

THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

IT seems practically impossible, these days, to consider matters of any importance without reviving ancient and long neglected attitudes—such as the idea of "self-knowledge"—and attempting to find in them new meanings. It is as though we are undertaking a new beginning in understanding the human enterprise, and having to go through old steps of investigation in a new frame of experience.

Why do we need self-knowledge? What warrant have we, now, for thinking that the familiar contempt for this expression, characteristic of, say, the 1920's, is no longer deserved? Well, one of the clear lessons of the present is that the meanings men place upon what they regard as "the facts of life" have a greater effect on the quality of human experience than the facts themselves, whatever they are. From this there follows one plain conclusion: that these facts—the account we have, at any given time, of "objective reality"—while important, have a relative, not an absolute, significance. We have discovered that our thinking and feelings about meaning do not come entirely from our grasp of the external facts, but derive partly, perhaps mostly, from within ourselves. So, standing on the plateau of our knowledge of facts, we are beginning to look inward—to ask, what does it mean to be a human being? Why do we shape our thoughts about ourselves and the world in the way that we do? This is an approach to the problem of self-knowledge.

It is becoming obvious that what we think of ourselves largely determines what we think about the world, society, and our definitions of good and evil. The modern quest for self-knowledge is, therefore, different from the ancient quest—different, that is, in its motivation. The ancient motivation of the quest was philosophical-religious. It sought a fulfillment of being as an intuitive response to felt need. The modern motivation is philosophical-psychological. The intuitive response is there, but something has been added by the experience and unfolding complexity of long ages of human development. We

have become *involved in the world* and we do not seem to be able to raise ourselves to the height of spiritual certainty (or self-knowledge) without carrying the world with us. That is, the involvement must itself be comprehended, along with ourselves, since the involvement has become a *part* of ourselves.

We find, as a result of this involvement, that we can say a great deal *about the problem* of self-knowledge without being able to say much of anything about what self-knowledge is. For example, we are able to conclude from a study of history that if men believe themselves to be the favorite creations of their favorite God, they are likely to be ruthless and tyrannical toward people who have another God or believe otherwise. Or if we examine the consequences of the conventional form of the scientific theory of knowledge—as Ortega y Gasset examines it in *Toward a Philosophy of History*—we are soon convinced that a purely physical definition of "reality" leads to an almost total neglect of psychological problems and eventually creates desperate political problems. If we are able to stand aside, to some degree unattached, and to review the various brands of "certainty" that men have adopted during the past two or three centuries, we find that each certainty led to the creation of a system, first of belief, then of behavior, and that these systems inevitably ejected from within their periphery ideas and elements incompatible with the principles of the system, categorizing them as either evil, unknown, or unknowable. Examples are not hard to find. Pope Urban's call upon all Christians to rid the Holy Land of Islamic occupation and encirclement was not essentially different from a modern crusader's wish to marshal all the military power of the West to erase the Communist menace. The same mood occurs, although in less bloodthirsty language, in the scientific literature of only a generation ago. In *Fields and Methods of Sociology* (1934), L. L. Bernard declaimed:

The old theological assumption of personal control . . . has given way, under the influence of an analysis of neurons, cortices, and endocrines, to the behavioristic theory of the conditioned response of behavior patterns. . . . a science of personality based upon a measurable mechanics of behavior is bound to replace the old magical and mystical spiritism which still survives in the thousand and one cults that delight in calling themselves psychological.

A little earlier, Enrico Ferri, a distinguished criminal sociologist, had asserted (1917): ". . . positivistic physiopsychology has completely destroyed the belief in free choice or moral liberty, in which, it demonstrates, we should recognize a pure illusion of subjective psychological observation." And B. F. Skinner, professor of psychology at Harvard University, wrote as recently as 1953: "The hypothesis that man is not free is essential to the application of scientific method to the study of human behavior." (While Dr. Skinner belongs to the present generation of psychologists, his opinions are more characteristic of those of earlier workers in this field.) Another form of rejection (of an approach to self-knowledge) on scientific grounds was expressed by Joseph Jastrow in relation to the idea of extra sensory perception. He wrote in 1938: "In the minds of psychologists who accept a comprehensive view of their responsibilities, it is the *general objections to ESP* that weigh most heavily." To illustrate this version of scientific "responsibility," he quoted a colleague who had said:

ESP is so contrary to the general scientific world picture, that to accept the former would compel abandonment of the latter. I am unwilling to give up the body of scientific knowledge so painfully acquired in the Western world during the last 300 years, on the basis of a few anecdotes and a few badly reported experiments.

We have quoted four scientific "authorities" to illustrate the resistance to the idea that there is an autonomous agent within the human being—which is the man, or some part of the man. The first two quoted, Ferri and Bernard, express an absolute view. That is, they declare that "the facts" are unequivocally against this idea. What they mean is that the nature of the world, as disclosed and defined by science, makes impossible a theory of man's nature or self allowing him to possess "free choice or

moral liberty." This is a way of saying that man is a *thing*, and that science has sufficient knowledge of things (including man) to reach this conclusion.

Notice, however, that Jastrow (or his colleague) and Skinner phrase their contentions differently. Jastrow speaks of the *general* considerations as weighing heavily against the idea of ESP. This means that *theoretical* considerations, more than the facts (although the facts, presumably, gave rise to the theoretical considerations), have determined his judgment. Skinner also takes his stand on "general considerations" when he says that use of scientific method depends upon allegiance to the *hypothesis* that man is not free.

This second pair of authorities ground their position on epistemological values. They argue that science must insist that man is a thing or we can have no knowledge about him. Actually, while they seem firm enough in their view, their way of asserting it is potentially fatal to the position they maintain. In effect, they are saying that *knowing* is more important than *being*. They place psychological values above physical values or "reality" in this contention, and it is only a step, although a long one, to the view that there may be other ways of knowing. The weakness is similar to that which becomes manifest when a true believer in dogmatic religion is obliged to admit that some portions of the Bible are subject to "symbolic" interpretation. Once the facts are permitted to assume chameleon hues, meaning becomes protean, and reality is no longer rigidly objective—whether in Revelation or in Nature. And *then* we begin to feel the full impact of the view that psychology is more important than the physical sciences. We begin to study ourselves in order to find out *why* we think and feel as we do, instead of trying to make final and limiting definitions of all the facts "out there." This is a fundamental revolution, and it is now happening, in some relationships has already happened, to us. The subject-matter of vital science has changed. Carl Jung anticipated this change somewhat in a passage in his book, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, which appeared in 1939:

The rapid and world-wide growth of a "psychological" interest over" the last two decades

shows unmistakably that modern man has to some extent turned his attention from material things to his own subjective processes. Should we call this mere curiosity? . . . This psychological interest of the present time shows that man expects something from psychic life which he has not received from the outer world: something which our religions, doubtless, ought to contain, but no longer do contain—at least for the modern man.

In the more than twenty years since Dr. Jung wrote the foregoing, this "psychological interest" has intensified and become the central focus of effective modern thinking about both ethics and philosophy. Moral ideas which are lacking in a psychological frame seem both unreal and uninteresting to the present generation. More than ever before, the human sense of reality is found in the complex of subjectivity we encounter when we think about ourselves, while theories and judgments which originate in the old conception of objectivity leave us more or less untouched.

But although the vital thought of the present is in these terms—we speak of the writings of those who have captured the attention of the thoughtful reading public, men like Erich Fromm, David Riesman, and a few others—the old ideas of "reality" persist in the form of academic traditions, textbook notions of "knowledge," and institutional conventions. The great majority of people still feel at home only among the familiar "thing" definitions of both the world and man. This results in a certain lack of communication on the part of pioneers who write, not as students or scholars of "objectivity" using the familiar terms of scientific abstraction, but as men in whom science and human values are *joined*. In the past, science and scientific writing were supposed to ignore all subjective considerations as unreal—or at least non-scientific. For all those whose sense of orientation in the world and whose feeling of security as to what is knowledge and what is not, has depended upon the old kind of science, a man who breaks this rule is like a bull in a china shop. When he brings the atmosphere of a living, breathing whole human being into the precincts of scientific studies, he not only bewilders; he frightens and upsets those who cannot understand where he gets his assurance that he knows what he is talking

about. What right has he to speak confidently of matters that, from the time of Galileo and Descartes, have had no status in scientific investigation? The man is a muddier of scientific waters, an importer of illicit emotions and dubious categories. He has even the brash temerity to speak of Truth as though it could have scientific standing, and makes freedom the condition of progress of science. For example, to set against B. F. Skinner's insistence that "the hypothesis that man is not free is essential to the application of scientific method to the study of human behavior," we have a passage like the following, which is from A. H. Maslow's new book, *Toward a Psychology of Being*:

Autonomy or relative independence of environment means also relative independence of adverse external circumstances, such as ill fortune, hard knocks, tragedy, stress, deprivation. As Allport has stressed, the notion of the human being as essentially reactive, . . . who is set into motion by external stimuli, becomes completely ridiculous and untenable for self-actualizing people. The sources of *their* actions are more internal than reactive. This *relative* independence of the outside world and its wishes and pressures, does not mean, of course lack of intercourse with it or respect for its "demand character." It means only that in these contacts, the self-actualizer's wishes and plans are the primary determiners, rather than stresses from the environment. This I have called psychological freedom, contrasting it with geographical freedom. (Van Nostrand paperback, 1962.)

Dr. Maslow, who has headed the department of psychology at Brandeis University since 1951, gives in this book an outline of what he hopes will become the psychology of tomorrow. He starts out with a view of the human being which has its roots in the humanist proposition that human beings have the capacity to make their own destiny. He proposes that psychologically healthy (self-actualizing) human beings make their own destiny, and sick human beings don't. He is well aware that such propositions amount to a revolutionary change in the conception of scientific psychology and he enters upon this project of redesigning psychology with unmistakable enthusiasm. He writes in his preface:

It is quite clear to me that scientific methods (broadly conceived) are our only ultimate ways of

being sure that we *do* have truth. But here also it is too easy to misunderstand and to fall into a pro-science or anti-science dichotomy. I have already written . . . criticisms of orthodox, 19th Century scientism and I intend to continue with this enterprise, of enlarging the methods and the jurisdiction of science so as to make it more capable of taking up the tasks of the new, personal, experiential psychologies.

Science, as it is customarily conceived by the orthodox, is quite inadequate to these tasks. But I am certain that it need not limit itself to these orthodox ways. It need not abdicate from the problems of love, creativeness, value, beauty, imagination, ethics and joy, leaving these altogether to "non-scientists," to poets, prophets, priests, dramatists, artists, or diplomats. All of these people may have wonderful insights, ask the questions that need to be asked, put forth challenging hypotheses, and may even be correct and true much of the time. But however sure *they* may be, they can never make mankind sure. They can convince only those who already agree with them, and a few more. Science is the only way we have of shoving truth down the reluctant throat. Only science can overcome characterological differences in seeing and believing. Only science can progress.

The fact remains however that it *has* come into a kind of dead end, and (in some of its forms) *can* be seen as a threat and a danger to mankind, or at least to the highest and noblest aspirations of mankind. Many sensitive people, especially artists, are afraid that science besmirches and depresses, that it tears things apart rather than integrating them, thereby killing rather than creating.

None of this I feel is necessary. All that is needed for science to be a help in positive human fulfillment is an enlargement and deepening of the conception of its nature, its goals and its methods.

One of the interesting things about this book is that, while it is scientific enough for us and for a lot of other people, it is carried along by an *esprit de corps* which may be a source of puzzlement to some readers. It seems perfectly natural to Dr. Maslow that he should have a care for psychologically miserable people, not only in a broad, humanitarian sense, but also in an immediate scientific sense, and that the ethical and philosophic values which have a therapeutic role for the psychologically ill should be intrinsic elements of a scientific psychology. It is this stance, unashamedly proclaiming *goals* for human

life, and setting out to define the moods, temper, and style that characterize the good life, which inevitably bewilders readers who are used to only the old sort of psychological science.

What actually happens in this book is that we get back to the "moral life" without being subjected to any moralizing! Dr. Maslow finds the rules of behavior in the structure of being. There is an enormous difference between this sort of science-cum-ethics and the old "obedience-to-God" or "go-thou-and-be-virtuous" injunctions. In the chapter, "Deficiency and Growth Motivation," the author makes the same kind of distinction between human types that is found in Dostoevsky's chapter on the Grand Inquisitor in the *Brothers Karamazov*. The analysis has something of a literary quality, but it is based on studies of human subjects. The ethical overtones of the passage are unmistakable, yet never oppressive or preachy:

In essence, the deficit-motivated man is far more dependent upon other people than is the man who is predominantly growth-motivated. He is more "interested," more needful, more attached, more desirous. This dependency colors and limits interpersonal relationships. To see people primarily as need-gratifiers or as sources of supply is an abstractive act. They are seen not as wholes, as complicated, unique individuals, but rather from the point of view of usefulness. What in them is not related to the perceiver's needs is either overlooked altogether, or else bores, irritates, or threatens. This parallels our relations with cows, and sheep, as well as with waiters, taxicab drivers, porters, policemen or others whom we *use*.

Fully disinterested, desireless, objective and holistic perception of another human being becomes possible only when nothing is needed from him, only when *he* is not needed. Idiographic, aesthetic perception of the whole person is far more possible for self-actualizing people (or in moments of self-actualization), and furthermore approval, admiration, and love are based less upon gratitude for usefulness and more upon the objective, intrinsic qualities of the perceived person. He is admired for objectively admirable qualities rather than because he flatters or praises. He is loved because he is love-worthy rather than because he gives out love. . . .

One characteristic of "interested" and need-gratifying relations to other people is that to a very

large extent these need gratifying persons are interchangeable. Since, for instance, the adolescent girl needs admiration per se, it therefore makes little difference who supplies this admiration, one admiration-supplier is about as good as another. So also for the love supplier or the safety-supplier.

One good reason for reading this book is to discover how its suggestive observations may have a basis in science. Dr. Maslow is modest enough about this, saying in his preface that the book "is full of affirmations which are based upon pilot researches, bits of evidence, on personal observation, on theoretical deduction and on sheer hunch." He adds, however, that what he proposes is generally phrased so that it can be subjected to test. Our own reaction is that the book has the ring of truth one always finds in the serious work of an impartial investigator; what is new is the pitch or the key of this work, and the idea that such matters can and ought to be made the subject of scientific investigation. While no moralist, Dr. Maslow does have the capacity to engage in a friendly and inviting way the moral longings of his audience, which may account for the noticeable response to his work, along with some raised eyebrows among old-style psychologists. Two paragraphs taken from his last chapter, "Some Basic Propositions," will give further explanation of why he has a claim on the warmly interested attention of humanists and all those who are looking about for the dynamics of a better life for mankind:

The state of being without a system of values is psycho-pathogenic, we are learning. The human being needs a framework of values, a philosophy of life, a religion or religion-surrogate to live by and understand by, in about the same sense that he needs sunlight, calcium or love. This I have called the "cognitive need to understand." The value-illnesses which result from valuelessness are called variously anhedonia, anomie, apathy, amorality, hopelessness, cynicism, etc., and can become somatic illness as well. Historically we are in a value interregnum in which all externally given value systems have proven to be failures (political, economic, religious, etc.) e.g., nothing is worth dying for. What man needs, but doesn't have, he seeks for unceasingly, and he becomes dangerously ready to jump at *any* hope, good or bad. The cure for this disease is obvious. We need a validated, usable system of human values that we

can believe in and devote ourselves to (be willing to die for), because they are true rather than because we are exhorted to "believe and have faith." Such an empirically based *Weltanschauung* seems now to be a real possibility, at least in theoretical outline.

Much disturbance in children and adolescents can be understood as a consequence of the uncertainty of adults about their values. As a consequence, many youngsters in the United States live not by adult values but by adolescent values, which of course are immature, ignorant, and heavily determined by confused adolescent needs. An excellent projection of these adolescent values is the cowboy, "Western" movie, or the delinquent gang.

This is critical self-knowledge. The bulk of Dr. Maslow's book is an attempt at formulating the characteristic behavior, states of mind, motives, and conceptions of value, not of the sick, but the well, or at any rate the growing, which for ordinary human beings is the same thing. Since Dr. Maslow lists those whom he regards as constituting a "Third Force" in psychology, including both groups and individuals, we do not attempt any account of the workers in this field, but simply suggest that this book, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, will make the reader acquainted with very nearly all of them.

REVIEW

CHANGES IN THE PEACE MOVEMENT

As often noted in these pages, the liberal press has lately shown an extraordinary interest in the activities of pacifists. This is partly due, of course, to the fact that the pacifists haven't been "passive"—the term "pacifism" itself being largely replaced by the more complicated but more interesting designation, "nonviolent direct action." Sympathetic articles in the *Nation*, the *New Republic* and the *Progressive* have provided excellent reports on the accomplishments of Martin Luther King, the full story of the Montgomery, Ala., bus strike, the courageous endurance of the Freedom Riders, and finally, the extraordinary psychological discoveries made in the course of the Moscow Peace Walk.

An article by Anatol Rapoport and David Singer in the *Nation* for March 24 now considers the significance of this trend away from the merely conventional means for advancing liberal causes, indicating an ever-firmer ground for cooperation between political liberals and ethical idealists. The article is titled "An Alternative to Slogans." In an opening paragraph, Rapoport and Singer say:

The peace movement in America has become a reality and is gathering momentum. For the first time since Pearl Harbor, peace-oriented periodicals are burgeoning, increasing, increasing numbers of scholarly articles on disarmament are appearing, letters to editors are no longer dominated by professional patriots, *ad hoc* pressure groups are springing up, and even the allegedly apathetic college generation has been able to mobilize a massive demonstration in Washington.

Second, the peace movement is no longer the exclusive domain of pacifists, that is, of people who see only the moral issues of violence and refuse to establish a common ground for discussion with any who do not share their ethical conviction.

Nor is the peace movement dominated by an "America is always wrong" attitude. There is in it sufficient political sophistication to dismiss the simplistic idea that either power is primarily to blame for the arms race. There is, in short, an increasing

understanding of the inherent dynamics of the present impasse.

In these two factors—a spontaneous growth on the grassroots level and a respectable measure of political sophistication—lies the strength of the present movement. In the days to come, it will be important to use that strength wisely.

What are the causes of the emergence of this "new minority"? With the major nations of the world competing for prestige and security, their extreme partisanship may be natural enough, but this attitude also constitutes the chief threat of national or global extinction. Then, too, an increasing number of liberals are aware of the fact that the distribution of atomic weapons in various branches of the military pushes the United States farther and farther away from the expectation of central policy control. For example, the London *Economist* in 1960 sounded an unwittingly ominous note when a feature writer reported the exuberance displayed by British officers of the Army of the Rhine at being finally equipped with nuclear artillery:

Commanders are delighted with their new weapons and make no bones about saying that they will use them if ever their troops are being overrun in land fighting. Training is now almost exclusively concerned with the use of tactical nuclear weapons to control the battlefield. Increasing responsibility for deciding when to use these weapons is being put on such relatively junior officers as brigade commanders. The soldiers are quite determined not to leave it to the politicians to tell them when to fire the weapons. The idea of political control raises the blood pressure of these professionals.

At the end of his story the *Economist* correspondent became a bit concerned and called this "an alarming business." And it is. In an article for the *Nation*, following a number of developments of a similar nature, Carey McWilliams brought the central issue directly to the United States, asking some crucial questions:

The situation is a technological one and it is the same on the sea as on the land. Here is the nuclear submarine, *George Washington*, putting out for the arctic shores of the Soviet Union with sixteen Polaris missiles ready to fire, each carrying a hydrogen

warhead. Her total fire power is greater than that of all the explosives used by both sides in World War II. Her skipper is a Commander named J. B. Osborn. Presumably he is a dependable man, but no one is dependable enough to hold the fate of mankind in his hands. Suppose, by some aberration, misunderstanding or "catalytic" action on the part of a third power, that he should fire his missiles—could President Kennedy recall the warheads? When the press and radio extol these goings-on as a great triumph for peace and the survival of the free world, they are spewing forth drivel, no matter how sincere their views. What is actually happening is that all social authority is being ceded to the military, and when the crisis comes, the ostensible centers of power will be found to be impotent.

What can the pacifist-tending liberals do about a condition which seems already so far out of control? Well, all you can do is the most you can do. Education toward a global attitude, striving for as much impartiality as possible, is the fundamental corrective, as both Erich Fromm and Jerome Frank have pointed out so well. This is indeed a psychological problem that must be met at every level of policy making. Rapoport and Singer also make this clear:

The decision-maker believes that he is tightly constrained to the vicious circle of threats and distrust. To put it concretely, the peace workers must realize that neither Kennedy nor Khrushchev is a warmonger or a fool. Each is largely a victim of perpetuated illusions (*i.e.*, convictions of the other's *inherent* ruthlessness and duplicity). These illusions have become realities by virtue of the fact that each side's actions (which are overt and demonstrable) are motivated and dominated by these illusions and corroborate the illusions. The effects are reciprocal.

The subtitle to the Rapoport-Singer piece is "Memo to the Peace Movement," and the writers invite the pacifists to become aware of the extreme difficulties of the policy-makers' decisions:

The peace worker must give expression to his awareness of this situation. As long as the national policy maker sees the peace worker as either blind to the constraints under which the policy maker must operate or in uncompromising opposition to the demands placed upon him, the policy maker has little choice but to dismiss the peace worker as naive or as

dangerous. The constraints under which the decision makers responsible for national security must work are indeed severe.

If any influence is to be exerted on those who see themselves responsible for the nation's security, these apprehensions must be taken into account. In doing so, the peace workers will be setting an example of how they would like the policy maker to behave, in his own turn, so that his negotiations and policy decisions will take due account of the suspicions and apprehensions of the Russians. The key to improved communication is the allaying of fears. The policy maker's feeling that the peace movement may be a menace to American security can be mitigated if (a) the peace workers give public expression to their awareness that the policy maker must operate under the severe constraints imposed by the strategic dilemma, and if (b) they firmly resolve to play a responsible social role; that is, to refrain from *indiscriminately* attacking every security measure undertaken or contemplated by the Administration. Rather the peace workers must point out that each decision must be approached in terms of balancing two types of dangers: the threat against which the security measure is taken, as well as the very real hazards which may be associated with the security measure itself.

COMMENTARY ISSUES OF PEACE MAKING

IN connection with this week's Frontiers, the view of Jayaprakash Narayan on the Goa incident will probably be of interest to many readers. The day after the Portuguese surrendered to the Indian Army, Mr. Narayan issued a statement which included the following:

I feel called upon, as one dedicated to the proposition that violence even in a good cause is immoral and an offence against humanity, to express my sorrow that my country had to take recourse to it. Only fourteen years ago, aided by forces of history, we liberated most of our country without taking arms against a foreign ruler. Now, when we are immeasurably stronger and the forces of history are even more favorable, we have failed to find non-violent means to free a tiny part of our Motherland. I am not blaming the Prime Minister or the Government of India. They are undoubtedly and truthfully wedded to the cause of peace, but they too have not foresworn violence of which the very existence of the Indian army is a constant reminder. True, they have eloquently and persistently denounced the use of force to solve international disputes and always advocated peaceful means. The Goa action, therefore does lay them open to the charge of inconsistency and threaten to lower their prestige. . . . [But] the blame in truth must be laid at the door of those of us in this country who claim to be working to build a non-violent society and a world order based on love. . . . The question of war and peace cannot be left to governments alone. No government can be expected to embrace non-violence. If non-violent action has to be taken the people alone can take it. . . .

This seems a well-reasoned response to what happened at Goa—one which takes into account the need for understanding of the problems of the "decision-makers" (see Review). No one with any knowledge of Gandhi's thinking could ever suppose that he would have "endorsed" the action of the Indian Government at Goa; on the other hand, Gandhi made clear his opinion that the Portuguese had no business remaining in India, and what he said in 1946 might be regarded as a warning to them. It is quite foolish to identify the Indian Government with the Gandhian Movement,

however much Indian policy may have been leavened by Gandhi's dream of a peaceful world. Jayaprakash Narayan's comment seems a fair one: "According to accepted political ethics of the nations, force was never more justified than the force employed by India in Goa. That India, after waiting patiently for fourteen years, was finally compelled to resort to force was wholly due to the refusal of the NATO powers, particularly of Britain, to discharge honestly their responsibilities to the ideal of freedom they have so loudly professed, as leaders of the so-called 'free world'."

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

CONVERSATIONS WITH CHILDREN

A RECENT Beacon Press volume of this title illustrates the breadth of the Unitarian religio-philosophical point of view. This book came as the result of a questionnaire, having been inspired by the belief that conversation with the young on "ultimate questions" is not only possible, but rewarding as well. The first section is titled "Religious Experience through Conversation," but by "religious experience" the author, Edith F. Hunter, means something quite different from attempts to implant the special creed of historical Christianity. Bronson Alcott, as well as Emerson, has inspired education among the Unitarians. These paragraphs from the Introduction to *Conversations with Children* convey the tone which pervades the book:

Teaching religion through the give-and-take of conversation has been a method used by some of the greatest religious figures of the past. Buddha, Socrates and Jesus, to mention only three, used the method of conversation extensively. In dialogue, unforgettable to those who knew them, they helped simple growth in religious understanding. This way of teaching is based on the conviction that we learn primarily through our own experience. The teacher's most important role is that of midwife to thought rather than imparter of wisdom.

Over one hundred years ago that great, if impractical, teacher, Bronson Alcott, shocked a generation of Bostonians by teaching religion to the children in his experimental school through the method of conversation.

Alcott said: "Education, when rightly understood, will be found to lie in the art of asking apt and fit questions, and in thus leading the mind, by its own light to the perception of truth."

Although we may feel that teacher Alcott's questions were rather loaded, and that he often managed to extract from the minds and mouths of his pupils ideas and words that they probably never intended, he was still far in advance of many of his educational contemporaries, and many of ours.

His premise was the still unpopular one, that human nature is potentially good. Why does this good human nature so often fail to come to flower? He laid the blame, in part, on "our low estimate of

human nature and consequent want of reverence and regard for it."

Although, like the majority in his day, he believed that divinity could be seen perfectly revealed in the distant figure of Jesus, he was impatient that so many of his contemporaries were blind to the perfect and recurring revelation of divinity in every child that is born. "We seek the Divine Image alone in Jesus in its fullness: yet sigh to behold it with our corporeal senses. And this privilege God ever vouchsafes to the pure and undefiled in heart: for he ever sends it upon the earth in the form of the Child."

His purpose in teaching religion through conversation, therefore, was not to make children good, but to encourage the goodness in every child to come to its natural flowering and fruition.

Conversations with Children was written with particular application to children between the ages of six and ten. Mrs. Hunter explains her theory, which might be called an application of the law of periodicity to the processes of learning. As she puts it: "Children and grownups, in their learning, do not proceed from the unknown to the known in one direct step. Rather, we move in a spiral motion, learning something from an experience or story or discussion, going on to the next experience, coming again to an area where we have some knowledge, but in this trip finding new meanings, new relationships, deeper truths." For this reason the essential material of which *Conversations* is constructed may be quite suitable for first-graders at one level of complexity and for fourth- or fifth-graders at another level of complexity. Certainly, subtleties of perception develop in adults, as well as in children, by a *periodic* return to a series of considerations or problems.

Conversations with Children is a stimulating extension of a theme which consistently appears in Beacon volumes—the conviction that the area we most frequently call religious becomes real only when it is seen to be inseparable from other dimensions of human experience. As with the writings of Dorothy Spoerl, one notes that Mrs. Hunter is never "preachy," never insistent upon a particular interpretation of religious truth. She is concerned rather with the discovery of a universal language of transcendent expression, and it is for this

reason that, when she speaks of Jesus, she speaks also of Buddha, Socrates and Emerson.

Mrs. Hunter feels that the beginning of a search for ethical values by the individual lies in the asking of expansive questions, and that such questions asked by children are of much more than casual significance. In a chapter titled "Our Senses and Our Feelings," she gives examples of the sort of "curiosity" question which, under discussion, can be turned into an introduction to psychology, philosophy, and metaphysics:

When one of the children in our family was about seven years old, I noticed that just about every day he would have a conversation something like this:

"What if there wasn't any gravity?"

And I'd say, "Well, what would happen?"

And he'd say, "I guess you would go flying right off into space, maybe all the way to the moon!" And then he would go away and think about it.

He could think up more "what if's" than any person I ever knew. But I know that a great many other children are great "what-ifers," too.

Here are just a few "What if's" that I have heard lately:

What if everyone had a face that looked just like everyone else's?

What if you went to sleep one night and didn't wake up in the morning?

What if the sun set and never came up again?

What if a fire started in your house when everyone was asleep and no one discovered it?

What if you were going over a bridge and it broke?

What if you were promoted into the second grade and you couldn't do second grade work?

Mrs. Hunter comments:

I think I understand a little about why six-, seven- and eight-year-olds, in particular, are such great worry "what if-ers." People this old aren't babies any more. They are doing many new things by themselves and they are finding out many things about the world beyond their own homes. It is an awfully big world really, and people six, seven or eight are still rather young to be out in that world alone. But they want to be, sometimes, and it worries them, sometimes. And that's all right, too, because being able to worry is something pretty special. It

means that we are able to think back to things that have happened and ahead to things that are *going* to happen or *might* happen. Because we are able to worry, we are also able to plan ahead.

The transitions in the liberal religious outlook which such books illustrate constitute a good deal more than modifications and compromises with partisan religion. Instead, we see the unfolding of a genuinely non-sectarian spirit—and find, too, an intelligent version of the philosophical insights emerging in contemporary psychotherapy. Mrs. Hunter points out that first-graders, for instance, often seem to embody all the "vices" that traditional religious education sought to suppress by a blunt—or should we say bludgeoning?—demand for conforming obedience. But a religion which operates from the "outside" remains forever alien so far as the child himself is concerned. Meaningful religion derives from exploration and discovery, yet all too often, Mrs. Hunter points out: "We adults are afraid to let the children probe the perplexing aspects of experience. We are afraid of the honesty and frankness of children, which, when allowed free expression, so often exposes the incompleteness of our knowledge and the parochialism of so many of our values. Their simple logic and clear young vision is apt to reveal our careless thinking and the yawning gaps between our ideals and social reality. We feel as exposed as the emperor in his new clothes." Following is a summation of the point of view expressed throughout *Conversations with Children*:

Conversation with children should challenge us to grow in curiosity and insight with them. "Where does the wind/ When it goes away go?/ Tell me! or don't even grownups know?"

Let us take time, lots of time, the best time we will ever spend, talking with children—our own and any others we are fortunate enough to be with. Let's be sure to listen to them, too. Perhaps, together, we may catch glimpses of realities more enduring than our short lives, and truths wider than our partial insights.

FRONTIERS

Comment on the Goa Affair

A SUBSCRIBER who reads MANAS in bunches, rather than every week, recently got around to the Feb. 28 number, which had a "Letter from India" dealing with the recovery of Goa from the Portuguese. Goa, to put a few pertinent facts on record, is a territory approximately thirty by forty miles on the west coast of India. This territory, along with two other small townships (Daman, three by five miles; Diu, three by four miles), was seized by the Portuguese from the old Indian Empire of the Moguls about 1510. On Dec. 18, 1961, these Portuguese possessions were returned to India by a military action of the Indian Army, which cost about twenty lives on either side. In his letter of Feb. 28, our Indian correspondent suggested that the Goans seemed to care little for their "liberation," and that reports of the affair in the Indian press suffered from an excessively pro-Indian bias, including even misrepresentation of Portuguese action. The observations of our subscriber, who himself spent many years in India, are printed below.

I have a comment on your Letter from India (Feb. 28). This Indian correspondent of yours always interests me. He has the great merit of being out of step with official Indian attitudes, and as I am nearly always nonconformist myself, this appeals to me.

The Goa affair I have tried to follow as carefully as a westerner could do. What your correspondent says, on the testimony of his press correspondent friend, is interesting, but at some points it tries my credulity to breaking point. I can well believe that in India there must have been a quite undiscriminating enthusiasm for the Goa action, and a determination to show that the Goans were all longing to be delivered from the Portuguese oppressor, so that it would not be easy for an honest correspondent to get a hearing for a different story. Yet somehow the story we

get from your correspondent seems to go to the other extreme. We are assured, for instance, that most of the blowing up of bridges, etc., was actually done by the Indian troops. But why should they want to blow up bridges? And we are told that the foreign correspondents did not report the truth as they did not want to annoy Nehru. At a time when all the Western press was united (nearly) in pouring torrents of abuse on Nehru's head, I find this very difficult to believe. I will take one example. The only report that I was able to find in the British press from an eye-witness in Goa (we were told that they were all ordered to quit a day or so after the invasion, a thing I did not like, and which certainly did not suggest that they were all acting as "yes-men") was in the London *Daily Telegraph*, a paper which rarely gives Nehru a single good mark. This correspondent told how he had arrived in a village within an hour of its occupation by the Indian troops. That church had been badly damaged, as well as other buildings. It seemed clear to him that the Indian troops could not have done this. They had not had time. Moreover, the officer in charge was himself a Christian, who certainly would not have ordered his troops to damage a church. To this I would add from my own observation that the Indian army, as I have seen it in recent years, has always seemed to me to be a very well-disciplined army, and it has a number of admirable Christian officers in it. So I find that *Telegraph* report very difficult to discredit.

But there is the more important issue: What did the people of Goa really want? If they had had a chance to vote, would the majority have voted for Portugal? I am sure I do not know, and probably no one now knows or ever will. But as far back as 1946, Gandhi was convinced that it was only Portuguese oppression that prevented the people from expressing their criticism of the Portuguese, although his views on Goa do not seem to be well known. What is known, however, is that numbers of people of Goan descent and Portuguese name living in Bombay had for years carried on a vigorous agitation for bringing Goa

into the Indian Union; and a small number of Goans, who tried to speak out in Goa itself, suffered long years of rigorous imprisonment in Lisbon. Further, the Catholic Archbishop of Bombay and Goa, Cardinal Garcias, a Goan by descent, had made his sympathy with the Indian claim clear. And a few years ago I met an English journalist who had gone to Goa at the time of earlier incidents, when other foreign journalists reported general acquiescence, at least, with Portuguese rule; he stayed on for a week after the others left, and he found that a good number of business men and others came to him secretly to beg him to stir up the world against the continuance of Portuguese rule.

But I am interested in the larger question: Is not this typical of most situations? Are there real mass movements for independence in any of the "colonial" territories? Is it not always a minority, usually an ardent and completely dedicated minority, sometimes a very few, who not only lead but actually create and mould these nationalist movements which are so typical of our age? Last week I read what appeared to me to be a very fair-minded discussion of the background of Algerian freedom. The writer pointed out that in the early days of the fighting, the Algerian "rebels" almost certainly enjoyed very little real support from the Muslim population as a whole. So certain were the French settlers of this that, when de Gaulle first "recognized" the "rebel" leaders by entering into parleys with them, the settlers were both shocked and indignant. So, too, going back to the Indian independence movement, even after Gandhi had aroused some popular backing for the movement, so that anywhere in India he was met with shouts of "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai," still many British officials who were certainly respected by the ordinary people in their districts, had some reason to believe that the Congress movement was not really a mass movement which the ordinary villagers consciously supported. These things are no doubt always difficult to assess, but my guess would be that, all over the world, though sophisticated townsmen may demonstrate

active support for liberation movements, the rural masses are rarely very actively political or nationalistic.

Following are some extracts from a memorandum concerning the Goa incident prepared by Horace Alexander, an English Quaker, which begin with citations from Gandhi:

In 1946, when it seemed clear that the British were about to withdraw from the rest of India, Gandhi wrote in his weekly paper, *Harijan*:

"In free India, Goa cannot be allowed to exist as a separate entity, in opposition to the laws of the free state. . . . I would venture to advise the Portuguese Government of Goa to recognize the signs of the times and come to honorable terms with its inhabitants, rather than function on any treaty that might exist between them and the British Government."

The then Governor-General of Goa retorted that there was no agitation among the Goans for a change of rule. Such agitation came only from "foreign" Indians. Gandhi replied: "That the Indians in Goa have been speechless is proof, not of the innocence or the philanthropic nature of the Portuguese Government, but of the rule of terror."

Of course, much depends upon what one means by "terror." Visitors to Goa have reported that it has seemed like a pleasant sleepy spot, belonging to another century. Visitors to Portugal say much the same. But there have been no civil liberties in Goa, and any criticism of the Portuguese has been ruthlessly suppressed. When we were in India two years ago, we met a Goan who had ventured to say publicly in Goa that he thought the people should be allowed to express their political opinions. For this, he was taken off to Portugal, where he spent nine years in jail. . . .

Independent India began to discuss with the Portuguese terms for withdrawal. The French, who also had some enclaves, including Pondicherry, soon agreed to withdraw. The Portuguese refused even to discuss withdrawal, and proclaimed Goa to be a part of Portugal. A great many Goans, not content with the sleepy life in Goa, migrated to the city of Bombay, where they have been carrying on a ceaseless agitation for some action by India to end Portuguese rule. . . . I think there can be no doubt but that the reason why things blew up to a crisis again was the

result of the revelations about the appalling things the Portuguese were still doing in Angola and other parts of Africa still under their control. As the Western States, owing to the fact, I suppose, that Portugal is a member of NATO, did little or nothing to arrest the course of Portuguese brutalities in Africa (the British record is, I am afraid, specially bad at this point), it became clear that action must come from some other quarter. . . . [The Portuguese] began to fire on Indian fishing boats and merchant vessels, and it seemed clear that this was a deliberate policy [to] provoke the Indians to drive them out by force, so as to bring maximum odium on India. . . . This was followed by several brief armed incursions into Indian villages across the border. So India, after twice delaying action owing to proposals for mediation from U Thant and from Washington, having learnt that the Portuguese Government was still unwilling to negotiate with any idea of a change of status of the enclaves, decided that strong action must finally be taken. . . .

Nehru, in the remarkable press conference that he held recently, made it clear that he found himself reluctantly driven, step by step, to this action, and that, even when he saw it as the lesser evil, he still recognized that a resort to force is always evil and is likely to have some evil consequences. He is convinced that continued refusal to act would have been even more disastrous.