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BOOKS FOR OUR TIME: VIII

OF the original list of seven books selected for discussion in this series, all have received some manner of treatment save for J. B. Rhine's *The Reach of the Mind.* (One additional volume, Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station,* was included, making a total of eight.) It is now necessary to explain why a volume dealing with the subject presented by Dr. Rhine has been included in the series. The reasons, we are afraid, sound complex, but here they are.

"Books for Our Time" discussions have focussed on perspectives which tend to deepen our respect for the nature of man and broaden the horizons of his future. There are many ways of encouraging the view that our present humanity has only begun the struggle to bring its subtlest potentialities to birth. One area of effort may be called "philosophy"; another is the realm of psychology, from which it now begins to be clear that if man can thoroughly understand his internal weaknesses, he can correct them.

From both philosophy and psychology, whenever pursued by men who have no vested interest in a closed system of ideas, we learn that the chief foe to man's happiness, as well as to his ethical progress, is his narrowing propensity for provincialism in thought. In our immaturity, we seek to make the universe conform to our petty notions of reality, perhaps preferring a small and niggardly view which we can easily describe and verbally defend to a larger view—because the larger view would require us to admit that none of our comfortable prejudices and preconceptions is justifiable. The larger view, for instance, may require a man to give up his religion, if his religion be of the usual sort, for this "larger view" is compatible only with the search for truth, and not with claims that one possesses it. Similarly, the man of larger view may feel compelled to give up his politics, for politics is much like conventional religion; the man of settled political affiliation has given up the search for truth, goodness, and beauty in human affairs as soon as he supposes he has found The system which defines social relations properly for all time.

Thus man, while not the ape a few nihilists have claimed him to be, bears a strong resemblance to the proverbial ostrich. His head is in the sand most of the time, he sees very little of what the world might teach him. He refuses to admit the existence of truths beyond his present gaze, rejects angrily any suggestion of better ways to live than the one to which he has become accustomed, or even that a larger world exists. Just as the neurotic personality is prevented by his own tensions from knowing anything of love, so is the fanatical religionist or political partisan prevented from learning what others can teach him.

How do we escape from an ostrich-like existence, how rid ourselves, for a beginning, of a few of our choicest prejudices? If the answer can be expressed at all in general terms, it is most simply put by saying that we have to make a habit of venturing beyond accustomed mental horizons. Not what is familiar, but what is strange, should command our interest. For this broad reason, then, we propose the study of evidence which purports to prove "extrasensory-perception." For, however trivial the data amassed by believers in mental telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, etc., their implications are of considerably more than trivial importance. If "ESP" is a fact of life, the mind is proved, even by laboratory standards, to have a "reach" far beyond its present use.

Returning for a moment to the first book on our list, Macneile Dixon's *Human Situation,* we find a paragraph on this subject which provides a

much better introduction for Dr. Rhine than anything we could put together:

> Nature is not natural, but supernatural, delighting in marvels, in confounding us with the astounding and impossible. If you have looked with some attention into the field of human faculty, into its still unexplored resources into the testimony for the marvels that the submerged portion of our being reveals, you will not, I think, return with less amazement, but if possible in a state of still greater stupefaction. What mean these premonitions and apparitions, levitations and hauntings, these tales of far sight in time and in space, of pre-cognition and retro-cognition, of stigmata and faith cures, of crystal vision and alternating personalities, of dowsing and divining rods, of telepathy and hyperaesthesia, of hypnosis and suggestion—of which, it is said, there are some seven hundred explanatory theories—of monitions and intuitions like those of Socrates and Joan of Arc? They meet you everywhere, in every age, in every literature, in every quarter of the globe. Is it all crazy abracadabra, and is the whole world a madhouse? Do not let us talk of the credible and the incredible until we have looked further into these among many other things; from which, if well understood, a new vision of truth might arise.
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> For the nature of mind, our own nature, the nature of every thing, of all reality, is here in the balance. We are deceived, indeed, if we fancy that our five senses exhaust the universe, or our present standpoint its many landscapes. In the soul's unvisited and sleeping parts it holds both faculties and powers not mentioned in the books of the historians, the manuals of the mathematicians or the physiologists. "The sensitive soul," as Hegel wrote, "oversteps the conditions of time and space; it beholds things remote, things long past and things to come." That we stand in other relations to nature than in our open and familiar intercourse with her through eye and ear, relations of which we are wholly unconscious, is not debatable, it is certain. We are not to assume that what we do not know will never be known.
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> The study to which I refer has nothing to do with spiritualism or with religion. It is simply an enquiry into such occurrences as should not on our present theory of knowledge take place at all. And if a tenth, a hundredth part of what competent observers in this field report be true, the castle of our thought may need rebuilding from its foundations. Simple people talk glibly of telepathy, for example; yet if extra-sensory perception alone were established the whole scheme of modern thought crumbles into ruin. It would be nothing short of a scientific revolution. Science and philosophy would be under the necessity, for them a sad necessity, to seek new concepts for the interpretation of reality, to redraw their antiquated map of the human mind.

So far, it may be said, we have succeeded only in building a case for consideration of the possibility that a supra-physical world exists, and since MANAS reveals a special liking for philosophic considerations, why not choose a book like William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience,* some of C. E. M. Joad's writings on physical phenomena, or content ourselves with ruminating over Macneile Dixon's perspectives? Our second, or distinguishing, reason for reviewing Rhine is that Rhine is doing something quite different from rehearsing and evaluating age-old testimony as to the reality of supra-physical phenomena. He is *creating* data, conducting laboratory experiments in an effort to take certain aspects of ESP out of the realm of conjecture. In an "age of science," he is proceeding in a scientific manner, without a special theory to prove and without visible prejudices or preconceptions. He studies observable data under controlled conditions, and the scope of his work increases each year. In one sense, then, Rhine is engaged in bridging the hitherto impassible chasm between science and metaphysics, and this fact should be a matter of profound significance to scientists and metaphysicians alike. The importance of such work was once expressed by an eminent nuclear physicist, Pascual Jordan, who, conceding the validity of Rhine's data, wrote that "the physical world is only a bordering zone of the world as a whole, just as our conscious mind is only a bordering surface of the deep ocean of our psychic life." If there had been no Duke University experiments in ESP, no William McDougall to inspire them, or J. B. Rhine to carry them out, Pascual Jordan would probably never have written this sentence. The work of Rhine may similarly affect many of us, if we give it a fair hearing.

There are now a considerable number who *write about* the implications of ESP experiments and who speculate interestingly in correlating theories of ESP with philosophy and religion, but Rhine is the leading *experimenter*. To read of his studies in detail, then, gives a definite sense of reality to the whole subject, and makes it possible to read other, more theoretical works with greater competence. Further, it seems likely that, as the impact of Rhine's experiments is increasingly felt, the number of such speculative works will continue to multiply, which should heighten the controversy concerning ESP. Meanwhile, those inclined to enter the controversy in any of its aspects will do well to arm themselves with a background of laboratory data. Only with such knowledge can one hope to distinguish fairly between claims regarding ESP which are incontrovertible and those still theoretical and debatable. So Rhine, in a complicated field, affords the hope of bringing order out of chaos, and if the details of his experiments seem to some uninteresting, he may nevertheless be supplying basic elements of a new scientific language.

In *Reach of the Mind* we move step by step through the history of ESP investigation, beginning with the encouragement given early experimenters by America's "first psychologist," William James. The majority of scientists and psychologists scoffed even at that easiest-to-prove ESP capacity, telepathy, while, at the same time, some leading psychiatrists, including Freud and Jung, challenged majority opinion and sponsored telepathic research. McDougall, influenced by James, began ESP experiments at Harvard, later bringing his data and his zeal to Duke, where Rhine subsequently joined him.

The first published results of the Harvard and Duke ESP laboratories were badly received by prejudiced contemporaries, but since public interest had been aroused, and reputable defenders of the research were appearing, the picture gradually began to change. Thousands of controlled experiments, with student subjects in universities all over the world, brought confirmation of the Duke results. Thus the average person was shown to have telepathic capacities. According to the "laws" of chance and probability, none of the data obtained could be explained in any other way, even though querulous skeptics in plenty still shouted that the tests must have been rigged. From research in telepathy, Rhine and a group of colleagues in several countries proceeded to study clairvoyant and precognitive abilities. Again the results were impressively positive. Finally came study of "psychokinesis," at a time when "psychosomatic medicine," similarly concerned with the direct effect of mind and emotions upon matter, began to get under way.

A long but intriguing story, this, each chapter of which gives credence to Rhine's prediction that "big changes, fundamental ones, are due in psychology." Physicist Raynor Johnson's *The Imprisoned Splendour*, published this year, collates the results of ESP researches carried on under the auspices of numerous institutions, proposing that ESP is now a subject demanding intercultural and international collaboration.

Summarizing the history of ESP research, Dr. Johnson indicates that the tide of opinion has finally turned enough to allow "respectable scientists and psychologists" to interest themselves in the field:

> The position today is that ESP, in which we include telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition, must be regarded as a fact established by as great a weight of observation and experiment as that which supports the basic facts in other sciences. While individual scientists, philosophers and psychologists have recognized this, it still remains true that the majority are either apathetic or mildly hostile to the subject. The hostility probably arises from the recognition that if these things are true they have to face data which cannot fit into the well-established system of law which governs the material world. In other words, materialist philosophies are undermined. The apathy, in view of the importance of the issues involved, is difficult to account for on logical grounds. Tyrrell, who has written frequently on this prevalent attitude, has expressed his conviction of its

psychological origin. He follows Bergson's line of thought in supposing that the brain keeps the mind tied down very closely to the world of action, and that whenever knowledge or beliefs arise which would draw interest away from the world of action, this factor operates to discount them.

Dr. Rhine makes no attempt to prove himself a metaphysician, yet feels led to the view (also found among a few psychoanalysts) that the "soul theory" of man's nature is tenable. In a closing chapter of *The Reach of the Mind*, he speaks to this point, explaining his own definition of "soul" and the use of the term in his book:

> The basic problem of the nature of man was worded at the start in terms of the familiar soul theory because that helped to identify it. It was a minimal concept of the soul, equivalent to the view of the mind as a non-physical system. But this meaning is probably the only universal meaning the word has. Individual theologians, of course, have many added meanings for the term, but we do not claim to deal here with such usages. The question is merely, "Is there anything extraphysical or spiritual in human personality?"
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> The experimental answer is yes. There now is evidence that such an extraphysical factor exists in man. The soul hypothesis as defined has been established, but only as defined. Not the supernatural character of the soul, not its divine origin, its transmigration, its immortality—indeed nothing has been dealt with so far but its elemental reality. The intricate speculative embellishments that have fringed the soul theory throughout its long religious history have not been involved here, and could not properly have been in any case until it had first been made clear that there was *something* essentially transphysical in the human individual.
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> What has been found might be called a psychological soul. Some such characterization will serve for the time being to distinguish it from a theological concept of the soul.
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> The first step was essential, however modest. It has established a point that millennia of argumentation have failed to make. This beginning represents the turning of the tide of three centuries of domination of our science of human nature by physicalistic theory. It will eventually have the most revolutionary significance, though the full effect may be slow in being realized. The turning of tides is never sudden.
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> There will be many who will welcome this shift of center in psychology. They will be mainly those who are actually working with people and needing desperately to understand them better. Psychology will now come into more effective rapport with the practical needs of present-day culture. It will begin to understand men as they live their lives, not as they resemble familiar physical systems.
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> What is more, men will understand psychology and use it. Every broad field of human affairs—religion, education, mental hygiene, economics, government, ethics—must eventually respond to the radical change that seems inevitable in psychology.

Rhine's lifework strongly indicates that many submerged capacities of human consciousness reveal themselves through mental telepathy, clairvoyance, and other psychic phenomena. Like his predecessor, McDougall, and together with a number of other researchers, Dr. Rhine does not now find anything strange in the view that the mind has powers and functions transcending ordinary means of communication; he wonders, instead, why more telepathy is not possible more of the time with everyone. If "the human heart has not yet fully uttered itself," it may also be true that man's mental powers are still in a comparatively early and much confused state of development. The groping attempts of various religious philosophies to define the meaning of a "higher" or "inner" existence may have simply presaged a future wherein additional levels of knowledge will be added to the mass of information we presently possess in regard to physical phenomena. In support of this idea, Rhine points to both statistical and laboratory evidence suggesting that man is still "emerging" into maturity.

In one way or another, all the "Books for Our Time" convey this outlook, however divergent their points of departure. For whether concerned with the realm of theoretical science, philosophy and religion, as was Dixon, with the characteristic cultural delusions exposed by Edmond Taylor's *Richer by Asia*, with the psychological immaturities of both religion and culture which Erich Fromm and Karen Horney discuss, or with

the powerful social and political trends assessed in Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station*, we are always talking about a humanity whose chief failing is its own ignorance—an ignorance which *may* ultimately be dispelled by new orientations of intellectual energy.

How much, ultimately, can we expect from man?—that is the question. If he is capable of skill in telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and psychokinetic action, he may, also, in time, become a sage; and this is an encouraging thought for those who are convinced that man must become a sage or move in that direction, before he can seriously set about improving the world he lives in. There is a vast difference between considering our present estate as the only one possible and considering that we have hardly yet begun to unfold potentialities for a higher life. If man has latent capacities for clairvoyance, then, it is natural to think he may also finally discover an ability to lead a life more informed by ethical subtleties.

The "ultimate questions," then, can be approached from many directions, and one's awareness of the case for extrasensory perception has a definite bearing upon discussion of most of them. If you attempt to "re-think" religion, for instance, as Harry Emerson Fosdick once invited his readers to do, the study of ESP may provide decisive perspectives. Since religious faith, for example, is impossible to justify from the standpoint of physicalist logic, it may be that some other order of perception will inspire such faith, and that transcendental religion has, in fact, at least a partial foundation in definable facts of human experience. The catch-all word, "intuition," begins to acquire a number of possible specific meanings, and "inspiration" and "vision," also. Why not, if "precognition" and "clairvoyance" are perceptive realities? Further, according to David Lindsay Watson *(Scientists are Human)*, the majority of original discoveries in the field of science are not the calculable results of mathematical reasoning alone. The discoverer, after plodding through the spadework of experiment and logic, is suddenly inspired to see something he has never seen before. The final creation *is* a creation, a vision coming to birth fully formed as to basic pattern. Physicists and inventors alike, moreover, have often duplicated each other's discoveries at the same time, even though separated by thousands of miles, indicating that what Rhine calls "thought transference" may have been an uninvited guest at many a scientific party.

Perhaps the mind, bound much of the time to the ordinary tools of language, occasionally provides for itself other means of communication. If, as Erich Fromm maintains in *The Forgotten Language*, "symbolic language is a language in its own right, in fact the only universal language the human race ever developed," we are encouraged to view all religious traditions as, originally, attempts to express *genuine* psychological and ethical perceptions by means of symbolism. A conviction that ESP is a constant fact of nature simply emphasizes the word "genuine." Every student of comparative religion will grant that religious beliefs have roots in symbolism, but it makes a great deal of difference whether this origin is regarded as pure fantasy or as intuitively perceived truth—or even if it be recognized that each religious tradition inevitably contains a mixture of fact and fantasy. On such a view, we are encouraged to be both sympathetic to and critical of religious tradition at one and the same time, and less likely to be partisan in our approach to religious subjects. Perhaps religious language, like the language of the child, is destined gradually to pass out of the stage of vague and confusing sounds, the more man's "intuitive" faculties grow into mature expression. Rhine's experiments will not, it is true, help us one bit in coming to psychological maturity, but they open so many new vistas to our gaze that the quest for maturity may come to appear infinitely fascinating as well as necessary.

In respect to psychology, the whole problem of "adjustment" is thrown into different perspective by the implicit suggestion that man's inner life may eventually amount to a great deal more than his external life—that it is therefore much more needful for him to learn how to live with himself than how to successfully blend with his social environment. Several psychiatrists already suggest evaluation, as is clear from frequent quotations in these pages from Erich Fromm, Trigant Burrow and Charles B. Thompson. But the strengthening of a case for even what Rhine calls a "minimal concept of soul" adds considerably to the weight of argument. And at this point, too, we can see that the conviction that man has a life of soul, as well as a social life, reinforces belief that the enlightened society must regard the conscience—or intuitive voice—of each individual as inviolable. It may be significant that Edward Bellamy, whose *Looking Backward* dreamed of social utopia, also wrote a story concerning a race of men in whom the power of telepathy had been perfected. No longer being able to conceal hostile thoughts from one another, living at all times without duplicity, they accepted happily the common burden and the common treasure of their humanity. A society which punishes thought-deviation, clearly encourages concealment of honest opinion, and since one form of concealment easily leads to many other forms of deceit, and since deceit is a form of hostility, the struggle for full freedom of expression is of great importance. Further, the importance placed upon freedom of thought is often derived from the conviction that man does have, and must be encouraged to enlarge, an independent "life of soul."

Turning to the field of medicine, it is not hard to see what a profound effect conviction of the reality of ESP might have in stimulating further analysis of the psychosomatic aspects of disease. If the mind can transcend space and time, if it can influence external objects through psychokinesis, how extensively it must affect the organs of the body! We may some day discover the causes of all manner of mysterious diseases in specific emotional and mental states, and perhaps ideas not only rule the world, as Plato maintained, but also govern the condition of the physical organism.

As for education, we again find ourselves invited to stress certain perspectives in the light of ESP evidence. For the acquisition of technical knowledge would seem increasingly subsidiary in importance, if the existence of a variety of undeveloped "inner powers" be accepted. The intuition, like the body and the intellect, perhaps, needs food; such food can best be imagined as supplied by the "liberal arts," by the abstractions of philosophy, by the metaphor and figurative expression of great literature. Also in order for revision would be the view that the most effective teacher is the teacher who leaves his pupils with the conviction that they have obtained a "good grasp" of their subject. John Dewey, a great but unassuming teacher, seldom made his students feel that they had entirely "grasped" anything, but he did communicate to them, in largely undefinable ways, his passion for seeking truth.

In conclusion, we should like to consider again a common element in the books of this series, notwithstanding their widely differing subject matter. All these books ask of man more than is "ordinarily" expected of him. Human potentiality, as these authors have viewed it, is considerably greater than human potentiality as defined by either orthodox religion, science, politics or philosophy. Rhine's experiments, and the vast amount of similar research to which he calls attention, provide tangible evidence for the age-old belief that, so wondrous are man's still unexplored capacities, "the Gods may someday stoop to admit these creatures of promise to their divine society."

Letter from
NORWAY

LILLEHAMMER.—The Norwegian Labour Party *(Arbeiderpartiet)* received a majority of seats in the new parliament (Storting) which was elected Oct. 12. Owing to an election reform—proposed and backed by the former labour government itself—majority was reduced from 84 to 77, but this party still gained the voters' unmistakable approval on its internal and foreign policy for the next four years. During the election campaign the Labour Party declared for more reforms of a socialistic kind, but party candidates were at the same time careful not to advocate a thoroughly socialistic society.

Many expected that some of the opposition parties would succeed in gaining the number of parliamentary seats necessary to compel the Labour Party either to resign from government or to work in coalition with one or more of its opponents. But the election itself left no doubt as to who were going to govern this country. Only the Christian People's Party showed a notable gain in seats. This party did not exist before the war, and its progress since is quite puzzling to observers of political life in Norway.

While most of the other parties claimed rather vaguely that they would base their policy on "traditional Christian values," this party is God-believing to the degree that many of the voters see their salvation assured only by membership in the Christian People's Party. On economics, social welfare and other important issues, however, you will find nothing in its program that cannot be found in any other. Many of the new voters for the Christian People's Party left the old liberal party *(Venstre)*, which suffered catastrophic defeat in this election.

Once the leading progressive party of the country, Venstre has today lost its influence on Norwegian politics. The members were divided on the only really important issue in this election, the Price Law, which embodied the rather radical proposals put forward by the Labour government on state-control of private enterprise.

Political development in recent years has improved the standard of living for the great mass of people to the extent that the ordinary voter is satisfied with his lot and sees no reason for a change. The opposition parties did not succeed in convincing the mass of voters that their programs offered any improvement. And criticism of the welfare state based on philosophical arguments has no chance of being shared by people who still remember the frequent want of pre-war days.

A considerable number of voters, however, feel themselves in a dilemma. A great many people oppose the foreign policy which all the leading parties support. All the parties except the communists agree on the Atlantic Pact and foreign policy was not debated in the election campaign. Since 1949, there has been growing dissatisfaction with the military, political and ideological consequences of this "Atlantic" family life. Most of the dissenters are non-communists. They are, the great majority of them, directly opposed to that system. One suspects that a lot of these people abstained from voting altogether, since no party but the Communist questioned the foreign policy of the government. Their dilemma is the more oppressive, since most of the dissenters are people who share labour views on social reforms and control.

NORWEGIAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
DAYS OF WRATH

ROLAND BAINTON, writing in the *Christian Century* for Oct. 28, shows considerable tenderness for the memory of John Calvin, while discussing the martyrdom of Michael Servetus, sixteenth-century defender of common sense in religion. The occasion for Mr. Bainton's article is the four hundredth anniversary of the burning of Servetus at the stake in Geneva, on October 27, 1553, for the capital crimes of opposing infant baptism—how, he asked, could an infant as yet without mind accept baptism in the Christian faith?—and of rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity.

Calvin was an active campaigner against this unhappy heretic, who once made the mistake of supposing that Calvin might enjoy a theological and metaphysical correspondence with him. Actually, it was letters written by Servetus years before, to Calvin, which the latter turned over to the court, that sealed the fate of the prisoner, who was now confronted with his heresies as found in private correspondence. Of this betrayal, Gibbon wrote:

> I am more deeply scandalized at the single execution of Servetus, than at the hecatombs which have blazed at the auto-de-fés of Spain and Portugal. The zeal of Calvin seems to have been envenomed by personal malice and perhaps envy. He accused his adversary before their common enemy, the judges of Vienne [this has reference to an earlier trial], and betrayed, for his destruction, the trust of a private correspondence. The deed of cruelty was not varnished by the pretense of danger to the Church or State. In his passage through Geneva, Servetus was a harmless stranger who neither preached nor made proselytes. A Catholic inquisitor yields the same obedience which he requires, but Calvin violated the golden rule of doing as he would be done by; a rule which is to be found in a moral treatise of Isocrates, four hundred years before publication of the Gospel.

Bainton comes well armed to a study of Servetus. He is the translator into English of *Concerning Heretics*, a work attributed to the contemporary and defender of Servetus, Sebastian Castellio (Columbia University Press, 1935). This book is a striking expression of devotion to freedom and justice, and should thrill twentieth-century readers by the quality of its appeal. Those who admire Stefan Zweig's *The Right to Heresy*, which tells the same story in popular form, owe it to themselves to read this "source material."

But Servetus speaks for himself better than any defender, so far as questions concerning his opinions are concerned. Here is a passage, taken from Dean Plumptre's *History of Pantheism*, in which the author extracts and summarizes from letters by Servetus to Calvin:

> "God is only known through manifestation or communication in one shape or another. . . . Containing the Essence of the Universe in Himself, God is everywhere, and in everything, and in such wise that He shows Himself to us as fire, as a flower, as a stone." Existence, in a word, of every kind is in and of God, and in itself is always good; it is act or direction that at any time is bad. But evil, as well as good, he thinks, is also comprised in the Essence of God. This is illustrated, he thinks, by the Hebrew word *ibei;* and he illustrates his position by the text, "I form light, and create darkness."

Elsewhere, Servetus chides Calvin for his preoccupation with human sinfulness:

> All that men do, you say is done in sin, and is mixed with dregs that stink before God, and merit nothing but eternal death. But therein you blaspheme. Stripping us of all possible goodness, you do violence to the teaching of Christ and his Apostles, who ascribe perfection or the power of being perfect to us: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt, v. 48). You scout this celestial perfection, because you have never tested perfection of the kind yourself. In the works of the saintly, I say, there is nothing of the corruption you feign. The works of the Spirit shine before God and before men, and in themselves are good and proper. Thou reprobate and blasphemer, who calumniatest the works of the Spirit.

We hold no brief for burnings at the stake, or persecutions of any sort, but if the self-righteous Genevans had to burn someone, why didn't they burn Calvin, whose monstrous reasoning led him to impose on nearly four centuries such insane doctrines as eternal damnation and predestination, instead of a gentle, reasonable, and unsuspecting man like Servetus, whose only offense was that he

could not comprehend the dogmas of his time, nor anticipate the fury of outraged orthodox believers? Some little encouragement may be found in the fact that, early in this century, as Bainton relates, "the Calvinists of France and Switzerland erected in Geneva an expiatory monument to Servetus. This year Calvin's congregation is subsidizing a study entitled 'Michael Servetus, Heretic and Martyr'."

Mr. Bainton's remarks on how Servetus became interested in criticism of the doctrine of the Trinity are to the Spaniard's credit (Servetus was born in Spain). He lived in a period when the inquisitors were having difficulty in persuading the Jews and Moors who lived in Spain to remain faithful to the Catholic creed. They would sometimes accept baptism, then relapse to their former beliefs—a dereliction which caused them to be burned to death. Servetus wondered why they found Christianity so difficult to believe, and he concluded that the doctrine of the Trinity was the stumbling block. From this he developed the idea that while the Father is eternal, the Son, since Christ participates in earthly events, is non-eternal—is, in short, a temporal aspect or manifestation of a non-temporal reality. This view enraged all Christendom against him, both Catholic and Protestant authorities hunting him out for punishment. Yet it is plain that the motives of Servetus were humanitarian and that his method was rational. Bainton also supplies a note on his other accomplishments: "Here [in France] for some twenty years he supported himself by editing, lecturing and the practice of medicine. In the course of his anatomical studies he became the discoverer of the pulmonary circulation of the blood."

Plumptre relates that Servetus entered the leading university of Spain, at Saragossa, when only twelve or fourteen years of age, where he distinguished himself in the classics, philosophy, and such science as then existed. "Religious doubts," says Plumptre, "most probably assailed him early, for before he had left college we find that he has renounced all intention of the Church as a means of livelihood." But Servetus never became irreligious. Rather his interest was toward the purification of religion. His first book, published in 1531, was concerned with the errors he found in the doctrine of the Trinity. Passages from his book are distinctly reminiscent of *The Bhagavad-Gita*—indeed, of the thought of every philosophical searcher after the spirit of deity. He wrote:

> The Spirit of God is the universal agent; it is in the air we breathe, and is the very breath of life, it moves the heavenly bodies, sends out the winds from their quarters, takes up and stores the water in the clouds, and pours it out as rain to fertilize the earth. God is distinct from the universe of things, and when we speak of the Word, the Son, and the Holy Spirit we but speak of the presence and power of God projected into creation, animating and actuating all that therein is, man more especially than aught else. The Holy Spirit is the motion of God in the soul of man; out of man there cannot properly be said to be any Holy Spirit.

This was the "heretic" whom the pious Genevan Calvinists burned over a slow flame using green faggots to make the torture last—lest he mar the purity of Protestant Christian belief in the sixteenth century.

But lest we, too, incline to self-righteousness, as we think of Calvin's part in this crime, there may be point in borrowing some concluding words from Mr. Bainton's article:

> . . . we may inquire whether we are so tolerant and so kindly if we believe that our material or national security is imperiled. Were the judge who condemned and the public which condoned the death of the Rosenbergs any less cruel than John Calvin? He believed that man's eternal salvation was at stake. We assume that the safety of our cities may be jeopardized. "Yes, but he was wrong," comes the answer. Granted, but considering that he believed himself to be right, was he any more cruel than we? And is our tolerance therefore anything deeper than a shift in opinion as to what really endangers us? If we conceive ourselves to be imperiled, we are no more disposed to mercy than was he.

COMMENTARY
ON HUMAN NATURE

ON the question of good and evil, Ashley Montagu's review of Alfred Korzybski's *The Manhood of Humanity* in the September *Scientific Monthly* (see Frontiers) shows that modern psychological analysis has practically abandoned the traditional religious evaluation of human nature. Montagu himself says:

> Babies are born cooperative. What they want is to be cooperated with and to cooperate. When their needs for cooperation, for love, are frustrated, they may react with aggressive behavior. Aggressive behavior is originally a means of seeking and if possible compelling love. . . . Children are not born selfish, they are made selfish by being forced to attend to their own needs as best they can by the failure of their discipliners to attend properly to their need for cooperation. The natural selfishness of the child is, indeed, a monstrous notion. It is an unfortunate projection of themselves upon the child of those who hold it.

Mr. Montagu seems so eager to persuade us that the evil that men do is almost entirely the result of their childhood psychological environment that we begin to suspect him of wanting to indoctrinate his readers with Rousseauist piety: Man, originally pure, good, noble, free, is corrupted by the social institutions which distort his natural benevolence. But since this doctrine is vastly superior to the "conceived-in-iniquity-and-born-in-sin" theory of human nature, we can easily sympathize with the view proposed.

We need to ask, however, whether all this enthusiasm for the goodness of man will get us into trouble. If environment and nurture are so all-powerful, what about the individuals who triumph over the worst sort of material and psychological circumstances? And what about children who, for reasons unknown, do not respond to the right sort of parental cooperation and guidance?

Let us start out, if we will, with a general assumption about the goodness of man, but let us carefully avoid any and every *closed system* concerning human nature. Human nature may be partly a "plastic material," initially shaped for good or ill by the adults who are responsible; but human nature has another component which may upset the wisest calculations or the darkest predictions. There is, in short, a freedom potentially possible for every human being, regardless of nature, nurture, or whatever. It may not always nor often be exercised, but we need, more than anything else in the world, to assume that it is really there. This way we may avoid yet another set of system-builders who will attempt to tell us how to "condition" our offspring from here to perfection—a process which would be not only a contradiction in human terms, but would also require the wildest sort of presumption in the conditioners.

FRONTIER

The Being "With the Longest Memory"

THE general reader, when he hears the name of the late Alfred Korzybski (he died in 1950) probably thinks of General Semantics and Korzybski's famous book, *Science and Sanity*, published in 1933. This is natural, since Korzybski entered the zone of public interest by means of his teachings of semantic discipline, and became relatively well-known through popularizers such as Stuart Chase and one or two others. What the general reader is not likely to realize, unless he has happened to read an article by Ashley Montagu in the *Scientific Monthly* for September, is that Korzybski's lifework had strong ethical motivation, of record as long ago as 1921.

In that year, Korzybski published a book, *The Manhood of Humanity*, which soon went through four printings. The theme and contents of this book will interest especially those who have felt repelled by the heavily "intellectual" mood of so much of what is said about semantics, and by the tendency of some enthusiasts of semantics, like Chase, to reduce the solution of life's problems to a formula declaring which "referents" are really real, and which are not. Mr. Montagu enters upon a discussion of his discovery of *The Manhood of Humanity* with great enthusiasm—a feeling which most MANAS readers will probably share after they have read some of the quotations provided from Korzybski's 1951 volume (republished in 1951 by the Institute of General Semantics, Lakeville, Conn.).

Korzybski began, Montagu points out, as a reformer of the conventional scientific indifference toward ethical issues. Here are words which make it evident that Korzybski was twenty or thirty years ahead of his times in the criticism of scientific neglect of morality:

> The scientists, all of them, have their duties, no doubt, but they do not fully use their education if they do not broaden their responsibility toward all mankind instead of closing themselves up in a narrow specialization where they find their pleasure. Neither engineers nor other scientific men have any right to prefer their own personal peace to the happiness of mankind; their place and their duty are in the front lines of struggling humanity, not in the unperturbed ranks of those who keep themselves aloof from life. If they are indifferent, or discouraged because they feel or think that they know the situation is hopeless, it may be proved that undue pessimism is as dangerous a "religion" as any other blind creed.

The leading proposition of this work is that all human progress depends upon an understanding of the true nature of man. According to Korzybski, this nature is best expressed by what he terms the "time-binding" capacity of human beings. In brief:

> . . . I mean [he writes] the capacity to summarize, digest and appropriate the labors and experiences of the past; I mean the capacity to use the fruits of past labors and experiences as intellectual or spiritual capital for the developments in the present; I mean the capacity to employ as instruments of increasing power the accumulated achievements of the all-precious lives of the past generations spent in trial and error, trial and success; I mean the capacity of human beings to conduct their lives in the ever increasing light of inherited wisdom; I mean the capacity in virtue of which man is at once the heritor of the by-gone ages and the trustee of posterity. And because humanity is just this magnificent natural agency by which the past lives in the present and the present for the future, I define HUMANITY, in the universal tongue of mathematics and mechanics, to be the TIME-BINDING CLASS OF LIFE.

Montagu finds this passage especially notable since, as an anthropologist familiar with scientific literature on "culture," he is able to duplicate the meaning of Korzybski's definition of man with several definitions of "culture" by modern anthropologists. He finds somewhat exciting the fact that Korzybski in effect evolved the modern anthropological notion of culture practically a generation before it clearly emerged in the literature of this field.

Since, however, men have been thinking deeply about the nature of the human being for long before the advent of modern anthropology, literature is filled with brilliant insights offering approximately the same conclusion. Ortega y

Gasset, for example, is one who embodied the same or a very similar idea in *Toward a Philosophy of History,* published in 1941. We can all recall the humility of the medieval doctor who declared, thinking of the writings of those who had preceded him, "We stand upon the shoulders of giants." Ortega turns the same principle into a criticism of nihilistic revolutions. Defending the method of "historic reason," he says:

> The latter [historic reason] shows us the futility of all general revolutions, of all attempts—such as that of the Confusionists of '89—to bring about a sudden change of society and begin history anew. It opposes to the method of revolution the only method worthy of the long experience that lies behind the European of today. Revolutions, so incontinent in their hypocritically generous haste to proclaim the rights of man, have always violated, trampled on, and broken man's most fundamental right, so fundamental that it may stand as the definition of his being: the right to continuity. The only radical difference between human history and "natural history" is that the former can never begin again. Koehler and others have shown that the chimpanzee and the orangutan are distinguished from man not by what is known strictly speaking as intelligence, but because they have far less memory. Every morning the poor beasts have to face almost total oblivion of what they have lived through the day before, and their intellect has to work with a minimum fund of experience. Similarly, the tiger of today is identical with that of six thousand years ago, each one having to begin as if none had ever existed before him. But man, thanks to his power of memory, accumulates his past; he possesses it and can make use of it. Man is never the first man but begins his life on a certain level of accumulated past. That is his single treasure, his mark and privilege. And the important part of this treasure is not what seems to us correct and worth preserving, but the memory of mistakes, allowing us not to repeat the same ones forever. Man's real treasure is the treasure of his mistakes, piled up stone by stone through thousands of years. It is because of this that Nietzsche defined man as the being "with the longest memory." Breaking the continuity with the past, wanting to begin again, is a lowering of man and a plagiarism of the orangutan. It was a Frenchman, Dupont-White, who around 1860 had the courage to exclaim: "Continuity is one of the rights of man; it is a homage of everything that distinguishes him from the beast."

Here is extraordinary unanimity concerning what is important about human beings, expressed in terms of memory. Through memory, man time-binds, as Korzybski puts it; through memory, man creates culture, the anthropologists tell us; through memory, man is enabled, as Ortega says, to learn from his mistakes. It is not clear why none of these writers expands his discussion to include the power of the imagination, which is, it seems to us, the positive pole of the power of mind, of which memory is only the negative or passive aspect. But perhaps imagination, by means of which men may take advantage of and put to work what they learn through memory, is taken for granted. This seems to be the case with Korzybski, when he discusses the human potentialities of idealism:

> Human nature, this time-binding power, not only has the peculiar capacity for perpetual progress, but it has, over and above all animal propensities, certain qualities constituting it a distinctive dimension or type of life. Not only our whole collective life proves a love for higher ideals, but even our dead *give* us the rich heritage, material or spiritual, of all their toils. There is nothing mystical about it; to call SUCH a class a *naturally* selfish class is not only nonsensical but monstrous.

Korzybski's broad hope emerges in the following passage from *The Manhood of Humanity:*

> In humanity's manhood, patriotism—the love of country—will not perish—far from it—it will grow to embrace the world, for your country and mine will be the world. Your "state" and mine will be the Human State—a Cooperative Commonwealth of Man—a democracy in fact and not merely in name. It will be a natural organic embodiment of the civilizing energies—characteristic of the human class of life. Its larger affairs will be guided by the science and art of Human Engineering—not by ignorant and grafting "politicians"—but by scientific men, by honest men who *know.*
>
> Is it a *dream?* It is a dream and science will make it a reality.

We are not sure what Korzybski means by the expression, "Human Engineering," which has a slightly technocratic ring, but if his meaning, here,

is consistent with what he has said elsewhere, we are perhaps safe in assuming that it does not imply government by an élite of semantically trained autocrats. The weakness of this approach—and the weakness, also, of Mr. Montagu's elaboration of Korzybski's findings—seems to lie in an oversimplification of the problem of evil, since Montagu is plainly convinced that parents are almost entirely responsible for what is wrong with their children. That they are often *largely* responsible is probably beyond doubt, yet absolute judgments here are as dangerous as they are anywhere else. But we can sympathize entirely with the anthropologist's attack on the dogma of the "innate naughtiness" of children, and appreciate his pleasure in finding that Korzybski, so long ago as 1921, was campaigning for a scientific definition of man which recognizes and affirms as natural to him the high ethical qualities which have for so long been ignored.