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ATOMIC ALIBI

THE building of character for ourselves, and through ourselves for our country, is hard, slow, and long drawn-out. The stamina and patience it requires are rewarded by but few thrills of sudden achievement. We get tired of the job. Sometimes we give up, or at least we crave some diversion which will turn our own and other people's attention from the fact that we are failing in the first duty of every person—to be master of himself, and thereby an effective instrument for the social good.

To that temper of weariness, evasion and escape the atomic bomb comes as a great boon. We are told that we are at the supreme crisis of all history, that if the use of atomic energy in warfare is not prevented, all culture and civilization will perish, and that if the human breed is not totally destroyed, the remainder will be dressed in skins, will live in caves, and will fight with war clubs. What is the use of being concerned with scholarship if the world is about to blow up? In the face of such a crisis are we not justified, even obligated, to forget for the time being the slow, strenuous processes of achieving personal and national strength? Should not our whole attention and energy go to meeting the supreme threat?

Such is the half-unconscious process of self-justification with which we avoid facing the work by which personal and national character are built. Although the atomic bomb is today the world's greatest alibi for our failure to be at our proper work of self-mastery and long-time nation-building, in this it is nothing new, but only the latest and most convincing form of an ancient excuse. At the beginning of the century many men minimized the importance of low standards of character by the need for attacking and defeating the monster of monopoly which, they held, was about to crush out the life of the country. When that menacing crisis was past, they held, would be time to give attention to such minor details.

Then came the first world war, and the threat of world domination by the Kaiser and his hordes. Before that towering menace who would be so trivial and embarrassingly inept as to insist on the need for personal mastery as the foundation of national strength? During the middle nineteen-twenties we seemed to be entering into a new era of boundless prosperity. The austere ones had been all wrong. Indulgence and softness of living were no bar to prosperity. Anyone who expressed concern for the foundations of national character was a Puritanical killjoy, to be disregarded with contempt. We needed only to buy stocks at mounting prices and enjoy the dividends.

With the coming of the great depression it was evident that concern with the development of personal and national character would not suddenly create jobs by the million. Social action was the thing, and anyone emphasizing personal responsibility was a reactionary. I personally observed the frequency with which a fervor for social progress was associated with personal laxity, and with disregard for the quality of the means employed.

Came Pearl Harbor, and then, of course, meeting of the crisis was the only matter worthy of attention. Anyone who in such circumstances should insist on emphasizing personal discipline and refinement of character as the long-time foundation of national strength would have been almost an obstructionist. The official attitude of our war establishment was to indulge any limitation of character which did not directly bear upon the successful prosecution of the war. There was a fairly complete alibi for the man who had evaded the task of ordering his own life. And now comes the atom bomb. Always there is plausible absolution for the man who has not

faced the long, difficult task of mastering his own life.

Like a theme running through the whole is the Marxian philosophy that personal character is primarily a reflection of economic environment; that with general economic well-being moral delinquency would almost disappear. Conventional morals, according to Marx and Engels, were the creation of bourgeois dictators to enslave the masses.

Thus the alibi never fails. The atom bomb is not new in kind. It is only more overwhelmingly plausible. Were that alibi to suddenly disappear, another would be created. As long as I can recall, even before the first world war, a common response to an appeal for the slow, vigorous process of building personal and national strength was, "Oh, but there is not time. We are at the edge of an abyss of crisis. Until the crisis is past, it must have our attention." Always we subconsciously crave a dramatic issue which will absolve us, at least for the time being, for our absence of personal mastery and personal responsibility for our lives. Always we are ready to say of work for long-time national strength, "But there is no time."

Terrible as are the possibilities of atomic warfare, more is lost than gained by lurid imagination which pictures the sudden ending of civilization, if not of the human race. Suppose we grant forecasts of atomic bombs a thousand times more powerful than any so far used. Suppose the American and European populations should be reduced to a third. In every nook and corner of our country there are libraries preserving the great discoveries of the recent past, with scientists and technicians who could reproduce our achievements. We should still have the secrets of chemistry, physics, metallurgy, electronics, and of technology in general. We should still have modern knowledge of business administration. The major part of our railways, highways and engineering works would survive. Our farms, won by billions of man-hours of labor, would still be cleared of the primeval forest.

The effect of such atomic war on our total population numbers probably would not last a century. Europe tripled its population in a century, and America did more than that. It is probable that the quality of American character and outlook will have more to do with both the quality and quantity of American population a hundred years hence than would the destruction of two thirds of our population by atomic warfare. At present our American cities, by their inadequate birth rate, eliminate their city families in four generations or less. They are actually achieving for their present families in four generations what the bomb might do in a shorter time.

The destiny of Americans will not be determined by the atomic bomb, but by the moral texture of the country' which is the sum total of the character of individual Americans. Evasion of that fact does not avoid its consequences, but only reduces the prospects of national strength.

A striking example of the effect of individual character on national destiny has recently been supplied by Europe. Finland was hard-hit by the war—by invasion, by the death of about ten per cent of her young men, by vast destruction of homes, farm buildings and livestock, by loss to Russia of territory, industries, and water power, by reparations, and by exhaustion of her meager resources. Threatened with wholesale starvation, millions of her people were greatly undernourished, and many died of malnutrition. In Helsinki, the capital, under these difficult conditions every nook and comer of open land was planted to potatoes. Street margins, parkways, vacant lots, boulevard strips—all were used. Each potato patch was the property of some individual, and was respected as such. Even extreme hunger was not considered a justification for theft. Finland is largely overcoming starvation.

'Berlin and other German cities also were near starvation, but almost no potatoes were planted in park strips or vacant lots, and there have been relatively few postwar gardens. What was the use of planting when someone would surely steal the crops? Nazi training had done its work. The people as a whole have suffered far greater starvation because the people individually could not trust each other. Foreign occupation supplied an alibi for lack of personal self-mastery. This is a simplified case of a universal principle. America is morally lax and indulgent. Measure our condition by increase of juvenile delinquency, of mental illness, and of venereal disease; by our consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; by the degeneration of education; by the growing incidence of crime; by the increase of class conflict; by the steady increase of railroad accidents; by the increasing breakdown of home life; by what Americans listen to by radio; or by numerous other criteria; and we can see that the gap between our national strength and what it might be if we were a self-disciplined people, is very considerable.

The changes necessary to strengthen our national character are of several kinds. Of course, we need national legislation which will favor good citizenship and further good national housekeeping. We need a clarification of national policy in our relation to other peoples and to world government. But domestic and international policy tends to reflect the personal character of men in public life, and that personal character is formed, usually in early childhood, by the quality of the environment, especially of home, community and local institutions, while the character and quality of that environment is only the sum total of the personal character and quality of individuals. Europe and Asia are watching both Russia and America. Wherever there is greatest integrity and competence in government, with social justice, good will, and efficient production, there loyalty will rest. The North European countries, for instance, are not sold on Russia. Neither are they sold on America. They *are* sold on human integrity and decency, on competence and intelligence, on good will and fair play. They are watching to see where those qualities are best established.

Many elements enter into the formation of such judgments concerning the United States. The behavior of American soldiers in Germany or while on vacation in France or Scandinavia, the treatment of Negroes in America; the way in which American labor conducts itself; the efficiency of American production; the American standard of living; the manner in which great corporations meet their public responsibilities (when a billion-dollar corporation talks about free enterprise, Europeans are not impressed); the evidence of public taste in movies, radio and current literature, the quality of academic scholarship—all these count in the appraisal which the world is making of us, and by that appraisal we shall win or lose the respect and confidence of other peoples.

There is time for us to give attention to fundamentals of national strength and character, for except as we do take time, each crisis we meet will but bring on another. Each such crisis will seem the supreme issue of our history, a valid reason for giving it all our attention and for neglecting that personal refinement, discipline and mastery which are the foundations of personal and national strength.

Our international policy and lack of policy helped to bring on world war one. That policy grew out of our national character. The way we handled the settlement of world war one helped bring on world war two. Again national character, the summation of personal character, determined our international policy.

Between the world wars perhaps half a million working people returned from the United States to their old homes in southern and eastern Europe. During the early thirties I met them wherever I went in their old world communities. Many of them, often referred to while they were in the United States as "Hunkies" or "Wops," had

lived in box-car construction camps, construction job shacks, or slums. They had been looked upon less as human beings than as "labor supply." They craved recognition and fellowship as Americans. We gave them wages. On a Greek hillside I stopped to watch a farmer scratching the ground with a wooden plow. Yes, he could talk "American." He had worked in Youngstown, Ohio. Why did he return? In America he was "labor." At home he was a man. The accounts such men took back to Europe of how labor was treated in America somewhat dulled Eastern Europe's glowing picture of American democracy. Had we taken them into our American life as neighbors and brothers, the feeling about America in Eastern Europe would be different today.

Except as crises are met on a high level of personal and national character they will but produce more crises, each supplying a persuasive alibi for our evasion of the mastery and refinement of our own lives and purposes. In each crisis, with lack of that sober imagination which comes only with character and clear heads, we cannot conceive that any other crisis would be as serious, and believe that if we but meet this one successfully the way henceforth will be clear.

The crisis of atomic energy warfare will be no exception. Only as we get over the feeling that meeting the present emergency is more important than developing the strength and character which enables us to meet emergencies can we expect anything but a succession of emergencies for which we shall be ill-prepared. It would be a public service if those warning America about the perils of atomic warfare should bring the issues into better perspective.

Yellow Springs, Ohio ARTHUR E. MORGAN

Letter from FRANCE

LYON.—France today is full of uncertainty, of an extreme and urgent kind. The job of reestablishing "*la vie normale"* continues insofar as possible (it is really surprising what has been done under adverse circumstances, with shortages of materials and low rates of pay), but for the majority of French people the "war situation" is a continuing reality. The economic near-chaos has prevailed for some time, resulting in sporadic strikes and protests which have not effected any concrete improvements. A great deal of criticism has (as usual) been directed against the government; it is widely felt that those who obtain governmental positions lack constructive drive and devotion to ideals. But in addition there are outside forces so dominant that even a vigorous government in France would be hampered by the tense international situation and the great question-mark of world peace and survival. And this impotence is felt by the people, too. Perhaps it is generally true that populations have become, through centuries, so dependent upon governments that they can take no steps without governmental initiative, or (in increasingly rare cases) without being goaded by the governments into a state of rebellion. But revolutions seem to be a thing of the past. Modern warfare and power politics have immensely diminished the scope of individual thought and action—or even of small group effort. When systems dominate, leaders become a rare species.

The next move of the big powers is always anxiously awaited—in the fervent hope that the cataclysm will hold off yet a while. Almost more than in Italy itself, the results of the Italian elections were watched for in France. (But the Italians too must in large measure feel powerless as individuals, as is shown by the recent efforts in Italy—not just to influence votes one way or the other—but to get people to vote at all.) Recent moves in American and Russian foreign policy increase, for the French, the probability of a conflict that would be a complete disaster, in which everything would be lost and nothing gained. Alone, France is powerless to alter this prospect; she feels somewhat like the character in *The Mikado* who was told "Don't hesitate your choice to name; a dreadful fate you'll suffer all the same."

In addition to political uncertainty is a more immediate uncertainty—that of daily bread and nightly bed. Many French workers earn from twenty-five to forty dollars a month. Since the bombings, housing has been at a high premium. Food prices, despite semi-effective controls, are constantly rising, and though there are now a few signs of increasing variety, much is out of reach of the average house-holder. Grandiosely presented plans are remote from most citizens, who can only judge the effectiveness of a measure when they see a tangible result. France has had a lion's share of unproductive plans, with the result that governmental pronunciamentos, in themselves, do not carry much weight, now.

One would therefore expect, as is the case, that a distinction is readily made between the people of a country and their government. Though some felt that the "big men" and the Communists would be the only ones to benefit, there was widespread appreciation of the generous spirit of the Friendship Train; it was recognized as coming from individuals interested in helping others. About the Marshall Plan, of course, no such aura of generosity exists. Interestingly enough, the view has been expressed that its political interestedness need not be considered a drawback: if it is to America's self-interest to send ERP aid, it is equally to Europe's interest to accept it, and the whole transaction can be extremely businesslike without need of any extraneous feelings of gratitude or indebtedness.

A friend of ours was recently disappointed at a youth convention by the hazy acquaintance of young people with present-day problems. The truth seems to be that these problems are so huge, complex and diverse that individual thought and action shrink before their magnitude, and no resolution of the present uncertainties would seem to result from studying them. Of course, not everyone feels completely impotent, or defeatist, or apathetic. In all walks of life—including governments—are those who would enthusiastically hail and work for any constructive program which would eliminate the present impending doom and put an end to the long delay since the war in establishing peace and liberty. But people are far from free and prospects are discouraging. Even the most unapathetic can only hope.

We met a sincere little lady one day in a café, peddling a little paper advocating the abolition of national hatreds and boundaries and the universal adoption of Jesus' philosophy of love. She advised us to stay here, if we could, because "maybe the atomic bomb won't hit France."

FRENCH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
THE SOURCES OF CONVICTION

IT is awkward, and in some ways inappropriate, perhaps, to compare two such widely differing books as *Puzzled People* by Mass-Observation (Gollancz, London) and *The Affirmation of Immortality* by John Haynes Holmes (Ingersoll Lecture, Macmillan), yet, reading them both at the same time, the comparison is inevitable.

Mass-Observation, an English research organization with an excellent reputation for careful public-opinion surveys, reports the confusion, the disillusionment and the growing skepticism of a segment of the London population on the subject of religion. Mr. Holmes explores the foundation for belief in human immortality. Of the two, Mr. Holmes' variety of "research" is by far the more stimulating—as would be expected—yet both books are important.

Puzzled People needs to be read in full to appreciate the implications of modern unbelief, to become aware that the "acceptance" of traditional religion in England is little more than a habit which continues more from .the indifference of the people than from any other cause. The disillusionment, Mass-Observation points out, focuses on *organized* religion—on church leadership and formal piety—rather than on essential moral ideas. It is “very largely a loss of faith in the unwieldy, centralized, *remote organization*, which increasingly monopolizes the potential of ideals, and which seems so distant and uncontrollable to ordinary people.”

The conclusion arrived at by the writer for Mass Observation is that the English people are looking for something to believe in—that the dying out of religious conviction has left a moral vacuum in their lives—and that unless this void is filled, some substitute belief "may be seized upon hungrily, uncritically and irrevocably."

In refreshing contrast to the faith which wanes with organizational authority, Mr. Holmes finds the source .of his moral conviction in a sustained intuition of the spiritual nature of man. He is quite sure that there is a logic of the spirit, and that it may be relied upon. He bows, in passing, to the suggestions of psychic research, but founds his real conviction upon the idea that the spiritual world is not something which exists only in "the hereafter," but can be sought and recognized during life on earth. And having made this plain, he passes to the evidence for this belief, finding it all about, until the reader is shamed by his own inattentive habits, not to have noticed these things before.

If man is a mere animal, he asks, how shall we explain the greatness of Helen Keller? Here was a body, muted, deaf, and blind, yet the spirit within somehow found a way to speak, to hear, to understand—which is even more than "seeing." What animal so hedged by physical disaster has ever revealed indomitable intelligence like this? It is of course when there is obvious and outstanding greatness of spirit that the independence of the latter is most easily divined. Writes Mr. Holmes:

> What are we to think, for example, when a great and potent personality is suddenly cut off by an automobile accident, a disease germ, or a bit of poisoned food? Must it not be what George Herbert Palmer thought as he looked upon the dead body of his wife, one of the outstanding women of her time—"Though no regrets are proper for the manner of her death, who can contemplate the fact of it, and not call the world irrational if our of deference to a few particles of disordered matter, it excludes so fair a spirit?"

Merely a sentiment—pleasant, perhaps, and momentarily persuasive, but contrary to "cold facts"? But what facts? The facts of the body do not militate against immortality, for immortality was never claimed (barring the ridiculous idea of "Physical" resurrection) for the body, but for the soul. And what is the soul? That, precisely, is Mr. Holmes' point. The reality of the soul is in the eternal values conceived and perpetuated by human beings, and spoken of in the accents of eternity.

Mr. Holmes is unblushingly a Platonist, one who repeats the closing passage of the *Phaedo* as though it were the voice of truth itself, as undeniable as the sun and the stars. The occasion for quoting Plato was a letter to the New York *Times*, in which Mr. Holmes always a practical man—objected to the journalistic tendency to refer to the dead body of a man as though it were the man himself. After reviewing the reports of Mr. Wendell Willkie's funeral, he wrote:

> May I respectfully contend that Mr. Willkie played no such part as described in these quotations. . . . Mr. Willkie was not taken to the church from the undertaking establishment, nor to the Pennsylvania station after the service, nor was he "placed in a crypt." Mr. Willkie did not lie in state, nor rest "in an open bronze coffin," nor did he speed west "toward his final resting place." It was Mr. Willkie's body that did all these things. . . .
>
> This apparently trivial matter of newspaper style and usage is, in its ultimate implications, momentous. It opens up vast metaphysical questions of personal reality, and touches the whole substance of religious faith. To him who believes in immortality and is convinced that, while we *have* a body, we are a *soul*, there can be no compromise on this issue. It is the body that is laved, and laid in state, and borne to the grave, and at last buried. The man lives on untouched, unharmed, unended.

Only with reluctance do we find what seems a flaw something more than incompleteness, for no testament of immortality can be "complete"—in the reasoning of Mr. Holmes about immortality. "The imperishable spirit," he says, "sprung by some miracle of transmutation from the flesh, as the organic has sprung from the inorganic and the animate from the inanimate—this is the answer to the cosmic riddle." We wish, in this case, that he had followed Plato, instead of invoking a "miracle of transmutation." For having boldly accepted the two worlds of spirit and matter, he is under no philosophic necessity to generate the former from the latter; indeed, the reverse would be a more orderly interpretation of the logic he has developed.

Curiously enough, the "least expected" result of the" Mass-Observation survey of religious opinion bore directly on this phase of the question of immortality. One in ten of those who held any idea of immortality at all "*spontaneously* went into enough detail" to show that they believed in some form of pre-existence of the soul or reincarnation—a view which, as Mass-Observation notes, is not derived from any religious system widely adhered to in England. Immortality of the soul, in other words, was naturally conceived by these people, not as beginning with a "transmutation from the flesh," but as extending in both directions of time, just as Plato intimated in the *Republic*.

But Mr. Holmes writes of the thing of which he is certain—that there is an immortal spirit in man, and that no other conception of life, or death, is tenable for human beings. The source of his conviction he finds in the moral medium of human life, not in any institution, so that the vicissitudes of the Church of England, or of any of the sects and creeds of the age, leave his faith untouched. No other sort of faith, we think, can ever fill the void in the lives of those who have come to distrust the claims and pretensions of religious organizations.

COMMENTARY
MORAL AUTHORITY

A QUESTION raised in Mass-Observation's *Puzzled People*—not touched upon in Review—is the difference between the skepticism which grows out of indifference and the scepticism which results from critical investigation and hard thinking. Unfortunately, the unbelief of the modern world is largely the unbelief of people who have "fallen away" from religion, rather than people who are thinking for themselves. This, as Mass-Observation points out, is a serious problem.

In another way, the same problem confronts those religious organizations in the United States whose educational activities were made illegal or threatened by the recent Supreme Court decision in the Champaign case. They, too, report the spread of unbelief, but unlike Mass-Observation, they have a positive program which they declare should supplement the ineffective religious instruction of church and home.

The real question, of course, is whether or not religious indifference can ever justify authoritarianism in religion. The attempt by any group to gain access to the minds of the young through public institutions is equivalent to the assertion by that group that it has a special right to instruct and indoctrinate other human beings. In contrast to sectarian training in religion, the genuine educator meets moral apathy with a strenuous attempt to stir indifferent people to ask themselves questions and to seek the truth.

Fundamentally, any measure to stimulate religious thinking on the part of other people, except by example and free discussion, is authoritarian in principle. It might be said that the task of religion is to say what is good for man, and of politics to locate authority in human affairs. Notably, the Constitution of the United States, as both an expression of political philosophy and a practical instrument of government, specifically rejects any authority in religion, leaving individuals to make their own definition of what is good for man. It seems clear that the authors of the Constitution assumed, justly, we think, that the idea of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is broad and neutral enough to encompass any conceivable religious philosophy.

It would be a mistake, however, to say that the Constitution reflects no positive views on the subject of religion. By implication, the Constitution reveals a number of religious truths which seem always to be ignored by men who deplore our "godless" educational system and want the doctrines of *their* religion to gain the prestige of official endorsement by the Government of United States. The Constitution, first of all, implies that religious truth is the truth of personal discovery, and that constraint in religion is a contradiction in terms. It implies that tolerance of the unorthodox is the wrong way to define religious freedom—that religious freedom means *no distinctions* of either recognition or privilege among majority or minority religious groups. It means that the personal faith of one man is as sacred a right as the organized religion of millions. The Constitution is not irreligious. It contains an entire philosophy of moral education.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE present American pre-occupation with psychology and psychiatry has convinced numerous parents that they must examine their children closely for "complexes." Children used to catch colds, measles, chicken pox and mumps, but now additional dangers seem to lurk in unsuspected crannies, *i.e.*, "repressions," "neuroses," "fixations," etc., It is not our intention either to praise or blame the popular renditions of psychology which make this new type of parental concern so prevalent. The popularization of psychology is undoubtedly in no small part due to the inadequacy of any or all conventional religions to explain specific emotional distresses; therefore, the growing interest in psychology, and a disposition to speak, however hazily, in clinical terms is less a passing fancy than evidence of an attempt to come to terms with modern personal and social conflicts. However, two considerations might be offered regarding the attitude of mind typically produced in parents who have a pseudo-familiarity with "psychology."

First, the most widely-read books on psychology tend to establish only one moral criterion—that of normality. The impression which any inadequately tutored reader will get from books on child-psychology is that the goal for the child represents a state of mind wherein emotional conflicts no longer exist. Although there is no direct assertion of this thesis made in any text we know about (it becomes manifestly absurd as soon as committed to writing), the conclusion is as definite as anything implicit can be. Child-psychology books seldom contain formulations of the "growth-values" which may come through conflict.

Psychiatric counsels are commonly directed toward the elimination of internal struggle. Any short-cut which seems to dispose satisfactorily of emotional tension is regarded as "good." This development probably stems from the fact that psychiatry has been a study of *ab*normality. Normality has received a purely negative definition—the absence of clinical symptoms within the individual. Yet every inspiring philosophy or religion and every enduring work of great literature is founded upon an entirely different type of goal for the human soul. Here we learn that struggle is the great and beneficial catharsis; that "bitter" experience is in every way superior to passivity or untried virtue. It must be unwise to neglect this aspect of the human evolutionary process, yet popular psychological treatises tend to encourage this neglect in parents. Some emotional struggles are necessary ground-work for future emotional and mental stability, being fully "normal" in an evolutionary perspective. That parents may legitimately concern themselves with sharpening or clarifying them should be recognized.

The other unsolved psychological problem for modern parents is the problem of the family-cultural causes of emotional disturbances in early childhood. Psychiatric analysis, if it is efficient, may trace a particular complex to an incident or series of incidents. Yet here we have not the *cause* but simply evidence of the first manifestation of some form of distress, or an inadequacy which we are doing nothing to eliminate. There is no neurosis where encouragement for negativism is not to be found. The incipient neuroses of childhood become fixations of defeatism only when subjected to the actual neuroses of parents—those attitudes which are negative or pessimistic. It should be obvious that the child's happiness depends upon his ability to accentuate physical, emotional, mental and moral growth—and that his worst internal enemy is, therefore, "pessimism." It may seem to stretch the meaning of "pessimism" to apply it to a child's state of mind, yet it should be remembered that the most virulent pessimism is unaware of itself, a mood rather than a position consciously taken.

Every home manufactures pessimism to the extent that one or both of the parents are cases of

arrested development. And that is what most of us tend to be. Seldom do we have the cultural opportunity of developing, as adults, all the various facets of our natures simultaneously and harmoniously. As we have before contended, the majority give up any active desire for further physical improvement at an extremely early age. Similarly, between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, the average American adult has usually crystallized a "religion" or a "philosophy" of life which will adhere to him without substantial revision for the rest of his life. The active appreciation of art, music, and literature also tends to become static some time before the age of thirty, nor is this less true in regard to the widening of mental horizons. We may not spend as much *time* listening to music or reading books when we are twenty as we do when we are thirty; yet, after a certain crystallization of tastes, the *amount* of our activity is inconsequential insofar as the principle of growth is concerned. We may read more books and possibly develop a more "refined" taste in literature, yet the tendency is to continue with the same general attitude of mind over a period of many years. When the human organism becomes static, it also becomes vaguely cynical and pessimistic. All types of pessimism are absorbed by children from their parents, although possibly not in exactly the same form.

Examine for a moment the tendency to hypochondria, obviously flourishing in a culture famous for its patent medicines. The parental hypochondriac is a pessimist in respect to the proper functioning of his body, or else he is desperately holding to an idea of physical fitness because of an inward conviction that nothing about him except his body is or can be "fit." If he clings to physical health as his last bulwark against the acceptance of inferiority, his attention becomes constantly focused on every small pain or symptom of slight bodily diseases His diet comes to be regulated by his attention to correcting the small ailments he thinks himself to be acquiring, and he exhibits many other indications of a powerful and continual fear. If he localizes his trouble in his "heart" or in his "back," it is almost a foregone conclusion that his children will in time develop similar symptoms, not because of organic weakness, but because of the power of suggestion. These small and specific fears are the legitimate study of psychoanalysis, but the root of all such fears, which parents so easily pass on to their children, is the desire to hold on grimly to what few advantages they have, rather than the desire to transcend them' This is negativism, and means that we hold out no hope for attaining a more satisfactory state of being. Our energies are bent on preservation, not creation. Behind the scenes and encouraging this type of complex is the twentieth century predisposition to view the individual human as of very little significance. The March of Science, the mass movements in labor—unionism and national preparedness are vaguely supposed to matter. But the individual typically believes that he has nowhere to go nor anything to do *as an individual.*

This is the philosophical atmosphere in which the majority of our children grow to maturity. Specific repressions and neuroses are also traceable to parents, but the most destructive inheritance of all is generalized "pessimism"—the mood resulting from a lack of active faith in the dignity of the human soul.

FRONTIERS

The Health of the Landscape

FOR an acceptable "scientific" estimate of the conclusions of Dr. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer's book *The Earth's Surface and Human Destiny,* it probably should be discussed by an agricultural expert with practical knowledge of hydrology, botany, and the chemistry of soils. We suspect, however, that were such a specialist to review this work, he would tend to overlook or to minimize its larger meaning and 'Purpose in order to concentrate on matters of technical significance. Usually, the scientific critic disapproves big generalizations, first, because he is trained to adopt the limiting perspective of analytical research techniques, and second, because big generalizations are always hard to prove.

When someone like Robert M. Hutchins, for example, asserts that modern civilization is "materialistic," at least three or four scientific writers respond with indignation, accusing Dr. Hutchins of "obscurantism," the worship of Thomas Aquinas, and a medieval prejudice against scientific method. When he talks about a life guided by "principles," the same critics hint that Fascism is just around the corner in Dr. Hutchins' educational philosophy, waiting to enforce acceptance of the principles whatever they are—Dr. Hutchins has found in the Great Books.

Dr. Pfeiffer, along with other agricultural radicals and "mystics," will doubtless meet the same sort of criticism from the orthodox agricultural science, for his book is full of "big generalizations." What is worse, his concluding observations show a curious sympathy for the religious symbolism of the ancients—he draws on the Mysteries of India, Egypt and Greece to suggest an over-all conception of the natural reverence man should feel for the plant and animal kingdoms. It is evident that he regards much in modern agricultural practice as a brutal mutilation of the surface of the earth. He is able to call some types of gardens "open wounds" in the soil, and develops the idea that the landscape which surrounds human habitations and the field of human activities exerts a profound, even a decisive, influence on the quality of human life.

In some ways, we think, he carries this idea too far, as when he attempts to show, with statistics, that philosophers and poets are native to mountainous areas, while statesmen and military men sprout on the plains. This seems a kind of earth-magic or geographical predestination arrived at too easily. But on the whole, Dr. Pfeiffer is to be praised and thanked for calling our attention to the psychological and even the moral implications of the ugly, haphazard, and sickly landscapes of modern civilization.

Many of the facts are not new. Readers will recognize his summary of the enormous losses of top soil and humus from the great plains of the United States. They will also be familiar with the story of the destruction of American forests, through wasteful and irresponsible methods of lumbering. This is not, however, the most important part of the book, which is largely devoted to suggestions for reforestation and agricultural reconstruction—a program for intelligent cooperation *with* nature, based on the conception of the earth as a living organism. Numerous photographs illustrate the principles set forth in the text.

The Earth's Surface and Human Destiny is as much concerned with a broad cultural ideal as with the practical side of landscape reform. Most people are vaguely aware that wood pulp is used in the manufacture of newsprint. Dr. Pfeiffer reports that "One Sunday edition of between 80 and 100 pages of one of the leading New York newspapers requires 60 to 80 acres of forest." As the forests in the United States disappear in the maw of newspaper consumption, the proprietors of large dailies are finding it necessary to acquire woodlands in Canada to keep up with the demand for wood pulp. The devastation caused by such ruthless deforestation, Dr. Pfeiffer points out, is comparable to the effect of a prolonged military bombardment.

Another fact of interest is the enormous water consumption by a city the size of New York, which uses up to 11 million gallons daily. This draining of the watersheds surrounding a great metropolis will, in time, the author contends, rob the natural landscape of its water supply and transform the near-by plains into an arid steppe. "Were there no other

grounds," he says, "the provision of water alone would be reason enough for the abandonment of great cities, and the scattering and organic shaping of settlements." The concluding chapter of the book presents a practical plan for public child and adult education in the importance of human relationships with the landscapes phase of social hygiene that should no more be neglected than the simple facts of personal health.

The Earth's Face and Human Destiny is published by the Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pennsylvania, at $2.75.

Toward Natural Living

The obvious thing to say about Grantly Dick Read's *Childbirth without Fear* is that it marks an important milestone in the liberation of women from what they have come to regard as the greatest physical agony of their lives. Actually, however, Dr. Read's book does much more than this, for it promises to help modern medicine to re-become a *natural* science. The idea of "childbirth without fear," this book shows, is virtually the equivalent of "childbirth without pain." Years ago, Dr. Read made an emergency delivery of the child of a poor woman in the Whitechapel section of London. The woman rejected the chloroform mask and had her baby without anesthetic. Later, as he was leaving, the doctor asked her why she refused the chloroform mask. As he tells it: "Shyly she turned to me and said, 'It didn't hurt. It wasn't meant to, was it, doctor?' "

That was the beginning of Dr. Read's mission. In the course of years, he developed a theory of natural childbirth based on the proposition, "It wasn't meant to hurt." His book is the record of its proof, in hundreds of maternity cases. Besides the dramatic demonstration that childbearing need not be painful, and need not be feared by expectant mothers, the book provides simple instructions in mental and physical relaxation which any woman can follow, in order to have a natural birth. And a natural birth can be—and usually is—an exalting experience. Mothers who pass through it become crusaders for the natural in childbearing, and indignant that any woman should be denied this profound fulfillment—"the inexplicable transfiguration of women at the time of their babies' arrival," as Dr. Read describes it. Already, in the United States, young mothers are beginning to convert their doctors to Dr. Read's gospel, simply from reading his book and following his instructions.

Childbirth is an agony for many modern women because they have been taught to fear it. Their fear produces muscular tensions in the body, closing the womb and preventing the child from emerging. This resistance to the natural birth process produces real pain. "Therefore," says Dr. Read, "fear, pain and tension are the three evils which are not normal to the natural design, but which have been introduced in the course of civilization by the ignorance of those who have been concerned with attendance at childbirth."

It ought not to be a "discipline" to be natural, but for those who allow their physical and emotional lives to follow the line of least discomfort, the natural is often alien and frightening in its portents of austerity. It was, perhaps, inevitable that in a civilization which guards against disease by injection, which wakes by stimulants and sleeps by sedatives, the art of natural childbearing would be lost almost entirely, and have to be restored by what seems, in these degenerate days, a somewhat Spartan regimen. Natural births, it may be hoped, will be the beginning of more natural lives for the children so brought into the world.

Notable in this book is Dr. Read's deep sympathy for human beings, his understanding of the psychological problems connected with childbearing, and the wholeness of his outlook on life. While he is thoroughly W home in the technicalities of obstetrics, the reader meets, not theories and abstractions, but a warm humanity in *Childbirth without Fear*. There is a lot of talk these days, about "sex education" for young people. This book would provide it—*naturally*. (Harper is the publisher, price, $2.75.)