the not-so-learned clergy of the day recognized the implications of Erigena's teachings, they took steps to have them anathematized. His *Division of Nature* was denounced as filled with abominable blasphemies, and there is considerable evidence to show that this work was a practical manual for the heretical sects of the Middle Ages. It seems to have been known to practically *all* the liberated spirits of the period. Erigena's works were widely circulated among the Albigenses of southern France, and almost undoubtedly exerted an influence upon the Cathari, the Beghards, and the pantheistic Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit. Erigena plainly contributed to the ferment which finally produced the Reformation.

What sort of things did Erigena teach? Poole supplies an excellent summary of the Irish philosopher's view of the pilgrimage of the soul, giving Erigena's actual words in italics:

He [Erigen] supplants the dark dogma of the natural corruption of man, his original destiny to perdition, by the conception of the negative character of evil. It is, he would say with Plato, as little natural as the diseases of the body: it is the inevitable result of the union of flesh and spirit. *The soul may forget her natural goods, may fail in her striving towards the inborn virtues of her nature; the natural powers may move, by fault of judgment, towards something which is not their end: but not for ever. For the universal tendency is upward; and thus from evil it wont to turn good, but in nowise from good evil. . . . The first evil could not be perpetual, but by the necessity of things must reach a certain bound and one day vanish. For if the divine goodness which ever worketh not only in the good but also in the wicked, is eternal and infinite, it follows that its contrary will not be eternal and infinite. . . . Evil therefore will have its consummation and remain not in any nature, since in all the divine nature will work and be manifest. Our nature then is not fixed in evil; . . . it is ever moving and seeks nought else but the highest good, from which as a beginning its motion takes its source, and to which it is hastened as to an end.* As all things proceed from God, so in God they find their final completion.

For Erigena, religion is not dependent upon some historical event, but is the metaphysic of soul-evolution. He surely drank at some archaic spring of wisdomism, for here, without question, is the Gnostic doctrine of emanations, the Hindu teaching of the outbreathing of *Brahma*, and the Neoplatonic conviction of final return to the One, after the drama of existence has been played out. But even within this "One," which closely resembles the Nirvana of the East, Erigena says, "the peculiarity of the natures will remain intact without prejudice to their unity, and neither will the unity of the nature be removed by their peculiarity, nor the peculiarity by the unity." Thus individuality is not destroyed; or, as an Eastern thinker might say, "It sleeps on the bosom of Eternity, to emerge once again at the dawn of another Great Day of Evolution."

Small wonder that after him came a line of pantheists who suffered persecution and expulsion from the Church. Erigena was the sort of thinker who, if taken seriously, would make the Church entirely unnecessary to the spiritual welfare of mankind.

*Addressed to Christians*, by Floyd Ross, while by no means a majestic statement of philosophical ideas, is worthy to be considered with the works of the Iconoclasts and the pantheistic heresiarchs because of its revolutionary and uncompromising honesty—coming at a time when honesty is greatly needed. Mr. Ross elevates no vaulting metaphysical system, but he does explain, in psychological terms, why the universalist tendency in the Christian religion has been and still is continually frustrated by regard for sectarian claims.

Mr. Ross is concerned with the incompatibility of Christian dogma with the ideal of world community in religion. He finds intolerable the Christian insistence upon unique and exclusive Revelation, whether explicit or only implied. His book is really a history of this insistence, from the apostolic period on. It is not a complete history, of course—the book is short—but rather a series of essays dealing with a succession of epochs in Christian thinking. What this author has done might be generalized in several ways: one way would be to say that he has a basic faith in the human instinct for justice, and his book is an account of how the will to do justice is confined and rendered ineffective by the Christian doctrine that only through the teachings of Jesus can ultimate religious truth be discovered. Mr. Ross himself seems to think that the Christian claim of exclusive truth is a betrayal of the religious spirit, if not a betrayal of Jesus himself—making it, in fact, unChristian.

The early chapters deal with the shaping of dogmas and the formulation of creeds. The gist of the author's contention is that the Romans, being legalistic by training and tradition, wanted a clear and unequivocal statement of what it meant to "be a Christian." The more philosophical Greek fathers were unable to supply satisfactory definitions. Justin Martyr, for example, maintained that men of every race have been partakers of Christ and that all those "who live reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists." Origen held that the source of a teaching did not prejudice its truth—Plato, Moses, or Jesus could reveal religious verities. These views, however, were not to survive. The Roman spirit triumphed, and Christianity was

increasingly defined in terms of a special and absolute revelation to a chosen people, the chosen people being no longer the Jews, but those who decided to believe in Christ. As Mr. Ross puts it:

Thus we see how deeply the idea of being the divinely elected race or the true Israel had taken rootage among the early Christians, finding both its cause and its reason in the Jewish attitude and in the Jewish scriptures. The most distinctive national peculiarity of the Jews became the most tenacious conviction of the Christians. The notion was to be given its own special twists by the Greek, the Roman, the Lutheran, and the Reformed versions of Christianity. An idea or conviction which was historically conditioned in its rise (like all other human convictions) thus came to be accepted without question as a divine absolute; none of the orthodox was to think of questioning it openly. Probably no sect or movement during the period of its evangelistic fervor is psychologically disposed to examine critically those matters closest to the feeling of being, somehow or other, in a most favored nation relationship with reference to deity. Certainly the Christians refrained from questioning.

Mr. Ross displays profound understanding of the forces which devise and crystallize the creeds of religious belief. Ostensibly, a creed is a means of stating one's basic convictions. But it may also represent a yearning for simple certainty. A man who can be satisfied with a creed is hardly a man who will continue a search for religious truth. And, as the author points out:

There is also the institutional need for a yardstick which can be utilized as a bludgeon, if necessary, to bring stragglers or rebels into line. This latter process of creedal coercion cannot take place till the initial enthusiasm which bound a group together has been dissipated somewhat, . . . The process of creed-making, like the process of education itself, would go on indefinitely in a normal exploratory fashion were it not for the fact that in every historically conscious movement, administratively-minded persons step forward to "jell" the process, to determine what the "faith" shall be. In such fashion churches or parties are formed, and indoctrination tends to displace the more subtle factors in the process of education or self-actualization.

*Addressed to Christians* is filled with insights of this sort. And, wonderful to relate, Mr. Ross never

once remarks that, of course, from a "practical" point of view, these compromises are necessary in order to establish effective religious organization. He does not seem to worry about "effective religious organization." His view of genuine religion is this:

. . . in the earliest period of creed-making, creeds were used primarily to determine the conditions for entrance into the Christian fellowship. By the fourth century they were being used to determine the conditions for expulsion. The churchmen in effect were saying that the Christian was justified through what he believed about the faith—faith being construed as a deposit of teachings. Whence this change?

One way of phrasing it is to say that concern with the relatively external side of the life of religion took precedence over concern with the interiorization process. It was a period when concern with form and institution outran by far the spontaneous and intuitive aspect of the life of the spirit usually expressed in art or poetry. Great religion like great art flows from the inner life, creating its forms only in order to express its insights and then transcend them. The inner life always remains in control of the outer life, and forever finds it necessary to go beyond the very form it creates. . . . A religion which has lost its soul clings to the forms of its art, seeking to refine those forms ever more subtly. Usually such a religion ends up by being forced into submission to the forms by its experts; whereupon the churchmen see to it that all adherents shall likewise *conform*.

Mr. Ross continues his analysis of the forms and emphasis of Christianity up to the present day. His book is tremendously instructive because its principles are clearly set forth. As very largely a critical work, *Addressed to Christians* may not be an epoch-making book, but it is surely epoch-marking, and should be read by many more than the "Christians" to whom it appeals.

## *Letter from* **CENTRAL EUROPE**

INNSBRUCK.—A so-called Coalition-Government doubtless offers advantages, particularly when the partners are the two most powerful parties of the parliament. And the advantages are the more obvious when, as has been the case in Austria since 1945, the two parties concentrate on moderate policies. If these parties opposed one another, they would suffer insufficient majorities most of the time or be forced to unite with a small but extreme party, thus allowing the extremists, in spite of their unimportance in number, to decide and "speak the last word" in matters which might often be of great significance.

But the coalition of two powerful parties also reveals certain disadvantages, and even some dangerous consequences. In the first place, the parties develop into dictatorships, based on their overwhelming majority. Second, their partition of the functions and seats of government among themselves reaches into even the smallest office, or the last committee in a mountain village which must consist of so many prescribed members of the one party, and the prescribed number of the other. In a word, there is not a parliament in Vienna only, with provincial parliaments in Niederösterreich, Burgenland, Oberösterreich, Steiermark, Kränten, Salzburg, Tirol and Vorarlberg—but the country is practically filled with thousands of parliaments, many of them very small, made up of members of the ruling political parties.

This might sound rather like an expression of the true, democratic spirit, but the experience of the last few years shows that, although most of the voters for the party in question have not been members of it, only party-members are counted after the election, as others are really not admitted into the different bodies. And that these bodies keep tightly to the party programmes, in spite of the fact that a high percentage of the population voted for them, simply because they regarded the other parties as still worse.

But the main trouble is that, politely hidden from public view, each of the two parties is dissatisfied with the situation and wants to be strong enough by the time of the next election to become independent from its coalition-partner. The consequences of this policy are

detrimental in practice. It is already the custom to fill a vacancy with a man who is a reliable party-member, notwithstanding his professional capacities. Every little cell of social and economic life is penetrated by the parties, each one with the idea of developing it into another stronghold of support in the coming election. General necessities move to a secondary place, bureaucracy dominates over genuine knowledge and the free spirit.

During the last two years, the public has indicated on several occasions that it wants to see more than a mere speeding-up of the party-machines. An "independent" party was born and the masses succeeded in insisting on the election of another President of State by the direct vote of every citizen, instead of leaving it to the leaders of the coalition-parties to bargain about the candidate for that high office—the custom since 1919.

There seems to be a contradiction in the fact that in a number of highly developed countries of the world, parliamentarianism permits the best possible means for governing a nation appropriate to its human and economic conditions, while in Central Europe it has led either to lethargy or to extremism. The cause for this lies in the mistake of the Allies, at the time of World War I, in looking at the German and the Austro-Hungarian monarchies as absolute and non-restricted, and in "ordering" the Vanquished to become democratic, thus abruptly destroying a development which probably would have come of itself, in time.

Not knowing any better, the new democracies added the powers of the monarchs to the parliaments and thus believed the problems of democracy to have been solved. The lack of some authority which is respected in all regards, particularly with reference to its impartiality, and which would act as the opponent of parliament, in situations such as have arisen in Austria for some time, seems to be the real reason for the non-functioning of the democratic system in Central Europe.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### FROM OUT OF THE GLOOM

As we recently remarked of best-selling novelist Norman Mailer, a great many writers have succumbed to "marketing Despair." We grant, of course, the existence of numerous reasons to account for this, especially when the background of a plot is World War II, and the novelist a combat veteran. More than one author, however, has added a tone of determined affirmation to his interpretation of the war experience, and a little way out of the gloom is better than none. There is need for writers who maintain a balanced mood, who are able to offset bitter geniuses like Mailer—whose contributions, incidentally, could then be better understood.

A recent BoM selection, *The Cruel Sea*, by Nicholas Monsarrat, another combat veteran, can be recommended in this connection. Monsarrat tells of the courage of an outmanned English navy during the four-year Battle of the Atlantic. His heroes show nobility, courage, generosity, and sensitivity, not only because they belong to the naval-officer category of educated men, but also because Monsarrat sees war as a tragic catharsis rather than as a proof of inevitable and increasing degradation for the human race. They live, some of Monsarrat's men, with a definite sense of consecration, and consecration, whenever it is genuinely inspired, is ennobling. The reader of *The Cruel Sea* may feel himself participating in psychological experiences of magnitude; and while the war will still seem bitter senselessness, from a sociological or historical point of view, the *human* affirmations will suggest that no war, however horrible, can obliterate man's perennial determination to find a higher life by discharging the duties of present odious situations to the best of his capacities. Monsarrat, moreover, is not fascinated by either hatred or disgust. His men, at times hating the Germans who pursue them in U-Boats, are also able to experience moments of clarity when they envision those same Germans as genuine patriots for their own land, simply

following a mistaken light. The moral seems to be that men who live on the brink of violent death, and in a day-to-day whirl of almost incredible privations, are at least encouraged to dig down to the fundamentals of the conflict. None of Norman Mailer's men find the digging important; a great many of Monsarrat's do, making him, by comparison, an "affirmative" author—already part way out of the gloom.

The trend of "negativism" has been so far-reaching that we might logically expect any "optimism" voiced by contemporary authors to be very cautiously grounded. Yet this makes it all the better when it comes. The men who *now* find dignity and promise in the human personality have to be men who dare to be different, and who have the courage of rather strong convictions. This might be claimed of James Jones in the case of his first novel, *From Here to Eternity*. For this man, so much a "realist" in his endless discussion of sordid details and in his use of language that even Bernard DeVoto of *Harper's* complained, nonetheless idealizes his characters with great persuasiveness. Jones, like Monsarrat, knows his way around in the gloom, but also seems determined to poke his head through to another atmosphere.

Perhaps the reading public should form some kind of an association for the advancement of intelligent optimism—or any kind of idealism—in art, literature, politics and religion. Such a group, to be sure, probably should read all the Norman Mailers available in order to be sure that their hopefulness is of a supportable sort. The best passages in popular literature, it seems to us, are those which combine a sense of sober responsibility for each man's part in creating the woes of the world with a feeling for the ultimate moral potential of the individual. Such passages are especially impressive when produced by authors who have spent earlier volumes vying to outdo each other in the grimness of their tragedies. One example of this is afforded by Theodore Straus, a writer who, in 1937,

concentrated all his skill on describing the brutality of mob violence (*Night at Hog Wallow* or *The Haters*). Later, in 1946, he wrote another story, this time with a hopeful and heart-warming ending. The same realism exists in the later story (*Moonrise*, Viking Press), but the pursued killer, for whom Straus evokes a sympathy based on understanding, is not made to die in some ugly fashion at the end of the book. Moreover, here we have an unusual representative of officialdom showing faith in the ultimate worthiness of all human beings, expressed in a protest against the inadequacy of legal punishment. This sheriff gives us, perhaps, a bit of Theodore Straus' awakened faith in the capacity of man—even the man in Authority—to feel genuine compassion, and act in consonance with it. More than anything else, perhaps, this is what needs to come "out of the gloom"—a compassion which sees the promise of some kind of nobility and value in even the most twisted personalities. At any rate, here is a passage we like for what we are able to read into it, believing that its moral has much to do with wars and nations as well as with crime and punishment:

"All I'm saying, Jake," said the sheriff, "is that there isn't any such thing as a simple fact. A fact can be the most complicated thing there is, it's got as many angles as a fly has eyes. Jerry Sykes is dead, but he didn't die of natural causes. If he had they would have nailed him in a box, held a nice funeral and sent him off to the cemetery, said a prayer for him, and left him among the other peaceful folks. But he was a different kind of dead man. He was murdered. Would you say murder was a simple fact?"

Jake squinted up through the smoke that drifted from the cigar firmly clamped between his teeth. "I won't answer that. But I can tell you what the law says....."

"I know what the law says," Clem interrupted with a tired wave of his hand. "Premeditation, first degree; with qualifying cause or momentary aberration, second degree. It don't go deep enough, nowhere deep enough."

"Sounds like you want to rewrite the law."

"No," said Clem, hardly taking notice of the coroner's crack. "I ain't smart enough for that. But

I'm smart enough to know that the law is wrong when it pins all the responsibility for a crime on the man who's committed one."

"How else you going to operate?"

Clem didn't hear the question, he was too busy looking for an answer to his own thoughts. After a while he said slowly, "I knew a man once kept accusing his wife of being unfaithful. After listening to him for twelve years she was."

Jake laughed harshly, . . . "Proved he was right. He was just a little premature—that's all."

Clem looked at the other seriously. "I say the husband not only contributed, but was directly responsible for what his wife did."

"You expect the law to go into hair-splitting like that when it's hardly got time to look at the facts?" asked Jake. "When there ain't a court in the country that hasn't got more cases on the docket than it can handle?"

"Well, somebody's got to," Clem said. He ruffled the papers on his desk again futilely, at last took the cigar Jake offered him. "Murder is like love, Jake. It takes two to commit it—the killer and the killed, the man who hates and the man who's hated. Sometimes I think that if you were to go into all the reasons why that rock struck Jerry Sykes's head you might wind up writing the history of the world."

"It's easier to stick to facts," said Jake, "and a lot more practical."

"More practical?" Clem asked. "I doubt it. Every day we're creating the men that tomorrow we're going to try for murder, crime, making wars even. And tomorrow we'll sit behind a bench and look down at them with righteousness all over our faces and say they're guilty. If we were honest we'd take part of the guilt on our own shoulders, place ourselves on trial at the same time. Maybe we'd find out a little more about why men commit crime."

## *COMMENTARY* AN OLD QUESTION

PERIODICALLY we—and a number of others—wax enthusiastic about the virtues of so-called "primitive" societies, the members of which seem able to live lives of wholeness and harmony, revealing a sense of basic integration with nature as well as with their fellow men. But periodically, again, we are forced to reflect that this enthusiasm needs qualification—for, as a matter of fact, the harmony of these societies also involves a somewhat rigid conformity. It is not necessarily a "bad" conformity, but one that limits the expression of creative impulses to channels established by ancestral tradition.

The members of these societies, while strikingly admirable within their own community, often seem hopelessly at loose ends in an unsympathetic or adverse environment. They do not, it might be argued, make good "radicals"—men who are able to forge new traditions by setting the example of unfamiliar kinds of justice.

All this, of course, is part of the endless dialogue between Conservative and Radical, a phase of which is explored this week in *Children . . . and Ourselves*. It is also, indirectly, a part of the subject-matter of the leading article, for Floyd Ross is at odds with the wrong kind of Conservatism, and interested in the sort of Radicalism which rejects credal exclusiveness and separatism.

Obviously, the ideal "wise man" will be both Conservative and Radical—he will be both preserver and innovator of the good, and resister and destroyer of the bad. In this sense, Conservative and Radical are terms which relate to intelligence in action, defining two different sorts of action devoted to the same end.

In the West, the most noticeable defect of the radical has been his irresponsible eagerness for change, without full recognition of how constructive changes must be instituted, and without thorough intellectual honesty concerning

the effects of the changes he proposes. The conservative, on the other hand, is often typified by the self-interest of the man of property and station—he wants no change that will disturb his favored position.

Quite possibly, one of the great historical contributions of Western civilization has been to demonstrate the importance of freedom to change—which may explain why the radical has enjoyed the lion's share of romance in modern history, and why the conservative has been sneered at and disliked, almost by instinct.

The really important consideration, however, it seems to us, is to learn to regard all men, first, as human beings, and then try to evaluate their ideas and attitudes without reference to parties or prejudices. If we could succeed in this, both "radical" and "conservative" would cease to be useful as epithets, and the intelligence behind both viewpoints could be judged according to its merits.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THE basic issues of the world-wide debate on "progressive education" methods all seem to involve, in one way or another, important psychological facts about human beings. During past decades we have witnessed a great factional struggle between "conservatism" and "radicalism" as to methods of teaching, but behind this is the inescapable truth that each child, and each adult, is, of himself, and in alternate phases, *both* "radical" and "conservative," learning during cyclic swings of the pendulum between extremes.

Radicalism and Conservatism are not only present in each person to some degree: they also represent progressive stages of awakening which succeed each other in a kind of rhythmical recurrence. As a great psychologist has recently pointed out, the most valuable human being is never long "at repose." The measure of his greatness as man, in fact, is the degree to which he can foreswear complacent "repose." Yet we cannot always judge the degree of either a man's stagnation or his dynamism by his apparent tendency in one or the other of these directions. The child—or the man—whose learning is *most* accelerated, will not exhibit uninterrupted partiality for either "radical" or "conservative" positions. At times he will break away from the accepted values of his culture through a conviction that new attitudes—new approaches and new interpretations of values—are necessary. At other times he will seek to consolidate and preserve the values of an older and sometimes popularly discarded system of thought.

Evidence of this rather complicated point is to be found in the lives of both John Dewey and Robert Hutchins, often held to represent the two extremes of educational opinion. In many respects Dr. Hutchins, the let's-get-back-to-the-classics man, has been just about as radical as anyone can be, while Dr. Dewey, the try-everything-and-see-if-it-works man, was certainly

conservative in the highest and best sense in respect to moral values.

If we were to agree upon anything, after feeling some willingness to separate ourselves from allegiance to current representations of either the Radical or the Conservative point of view, we should have to agree that man's first freedom is the freedom of thought. And if the man, when a child, is trained simply to accept the prevailing opinions of his elders, he can hardly grow into either a genuine radical or a genuine conservative. The genuine conservative, we must see, *also* has to think for himself. *He* must do the conserving, separating the chaff from the wheat and retaining only what affirms the dignity of humanity and the hope of further enlightenment and progress. The genuine radical, similarly, cannot be "made." Even the extremely unorthodox opinions of parents or teachers, if accepted and converted into unthinking prejudice, leave all but exceptional children unable to rise above the bias of early conditioning. They will seldom go back to the roots of thought in assessing values, as a genuine radical should, but will only represent a different, perhaps a better or simply a more bitter orthodoxy of their own.

These psychological factors in education—not only the education of our children, but also the education of ourselves—indicate the primal necessity of learning to distinguish between conviction and prejudice. Prejudices are unexamined conclusions, or conclusions adopted after that sort of partial examination which has reference only to our own personal advantage in time, place and circumstance. In an intelligent society, there is no freedom for prejudice, since the members of an intelligent society easily recognize that no man understands the meaning of freedom of thought unless he *gives* it meaning by the assumption of constructive responsibility—and prejudice is never intellectually or morally responsible.

The pendulum swings, for both ourselves and our children, however, whether we are

unprejudiced or not. What usually seems to happen is this: When we are released from habitual attitudes of mind, we often exercise new freedoms unwisely. In such case, we have failed to accept the responsibility that accompanies the exercise of those freedoms; and while we may be *willing* to learn, and may be "responsible persons at heart," we will undoubtedly be vulnerable to a great deal of criticism. There is, in other words, a price to pay for the liberation of the human mind. Our traditional attitudes and opinions have for long centuries been based upon provincial biases and fanatical or near fanatical sectarianisms. We are not, any of us, *used* to freedom.

If we attempt to apply this analysis to the controversy between Progressive and Conservative education, it is easy to explain many wholesale denunciations of the Progressive movement: "Children are not receiving any idea of discipline," we are told. Or, "Children are not being disciplined." Or, "Children are encouraged to do only what they please, to follow the inclinations of their own desires, without any restraints or effective punishments." Or, "Children are taught disrespect for their elders by implication, since they are encouraged to hold new views not held by their parents, etc., etc." Behind each of these charges there is undoubtedly a bit of truth. If one is a crusading Progressive, he probably does allow the pendulum to swing too far—just as all of us allow it to swing too far, this way or that, in our own lives. Nevertheless, this whole process *is* a process of growth. Only the free mind can truly assume responsibility—only the free mind can understand the meaning of *self-discipline*, and only the free mind is able to proceed constructively from mistakes, turning them into deep comprehension.

This is actually no partisan question. We could not, if we would, turn back the tide of human learning. And, when we learn, we continually pass beyond the area of familiar and safe ideas to new ones, and their consequent expressions in our lives. American education

could not have done without the Progressives any more than the Constitution of the United States could have done without the revolutionaries of the eighteenth century. That Constitution may now seem a conservative document to some, but its creation involved some of the most intense radicalism in political history.

There is only one belief able to inspire confidence that the inevitable process of "swinging pendulums" can be comprehended without dismay or discord. That is a faith in both the essential courage and the essential capacity for responsibility within each human being. The praiseworthy radicalisms and conservativisms have always been inspired by this kind of faith, and a synthesis of the praiseworthy elements of both is not difficult to achieve. If our attitude, however, is distrustful of the *essential nature* of man or child, we shall see only license in free thought, and only tyranny in conservatism.

## *FRONTIERS* Overcoming Anxiety

THE animals gave us as a heritage, awareness without anxiety and action without haste. Can we recover the lost heritage?

The state of mind of *anxiety* is immanent throughout human life. It could be called a *perversion of a primitive function*. In wild-animal life the function is sleepless watchfulness, not anxiety. And in wild-animal life, not *haste*, but *appropriate action* (which often is total *immobility*) is the typical behavior following from watchfulness. Hudson thought (*Idle Days in Patagonia*) that in wild animals and in aboriginal man, the watchfulness and awareness carried had none of the emotion of anxiety.

There are fortunate men who find it easy to be exhaustively watchful without anxiety. Thus, Napoleon, never anxious in spite of his maxim, which he practiced, that "no detail is unimportant." President Franklin D. Roosevelt seems to have been another such. Possibly these men pay the price of a diminished sensitiveness. In any event, most of us live in the shadow of conscious or unconscious anxiety.

We always can rationalize, justify our anxiety a hundred times over; for we are, and must remain,

. . . midmost the beating of the steely sea  
Where tossed about all lives of men must be

—we and what we hold dear are thus situated permanently. Peculiarly can those engaged in enterprises of their own making justify their anxiety—those engaged in enterprises whose needed time-span is greater than the possible time-span of their own authority, whose elements are new and not generally understood or valued, and whose preservation depends on the collaboration of many. But all can justify their anxiety.

What we need to recognize is that method, discipline, experimentation and self-suggestion must—and can—be used to *keep* the primitive

watchfulness and awareness while *escaping* its civilized accompaniment *anxiety*. The wild animal who reacts to danger with panic or haste is lost. In laboratory conditioning, the anxiety neurosis can be built up in animals, with the effect of confusing both their awareness and their motor reactions. *Anxiety in ourselves operates the same way.*

As for haste, that can of course be built into a habit sustaining itself merely *as* a habit; but primarily, haste is the product of anxiety. However, we often can control an emotion through controlling merely its motor effects; and anxiety can be controlled by the means, among others, of methodically not indulging in haste. To not indulge in haste is partly a direct process of detecting haste in one's own behavior and inhibiting it; and partly it is an indirect process of sifting in advance the important from the unimportant, and of so planning—in terms of days, weeks, seasons—that the *time-element* is adequately allowed for. One whose hope is vested—his purpose placed—amid complex events, to be attained by coordinate and successive actions on many lines and through the concert of many wills; such an one cannot defend himself against haste except through the use of objective method—method which will include sifting, planning, scheduling—and scheduling *with a safety-margin in the matter of time*: because always the unforeseeable will intrude itself, and good luck cannot be constant. And always one who is in the position of a leader—a maker—must remember, and work into his planning, that *not volume of action, but importance and the wise placement of action* is what matters.

Haste, of course, while it contributes to the anxiety which is its cause, is not fundamental; it is anxiety (a complex of the insecurity and fear-emotions) which is fundamental and which could be called *the neurosis of civilized man*. And mere objectivity, mere matter-of-factness, cannot conquer anxiety, because always there is plenty of fact to support anxiety. The direct attack upon

anxiety has to be through wisdom, not merely through common sense; and even wisdom must operate principally through persevering self-suggestion. Once, the self-suggestion which availed was God, Providence, Destiny, Fate, and the substitution of other-world anxiety for this-world anxiety. We now have to provide ourselves with another kind of idea-force, if we are to meet anxiety through a direct attack.

One idea-force is this: our life and our enterprise have not come through to where they now are, solely by virtue of our own purposeful effort or of all our effort. Hence they are not going to have to go forward from now on solely by virtue of our effort. There are *zeitgeists* within *zeitgeists*, which made, which sustain, which carry forward the pattern and the production with which we are concerned. It is not only impediment which comes from regions beyond our foresight or control; help comes from those regions, too. *Anxiety* always makes us assume (a great error) that the well-being and future of what we care for depends on *our action alone*. Place one's self back in time, a year, several years; could one possibly have foreseen the helps which have emerged from the little-known world of men and of chance? But in the vague cloud of anxiety one *did* foresee all the hurts that came and in addition the "evils which never arrived."

Another idea-force, more important, lies in the fact that it is our Unconscious which contains our real resources—our Unconscious which reveals itself not in our anxious cogitations but in our actions, including our effects upon other persons. Our Unconscious, could we but let it help us, would be bounteous indeed—all but omnipotent.

What we call our Unconscious is a tremendous, an absolutely crucial, fact. Rest we in it, lean we upon it, and remember we that anxiety and its haste-brood are the principal barriers divorcing us from our Unconscious. We can trust and solicit our Unconscious, just as, of old, men trusted and solicited God—indeed,

practically speaking, it is our Unconscious which always has been "God." (James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*.)

Note that these two idea-forces, possible fulcrums for the lever of self-suggestion, are valid wholly *within* our *properly overwhelming* concern that our purposes shall not fail, our responsibilities not be slighted, our enterprises not be sunk, and that our life-hope shall be given our last drop of blood. If we attack haste through inhibition and through method, and attack anxiety through self-suggestion within the above idea-forces, it will not for a long time become needful for us to invoke *other* idea-forces, philosophically sound, but perhaps psychologically related to "escape-mechanisms," as for example, the resignation of Marcus Aurelius, or the faith stated in John Burroughs' lines—

"I stay my haste, I make delays;  
For what avails this eager pace?  
I stand amid the eternal ways,  
And what is mine shall know my face."

These more ultimate truths and refuges must come, in their due time; but it is the nearer truths, wholly pertinent to the endeavor, the construction, the battlefield of our present, that we should first use, to banish haste and anxiety, the neurosis of civilized man.

—JOHN COLLIER

New York City