

## THE GOD-IDEA

A SUBSCRIBER, commenting belatedly on the article, "God and Man" (MANAS, April 23), writes to inquire:

What caused the growth of the Personal-God idea in the first place, and why did it develop, if it is philosophically so absurd? . . .

To my knowledge, the only originators of a single Personal God have been desert dweller—Jews and Arabs. Not meaning geographic determinism, I would further note that these people approach religion and life almost entirely through devotion and the emotions, and almost not at all through philosophy except for a very narrow code. The implications of this are twofold. One aspect you pointed out very well in MANAS. The other, which you did not mention, is that once in a while, through extreme devotion, one of these single Personal God worshippers goes spiritually deep enough to break the narrow bonds and achieves the same end as a good Pantheist—*e.g.*, St. Francis of Assisi. Perhaps a synthesis of the philosophical and devotional approaches today might help.

While a question of this sort needs a "volume" of discussion rather than a brief article, some notes may be offered on the important considerations that seem to be involved.

First—as to the way in which the problem is set—it should be noted that, like other great world religions, Judaism and Islam both afforded metaphysical and mystical approaches to the question of "Ultimate Reality," however much these may have been neglected by the orthodox rank and file. For works on Jewish mysticism, readers are referred to Mathers' *Kabbalah Unveiled*, Franck's *The Kabbalah*, Abelson's *Jewish Mysticism*, and Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. A fascinating but rare volume touching on the part played by Kabbalism in the Humanist awakening of Europe is Frederick Barham's *Life and Times of John Reuchlin* (London, 1843), which illustrates the hunger for philosophical and mystical knowledge on the part of the men who inspired both the Revival of Learning and the Reformation. Reynold Nicholson's

*Mystics of Islam* (London: G. Bell, 1914) is excellent for an introduction to Muslim spiritual philosophy; and for light on the devious paths through which Sufi mysticism found its way into European thought, the portal being the great Italian poet, Dante, his teacher, Cavalcanti, and other contributors to the literature of *Fideli d'Amore*, the books of Gabrielle Rossetti and Luigi Valli are indispensable. The members of this group, known as the "Faithful in Love," adopted the mystic symbolism of Persian poetry, thus escaping the persecutions of the Roman Church for harboring heretical opinions.

Thus, like the Gnosticism of ancient Christianity, there was a great and profound mystical tradition in both Jewish and Islamic religion. This fact, however, while needing to be recognized, does not diminish the force of our correspondent's suggestion that the monotheistic deities of Islam and Judaism are the principle examples of the Personal-God idea at the present time.

As to the way in which, occasionally, a devotee of a personal deity may break out of this delusion, Aldous Huxley has a curious passage in *Ends and Means* concerning the inner experience of Christian mystics. He tells of an ignorant peasant girl, Marie Lataste, who after enjoying visions of the Virgin Mary and Christ, found herself bereft of any "personal" images. This, in the Western mystical tradition, has been termed the "dark night of the soul." Huxley remarks: "Significantly enough this particular form of spiritual anguish is not experienced by unorthodox Christians nor by those non-Christian mystics who profess a religion that regards God as impersonal. . . . the belief with which the oriental mystic sets out is in accord with the testimony of his own experience. He has no treasured belief to give up; therefore enlightenment entails for him no spiritual anguish."

Huxley's observation is quoted for what it may be worth. We have no special enthusiasm for

"literary" studies of "religious experience," although analysis of this sort can be useful if it is remembered that many kinds of growth are apt to be ushered in by "anguish"; if the pain of divorce from the Personal-God idea is absent from the Eastern mystic's experience, there may be other ordeals he must go through—ordeals which neither Christs nor Buddhas can escape, of the sort set forth in some detail in the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

Our correspondent refers to Francis of Assisi as a Pantheist—in this case one who had transcended the God-idea in its usual form, yet still lived in its shadow. An extraordinarily good and gentle man St. Francis undoubtedly was, but whether, because the world of Nature inspired him with a "love of God," he can be called a "Pantheist," we are bound to question. A whole-hearted Pantheist is likely to be a breaker of idols as well as a lover of the good.

Coming, then, to the main question, the origin of the God-idea, there are two main channels of inquiry, and numerous side-roads worthy of exploration. The conventional explanation runs something like this:

Primitive man was an animist. He saw a "spirit" behind every rock and stump. From this naïve belief arose polytheism. Then, with the progress of the race, the idea of a Supreme Power emerged. By this logic the Jehovah of the Old Testament has been praised as the ultimate religious expression of Monotheism. "Real religion," we are invited to believe, began with the Hebrews, and was improved by the Christians with the addition of the New Testament and the drama of salvation through Jesus Christ.

This oversimplified compromise between anthropological theory and sentimental attachment to inherited belief forms a theme running through countless books, the emphasis or interpretation varying with the author. If the latter's tendency is agnostic, he may add a chapter noting the emancipation of man from any sort of belief in God, as the result of the advance of science. If the author is theistically inclined, he will end with admiration of the "unity" of the monotheistic idea, referring with patient tolerance to earlier polytheistic religions.

They tried, he will intimate, but they lacked the genius of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

What you actually believe about the origin of the God-idea will depend, of course, upon your own thinking about the great question of Deity or Reality. Historical research on the subject, while possibly interesting, can hardly be decisive, for the reason that the reports of investigators are inevitably colored by *their* beliefs. Take for example the famous students of the religions of the past, Edward B. Tylor and James Frazer. In his remarkable study, *Sex and Culture*, the late J. D. Unwin literally demolishes the foundations of conventional anthropological theory about the formation of the God-idea among primitive peoples, by showing that the missionaries who supplied the source-material read their own ideas into the religions of those whom they presumed to "study." As Unwin puts it:

It is on misleading translations that all theories as to alleged "nature-spirits" and "nature-worship" have been founded. These have been responsible for many unacceptable theories in regard to uncivilized ideas. For instance, some scholars have interpreted the presence of sacred groves among some deistic peoples as evidence of nature-worship, basing their interpretations of the facts upon the assumed existence of nature-spirits. A close study of the facts reveals the untenable character of these theories. . . .

Gradually, then, the fallacies are being exposed. In uncivilized culture there are no nature-spirits, these owe their existence to our translations. Thus there is no worship of nature. There are no tree-spirits or rock-spirits. No tree or rock is revered *qua* tree or *qua* rock. It is regarded with veneration because the power in the universe is manifest there, the power being the same whether it be in a tree or a rock. This power is often conceived not as an entity but as a quality, the idea that it is a personified cause being due to what Mr. Swanton calls our "European lineage." . . .

The difficulty is real. When it is said that a native conception is that of a God, we do not know by what criterion it has been judged whether it is a god or not. Is it not plain that Mr. Fewkes was right when he said that "in the use of the words gods, deities, and worship we undoubtedly endow the subject with conceptions which do not exist in the native mind"?

Unwin points out that for "civilized" people as well as primitives, the idea of God functions largely as, in Spinoza's words, the "asylum of ignorance." Our legal documents reveal this:

When we say that an event was due to an "act of God," we mean that there is no reasonable explanation of its occurrence; it is strange, unusual, outside normal experience, incomprehensible. The similarity between the ideas of our forefathers and those of uncivilized men has been obscured because, with a natural and comprehensible egocentricity, we have tried to interpret the culture of simpler societies in such a manner that the result would reflect to our own glory and bear witness to the great difference between us and them. We have tried to prove the existence of an evolution from primeval man to twentieth-century white man. We shall never succeed in understanding either ourselves or any other men if we study human affairs in so unscholarly a manner. . . .

Mr. Unwin's criticism should be a wholesome influence whether or not we adopt the conclusions of his own behavioristic studies. He may humble us, but he cannot inspire us, for this is the virtue, this the defect, of the critical method of inquiry.

What, then, shall we say, having been startled out of any smug theory of the evolution of the God-idea?

Psychologically, expressions of the God-idea seem to have two modes. They are either explanatory of what happens to us from without, or affirmative of what happens *in* us, from within. Either we use "God" to account for events which seem otherwise "incomprehensible," or we are driven by some inner realization to declare a profound conviction about the nature of things. The first sort of expression of the God-idea tends to be anthropomorphic—of a God made in the image of a supernatural and all-powerful man—sometimes benevolent, sometimes threatening. This is the God of dogmatic religions—the religions which, if you join them, offer you a special way of getting along with the unpredictable and difficult situations which are continually overtaking human beings. They are the religions for people who tend to be afraid of life, who want some outside power to solve their problems—and, like Esau, for giving up their

spiritual birthright they get the mess-of-pottage of a supposed "security" in their belief.

The second kind of expression is a thrilling declaration of self-discovery, of self-dependence, and of a noble equality with the rest of life. It is found throughout the ancient scriptures of the East, and in the writings of all Pantheists, from Bruno to Edward Bellamy and Richard Byrd. Pantheistic conviction is spontaneous, at first unschooled, although it may be put into disciplined form by men who are also philosophers. It *requires* profound psychological enlightenment, whereas the anthropomorphic religions fear individual enlightenment, decry it as "arrogant," oppose its results as "heretical," and try to suppress it as "moral infection."

Obviously, a study of the God-idea involves history as well as psychology. Timid men are dominated by history, while courageous men do not fear it, but try to make it. But most of us are sometimes brave and sometimes fearful. We are bound by the past even while we try to make ourselves free of its influence, and the interplay of these two factors makes understanding ourselves an extremely complex problem. So often we dress up our fears in the garments of "loyalty" and "true devotion," and we frown upon the courage of others as "irresponsible" and "extravagant." "God," as Voltaire remarked, "is always on the side of the big battalions," which shows what sort of a God he is, and explains, more than anything else, the sort of people who choose him to worship.

We have saved a little space—not nearly enough—for discussion of another aspect of this question. Modern scholars, those of "naturalistic" persuasion, take great pleasure in pointing out what they hold to be a great "contradiction" in Plato on the subject of Deity. Plato, they say, had "two Gods"—the God of the *Republic*, referred to as "The Good" (which, as Alexander Wilder explains in a note to Thomas Taylor's *Egyptian Mysteries*, served ancient Greek thinkers "to represent the Supreme and Absolute"), and the active, creating "God" or Artificer of the *Timaeus*. Arthur O. Lovejoy, hardly a sympathetic scholar, although a conscientious one, summarizes the matter in *The Great Chain of Being*.

In the *Republic* the ground and source of all being, . . . is the Idea of the Good itself; and it has therefore been held by many interpreters that the Creator who figures in the *Timaeus* is simply a poetic personification of that Idea,—or as the Neoplatonists construed it—an emanation, or subordinate divinity, through which the world-generating function of the Absolute and Perfect One was exercised. . . .

Why this "contradiction" should be held difficult to understand remains a mystery, except for the fact that Western religion has so lost sight of the distinction between the ancient polarities of the Manifest and the Unmanifest Deity, as to neglect it almost entirely. What happened in Christianity, as a study of the writings of the early Greek Fathers plainly suggests, is that the Unmanifest Deity was finally replaced by the low-grade Demi-urge, Jehovah, turning the tribal deity of the Jews into the equivalent of the Unknowable and Most High. Serious Christian thought has been forever after tortured by this philosophical mutilation. The best evidence for the reality of Pantheism is the long line of "heretics" whose intuitions would not permit them to accept the monstrous doctrines of Christian orthodoxy, and who broke away into philosophical metaphysics of their own making, even at the cost of bitter persecutions and, in some cases, death by burning at the stake.

Every religion or philosophy worthy of the name has presented this teaching of the "two Gods." In India, there is the supreme, incomprehensible *Parabrahm*, and the manifested, creative deity, *Brahmâ*. Lao Tse put it thus:

The Tao which can be expressed in words is not the eternal Tao; the name which can be uttered is not its eternal name. . . .

Tao in its unchanging aspect has no name . . . As soon as Tao creates order, it becomes nameable.

Hardly a race or a nation of antiquity can be mentioned which did not have, beyond the familiar pantheons of active Powers, an *Unknown God*—the idea of a transcendental Reality which supports all, yet is "involved" in nothing. It is the *That* of the *That thou art* of the *Upanishads*. It is the *I* of which

Jesus spoke when he said, "I and my Father are One." (John x : 30.)

This distinction between the Protean, omnipresent Life-Force within the world and the unqualified ground of infinite Potentiality, which is the Self of All—this distinction is the heart of all religious philosophy. It is the inner Godhood of every man, the patent of equality before the moral law of nature. Only fear, and fear joined with the astute deceptions and casuistry of power-hungry, acquisitive religion, have the power to distort this inner God into an external, anthropomorphic deity—a very caricature of the philosophical ideas of the ancients, and of the moderns whose minds are free.

## *Letter from* **INDIA**

SURAT.—To understand the successes of the opposition parties in the general election in India, we have to probe into the circumstances of various states. The opposition is composed mainly of two groups entirely different from each other in political outlook. The Leftists are on the whole progressive and have dissociated themselves from the Congress because they feel the Congress moves too slowly. The Princes are from a different stock altogether and they think that the Congress is going too fast. The Princes' success at the polls only means that democracy has come too early to some parts of India. It is clear that the illiterate masses have voted only for money. At some places people voted as a token of generosity, feeling amused to find their ex-rulers begging for their vote. But the success of the Leftists in the comparatively more literate South has some meaning behind it, signifying the weakness of the Congress government rather than the attraction of communist ideology. Individual corruption and demoralization there has been in the Congress, but lacking most of all is actual service of the masses, which Gandhi called "the Constructive Programme." It is true the communists have built their house with hatred, but it is equally true that there was ground of general discontentment for them to build upon.

There is another point worth considering about the elections. A tremendous amount of money was spent in the elections by the governments, the contesting parties, and the individuals concerned. Most of the money was burnt away in petrol. One wonders whether this expensive method of propaganda suits India. If this sort of propaganda continues, it will be a part of the system which is draining away the economic resources of the country. It is also doubtful whether going about in cars and planes, delivering lectures at scores of meetings daily, has any real propaganda value.

The Indian method of propaganda was shown by Gandhi when he marched on foot to Dandi for his famous Salt Satyagraha. Vinoba Bhave is continuing the experiment today in his mission of obtaining land-gifts. Walking and living with the people proves to be a better method of reaching their hearts. Some individuals have tried this method in the elections, too, with remarkable success. Notable among them is the Chief Minister of Orissa, who not only walked from hut to hut and village to village in his constituency, but also invited all his rivals to speak at meetings specially organised in the interest of conserving national resources, and also to foster a cordial feeling among the contesting parties. No noise, no knocking about from place to place, no mudslinging, no lies: that is the method of propaganda which the world needs today.

INDIAN CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### AN ADMIRABLE FAILURE

WILLARD MOTLEY'S *We Fished All Night* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951) has not been handled kindly by the critics, a fact which even the first few pages make understandable. This novel lacks the power, the literary wholeness, the depth of analysis and the impact of Motley's earlier *Knock on Any Door*. Published in 1947, *Knock on Any Door* still makes its bid as a profound tale of crime and its environments. This life of an altar-boy who finally became an occupant of the electric chair is full of subtle nuances of meaning, many of them worthy of a Dostoevsky. Precisely what Motley's own experiences were with the environment he describes and the sort of characters which people his novel, we do not know, save that neither can have been foreign to him. He wrote with so great an apparent wisdom that literary style flowed as a kind of necessary consequence. As a book, *We Fished All Night* has none of this integrity, although, at the same time, the very nature of Motley's effort speaks for the continued integrity of the author—an integrity we think to be several cuts above that possessed by many of those who have rather professional "social consciences.

While we do not here wish to take issue with the critics and reviewers who have deprecated *We Fished All Night* for its many inadequacies and immaturities, we suggest that this book merits reading and pondering, mostly because of what it attempts. Motley has written a story about the men who came home from World War II, and he has tried to show, in terms of the lives of individuals, what the war actually did to them as human beings. We have seen no similar attempt of such magnitude, and if readers reflect upon the difficulty of the undertaking, it can be seen that there is a world of difference between writing actual war novels such as Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* and Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions*, and writing an *after-war* story. Motley has essayed the latter task because he felt it to be

important and we think he is absolutely right. He is uncompromising as to man's participation in modern warfare, and here, we think, he is right again—at least as concerns the destruction of human personality which war brings. "This book," he writes, "is for all the soldiers who fought for all the countries that failed them in the hope that they will never again have to fight for all the countries that will again fail them."

The picture that forms in Motley's mind as he composes an introduction to the 560-page novel is thus described:

Down the black asphalt the parade of returned soldiers comes. The soldiers come nine abreast in tight formation. Come in the steady, measured one hundred and twenty to the minute march step. Come with the sun striking and ricocheting from their pointed, polished bayonets.

The soldiers come in even rank, in rigid march, their carbines slung from their shoulders, their hands free, swinging in measured cadence. The soldiers come, thirteen thousand pairs of boots in hooves of hammer blows against the asphalt. The soldiers come in steady clump, in combat jacket, and staring straight ahead. Come in funeral effect.

Mist has lifted. Sun breaks through the gray clouds. And the soldiers come their long way back. Their long way back from death and dying and killing. Back, their long way, the weary soldiers from the weary lands.

"The boys are back!" a woman shouts

The boys are back. But not the same. They have seen things, been places. Done things of a night and of a day. And now the killers come home.

As with James Michener in *The Fires of Spring*, it may be that Motley has attempted the impossible. He probes into every nook and corner of American life, visiting the chicanery and corruption of local politics, the difficult idealism of labor organization, the misplaced idealism of Communist activity. He explores the several grades and classes of attitude among the rich and powerful, the world of the decadent and emptily rebelling "protest intellectuals," and the vividly real world of racial oppression. The most prominent character of the story climbs from

obscurity and poverty to become a political power, helped to rise through an "accidental" education in the midst of a little theatre group. As a one-legged veteran, he becomes the tool of the Powers seeking the veteran vote, but finally becomes The Power himself, as he rationalizes away his earlier determination to "help build a better world" in the memory of an army comrade who lost his life. This man, who changes the name Kosinski to Lockwood to escape the humiliation of his origins, is, in a sense, Motley's spokesman. "Lockwood" never becomes the man readers hope he will be, but on each of his wrong turnings, *we go with him*, seeing how easy it is for those who have been maimed in war to feel they are entitled to all they can get for themselves while the getting is still possible. Another of Motley's characters, Jim, the handsome labor leader, is psychologically crucified by the war, and returns to wife and family a hopelessly changed and warped man. Aaron, the young Jewish intellectual, becomes psycho-neurotic and drags his potential genius with him to sit behind the barred windows of a Veterans' mental hospital.

There are moments of clarity for all these men—moments of aspiration, moments of asserting the will to reverse the tide of disintegration. From time to time, still attempting mechanically to keep up his obligations to his labor organization, Jim views dispassionately the very process going on within himself:

War didn't change people? They didn't carry part of the change back with them into civilian life? At first they, the men he knew and liked in his outfit, were as he was—those he liked—purposeful in getting the killing over, drawn into this thing because of their beliefs, their ideals.

Not hating the men. Hating the idea behind the men. And, bit by bit, as the war wore their nerves thin and uncovered the layers of their hidden and unconscious antagonisms and civilized-away hate, he saw them change, day by day, until they had actually become killers. Just as after a while their hands had become calloused from the use of guns, so now the sandpaper of war had rubbed the soft edges off their brains and souls and made of them the hard tools to

be used only for purposes of war. With the change their guns had become phallic symbols, takers of life, proof of their manhood and masculinity and heroism. They shined their guns, took the greatest care of them and always had them near at hand. Their guns had become their best friends and their bed companions. And now there was the same elation, the same high point in blasting death into the enemy as giving a child to a woman in peacetime. An exultation in killing, destroying, moving forward, forcing the enemy off the edge of the earth. . . .

Jim's mind went back to the explanation—the months and years of front-line action—and all of Motley's characters are made to experience this apotheosis of preparation for war. It seemed that a separation took place between two parts of a man, and that to draw them together again was an almost insuperable task. In war men did things they had never done, could not have done before, because they believed that they were not the same men as before, and through that very believing they lost their original identity. The "Jim," overseas, was a man of comrades but of no purpose, for he believed it impossible that he would ever return to serve the purposes that had once been his:

He was alone and lonely. He was alive and afraid and unhappy and none of it meant anything. Anything at all. This was only their lives over here. In the hidden night of war they could do as they pleased. Without censor. Without guilt. No secret feelings of guilt or shame would come creeping back home to them, stealthily, across battlefields and from out of conquered and freed towns, cities, countries. This was their lives over here. It had nothing to do with home. Or with them. They would go back to their wives and sweethearts and leave this part of their lives here. It had nothing to do with what they were at home and would be again at home.

The atrocities committed in wartime were the atrocities of men who felt and thought this way, and thus, as Motley depicts them, they were universal men in this degrading sense—the common population of all armies. The Americans who marched through France and Germany were not only the hunters of Germans, but were themselves hunted by the forces of internal

dislocation which preyed upon them even as they marched:

Night frowned menace. The night promised death. For hunter and hunted . . . The night was a dead thing. The woods through which they penetrated on the outskirts of the town hid the sky and there was no moon. The night was alive with death. It came from the sky. It came from behind the next clump of trees. In this town ahead the Jews had been hunted. They had been tortured. They had been thrown into concentration camps. Parent torn from child. Often never to see one another again, through all of life. Here on the outskirts they had been trailed. Only the animals of forest and field had been safe and at peace. The rabbits in their burrows. The spiders in their silken webs on tall grass supports. The bats in tree limbs and the worms in the ground. The field mice and the moles and infinitesimal ants in honeyed cells, the squirrels with hidden provisions. Even the mosquitoes and the flies; the fish of the river and the clumsy waddling crabs, the wood ticks in their diggings. All nature held her creatures and gave security in the night—even unto the broad day with the sun at noon. All were safe in nature and in man. All but man himself.

It cannot be claimed that *We Fished All Night* is a great book, nor even, by literary standards, a good one. But Motley's *attempt* is profound, and in so important a direction that it must be said that critics who review it simply in terms of its literary merit miss a central point.



## *COMMENTARY*

### QUESTION ON THE FUTURE

How long can the human race, or a considerable portion of it, get along without affirmative and reasonably articulate convictions about the nature of things? We are led to ask this question after reading the "Frontiers" analysis of Kirtley Mather's account of the role of science. The scientist, Dr. Mather cautions, is a mere technician, no more competent than anyone else with respect to great moral issues. He has no theory of the Eternal Verities, according to which decisions might be made.

The present, obviously, is not an age of Affirmation. A hint of an answer to our question may be in Robert Graves' remark, "A nation can exist well enough without a positive religion so long as it preserves its rituals"—but after the rituals lose their savor, then what?

A precise answer is probably impossible, but one thing is certain: a world which lacks genuine convictions will, sooner or later, fill the void with a new affirmative credo. Actually, the history of ideas seems to divide itself into great epochs of affirmation followed by epochs of criticism and analysis, ending in sterility. Then comes a new burst of energy, creative activity, resulting in revolutionary affirmation.

The Renaissance was such a burst of energy, the revolutions of the eighteenth century gave expression to another. The Industrial Revolution, which made immeasurable progress in the nineteenth century, and provoked an anti-industrial reaction in the twentieth, is still another. These credos come and go. What seems important about them is not their limiting content, their "tract-for-the-times" aspect, but their zealous faith in the capacity of man to create anew.

Today, perhaps, we stand—or crouch—amid the ruins of an age of criticism. We are wise in our recognition of failure, but weak in our capacity for action. Too clear an understanding of

failure seems a disarming kind of knowledge, producing a dark precocity which refuses nourishment to the dreams which alone can bring a new age of creativity to birth.

What, then, will be the affirmations of tomorrow? What faith will they declare? Will it be another "tract for the times," destined to rise and fall like ancient empires? Or will it grow from some deeper dynamic, more of the quality of human hope itself? A self-verifying credo of the potentialities of the human mind? Perhaps the intense self-consciousness of our own age—its greatest virtue will become a positive energy in the age to come.

## CHILDREN ...and Ourselves

WE have always found it difficult to discuss the relationship of psychiatry to the needs of parents and children, for the reason that, while valuable insights and various forms of practical assistance in child guidance have come from psychiatric clinics, we have always worried about the tendency of parents to rely too heavily upon such external help. The best psychiatrists know that a little of right practice in child-training at home is worth much more than hours of the most superhuman perfection in the handling of a child's troubles by a clinician. But parents, unfortunately, have a hard time realizing this. And the prevailing tendency, in American culture especially, is to lean heavily upon the "experts." When this is done in relation to the emotional troubles of our children, we may end by losing the advantages which grow from sweating the problems out for ourselves, with all our "ignorance," from day to day.

Nevertheless, both parents and teachers should have some awareness of the excellent psychiatric contributions to the psychology of child guidance. In this connection we especially recommend the magazine *Mental Hygiene*, published quarterly by the National Association for Mental Health. As an example of the usefulness of this journal, some interesting reflections arise from a reading of "Behavior Problems of Children" by Dr. George Stouffer in *Mental Hygiene* for April, 1952. This article compares teachers' and mental hygienists' attitudes toward typical child-behavior problems, illustrating the changes which have taken place since E. W. Wickman's first analysis of this sort in 1928. Wickman found a wide variance between the views of teachers and psychiatrists concerning childish defections. In 1928, teachers were chiefly concerned with overt forms of behavior tending to interrupt classroom procedure and which could be readily classified as "bad." The mental hygienists and psychiatrists, on the other hand, tended to disregard overt behavior, but ranked at the top of

the list of serious symptoms various *mental attitudes*. From a philosophical point of view, the mental hygienists obviously had the right of it, since the evaluation of personality traits according to acts, rather than by attitudes, is a most misleading procedure. Dr. Stouffer's present comparison, however, shows that these differences have been considerably lessened:

All the evidence would seem clearly to indicate that the passage of years has brought changes in teachers' recognition, understanding, and practice in the area of the mental hygiene of the social child. The teachers' changed attitudes might be attributed to a change in the total social and, in particular, school situation as it exists today. If we accept the judgment of the psychologists, psychiatrists, and psychiatric social workers as an adequate criterion, we can authoritatively say that teachers have grown in their knowledge of how the school child develops and behaves.

Dr. Stouffer naturally favors further integration of therapeutic psychiatry with teacher-training and recommends that schools of education bear this in mind, but here we should like to suggest a qualification. Competent psychologists surely realize that "half-taught disciples" can be a positive menace if they carry a preoccupation with mental illness and emotional dislocation into the classroom. What our teachers need, more than anything else, is training in *philosophy*, which implies a continued quest for clarification on the ends and aims of life. The work of the philosopher, really, is the work of association of values—not particular values as viewed by one man or by any school of thought, but the field of values in general. The psychiatrist is primarily concerned with eradicating emotional differences and may have little time left over for affirmation. Too much dependence of schools of education upon Departments of Psychology, as now constituted, may tend to discourage the very sort of imagination which teachers need for balanced perspective.

These considerations seem necessary since we think rather highly of Dr. Stouffer's analysis of much of formal education. He sees the intricacies

of the problem clearly, even though he does not seem to have reflected upon the institutional imbalance of a school in which all the teachers are constantly trying to *wrestle* with the children's behavior problems; such "wrestling" is a vital part of life and even a child can learn how to do as much as possible of his own. However, Dr. Stouffer's discussion of typical public school failings has particular merits of its own:

In assessing the total picture of the attitudes of teachers and those of mental hygienists toward the behavior problems of children, one cannot but wonder if there are not in conventional school practices certain things that aggravate and promote the development of behavior problems. It would appear that our present tradition-bound school, with its regimentation and its regimented teachers, of necessity fosters behavior that is pathological from a mental-hygiene point of view. If this is true, who is to accept the responsibility for the teacher's attitude? The teachers in question make the natural mistake—owing, no doubt, to practical conditions—of evaluating children's behavior in terms of good order and recognition of authority. . . .

On the other hand, the psychologist, the psychiatrist, and the psychiatric social worker think in terms of the effects of behavior in the long run; Teachers are expected to maintain reasonable order, and in doing this, at times make the mistake, from a mental-hygiene point of view, of favoring withdrawing behavior and ruthlessly suppressing overtly aggressive (symptomatic) behavior without thought of the consequences thereof.

Some parents may snort more than a little at the foregoing, feeling that many modern schools, influenced by what is loosely called "progressive education," are not even interested in maintaining "order." Perhaps Dr. Stouffer has allowed himself to get a bit behind the times in relation to some school districts, yet the complaints we have all heard in respect to a superabundance of "freedom" still pertain only to certain teachers and certain localities. Many other instructors are deeply religious in a conventional sense, and these are usually to be found still associating cleanliness and classroom meekness with Godliness.

It is certainly interesting to find such opposing extremes in the psychological attitudes of teachers within a few miles of one another, yet we are sure this is often the case. All the more reason, however, for parents to investigate just what sort of instruction is available in their neighborhoods, so that the more obvious biases of children's teachers can be compensated for at home.

## *FRONTIERS* Strategic Retreat

DISCUSSING "The Problem of Antiscientific Trends Today" in *Science* for May 16, Dr. Kirtley F. Mather, Harvard geologist, offers an interesting composite of sagacious commentary and fascinating fact. Dr. Mather is eminent among modern scientists and what he says in this article (based on an address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science last December) may set going new currents of scientific reflection.

That an antiscientific spirit exists and is growing cannot be denied. Dr. Mather lists what he thinks are the causes of this development. First, because science has the reputation of being "mechanistic-and materialistic" in philosophy, its critics argue that science is "largely responsible for the abandonment of moral principles and the destruction of ethical standards, which have undoubtedly occurred in recent years." Second, there is the atom bomb and the horrifying techniques of chemical and bacteriological warfare. These weapons would have been impossible without modern research.

To both criticisms, Dr. Mather makes the same answer. It is wrong, he says, to claim that science is either a moral or an immoral influence. On moral questions, he declares, science has exactly nothing to say:

In the market place of public opinion, where ethical and moral values are appealing for recognition, appraisal, and loyalty, the sciences are neutral. The release of atomic energy from nuclear fission by chain reaction, for example, has no moral significance, in and of itself. It is what men do with this new and spectacularly dynamic form of energy that is either good or bad. The primary objective of science is to increase the efficiency of men, of their minds and bodies, their tools and implements, their techniques and institutions. But it is all too obvious that there is little if any correlation between scientific efficiency and righteous morality.

Science, in short, is here defined categorically as no more than super technology. As a social

institution of our time, it has no more responsibility than a cleverly-devised machine. It serves "the will of the people" with its special "commodity"—the capacity to manipulate the laws of nature—in pretty much the way which Pontius Pilate served the will of the people of his time, through the manipulation of Roman law.

The popular condemnation of science is obviously on "moral" grounds. Dr. Mather urges his colleagues to point out that such criticism is misdirected. There is no "moral" defense of science, he implies. Unfortunately, scientists and their supporters have in the past made the mistake of promising unlimited benefits to mankind through the application of scientific discovery. He seems to think it quite likely that science will be unable to make good on such grand anticipations. What he is really saying is that science is not religion, is not a "total philosophy of life." He adopts the position of the wise scientist of an earlier generation who remarked, "Except for our specialty, we all belong to the masses." Make for science, he advises, no claims to moral insight or ethical elevation:

Let us not play the game according to the opposition's rules. Instead, let us have something to say about the rules ourselves. Do not apologize for the failure of science to do things that science alone cannot be expected to do. Displaying something of the humility that has always characterized every really great scientist through all the years, we should push the battle line forward into the very camp of the enemy. The great, imperative problems of our day cannot be solved unless something is added to the intelligence of science. The world's troubles are really caused by the fact that the dynamic of good will is not adequate to direct beneficially the vast resources of intelligence that are at hand.

If civilization is to be saved from catastrophe, the ethical consciousness of each of us must be greatly strengthened, renewed, and improved. The wellsprings of good will lie deep within the spirit of man, not in the outer, public world. Science discloses the imperative need; something that transcends science must assist men to respond to this challenge of our time. The scientist is just as responsible for the failure or success along these lines as the

nonscientist—neither more nor less responsible than every other intelligent citizen.

How different this "apologetic" from the brave declarations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries! The optimism of the French Revolution, of the *Philosophes* who expected such great things of scientific progress, has somehow been lost along the way. According to Dr. Mather, the scientist must make a strategic retreat from these hopes of the past. If, he seems to say, scientists promise to change the world, they must be willing to accept responsibility for whatever it is changed into. And the prospects, at present, are not good.

Surely there is a parallel, here, to the retreat from "liberal" religion by numerous religious leaders into the havens of Neo-orthodoxy. Man is weak, man is sinful, we are all guilty—every one of us—and dependent upon God. The refusal of the scientist, *as* scientist, to play the role of philosopher with a theory of knowledge to offer is matched by the refusal of the religionist to play the role of a humanist with a social gospel to take the place of irrational dogma. Both are now seeking sanctuary in the halls of their respective technologies—one, the technology of belief, the other the technology of fabrication and invention. Of the two, the scientific technologist has of course the sounder position, but the parallel is unmistakable.

Now for Dr. Mather's "fascinating facts." They are introduced in connection with the question of whether or not science can "save the world." His subject is the application of scientific methods for the benefit of general social welfare. After pointing out that the living conditions and health of under-privileged peoples have been greatly improved by these means since 1900, he comments on some misconceptions based on such facts:

It is quite unrealistic to take, for example, the recent percentage growth of the population of India and project it into the future, with the warning that within a century a billion Indians will be jostling one another for food. By the same token, it is altogether

fallacious to suggest that continuance of medical missions and further indoctrination of the people of India and China with techniques of public health will permit them suddenly to acquire the low death-rate of the United States, with a resulting "population explosion" that would have dire consequences. The trend of the recent past is far more likely to continue. Gradually the death-rate will continue to decline and at the same time the birth rate, lagging somewhat behind, will be reduced.

How does Mr. Mather know this? From current experience:

There is an almost perfect inverse correlation between the birth rate and the per capita consumption of pig iron among the nations. The higher the consumption of pig iron—*i.e.*, the greater the industrialization—the lower is the birth rate. Similarly, there is an almost perfect correlation between literacy and the birth rate. The higher the percentage of illiteracy in a nation, the higher the birth rate.

The moral is plain: If we would prevent the multiplication of the dispossessed to the point where they threaten our sovereignty, give them plenty of pig iron and help them to industrialize! And teach them to read. Good readers are bad breeders!

Dr. Mather, of course, is using his facts to allay selfish fears among the prosperous "white" nations. We are not, on the other hand, entirely sure of what his "facts" really mean, but our suspicions are not of the best.