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EXTREMES OF SOCIAL THEORY

IF we say that, despite renewed economic activity in some quarters, Continental Europe lies wounded and spent, that England's golden age is now far behind her, and that the United States, while still energetic and formidable, breeds more confusion than hope for the rest of the world, we have still to acknowledge that Western civilization has added to the culture of the world what may be the future's most precious conception—the idea of the dynamic and free individual. This idea is definitely born of the West, and whatever the West does with her own future, the idea of individual worth and freedom cannot die.

Say whatever else you please about the West. Say that it precipitated the world into the worst possible of wars, that it made countless millions miserable, and slaughtered millions more; that above all it failed to make intelligent use of its inspiration—say all these things, and there will remain the fact that the West gave to posterity a quality of determination to be free which is of the very essence of genuine civilization. The genius of the West has always been in the re-creation of freedom. By angry rebellion, by impassioned declaration of the right of the individual to be wrong on his own account, the West has always broken out of every confining social form. While Westerners have often made less than admirable societies in which to exercise their freedom, they soon reject these failures and strike out in a new direction. And today, when we have come full circle in the design of social schemes—from the theocracy of God to the theocracy of Dialectical Materialism—we are willing to sacrifice rationality before we give up the ideal of freedom. Thus the French Existentialists declare that the world is absurd—that there is no sense in the universe, nor in life ---but that man, like a lonely island of mind adrift in a bottomless sea of mindlessness, must still declare his freedom, his dignity, in the teeth of a devouring fate. This is freedom's last-ditch defense against the system-builders of both mind and matter; there may be follies in it, but it has its own magnificence. It will have no consistency which casts out freedom, and if the world is inconsistent with freedom, then let us cast out the world!

The real failure of the West is in not having been able to make a better world—or, more precisely, a better *society*. For while the West has succeeded in defining the ideal man as a *free* man, it has failed in its attempt to evolve a free society. What has been accomplished in the West, with respect to the social question, is a certain amount of brilliant criticism—empirical as to method, pragmatic as to value, and emphatically unconstructive or "negative" in result.

How ought "free" men to live together? Or, in more radical form, the question is, *To what end* ought free men to live together? This is the question we have not been able to answer, in theory or in practice, although, after a long and calm look at the United States, it seems fair to say that the practice has been a bit better than the theory.

The fact of the matter is that the West has no theory of the ends of human life. "Happiness" is not an end, but a state of feeling. Further, to define man as a free being is not enough to arrive at a functional conception of man-in-existence. What is his freedom *for?*

The explanation of why the West has no answer to this question is a fairly simple one. In Western experience, every answer provided for this question smacks of a sneak attack on human freedom. Suppose we say that human freedom exists to afford man the opportunity to do God's will by choice that unless he *chooses* to obey the mandate of heaven, he is not even a moral being in

his righteousness. This interpretation of the use of freedom has initial plausibility, but it turns out that in order to find out what God's will may be, you are obliged to take leave of both reason and freedom. That is, if you are to be guided by any of the available orthodoxies, you must be prepared to sacrifice both. Hence the enormous resistance the West has accumulated to *any* theory of the meaning of life. This is the bog of aimlessness into which Progressive Education has fallen, making its professions and its works fair game for critics like Dr. Hutchins.

Another effect of the determination of Western thinkers to keep the question of final aims or ends as fuzzy as possible has been the lapse of energetic men into mere acquisitiveness as a way of life. We are always up and doing in the West. This makes us rich, and those who become rich usually find that their riches require elaborate justification—not only because of the power which riches yield, but also because a man who has spent his whole life making money is reluctant to admit to himself or to anyone else that he has been doing something which is not really worth while. Thus the apologies for Capitalism are something more than a sly defense of the techniques of exploitation; they are also an attempt to recover for the capitalist some feeling of human dignity. A businessman is still a man, with the secret hopes and aspirations of other men. And while free enterprise may be a low form of freedom, there still remains in it an element of tribute to the spiritual discovery of the West.

Another failure of the West, again both theoretical and practical, is in the field of human differences. The West resists theories to explain human differences as vigorously as it resists doctrines of ends. The reason is plain enough. Theories of differences have almost always been theories of subjection, and therefore enemies to freedom. Perhaps there has been no departure from science in the West as barefaced as the neglect of the fact of human differences. True, we have endless studies of differences in "intelligence," and as many treatises concerned with the effects of heredity, but on the whole any certainty which might be gained from these avenues of research is cancelled out by the contradictory results which are obtained. In one case heredity seems to dictate with absolute authority, in another it has virtually no effect at all. Environment and nurture, again, may on occasion prove all-important, but elsewhere are shown to be frail reeds of influence which may be overcome by intangible elements in human character. What causes one man to be very different from another? We have lots of facts, a few theories, relating to this question, but practically no "reliable knowledge" at all. The Nazis thought they had adequate certainty concerning the importance of "blood," but their sole claim to distinction soon came to be in spilling it; the Communists have erected an entire social structure on the theory that Environment governs all, but the steps toward creating the Perfect Environment have proved so repugnant to the civilized world that an admittedly aimless society like the Capitalist West seems almost a paradise of freedom, by comparison.

Looking back over the centuries, it appears that, characteristically, men seek freedom in order to choose their own ends. Then, having chosen their ends, they pursue them; but in doing these things, men live out their lives in vastly different ways, being different in the clarity of their thinking, in the sort of freedom they want, in the quality of the ends they choose, and in the energy with which they pursue them.

If they achieve freedom at the cost of institutional patterns which have grown up to adjust the differences among men, other patterns of control emerge as wild growths of nature instead of rationally devised schemes of human relationships. If the institutional patterns develop an excessive rigidity, the love of freedom eventually breaks them down and abandons them. If the ends selected by men are chosen at random,

or during revolutionary passion, or after an age of relentless suppression of independent thought, they may give expression to the drive for freedom, but satisfy no other element in human nature. If the most intelligent of men use their skills to maintain power over the less intelligent, their children will be born into an age in which intelligence is suspect, and the clod is apotheosized. If the mediocre rule a society in which conformity is praised with religious fervor and deviation from convention suspected as a symptom of "failure," *their* children will be likely to grow into a "lost generation" of alienated rebels who find pleasure in shocking their elders and formulating the theology of rebellion.

There, in sketchy outline, are some of the social facts within our experience, but how shall we interpret them? Against what "normal" curve of human development and behavior shall we project these oscillations revealed by history? How, in short, can "objectivity" be obtained?

Naturally, with a reputation for impartiality at stake, we are not going to attempt a flat answer to these questions, even supposing such an answer could be provided. Like all genuine solutions, the answer is bound to be arrived at gradually, with progressive understanding of its several aspects. Meanwhile, however, we have at hand two essays which bear on the problem of culture and social organization, both, we think, brilliant in the light they throw, and with the added advantage of being written from entirely different, if not opposed, points of view. One is Dwight Macdonald's "A Theory of Mass Culture," appearing in No. 3 of *Diogenes* (Summer, 1953), a quarterly review issued by the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies. The other is *The Religious Basis of the Forms of Indian Society* by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, published in pamphlet form, together with two other essays by the same author, by the New York bookshop, Orientalia (1946). Macdonald's discussion has his characteristic lucidity, and what some would term his characteristic "negativism." So far as we can tell, he sees no hope anywhere. It is important to say, however, neither does anyone else who thinks clearly from Macdonald's premises.

Macdonald's thesis is that "mass culture" is gradually absorbing, emasculating or rendering ineffectual practically all other forms of cultural expression in the West. By implication, Macdonald holds that the thing worth talking about in culture is original expression in the arts—original and significant expression which throws light on the human situation. Macdonald is no metaphysician and lays no claim to big intuitions about the nature of things. But he is concerned about the fate of the West's genius for freedom, which he finds exposed to the depredations of mass culture.

Mass culture, as Macdonald defines it, is the vulgarization, the fragmentation and standardization of High Culture, which, in turn, is the authentic expression of the arts. Mass culture is not artistic expression, although it borrows from the techniques of the arts. Rather it is something imposed upon people in the name of the arts. Using the German term, *Kitsch*, as a synonym of Mass Culture, Macdonald writes:

> *Kitsch* "mines" High Culture the way improvident frontiersmen mine the soil, extracting its riches and putting nothing back. Also, as *kitsch* develops, it begins to draw on its own past, and some of it evolves so far away from High Culture as to appear quite disconnected from it.
>
> It is also true that Mass Culture is to some extent a continuation of the old Folk Art which until the Industrial Revolution was the culture of the common people, but here, too, the differences are more striking than the similarities. Folk Art grew from below. It was a spontaneous, autochthonous expression of the people, shaped by themselves, pretty much without the benefit of High Culture, to suit their own needs. Mass Culture is imposed from above. It is fabricated by technicians hired by businessmen; its audiences are passive consumers, their participation limited to the choice between buying and not buying. The Lords of *kitsch*, in short, exploit the cultural needs of the masses in order to make a profit and/or to maintain their class rule—in Communist countries

> only the second purpose obtains. (It is very different to *satisfy* popular tastes, as Robert Burns' poetry did; and to *exploit* them, as Hollywood does.) Folk Art was the people's own institution, their private little kitchen-garden walled off from the great formal park of their masters' High Culture. But Mass Culture breaks down the wall, integrating the masses into a debased form of High Culture and thus becoming an instrument of political domination. If one had no other data to go on, the nature of Mass Culture would reveal Capitalism to be an exploitative class society and not the harmonious commonwealth it is sometimes alleged to be. The same goes even more strongly for Soviet Communism and *its* special kind of Mass Culture.

Macdonald pursues his analysis of Mass Culture in detail, showing how it removes the rational elements from the arts it debases, discarding anything and everything which might require an effort on the part of the spectator, predigesting even his "appreciation" of what is shown. The world of Mass Culture is a world of homogenized values—there is no cream of life, but all is thoroughly mixed and sold by the ounce or the yard. Sentiments become sentimentality, the vigorous becomes the brutal, the odd becomes the miraculous—everything is pressed to its irrational limit. While there are those who hope for a new sort of popular expression of value from the refinement or evolution of Mass Culture, Macdonald offers no such encouragement:

> There are theoretical reasons why Mass Culture is not and can never be any good. I take it as axiomatic that culture can only be produced by and for human beings. But in so far as people are organized (more strictly, disorganized) as masses, they lose their human identity and quality. For the masses are in historical time what a crowd is in space: a large quantity of people unable to express themselves as human beings because they are related to one another neither as individuals nor as members of communities—indeed they are not related *to each other* at all but only to something distant, abstract, non-human: a football game or a bargain sale in the case of a crowd, a system of industrial production, a party or a State, in the case of the masses. The mass man is a solitary atom, uniform with and undifferentiated from thousands and millions of other atoms who go to make up "the lonely crowd," as David Riesman well calls American society. A folk or a people, however, is a community, i.e., a group of individuals linked to each other by common interests, work, traditions, values, and sentiments. . . . The scale is small enough so that it "makes a difference" what the individual does, a first condition for human—as against mass—existence. He is at once more important as an individual than in mass society and at the same time more closely integrated into the community. (The great culture-bearing *élites* of the past have been communities of this kind.) In contrast, a mass society, like a crowd, is so undifferentiated and loosely structured that its atoms, in so far as human values go, tend to cohere only along the line of the least common denominator; its morality sinks to that of its most brutal and primitive members, its taste to that of the least sensitive and most ignorant. . . .
>
> Yet this collective monstrosity, "the masses," "the public," is taken as a human norm by the scientific and artistic technicians of our Mass Culture. They at once degrade the public by treating it as an object, to be handled with the lack of ceremony and the objectivity of medical students dissecting a corpse, and at the same time flatter it, pander to its level of taste and ideas by taking these as the criterion of reality (in the case of questionnaire-sociologists and other "social scientists") or art (in the case of the Lords of *kitsch).* When one hears a questionnaire-sociologist talk about how he will "set up" an investigation, one feels he regards people as a herd of dumb animals, as mere congeries of conditioned reflexes, his calculation being which reflex will be stimulated by which question. At the same time, of necessity, he sees the statistical majority as the great Reality, the secret of life he is trying to find out; like the *kitsch* Lords, he is wholly without values, willing to accept any idiocy if it is held by many people. The aristocrat and the democrat both criticise and argue with popular taste, the one with hostility, the other in friendship, for both attitudes proceed from a set of values. This is less degrading to the masses than the "objective" approach of Hollywood and the questionnaire-sociologists, just as it is less degrading to a man to be shouted at in anger than to be quietly assumed to be part of a machine. But the *plebs* have their dialectical revenge: complete indifference to their human *quality* means complete prostration before their statistical *quantity, so* that a movie magnate who cynically "gives the public what it wants"—i.e., assumes it wants trash—sweats with terror if box-office returns drop ten per cent.

Those interested in the particulars of this sort of critcism—concerned with composers, painters, writers, and their role, in Macdonald's theory—should obtain a copy of *Diogenes* from Selected Outlets, Box 761, Hoboken, N.J., for 75 cents.

We now turn to Coomaraswamy's discussion of Indian society as growing out of Indian religion. With frequent references to Plato, for Western confirmation of the Eastern outlook, Coomaraswamy proposes that, according to the religion of India, the ends of life are several, and are pursued at different levels—different levels in society, different levels in human nature so that a wisely organized society will take account of these differences. He does not defend the abuses of the caste system, but endeavors to show its original *intention:*

> Institutions may be defined as means to the perfectibility of the individual. They are to be judged accordingly by the standard of whatever are held to be the immediate and ultimate ends of life; as good if they conduce to their realization, or otherwise evil. By Hindus, the purpose of life, "man's end" or *raison d'être,* is defined in a fourfold way and at the same time as regards the active and contemplative lives respectively. On the one hand, the purposes of life are the satisfaction of desire, the pursuit of values, and the fulfillment of function (in the sense of duty); on the other hand, the final, and in this sense the whole purpose of life is to obtain liberation from all wanting, valuation and responsibilities. These immediate and final ends are listed in the order of their hierarchy, but should not be thought of as independent or fundamentally opposed to one another.

This fourth end, which might be called, in Western terms, Transcendental Purpose, is the goal of the Philosopher in Plato, and, until the development of Western here-and-now ideals, has always been granted enormous popular respect. Coomaraswamy points out:

> It is almost exclusively from the modern "Philistine," secular, and moralistic point of view that the extraordinary norm {"liberation"} has come to be regarded in the West as nothing but an evasion of social responsibilities: It might well be argued that without the example of those who have given up all values for the sake of a Worth that is not a value (one amongst others), the very values on which the order of the active life depends would be reduced to the level of mere preferences and at the same time be treated as absolutes.

The burden of Coomaraswamy's contention is that human beings have their destinies to work out at different levels; that this is accomplished, quite literally, by *work;* that work is therefore to be regarded as the means to truth and to freedom. Every profession is a priesthood, every labor a rite of devotion. "It is a simple fact," Coomaraswamy says, "that no one, uncorrupted by the modern idea of 'climbing,' is ever ashamed of his profession, but on the contrary, proud of it. As Marcus Aurelius points out, 'those who love their own art wear themselves to a shadow with the labors over it, forgetting even to wash or eat'." Further:

> All peoples whose work has not been organized "for profit" have actually sung at their work, and in many cases the content of such songs is religious or metaphysical: but in "civilized," that is to say mechanized, societies these songs survive only as drawing-room accomplishments, with piano accompaniments. What urbanism has done to the traditional cultures and their manufacturers (using this word in its literal and proper sense) was done first to its own workers. "We have robbed them of the possibility of producing masterpieces. We have erased from their souls the need of quality; and made them want nothing but quantity and speed."
>
> Can you imagine a factory "hand" striking for the right to consider the "good of the work to be done" and not for higher wages and a bigger share of his master's profits . . . ? If not, it means that the industrial, economically determined and therefore irresponsible human being has been denatured. . . . I say that any civilization stands self-condemned in which men have to earn their living in any other way than by doing what they would rather be doing than anything else in the world.

The man who works, happily, and without distaste for his life, finds emancipation through thinking of what he does as part of the great processes of life that need to be fulfilled. Even the gods, who are free, work in order to set the example of right action to men. By thus becoming

a part of Nature, embodying her laws—working, that is, without self-interest—the individual is freed from the bonds of action. Having realized the self as a unit, he now is able to realize the self of the larger whole, because he acts in the light of the whole, or of the Self of all.

So, here are aligned, in Macdonald and Coomaraswamy, a modern and an ancient criticism of modern society. Between them there is much to reconcile, many questions to be asked. But somewhere, behind the mistakes of the West and the corruptions and distortions of the East there must be the outline of the ideal—that ideal which, through an inner reference, creates revolutionists in times of social and religious oppression, and in years of confusion produces men with an instinct for order, measure, and constructive responsibility.

We shall probably never again have castes and formal divisions among men—the West has made an end to such tidy arrangements—but who will say that we are not to regain a sense of vocation for the work that lies before us? The monstrous falsity of "mass culture" must be done away with; men must want to sing at their work again, to feel that what they are doing is part of a beneficent scheme of nature. If this means walking away from some of the advantages and "efficiencies" of modern industrialism, why, then, it is time to take the first steps. There are other efficiencies, surely, less devastating to both human organism and human soul.

REVIEW

HISTORICAL NOVEL—TOP QUALITY

ELLIOTT ARNOLD'S *The Time of the Gringo* will do nothing to lessen the reputation of the author of *Blood Brother* (better known in movie form as *Broken Arrow).* Arnold's writing has life and movement, his plot avoids the usual oversimplifications of character which make many works of fiction seem identical peas in the pod, and, above all, in the interests of instructive entertainment, Mr. Arnold gives form to action and philosophy at the same time.

Especially for those interested in the colorful history of the Southwest will *The Time of the Gringo* be a welcome find. The Western States are by no means purely Anglo-Saxon enterprises, and much of the atmosphere of Spain and Mexico survives to this day in popular culture, mellowing and toning down clipped speech and clipped living. Arnold's story is the story of transition in New Mexico, which, until the end of the book, remains a country of its own. Formally incorporated into the Republic of Mexico since separation from Spanish rule, this land was remote enough to pursue its own destiny with scant interference from Mexico City. New Mexico was, in fact, existing in almost medieval isolation, as untouched by the sweeping changes taking place in the United States as by the slower modernization of Mexico proper. The government was appallingly corrupt, but in the grand manner, personified by Governor Manuel Armijo. In and out of power three times, loved and hated in turn for his amazing complexities of personality, Armijo symbolized the end of an era, and thus, in the story, fittingly plays a central role. This man, occasionally an astute statesman, but who often in his own interests acted like a gangster, and most of the time was a bit of both, also becomes a subject for the psychological study of Homo sapiens in general. With him we scheme and plot, tremble and exult, despise and exalt ourselves—and even come near to the meaning of honor. But not near enough, for Armijo was mostly a villain. It was only because he was also capable and resourceful, as well as a somewhat representative man, that history allowed him, after being deposed through U.S. annexation, to live on in comparative ease and plenty.

The other part of the story concerns one of his earliest followers, a young *rico* whose love story crosses paths with Armijo's desires, and who finally betrays his government to the United States to save his people from despotism. This is a luminous theme in the novel—the difference between a government and a people and one is encouraged to believe that treason against governments is never more than a traditional evil. The real evil, as the real good, has to do with the benefit of the common people alone. Esquipulas Caballero has to grow beyond the traditions of his land to become enough of a man to become a "traitor," and the way is at first obscure. Centuries of training loom behind his own aristocratic birth, and, in the elegant city of Santa Fe, he has to free himself of this heritage—a heritage discussed by a percipient American who chose to make the New Mexican capital his home:

> "My God, colonel, what kind of people are these?"
>
> Magoffin took another swallow. His eyes became reflective. "Inside, no different from anybody else, captain. But I will agree with you. Outwardly they are very strange. I have lived with them for years and they still can puzzle me. I think perhaps they may be better understood by both of us—and by the others who are coming here—if we all realize they are living an anachronism." He closed his eyes for a moment and his face showed his strain. "You must understand, captain, that except for the traders New Mexico has been cut off from the world for a long time. And in its way it's been rather lovely. To come here has always been like stepping back through time to the Middle Ages. It's one of the things I shall regret to see disappear."
>
> "I still don't understand those men."
>
> "I guess not, son. You see, Armijo and I understand each other so well, and we both know that the end of his time has come and with it a manner of life. I have played the part of gravedigger tonight and I weep a little inside for what I am burying. My roots

> have gone deep into this beautiful land." For a moment his face softened and his eyes became tender. He finished the whisky in the glass. Then he said musingly: "With the Mexicans what is done is not so important as the manner in which it is done. The style is everything. Anything may be done if it is done in the proper style. And the style is part of the honor, and the honor must be served before all else."

It is of course dangerous to isolate evaluations of national or cultural character, yet if we realize that while all men are much alike, their cultural backgrounds bring out entirely different qualities, we can understand why none of the Americans who knew and loved the old New Mexican world could help being nostalgic when the land became but another Progressive state in the Union. For one thing, the slow pace of living encouraged a certain grace of living and speaking, and the exchange of grace for American dexterity is not always the happiest trade.

The New Mexicans, as we see them through Arnold's eyes, had another memorable quality—they were adepts of irony without bitterness—and the peculiar sense of humor which Arnold brings to life in his characters is truly delightful. This is illustrated in a bit of dialogue between Esquipulas and a friend. Suffering self-imposed exile as a trapper in the Snake River country north of the border, Esquipulas has a price on his head at home, and has lost, apparently, his lovely wife, but his sense of humor never deserts him:

> The men huddled in their ponchos, enjoying the exquisite misery known only to Mexicans who have not for days looked upon a blue sky. The rain beat against their faces, the fur hats without brims which had served them so well in the winter now offering small protection against the driving water. Carlos made a cigarette and tried to light it. He sank his face into the recess of the poncho. The rain spilled in. When the flame finally was going, the cigarette had dissolved. He threw away the shreds, cursing. "I have discovered the secret at last," he said. "It is the beavers."
>
> "What is the beavers?" Caballero inquired
>
> "This rain."
>
> Caballero considered. "Are you saying that the rain is the beavers?" he asked at length.
>
> "No, por Cristo, I am saying that the rain *is* because of the beavers."
>
> "That is an interesting observation, Carlos. Would you do the favor of explaining what it means?"
>
> Carlos waved his arm. "It is because of all the dead beavers, the ones we have trapped and the ones that have been trapped by all the others."
>
> "Have I missed a sentence somewhere?" Caballero asked politely.
>
> "What is the function of a beaver?"
>
> Caballero scratched his soaking beard. "He assists in the making of small beavers?"
>
> "He makes dams."
>
> "That is true."
>
> "What is the function of a dam?"
>
> "The catechism gets easier. It holds back water."
>
> "Exactly!" Carlos shouted. "And since beavers are being killed, they are prevented from doing what they were intended to do."
>
> Caballero nodded gravely. "You have struck upon a great truth, Carlos. We must not fail to warn Señor Bent that if he does not desist he will cover the earth with a flood." We shall all drown," Carlos said lugubriously.
>
> "Perhaps we shall learn to build dams."
>
> "I do not believe so. We are not so clever as the beavers."
>
> They rode in silence.

So, as the publisher's press agents say, you and you and you will enjoy *The Time of the Gringo.* If we repeat that many things can also be *learned* from it, the book will no longer, perhaps, seem to promise the enjoyment it chiefly affords, so we had better let the matter rest.

COMMENTARY
THE DISTANT HEART

IT is often suggested in these pages that the problems of the modern world are complex, and that writing about them, therefore, necessitates a certain degree of complexity, making it a bit hard on the reader, and, incidentally, on the writer, too.

In all areas of modern life, however, we are called upon for complex thinking. Physicists tell us that in order to understand the new physical theories, we must gain the same sort of familiarity with mathematical abstractions that we once enjoyed in relation to the "world machine" of Galileo and Newton. Learning to think in abstractions, or general principles, seems to be the order of the day. It seems certain, for example, that modern political criticism will be ineffectual unless it deals with the psychological factors which control social and political attitudes, instead of the gross effects which are everywhere apparent.

This is one of the reasons why we think so highly of Dwight Macdonald as a social critic. He seems to have a faculty for lucid illustration of abstract analysis, as found, for instance, in a passage quoted in this week's leading article. Speaking of the "integration" of men in a mass society about some *distant* center of attraction, he defines this society as—

> a large quantity of people unable to express themselves as human beings because they are related to one another neither as individuals nor as members of communities—indeed they are not related *to each other* at all but only to something distant, non-human. . . .

Here, quite plainly, is the formula for inhumanity in human relationships—for liquidations, purges, witchhunts, and general contempt for individual man. The evil, in this case, is not so much in the particular acts of brutality, but in the principle on which they are based—a psychological attitude. The people are directed to love and respect, not man, but the inhuman power on which human welfare is supposed to depend—the Party, the State, or the Leader—it does not matter much what the symbol of salvation may be.

There is very little difference, actually, between the State as the distant, integrating power and the angry and jealous God of the Puritans who are recalled in this week's Frontiers. The cruelty practiced by the theocrats of colonial days in America is psychologically identical with the cruelty of fascists and communists. Both the believers in a personal God and the believers in the external authority of the totalitarian State worship a distant, non-human Power whose will must be served, regardless of the consequences to individual man. The gentle Jesus did not restrain the Puritans from angry persecution of unbelievers, any more than the ideal of "brotherhood" tempers the vengeance of totalitarians against those who deviate from "correct opinions." The parallel is striking, and instructive in the fact that the decisive forces in modern life are psychological in character and metaphysical in origin.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
NOTES IN PASSING

SINCE we are still close to the "peace on earth, good will to men" season, this is perhaps a good time for a reminder that Pacifists still exist, and that there is a new crop of young ones about. We always try to make the best possible statement of the case for pacifism, since we believe that everyone ought to be familiar with this case, even if he does not become a pacifist himself. For the pacifists—at least the all-out, no-compromise fellows—oblige us to consider psychological and ethical possibilities we otherwise would not notice. And if they make people ask questions of themselves, or, better yet, induce them to doubt their own righteousness more than the righteousness of their neighbors, the pacifists are well worth having around.

Gleanings from a miscellaneous pile of clippings suggest the present bow in the direction of the world's "Conscientious Objectors." To get into the subject, we have the following gem of "military reasoning" from the editorial page of the Los Angeles *Examiner*, in which the writer inadvertently suggests that the more intelligent one becomes, the less able he is to be a "good" soldier:

> Draft Director Hershey doesn't think much of the Defense Department idea to raise intellectual requirements of recruits to compensate for possible reduction of manpower.
>
> He believes everybody should be trained, regardless of mental aptitude.
>
> We think Mr. Hershey has something there.
>
> In the history of arms, the most successful, dependable and skillful soldiers have by no means been always the boys with a penchant for book learning or high I.Q.'s.
>
> The vast majority, from marshals to privates, have been instead the single-aim, tough-minded, tenacious lads gifted with leadership but not noticeably handy when it came to phrasing a sentence or solving a quadratic equation.
>
> Mental qualities above average usually lead a man to accept military service as something that can't be avoided but must be endured.
>
> These are not soldierly attitudes.
>
> For comforting company in the face of the enemy, there's none better than a country boy strange to schooling but very wise indeed in the art of taking cover and having that mysterious something no high I.Q. or amount of training can guarantee—the "feel of battle."

If you find yourself a little bothered by this, simply consider that draft objectors may have gotten a stronger dose of the same reaction. The draft objector, if he is rational, wants neither to acquire nor to encourage "soldierly attitudes" at the expense of independent thought. If "mental qualities above average usually lead a man to accept military service as something that must be endured," the same logic would seem to imply that mental qualities *far enough* above average might lead one to conclude that military service *cannot* be endured. (This is not, really, any sort of case at all for Pacifism, but it seems a suitable comment on the *Examiner* editorial.)

What do C.O.'s do with their time besides object to war? Well, there are all kinds of conscientious objectors. Some of them are probably not a bit less stupid or obnoxious than the rest of us, but we have one newspaper clipping which is amusing and also informative of how one "C.O." has been conducting himself. A local Los Angeles *Times* story recites some details in the case history of a youth indicted by a federal grand jury on draft-evasion charges. It seems that when this 21-year-old son of a Methodist minister received his draft card, "he mailed it back to the draft board because he could not conscientiously carry it"—clearly because he wished to record his determined opposition to the system of military conscription. Later, according to the *Times*, he worked in Mexico with one of the relief agencies of the American Friends Service Committee, but returned to the United States when his job was

done—in his own words, "knowing full well that I would be arrested." He was. The amusing part of the story begins here:

> When the agents called at his home to take him in custody, young Carey told them, "I won't resist—neither will I cooperate." The agents had to carry him to their car.
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> When they arrived at the Federal Building they arranged for a wheelchair and transported him to the court of U.S. Commissioner Howard V. Calverley, where he was held on $2500 bond pending trial.

Gandhi practiced similar tactics and finally earned the respect of the entire world, not just because he won the battle for India's independence, but also because it gradually became clear that he was trying to illustrate a principle even closer to his heart than securing the freedom of India. The technique of "passive resistance" was a technique of education, however ludicrous we find the mental picture of a young C.O. being carted into a federal courthouse in a wheelchair.

Gandhi's performance was not altogether a one-man show, as a report, "World Seminar on Non-Violence," in The War Resisters' League *Bulletin* attests:

> "The Contribution of Gandhian Outlook and Techniques to the Solution of Tensions Between Nations" was the subject of a Seminar organized by the Indian National Commission for UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and held in New Delhi in January 1953.
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> This Seminar was of great significance not only for the subject with which it dealt, but also because of the eminence of the thinkers from all over the world who came to take part in its work. Those from outside India included Mrs. Alva Myrdal, representing the Director-General of UNESCO, Lord Boyd-Orr (Great Britain), Professor Massignon (France), Pastor Niemoller (Germany), Dr. Ralph Bunche (U.S.A.), Professor Tucci (Italy), Dr. M. Hussain Heikal (a former President of the Egyptian Senate), Dr. M. Daftary (Iran), Professor Y. Tsurumi (Japan), and Mme. C. Meireles (Brazil). Maulana Azad, Indian Minister of Education, presided over the Seminar, which was addressed at its opening session by Mr. Nehru, India's Prime Minister, and at its close by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of India. Other prominent Indians who took part were Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and Acharya Kripalani, for several years Gandhi's private secretary.

We have two other quotations relating to conscientious objection, the first from the comment of a senior psychiatrist during the course of a draft board examination of a conscientious objector. An assistant to the psychiatrist, never having encountered a pacifist before, expressed grave doubt as to the sanity of the prospective draftee. The senior psychiatrist then observed that "it is not uncharacteristic of our times that a man's refusal to take part in humanity's most irrational activity should be enough to label him abnormal. Even to a psychiatrist." The other quotation is a poem first printed in the New York *Tribune* twenty-three years ago by Franklin P. Adams, in his column, "The Conning Tower":

THE POLTROON

His country cowered under the mailed fist
Of the great soldier-nation of his day
But did he volunteer? Not he; instead
He talked in ill-timed, ill-judged platitudes,
Urging a most unpatriotic peace.
People that had been once slapped in the face
Ought to stand still, he thought, till slapped again.
And when they were insulted they should watch
For chances to return it with a favor!
I will say for him, milksop as he was
He proved consistent, for he let himself
Be knocked about the streets and spit upon
And never had the manhood to hit back
Of course he had no sense at all of honor,
Either his country's honor or his own
Contemptible poltroon! His name was Jesus.

FRONTIERS

Toward a New Tradition

WHILE one may admire the determination of the settlers of New England—the Puritans and the Pilgrim Fathers—to pursue religious worship according to their consciences, at great personal hazard and suffering, the reading about these early days in the Boston Bay and the Plymouth colonies is always an oppressive experience, for these "good people" were appallingly certain, not only of their righteousness, but of the rightness of their views as well. This certainty, however, gained them a simplicity of decision which is denied to Americans of today, and which we may regard with a somewhat wistful envy. In the field of education, for example, the pious New Englanders were never tortured by doubts concerning "what to teach." The child must learn to read, for only by reading could he become acquainted with Holy Scripture, and in Scripture he would find the key to salvation for his immortal soul. The first colleges in North America were founded on a similar motive. The colleges were primarily—at first, almost exclusively—for the training of ministers. Since these colonial communities were virtual "theocracies," their institutions were all of a distinctly religious character.

But the religion of these people, let us note, was not a matter of individual search or self-discovery. True religion, they held, was known, and known to them. It had only to be communicated to the young. Accordingly, education was no more than a tool of piety, a channel through which the truth must needs be poured.

When you come to think about it, this is a strange state of mind for a colony of "pioneers." How little these men knew, really, of the meaning of education! It is no wonder that the bursting energy of the new culture of this continent struck out in other directions, leaving religious questions to those who were attracted by this ingrown psychology of the "Last Word." And if the development of the United States was unmeasured and intemperate, the fault should be laid, if anywhere, at the door of such "spiritual advisers" whose complacency and self-righteousness were as wide as their beliefs were narrow.

American education, however, is today haunted by reviving ghosts of Puritanical certainty. There are those who insist that the role of the teacher is to transmit to children as finalities the opinions and prejudices of their parents. A "watch and ward" sort of supervision over textbooks and curricula is attempted by people who are as sure as the Puritans were of their salvation that they know what youngsters ought to think about the society in which they are growing up. To such people, the teacher is no more than a "clerk" who has been installed to read to the young the minutes of the last meeting. The meeting house may be on fire, the fire suppression equipment may be obsolete, but the clerk must never deviate from the text as written by those who fear not only change, but even a calm discussion of the possible benefits which might result.

It is true that education has undergone a number of minor revolts and one or two actual revolutions. It is also true that, in the United States, there is no controlling pattern of tradition to give stability to educational theory and procedure. Some twenty-five or so years ago, an advance guard of educators, largely influenced by John Dewey, proposed that the transformation of society should be anticipated by teachers, who ought, it was argued, to prepare the young, not to live in the world of their parents, but to make a much better world for themselves. There was a certain amount of blowing of trumpets and beating of drums connected with this high enterprise.

Now, looking back at this ambitious movement, some would-be guardians of the *status quo* are horrified to discover that the blue-prints for a new world studied by these teachers were not blue at all, but distinctly pink! Accordingly, we are told that Education, having lost touch with

the workaday world, having taken on airs and adopted "foreign" notions, has harbored heretics and blasphemers of the American Way.

These teachers are accused of teaching the young things that their parents regard as improper. They, the teachers, are said to have no roots in "real" Americanism. There may be something to this charge. But, first of all, let us recognize that "real" Americanism is extremely hard to pin down. Does it consist of the high purposes of the Founders of the American Republic? If so, then we shall find that Americanism, for these undeniably great men, meant clear reasoning about a wide variety of social and political alternatives. There is more light than heat in even the allegedly "conservative" *Federalist Papers.* Or is Americanism defined by what Americans, by and large, have *done* during the past fifty or a hundred years or so? Should we, in short, instruct the young in the open-minded *method* of great Americans in reaching decisions, or should we maintain that the mistakes that may have been made by Americans in ordering their society should not be critically examined?

It might be said that, unlike any other country or culture in the world, the United States has no real tradition as to the "truth," but only a tradition concerning the way in which truth ought to be sought. And this, we should admit, places an excessively heavy burden upon educators. They have to be not only teachers, but philosophers as well—lovers of truth, for who but *lovers* of truth will be willing to prefer deliberate uncertainty to some more easily arrived-at half-way-house to which they can attach their banners?

Now and then we enjoy the rare privilege of having among us as a leader in education a man who is both educator and philosopher. His "truths," we find, are never metaphysical or socio-political finalities, but relate to the operations of the mind in the quest for knowledge and wisdom. The difficulty of such men, however, is in communicating so intangible a tradition to school boards and trustees. They propose that education is needed because we *don't* know the final answers, whereas, ever since Pilgrim and Puritan times, the popular cry has been for education which repeats what we *do* know, or think we know.

Now and then, in these pages, we speak of the Eternal Verities. Increasingly, we become persuaded that the only Eternal Verities worth fighting for are those which declare for a temper of mind, a spirit of impartial inquiry. The most ancient truth, then, and the most honorable one, is the truth which tells us that tomorrow we may see more clearly.

Is it possible that an educational tradition may be erected upon first principles of this sort? Can we inform the courage and the determination of the Pilgrims with the open-minded questing of Socrates? It may be difficult, it may be practically impossible, but no other educational tradition gives promise of affording the sort of "stability" we need.