

MEANINGS OF MODERN ART

[This article is condensed from two chapters of Lewis Mumford's recent book, *In the Name of Sanity*, copyright, 1954. It is reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.—Editors, MANAS.]

AT the first try, many of the manifestations of modern art might seem as difficult for a layman to interpret as the latest equation of nuclear physics. But in time the more positive productions, associated with the more formative processes in our civilization, became individually more intelligible, though anything like a synthesis between the various aspects of life and reality that have been symbolized in art during the last fifty years has so far proved unattainable: indeed, just the opposite has happened, because with the further development of painting, particularly in America, the split between the integrating and the disintegrating tendencies has become deeper.

One part of our art has responded to the formative and rational elements in our civilization and has sought to interpret and translate them: the other part has responded to, has recorded, has intensified the horror and misery and madness of our age, with its code of unrestricted violence and its scientifically contrived technics of demoralization, disintegration, and extermination. As one looks back over the art of the last forty years, these two facts are increasingly plain, and the ways which seemed to run parallel at first have parted further and further. Plainly, the narrow path, the path of discipline, order, rationality, discrimination, the path of mature and loving emotional development, fruitful and creative in every occasion it embraces, has become ever narrower, and the effort to follow its upward course has become lonelier and lonelier. Those artists who are committed to this way have fallen out of fashion; and sometimes, for lack of response, have ceased actively to create. While, on the other hand, the broad path, the path that

leads to destruction—to the corruption of the human, to the denial of love, to systematized disorder, to non-communication and non-intercourse at any level—has become wider and wider.

So it is in art; so it is in politics. The glorification of brutality characterizes all the arts today: both highbrow and lowbrow have become connoisseurs of violence. The enemies of the human race are no longer isolated tyrants, like Hitler and Stalin: in the very act of opposing their programs of revolutionary enslavement by the same means these dictators employed, we ourselves have increasingly taken on their inhuman or irrational characteristics.

As if the cult of violence were not a sufficient threat to our rationality, indeed to our very humanity, the painting of our time discloses still another danger: the surrender to the accidental and the denial of the possibility of coherence and intelligibility: what one might call the devaluation of all values and the emptying out of all meanings. This ultimate expression of the meaningless began in an almost innocent, because still humorous, form, at the end of World War I, in the cult of Dadaism: an irreverent commentary on the inflated platitudes of politicians. But by now the cult of the meaningless is a grimly humorless one: the negative responses that its empty splotches and scrawls at first provoke in a perceptive mind will be met, on the part of the devotees, with a fanatic gleam of reproach. Cracks, erosions, smudges, denials of all order or intelligibility, with not even as much capacity for evocative association as a Rorschach ink blot—this is the ultimate form and content of the fashionable art of the last decade. To gaze piously into this ultimate emptiness has become the last word in art appreciation today. The artists who produce these paintings, or the sculptures that correspond to

them, are often people of serious talent: sometimes their early work discloses the fact that they were people of original ability, perfectly able as far as technical command of the means goes, to express whatever human thought or feeling the artist of any age might express. But now all their talent, all their energy, is concentrated on only one end: a retreat, not only from the surface world of visible buildings and bodies, but a retreat from any kind of symbol that could, by its very organization, be interpreted as having a connection with organized form: a retreat into the formless, the lifeless, the disorganized, the dehumanized: the world of nonsignificance, as close as possible to blank nonexistence.

In these final images the modern artists who seem, however patiently we behold them, to say nothing to us, are in fact saying a great deal. Paintings that we must, in all critical honesty, reject as esthetic expressions, we must yet accept as despairing confessions of the soul, or as savage political commentary on our present condition arising from the depths of the unconscious. For there is one special quality in these paintings that lowers their standing as works of art: they are too factual, too realistic, they are too faithful reflections of the world we actually live in, the world we are so energetically preparing to suffer death in. These symbols of nothingness, true revelations of our purposeless mechanisms and our mechanized purposes, this constant fixation on what is violent, dehumanized, infernal—all this is not pure esthetic invention, the work of men who have no contacts with the life around them. Just the contrary: their ultimate negation of form and meaning should remind us of the goal of all our irrational plans and mechanisms. What they say should awaken us as no fuller and saner images might. These men, these paintings, these symbols have a terrible message to communicate: their visual nihilism is truer to reality than all the conventional paintings that assure us so smoothly that our familiar world is still there—and will always be there.

Let us not reproach the artist for telling us this message, which we have not the sensitivity to record or the courage to tell to ourselves: the message that the future, on the terms that it presents itself to us now, has become formless, valueless, meaningless: that in this irrational age, governed by absolute violence and pathological hate, our whole civilization might vanish from the face of the earth as completely as images of any sort have vanished from these pictures: as dismayingly as that little isle in the Pacific vanished from the surface of the ocean under the explosion of the hydrogen bomb. This is the new apocalypse, haunted by more terrible specters than the traditional Four Horsemen, as they appeared to the innocent eyes of John of Patmos—a revelation that promises neither a new heaven nor a new earth but an end that would nullify and make meaningless the whole long process of human history. Let the painters who have faced this ultimate nothingness, who have found a symbol for it, be understood if not honored: what they tell us is what we are all hiding from ourselves.

We are living in a society whose present character and condition were first prophetically disclosed in two American tales, that of Hawthorne's *Ethan Brand* and that of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Ethan Brand, the lime burner, the prototype of the dehumanized technician, by seeking knowledge and power alone cuts himself off by degrees from the magnetic chain of humanity: in the end he incinerates himself in his own furnace. As for Melville's epic, his Captain Ahab, who rejects the claims of both divine and human love, finally grapples with his consecrated enemy, the White Whale, only to bring himself and his ship to utter destruction—though for an instant, before the pursuit has reached its climax, he says to himself in one last flash of lucidity: "All my means are sane; my motives and object, mad."

Unfortunately for us today the means have now become as irrational as our purposes; for in

the very act of piling up weapons of extermination our leaders constantly assure us, with a laudable anxiety that alas! reveals their inner confusion, not only that there can be no victory, but that the employment of these instruments might wipe out the human race, or even destroy all life on the planet. That contradiction between our totalitarian military instruments and our democratic political ends gives the final measure of the irrationality of our time. Our works of love have marvelously succeeded: witness the rebuilding of Europe under the Marshall Plan. But our works of power have miserably failed. Most of the means we have taken to ensure military victory, during the last ten years, have so far led to defeat. The measures we have adopted for national security have enormously magnified every danger and enslaved us to our fears: the measures we have taken to detect traitorous accomplices of the Russian state have subverted the American Constitution more effectively than thirty years of Communist espionage and plotting: the measures we have taken to promote the physical sciences rapidly have led to the stultification of that great scientific tradition of intercommunication, which alone made possible the fission of the atom. In the name of freedom we are rapidly creating a police state; and in the name of democracy we have succumbed, not to creeping socialism but to galloping Fascism, in which official scandal sheets spotted with unsorted lies, fabrications, and distortions, have been used in an attempt to destroy overnight the reputation and political effectiveness of honorable, patriotic men, like Bishop Oxnam. While our jet planes can girdle the earth at a faster rate than sound, freedom of travel and communication among scholars and men of science is now curtailed, not only in Russia but in the United States, on grounds as capricious and nonsensical as the whole legal process that Kafka described in his prophetic novel, *The Trial*.

Too many of us have already descended to the level of the docile robot, manipulated by remote control. But note this: when human

beings are cut off from a purposeful and meaningful life, they not merely lose the animal capacity for self-preservation, but even the very will to live. This propensity to self-destruction is the nemesis of irrationality; but unfortunately, with the powers that we now command, before we destroy our enemy and ourselves, we may also destroy the whole fabric of mankind's life. Lord Acton's oft-repeated dictum on the pathology of power, that "Power corrupts absolutely," is now undergoing its final demonstration. We are living in an age when finite human beings, subject to sin and error, beings of plainly limited intellectual capacities, open to erratic promptings, have assumed control of energies of cosmic dimensions. That dangerous fact has been made infinitely more dangerous by the wall of secrecy that has been erected around these powers, and by the atmosphere of fear, suspicion, isolation, noncommunication that the very nature of these destructive weapons and instruments has helped to produce. As a result, issues that concern humanity as a whole have been treated as if they were of purely national concern; plans and policies that should have been subject to open discussion and earnest moral debate have been made in closed chambers without benefit of public reflection by men with minds even more tightly shut than the doors that guarded them. Nowhere has the democratic process, indeed the bare protections of constitutional government, been more consistently flouted than in the field of preparation for total genocide. Nowhere have moral judgments been more completely paralyzed than in the very area where moral judgments alone could preserve our humanity.

There is indeed one grave flaw in all these irrational preparations: they cannot afford the risk of open public discussion, of intelligent reassessment of the means to be used and the ends to be achieved, of rigorous and realistic moral judgment. Such judgment not only concerns itself with the principle of doing reverence to all life, but it understands that there are moral norms—natural laws if not divine commands—that no self-

respecting person, *yes, and no self-respecting nation*, can afford to violate merely to preserve their own existence.

Because this flaw is a serious one, the general conspiracy of silence that now prevails must be fortified by the invention of a new heresy and a new crime: a crime more serious than that of sympathizing with Communism or of engaging in treasonable activities on behalf of Soviet Russia. The crime I refer to—forgive me for countenancing this heresy—is the crime of being human. Who are the marked men and women among us today? Who are the ultimate security risks? They are the people who still retain and still cherish all their human attributes; people who are trusting, tenderhearted, responsive, cooperative, curious, intelligent, humorous, capable of human sympathy and love. People who read widely and think critically, who are not afraid to exchange opinions with those they differ from, who trust their neighbors and are magnanimous to their enemies, who believe in freedom for others as well as for themselves; people who are fully committed to democracy, who are ready to challenge arbitrary authority, and rise as Walt Whitman commanded "against the never-ending audacity of elected persons." Such people, the very salt of American democracy, hold a hand uplifted over irrationality, if not over fate; and fortunately, as long as they exist, not by the thousands, but by the tens of millions, there is still a prospect of recovering from the state of collective paranoia, of pathological suspicion and isolation, into which our country has so swiftly fallen.

The leaven of Christianity is still at work among these sweetly sane people, and the lessons of the New Testament, so easy to disregard in happier times, have come home to them as perhaps the ultimate word in practical statesmanship, if we are not to resign ourselves prematurely to mankind's annihilation through the misuse of the very forces man's intellect has brought to light. There will be no lifting of the

catastrophic threat that hangs over mankind, making blank and valueless all activities that conserve the past and mold the future, until we recover as a nation the capacity to be human again. The preliminary step toward justice and peace, toward trustful human intercourse between peoples, is the capacity to feel love in our hearts, and to bestow love even on our enemies, in the hope of reawakening their own humanness, their own potential capacity for love. It is easy, as Henry James, Sr., once remarked, to love those who love us, or who are in themselves lovable. But true love demands something more than that: it requires that we do good to them that hate us and use us spitefully; for only such love can transcend our easy, self-justifying repulsions and remove, from our enemy's heart, his abiding fear of our hateful intentions. Anything that can be called statesmanship today rests on the practice of love, of a love that is capable of self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, of a humility and patience as deep as Lincoln expressed in his second Inaugural Address. By the same token, any policy that rests on the delusions of grandeur and pride in possession of absolute power must be as self-defeating, indeed as suicidal, as is the degraded mental state of which it is, in fact, the clinical expression.

Need we carry the political or esthetic analysis any further? The theme of this paper is not, it goes without saying, open to any laboratory demonstration. All I could hope to do was to indicate a possible connection between the disturbing symbols of fashionable modern art, so empty, so valueless and meaningless, so chaotic and random, and the deeply irrational quality taken on by political life today, in which absolute power has become another name for impotence, in which security becomes more terrifyingly absent with every new physical instrument invented to produce it, in which the final destination of our whole civilization could be represented only by such a form as unorganized and meaningless particles floating at random about an otherwise vacant canvas.

In both art and politics we have reached the last blank wall of meaninglessness: the complete negation of all human values and purposes. That is the ABC lesson of the ABC war—the seemingly innocent classification that has been given to atomic, biological, and chemical genocide. The only intelligible fact that post-Abstract painting discloses is that life has become purposeless. The only idea that is conveyed by its lack of form and design is that the next step—and the last one is chaos: the chaos of a final wasteland in which all order and design derived from life have returned to aimless dust and rubble. In bringing these new facts and these new symbols together, I have, I hope, at least opened the way for a clearer insight into the human problems of our time: problems that transcend art and science and politics. The corrupt purposes that we passively participate in, the immoral acts we have accepted in the name of expediency or practicality or even of financial economy, the irrational compulsions that we have bowed to with the respect we owe only to reason—all these things are not fixed and fated. We need not submit to these dehumanized processes and these life-negating mechanisms. To be human is to understand, to evaluate, to choose, to accept responsibility. As Robinson Jeffers once wrote, corruption never was compulsory, and the existentialist, Sartre, has more recently made the same observation.

Pursuing the power to control nature, we have lost the wisdom and will necessary to control ourselves, and we thus become helpless cogs in the mechanism we ourselves have created. The impersonal processes of science lead to the treatment of dynamic, self-impelled subjects as mere objects, of persons as things, and to a systematic disregard of the claims and aspirations of the whole personality, from which science itself, incidentally, has issued. By treating this depersonalized existence as if it alone were the real one, we have created a new world, a world of mechanical collectives and individual automatons in which only automatons have the full status as citizens, since by the rules that govern this world

every human quality, apart from those that serve the pure intellect, is a defect, or at worst, a superfluity and an extravagance.

In such a world, it becomes easy to conceive of exterminating a million people in a city by a hydrogen bomb, as if they were a million rats in a garbage dump: for when human values and purposes disappear, human beings themselves become vermin to each other, and finally, by contempt for the law of their own nature, become vermin, likewise, to themselves—the lousy victims, as they might put it, of a lousy civilization.

This whole process has been exquisitely summed up in a personal letter to me from Roderick Seidenberg, the author of *Post-Historic Man*; and since it arrived at the moment when I was trying to make my own summation. I will, with his permission, quote it to you, instead of succumbing, out of envy, to the insidious temptation to paraphrase these thoughts more clumsily in order to conceal my debt to him. "Your plea in the *Times*," he writes, "brings to my mind an idea which haunts me: each culture evolves a characteristic bodily posture or gesture that symbolizes its essential values; thus Christianity brings to mind a suppliant figure on its knees in prayer; the Buddha sits in the calm of eternity with snails in his hair! The gods and Pharaohs of Egypt are seated—great granite figures of power. There is in these postures an element of the ultimate, an expression of a transcendent attitude. But what, pray, is our posture upon having miraculously touched the innermost sources of nature's power? Our school children here in the backwoods of the village of Tunicum are taught in the daily drill to duck under their desks when they hear the siren blow. The citizenry have built themselves deep under ground shelters where they are to cower while their civilization is blown to atoms. And those not fortunate enough to grovel in fear and trembling underground are taught to fall upon their faces in the gutters of their cities and await their doom.

Prostrate, our heads, deep in the mud, we face the future! Such is our posture."

We have *made* ourselves into the creatures we have, so deplorably, become. Let us look at that new image in the national mirror, and be properly horrified and frightened by it. *Is this America?* If this walled-in enclosure we have locked ourselves into a home or an asylum? Let us look into the eyes of our foreign neighbors, at our friends in other parts of the world, and understand why they are so deeply shocked by what they see. Once we have seen ourselves, we need not maintain a discreet silence about our condition—as I have tried, in the course of this paper, modestly to demonstrate. We have still another choice open: the choice of renewing our integrity, our sanity, our humanity.

And this brings me, finally, back to the artist, whose last message I have tried to interpret. If he is not to betray his art as well as his humanity, he must not think that nausea and vomit are the ultimate realities of our time. Those obscenities are indeed a part of the actual world we are conditioned to; but they do not belong to the potential world of the creator and transvaluer, who brings forth out of his own depths new forms and values that point to new destinations. The artist, too, has the responsibility to be sane, the duty to be whole and balanced, the obligation to overcome or transform the demonic and to release the more human and divine elements in his own soul; in short, the artist has the task of nourishing and developing every intuition of love and of finding images through which they become visible. If all he can say in his pictures is, "This is the end"—let it be the end and let him say no more about it. Let him be silent until he has recovered the capacity to conjure up once more, however timidly at first, a world of fine perceptions and rich feeling, of values that sustain life and coherent forms that re-enforce the sense of human mastery.

No one has fully taken in all the new dimensions of our world; no one effectively commands all the forces that are now at

humanity's disposal. But we know that mankind today, thanks to the pooling of reserves and treasures from every culture and historic epoch, including our own, is in possession of energies, vitalities, humanities, and divinities now only feebly and fitfully used, which are capable of redeeming our civilization. Catastrophe is perhaps nearer to us than salvation, as a war of unrestricted extermination is perhaps nearer to us than the foundation of universal peace, based on justice and loving co-operation: but the destructive nightmare in whose grip mankind is now so helplessly tossing and turning, is no more real than the benign dream.

We need the help of the artist to rally, by his example and effective demonstration, the forces of life, the passionate commitments of love, to recall to us all the qualities we have violated this last century in the untrammelled pursuit of power.

Our numbness is our death. Whatever our immediate fate may be, as individuals or as a nation, we must, as a condition of survival, recover our humanity again: the capacity for rational conduct, free from compulsive fears and pathological hatreds: the capacity for love and confidence and cooperation, for humorous self-criticism and disarming humility, in our dealings with each other, and in our dealings with the rest of the human race, including, it goes without saying, our enemies. Even should we meet disaster or death through the attempt to replace the politics of dehumanized and absolute power by the politics of love, that defeat would only be a temporary one. For the God in us would remain alive—to quicken the spirit of those that follow us.

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REVIEW
**SANTAYANA ON "AMERICANISM"
 AND RELIGION**

WE have several reasons for calling attention to a posthumously published article, "Americanism," by George Santayana, first written by the distinguished philosopher somewhere between 1935 and 1940, and now appearing for the first time in *The Virginia Quarterly* (Winter, 1955). In the first place, Santayana's analysis of religion in relation to American *mores* fits well with disclaimers that Santayana had become a death-bed convert to the Roman Church. No one who reads this article can seriously entertain the thought that Santayana deserted his fundamental criteria for religious evaluation—at any conceivable eleventh hour. If no other evidence were at hand, and despite the time lapsing from 1940 to 1952, the article under consideration should be sufficient to settle the question.

Second, we confess to admiration for any writer who, after completing an essay of this sort—which any editor would have been delighted to print at once—could hold the manuscript back because "he wanted time to reconsider the whole matter." Santayana was apparently not one to allow himself casual judgments; he wanted no monuments, however imposing, if these were to be later found to rest on half-truths.

Third, it seems to us that the philosopher's final decision, in months just preceding his death, to release "Americanism" was a fortunate one for those interested in totting up the psychological weaknesses and strengths characteristic of American culture.

We suppose that some Catholic spokesman will endeavor to suggest that the fact that Santayana begins "Americanism" with a quotation from Jacques Maritain is further evidence of his Roman leanings, but we see this merely as evidence that Santayana was enough of a true philosopher to recognize vividly expressed truths wherever they might be found, and to search for

symbolic meaning within the literal. When speaking directly on the topic of religion and religious influence he makes this basic statement:

Founders or reformers of religion are necessarily exceptional men, men over whom moral faith and metaphysical imagination hold absolute sway. They very naturally impress and convince a few other exceptional souls; but if their teaching spreads widely over mankind, it must needs be greatly diluted and counteracted by all the instincts and insights of the old Adam. Religion for the majority can never be anything but a somnolent custom or an uncomfortable incubus. Practical disloyalty to it fills all the free moments of life, murmurs and jests against it are pervasive in society, even in the so-called ages of faith; and open rebellion is always smouldering in the sly intellect and the young heart.

Since Santayana has no quarrel with those who are "young at heart"—and this is evident throughout his published writings—his hospitality to some forms of religious utterance is in no sense a personal endorsement. Moreover, it is precisely this perspective in his criticism of "the religion of Americanism" which results in much that is warmly encouraging, despite his finding of brashness and superficiality. Americans, Santayana concluded, are "tough in action but tender in mind." "Their own secret philosophy," he writes, "might not have been popular among them, if it had been expressed in brutal materialistic terms."

Three paragraphs give the essence of Santayana's critique of American national psychology:

Here I come at last to what seems to be the distinctive quality, the unshared essence, of Americanism as America breeds it. It consists in combining unity in work with liberty of spirit. There are plenty of sectarians in the United States, plenty of fanatics, propagandists, and dogmatists; but the American absorption in work—a work controlled and directed by the momentum and equilibrium of its total movement—causes all these theoretical passions to remain sporadic, private, harmless, and impotent. Their social effects cancel and disinfect one another; they count and modify the balance of action in so far as they are forms of business; in so far as they are definite ideas they evaporate in loud steam. If the

Pope speaks through the radio, everybody listens and thinks that, after all, the old gentleman must be a good fellow; but nobody notices what he says. All that is not business is left free, because it is profoundly indifferent—a safety-valve and holiday folly for those who like it. In America, where all else is precision and hurry, the very speech of the people, when it is more than a business code for co-ordinating action, becomes languid and vacuous; it draws, it becomes indirect, humorous, and playful, it renounces all responsibility, like whistling, and is not particularly interested in anything or even in itself. Why should this happen in a nation otherwise so lively, and so shrewd in practical perception? Because speech and thought, for the man of action, lag behind the automatic decision by which his action is determined, he sees, he aims, and he hits the mark. Why should he trouble, after that, to express the fact simply in words, to focus description on the truth, or to trouble about what anything is exactly? For his speech and thought are essentially superfluous, belated, pathetic: if he must talk or think, he will take to amiable banter, as if he were fooling with a child: and his work over, the wake of his thoughts will be like those soapy patterns left wavering in the sea-water by the impetuous churning of the screws.

Isn't this looseness in everything in so far as it may not be useful, this blankness of will in respect to ultimates, an evident application of the principles of liberalism dominant in the nineteenth century?

Liberalism was tolerant of everything except indifference to material wellbeing, either in oneself or in others. It favored the accumulation of wealth; Big Business must be highly organized, and requires Big Brains at the top. On the other hand, wealth must not stagnate in a few hands, as if there were any public advantage in princely fortunes or princely ways. The millionaire must remain a man of business, an object of emulation, and an example of success in work. If nepotism or routine crept into the management of affairs, ruin would not be far off. The state must be addressed to Business, and Business must be managed by Brains. Wealth must circulate and be widely diffused; and if once the standard of material well-being is high enough, all else will be spontaneously added by the goddess of liberty.

The following is by way of summation on the question of genuine religion—the nature of the human soul:

The soul always remains master in the moral sphere: obliged perhaps to bide her time and to lie

low during some horrible deluge, but never receiving direction save from her own nature. The relation of a soul to bodily life and to action in the world may be expressed in two ways: first, critically and materialistically, by saying that when an organism arises and exercises self-preserving functions, a sensitive and perhaps intelligent soul is found to animate it; and second, dramatically or mythologically, by saying that when a soul of some specific sort descends into matter, she organizes that portion of matter in a way consonant with her native powers. The two ways, for a moralist, terminate in the same fact: that for the human soul there is a spiritual life possible, but conditioned by the sort of commerce which the soul carries on with the body and with the world. That this spiritual life—meaning the entire conscious fruition of existence in perception, feeling, and thought—is the seat and judge of all values, I take to be an axiom: every maxim, every institution, and the whole universe itself, must be tested morally by its effect on the spirit. The merits of Americanism, and the direction in which we should wish it to develop, therefore hang exclusively on the sort of spiritual life which it may foster. How does unity in work affect the spirit? And how does freedom of spirit affect it?

COMMENTARY **THE FOURTH OF JULY**

IT was from *Chambers' Book of Days*, very nearly the oldest volume in the MANAS library, we learned that both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams—one the author, both signers, of the Declaration of Independence, and both subsequently Presidents—died on July the fourth of the year 1826, just half a century after they had met in Philadelphia to launch a new nation upon its destiny.

This was, as the Chambers writer says, "a most remarkable coincidence," yet it is a most suitable one to remind us of a number of things on this day.

There is, first, the youth of the men whom we fall into the habit of thinking of as venerable "Fathers" in 1776. In that year, Washington was forty-four, Adams forty-two, and Jefferson thirty-three. Alexander Hamilton was a beardless youth of nineteen, Thomas Paine thirty-nine, and James Madison twenty-five.

Second is the extraordinary flowering of sagacious intelligence at the time of the Revolution. The Founding Fathers belonged to a generation which sprang from a total population of less than four million people in the thirteen colonies (Census of 1790)—not even a fortieth of the present human resources of the United States. These men, moreover, were by no means merely great politicians. They were philosophers, educators, and inventors in the arts of statecraft. Jefferson, in addition, was a man of incredibly fertile mind. When he visited abroad, perhaps to assure a treaty or to accomplish some other mission for his country, he returned with copious notes on whatever he observed. He records, for example, that in Amsterdam, "the joists of houses are placed, not with their sides horizontally and perpendicularly, but diamond wise, . . . first, for greater strength; second, to arch between with brick"; and he noted that Dutch windows open "so that they admit air and not rain." The memoranda

of his travels are filled with a multitude of little sketches, such as one to show how two scows may support a bridge across a canal, which may turn to let boats pass, or such as an illustration of a Dutch wheel-barrow, recommended for "convenience in loading and unloading."

In a fragment of autobiography, Jefferson tells how he and John Adams, meeting in the Hague, combined to save the credit of the United States by quickly floating loans to meet obligations to Continental money-lenders that were about to precipitate the United States into bankruptcy. They borrowed a million florins, against which Mr. Adams executed a thousand bonds, depending upon Congress to ratify what they had done. "I had the satisfaction to reflect," wrote Jefferson afterward, "that by this journey our credit was secured, the new government was placed at ease for two years to come, and that, as well as myself, relieved from the torment of incessant duns, whose just complaints could not be silenced by any means within our power."

Of all the works of his long life, Jefferson was proudest of three achievements. These he listed for his epitaph, which he wished to appear as follows:

Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the statute of Virginia for religious freedom, and Father of the University of Virginia.

These were the causes to which Jefferson devoted his energies—Political and Religious Freedom, and Education. No better purposes and ideals could engage our attention.

CHILDREN ...and Ourselves

INVITATION TO TEACHING

AN increasing number of educators are now counter-pointing conventional articles on the teacher-shortage "crisis," urging reevaluation of our entire concept of professional education. Clarence H. Faust, writing under the title "Resources for Universal Education" for the May *Gadfly*, Great Books Foundation monthly, begins his survey:

The coming flood of students into our schools and colleges is not a misfortune for us as a people, but a tremendous opportunity.

It is my thesis that we have not yet thought our way through the implications of the commitment to universal education which our society, or any society dedicated to democratic freedom, must make. I want to suggest that when we do think our way through it we shall see the need for radical and widespread rearrangement of our educational system. I believe, furthermore, that under the inescapable pressure of circumstances, we may be led to make improvements in education many of which we have long contemplated and discussed but about which, since we were not driven to do anything, we have done nothing.

Of greatest interest is Dr. Faust's plea for enlistment of "an increasingly large number of competent adults for work of various kinds in our educational system." He adds: "We should turn to them, not as a move of desperation to man our schools at the expense of educational quality, but as a consequence of a fuller and richer conception of the responsibility of all our people for the education of all our youth." Dr. Faust continues:

We should be required, if we took the view of universal education, to think of the school, not as a building within the walls of which a separate professional class of society takes care of the instruction of youth, but as the institution which through its professional staff coordinates the educational efforts of the community, drawing upon all of the community's resources to lay the foundations for lifelong learning—and teaching—in the community's young people.

Teacher training institutions would need to enlarge their ideas and practices so that instead of providing a single road into teaching marked by required courses in professional education and leading simply to one kind of teaching certificate, they would direct and coordinate a wide range of programs along appropriately different paths for preparing many people to make a wide range of useful contributions to education. They would need, first, to extend, broaden, and deepen the education of those who propose to enter immediately on a full-time career in teaching so as to prepare them adequately for the larger and more important role they would need to take in coordinating and leading the education work of local communities. They would need also to provide short courses for teachers' aides, develop special programs for preparing older college graduates in the community to do effectively a variety of educational work in the schools, work out programs (perhaps combinations of summer conference and independent reading plans) for enlisting and preparing people in industry, business, government, and the professions to do part-time work in schools and colleges, and contrive programs for preparing people as they approach retirement to make substantial contributions to our educational system. . .

These measures would rest on a conception of universal education as involving, not merely an extensive period of schooling for all young people, but as co-extensive with the life of each individual, so that learning, and as soon as possible teaching, would begin in youth and proceed throughout life.

A story in *This Week* (June 3) reports the first tangible effort to incorporate non-accredited adult help in the understaffed classrooms. "Teachers' Aides" are now employed in a number of American cities, and are paid for their work—though at a very low rate. A Teachers' Aide may be entirely self-educated, but, degree or no degree, is enabled to work with children directly and, we hope, to the limits of natural ability. At present the chief function of the Teacher Aide is to handle the incidental responsibilities of the classroom, but it seems possible that those with genuine teaching ability will, through this experience, find themselves being given a greater measure of responsibility. If Teacher Aides, unable to return to college for the standard

credential, wish to continue in this work, we see no objection to the development of some regular teachers by this means. After all, the principal of an under-staffed school should know when such a teaching assistant is able to take full responsibility for a classroom and thus avoid the time-consuming and costly procedures of orthodox certification.

The *This Week* article, "New Ways to Beat the School Crisis," points out that other innovations accompany the Teachers' Aide program:

Many schools, regretfully, have given up their "frill" courses—nature study, folk dancing, ceramics, theatrics, school newspaper—because their regular staffs are overburdened and they can't afford to hire extra help. Others, however, have found the needed teachers among local hobby-minded adults.

In Lewisboro, N.Y., a noted conservationist brings weekly nature lessons to the area's grammar-school youngsters. In Los Angeles, a retired Monte Carlo ballerina, now mother of four, teaches social dancing in a grammar-school gym class. In a suburb of Detroit, a \$40,000-per-year Ford Motor Company official teaches an after-school course in motor maintenance!

In Alice, Texas, school authorities draw frequently on a list of more than 200 adults in the community who supply vocational guidance, leadership in handicrafts and hobbies, and historical and cultural lectures.

In Wilmington, Del., the American Association of University Women urged women to qualify for teaching in the public schools. Seventy made inquiries. The University of Delaware provided courses required for local teaching certificates. Result: a new pool of more than 30 secondary teachers.

Similarly, in San Diego, Calif., and Plainedge, N.Y., college-educated parents went back to school to train themselves to fill gaps in local teaching staffs.

So the "crisis" focuses attention on two important subjects. First, as Dr. Faust indicates, professional educators and the lay public alike are invited to consider the "teaching-learning process" in a much broader context. The teaching of our children, it can more readily be seen, *should* be the

work of every interested member of the community; the "system" should accommodate itself to the human needs of children and the aspirational and financial needs of potential teachers. Those who want to help teach in the public schools should be given some opportunity for employing and testing whatever talents they possess. The fact that scientists and professional men of all sorts are now being recruited for voluntary work by some of our school districts indicates how easily the barrier of professionalism can be crossed. In one New York school an exceptional science teaching staff has been recruited by this means.

FRONTIERS To Fill the Vacuum?

EXCEPT for occasional heretics, modern Christians have never accepted reincarnation, so that when "Simeon Stylites," who writes a weekly column in the *Christian Century*, speaks of it as "a fantastic idea," this is nothing new. Simeon's column for June 6, however, on the subject of "Bridey Murphy," is especially good. He does not attack reincarnation, nor spank Morey Bernstein, the hypnotist author of *The Search for Bridey Murphy*, with the paddles of orthodox belief. Instead, he writes:

The interest [in Bridey Murphy] represents a protest against a materialistic, mechanical interpretation of the world of which we have had plenty. There are multitudes of people who would rather believe in a fantastic idea of reincarnation than in a universe completely empty of spiritual quality. Reincarnation is better than a material world.

Simeon tells of meeting a man with Bernstein's book under his arm. He asked the man if he thought there was anything to it:

He said, "I don't know." Then he added: "I'd rather believe in it than nothing. Hell (I am just quoting), I don't want to die. I'd like to have a second chance."

There is no way of telling whether the some two hundred thousand people who have (thus far) purchased copies of *The Search for Bridey Murphy* (Doubleday) were attracted to the book by similar longings, but we think Simeon is not far wrong when he says: "The interest in Bridey Murphy is an outward reach for a spiritual world of some sort." He adds, however, that this mood is "a preparation for the gospel," and that "in some real ways the search for Bridey Murphy is the search for God."

This latter conclusion seems less likely to be true. After all, the gospels are not exactly "unavailable" in our civilization, while the doctrine of reincarnation was not in the least "fantastic" to a large number of early Christians contemporary with the real Simeon Stylites. Now if Simeon had

said the *gnostic* gospels, we could easily agree, since the Gnostic Christians of the first few centuries A.D. believed in and taught reincarnation. In fact, the idea was so popular that by the fifth century the teaching constituted a threat to orthodoxy and was explicitly suppressed in a Church Council held in Constantinople in 443 A.D. "If anyone," the first of the Anathemas against Origen goes, "assert the fabulous pre-existence of souls, and shall assert the monstrous restoration which follows from it: let him be anathema."

The question that Simeon might have discussed, but did not, is: Why, having the gospels, do one fifth of a million of the people of this land still find fascination in the possibility of another life after this one? Of course, the illicit promise that through hypnotism people can be *made* to tell about their past lives probably plays a large part in the sale of the Bernstein book. There is always a market for a sure thing—or, more accurately, something that looks like a sure thing. And if Mr. Bernstein has inadvertently made immortality look a little more certain, this is enough to keep his book on the best-seller lists for quite a while.

But allowing for the hypnotic lure, a large part of the appeal of the book must be laid at the door of reincarnation. Back in 1948, MANAS reviewed a slim volume called *Puzzled People*, put together by Mass-Observation, a British research organization, and published by Victor Gollanz. *Puzzled People* was a study of the religious opinions of a segment of the population of London and was largely a report on disillusionment. The writer spoke of the "loss of faith in the unwieldy, centralized, remote organization, which increasingly monopolizes the potential of ideals, and which seems so distant and uncontrollable to ordinary people."

The interesting thing about the Mass-Observation report is that the compilers were obliged to add a section that had not been planned for, in order to make room for comment on the

belief in reincarnation. One in ten, the report stated, of those who held any idea of immortality at all "*spontaneously* went into enough detail" to show that they believed in some form of pre-existence of the soul, or reincarnation. The Mass-Observation writer took note of the fact that this belief could not be attributed to any teaching or religious system widely adhered to in England, and was, therefore, some sort of "natural" conviction.

Possibly the Church of England, which bears the peculiar burdens of supplying England's "official" religion, affords duller fare to English Christians than the independent denominations of the United States provide for American believers. At any rate, Simeon does not scold his contemporaries of the pulpit for failing to arouse more interest in the gospels, even if Bridey has become a more attractive advocate of a life after death than the vague promises of traditional religion. But how can a return to ancient Christian heresies of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries be labelled a "preparation for the gospel"?

Simeon quotes Wordsworth as prophet of the mood which looks beyond orthodox doctrine:

Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

Yet Wordsworth, least of all, was preparing himself for the gospel. Else how could he have written:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar. . .