

PROBLEMS, UNLIMITED

THE day of tidy solutions to limited problems is about over. The neatly departmentalized world in which we lived a generation or so ago—in which economic problems were discussed by economists, "moral" problems by clergymen, and political problems and "issues" by the male members of the family—has dissolved into a disorderly unity in which anxiety and lack of a sense of control are the common principles.

No longer can we refer our problems to some specialized agency for solution. Another YMCA or a boys' club in the local slum area is no answer to Hoover's statistics on juvenile crime. A drive to increase church membership is not the way to reform employees of the Treasury Department (some fifty-six officials of the Bureau of Internal Revenue either resigned or were fired as a result of the expose of corruption). Even if the other Hoover was in a position to send a food ship to Korea—where the devastation of war has been greater than in any other war, anywhere, anytime—there would still be problems beyond even imagined solution. As a recent *Nation* report puts it:

The loss of life has been appalling. United Nations experts estimate that one out every nine men, women, and children in North Korea has been killed. The maimed are seen everywhere. High on the U.N.'s list of requisites for Korean reconstruction is a factory for artificial limbs. In South Korea roughly 5,000,000 people have been displaced and 600,000 homes destroyed. Official reports describe 100,000 children as "unaccompanied." Two-thirds of them are wandering on the highways facing Siberian winds and winter snow.

Americans, meanwhile, will read any article, attend any lecture, which has the word "security" in the title. The fact that "business," due to endless government spending on war and preparation for war, is excellent, with employment figures high, has little effect on the worry of the

people of the United States about their "security." It is the instability of their psychological surroundings rather than the high income of the moment which makes the big impression.

Writing on "What's wrong with American Morals?" in the February *United Nations World*, Saul K. Padover notes that in the land of the free and the home of the brave, no less than 22,000 people kill themselves each year, while another 100,000 attempt suicide but are unsuccessful. A survey made in the South early last year reported: "More than 40 per cent of the thousands of Southern youths passing through induction centers are failing to meet service standards, including 38.7 per cent who cannot qualify mentally." There are weeks, says Mr. Padover, when "Army Induction centers reject as many as 62 per cent of Selective Service Registrants for 'mental deficiency'."

These figures might be said to represent the "floor" of our cultural problems. The decline in morality is no respecter of persons or of social status. A recent survey at Cornell revealed that 47 per cent of the undergraduates admit cheating in examinations; the figure at the University of California in Los Angeles stood at 49 per cent. The corruption in college athletics is too well known to need comment.

Mr. Padover believes that the war played a large part in the lowering of standards, and as a good Jeffersonian he thinks that urbanization and industrialization have contributed to the general disorder. He also speaks of "a noticeable decrease in church attendance and an increase in drinking." The major factor, however, he holds to be the worship of individual "success," regardless of how attained:

Americans may be said to live in a society where social values tend to be pulverized. The individual,

under such a system, has two main loyalties: one is to himself and the other to his immediate group. The needs and the welfare of the *whole* society are rarely taken into account except by a minority of civic-minded individuals or dedicated idealists. The whole tendency is to work for and protect special interests. This devotion to self-aggrandizement is to be found among avowed racketeers as among honest citizens. It is practiced by the gambling fraternity and by trade unions, by agricultural pressure groups and by school lobbies. It is, in brief, an integral part of the whole American system, a fundamental characteristic of American civilization.

In offering this basic diagnosis, Mr. Padover is careful to explain that in his opinion it would be a mistake to regard any of the surface symptoms of demoralization as revealing the core of the problem. The "symptoms" are neither new nor especially aggravated, as he shows from instances of political corruption in recent history, under other administrations. Rather, he says—

The roots of the present-day moral sickness lie deeper. They are bound up with the development of our society as a whole. To remedy the situation more is needed than special investigators purifying the souls of public officials. We must re-examine the entire set of moral values by which the individual lives day by day, whether he is a congressman, a civil servant, a teacher, a student, a businessman or any other private individual.

In this general dissolution of moral standards, then, we have another common denominator of the age, an influence which cuts across the special moralities of groups, exposing the naked motive of self-interest without any of its familiar justifications or disguises.

While it is the insistent presence of moral breakdown in practically all human relationships, whether interpersonal or social and national, which demands our attention, and which makes the "tidy solutions" of other days seem so trivial and insignificant, other factors in this broad trend are worth considering. The moral analysis, while necessary and *primary*, seems unable when left by itself to produce much more than feelings of impotence, self-accusation, and frustration. Actually, it is dismaying to realize that the form

which our moral judgments take has changed very little during the past thousand years or so. We are still condemning the "sinners," as our pious forefathers did, hundreds of years ago. As to understanding the relationship between the intellectual or mind factor and the moral factor in human behavior, we have not even caught up with the oversimplification of Socrates that "knowledge is virtue"—at any rate, we do not work at the Socratic theory very hard to find out how much truth there is in it. (An exception may be made, here, in behalf of several modern psychiatrists, who seem to be wrestling with this equation, although without stating it in Socratic terms.) Even the Marxist materialists, who so vociferously disavow the "Christian" or "religious" version of morality, have continued the tradition of bitter and unrelenting condemnation of others that has been characteristic of religious controversy throughout the entire history of Christendom. It is the dogmas, of course, whether of religion or of materialism, which stand in the way of *understanding* the roots of human weakness, and which keep hidden the sources of regenerative strength.

Mr. Padover's examination of the problem, while searching in diagnosis, reaches only to the dead-end of typical moral judgments, despite the fact that he calls for re-examination of our "entire set of moral values." This re-examination is indeed the necessary step, but his assumption that lagging church attendance is indicative of moral decline is itself a way of slamming the door on *unprejudiced* re-examination. Quite conceivably, a lagging church attendance is one of the prerequisites to impartial review of the moral values which exert such ineffectual influence on our lives. In any event, to claim that church attendance is a measure of moral values weights the scale of the analysis even before it begins.

For these reasons another approach to the factors of transition—an approach which, although not amoral, will not be moralistic—might help us to refresh our studies of civilization with a

current untainted by the guilt-obsessions which emasculate even so-called "objective" evaluation. It seems reasonable to suppose that the ominous disintegration of conventional morality is in part a reflex of some deeper psychic and cultural transition, and that the pains we experience need to be regarded more as "growing pains" than anything else.

Consider the numerous psychological boundaries which have blurred beyond recognition within the present generation. The intelligent and well-informed medical man of today, for example, knows that in many of the prevalent forms of ill-health and disease, emotional factors are far more important than merely physiological conditions. The doctor who practices medicine without attention to the mental state of his patients is applying a more or less obsolete theory of healing. The dietician who neglects the role of the soil and agricultural methods in the production of nutrients is like a doctor who prescribes drugs without troubling to assure himself that his pharmacist uses pure ingredients. Only the specialties which have sent out roots into other fields give evidence of surviving the far-reaching realignments of the times. It is the ethnologist concerned with human attitudes and their reflection in behavior who has things of importance to announce to his colleagues and the world. The economist who cannot think in international terms—indeed, in terms of international welfare—is likely to remain unread, save by an orthodox remnant in his field. The psychiatrist who neglects the study of symbolism, especially religious symbolism, may soon find himself unacquainted with recognized realities of universal subjective experience. The narrow Christian who is oblivious to the wide-ranging studies of his non-sectarian colleagues may be caught without a bridge to the world-fellowship of souls united in brotherhood and common aspiration, regardless of creeds. (The parochialism of the typical Christian minister is noted by a *Christian Century* reviewer who finds a finer appreciation of the spiritual life in a recent book on Vedanta than in much of conventional

Christianity. The reviewer quotes the complaint of a layman: "My minister can't tell me anything about the spiritual life. All he tells me about is politics—and I disagree with him on that.")

Everywhere, vigorous thinking is breaking out of the restraining molds of habit. The only solutions of promise are the untidy solutions—the solutions which cut through the divisive lines of orthodox thinking and are disturbing to sectarian complacency in all its forms.

Let us note, moreover, that many of the symptoms of moral decline cited by Mr. Padover exhibit contempt for the special moralities of institutions. The paid "amateur" athlete simply endorses the "get-ahead" slogan in preference to the threadbare "school spirit" theory. The men who cheat in examinations—about half, apparently, of most student bodies—probably feel that a certain amount of fraud is already present in the pretentious pomp of "higher education." How much of the current "immorality" or "dishonesty," then, should be defined as resulting from a realistic rejection of an ordered array of official hypocrisies?

It seems important to try to distinguish between the actual weakening of human character, and a growing suspicion of institutionally-defined morality. A really objective measure of trends in morality can hardly exist without making this distinction. The authoritarian's definition of immorality is often directly opposite to the libertarian's definition. How can we tell at what point the sin of rebellion becomes the courage of emancipation? Lying and cheating, of course, are hardly evidences of a freedom-loving spirit, but when they typify widespread human reactions to institutional morality, critical studies which avoid analysis of the institutions themselves are worse than confusing.

Disgust with contemporary institutions comes out in various ways. The young man with a first-hand knowledge of modern war—if he allows himself to adopt the implicit logic of the war he has been through—may find plenty of justification

for ignoring conventional "ethical" rules and restraints. He simply applies in person the theory of success taught by the example of his civilization. A more self-conscious rejection emerges in the French Existentialists' contempt for those who take their social and economic status too seriously. As Hannah Arendt put it, several years ago:

L'esprit sérieux, which is the original sin according to the new philosophy, may be equated with responsibility. The "serious" man is one who thinks of himself *as* president of his business, *as* a member of the Legion of Honor, *as* a member of the faculty, but also *as* father, *as* husband, or as any other half-natural, half-social function. For by doing so he agrees to the identification of himself with an arbitrary function which society has bestowed. *L'esprit sérieux* is the very negation of freedom, because it leads man to agree to and accept the necessary deformation which every human being must undergo when he is fitted into society. Since everyone knows well enough in his own heart that he is not identical with his function, *l'esprit sérieux* indicates also bad faith in the sense of pretending.

A fair conclusion from all this is that the world is nauseated by its own petty objectives and shallow "ideals." The symptoms of this nausea are everywhere observed and viewed with alarm, but they are not, in fact, a ponderous indictment of mankind except for the champions of sectarianism and the timid defenders of institutional security. The trouble with the rebellions and rejections of our time is that they are largely instinctive, striking out blindly in a nihilist mood. And this, of course, plays into the hands of the orthodox moralists, who prefer a rickety *status quo* to any questioning of their own authority.

Actually, we have put on trial everyone and everything but our Sacred Cows—our Religion and our Economic System. We have not dared to re-examine religion in the light of universal aspiration; nor our economic system in the light of the worthiness of productive labor. Restrained by the dominant taboos of the day, we assume that critics of religion *must* be atheists, and that decriers of the profit motive *must* be communists.

Yet here, perhaps, in the hallowed precincts of the American Way of Life, are the major sources of our moral decline.

Letter from South Africa

JOHANNESBURG.—*Cry the Beloved Country*, filmed by Zoltan Korda and Alan Paton on behalf of London Films, has recently held its premier in South Africa and will shortly be shown in other countries. It may therefore be as well, in relation to the film, to deal with the question so often asked about the novel of the same name: Is the film true to conditions in South Africa, and, in particular, to Johannesburg, where so much of the action takes place?

The story was written by a South African. It was the fruit of his sensitivity to the conditions with which he came in contact and with which he constantly had to deal in his capacity as principal of a large reformatory for African boys just outside Johannesburg. He knew the human tragedies of many Africans who, coming straight from primitive rural life to the slums of a great industrial and mining city, were unable to make the social adjustment which the transition required of them. From the depth of his understanding and sympathy the story of the book was born. There is nothing in the book that is not completely true, although the characters and events are fictitious. The same can be said of the film. But it is very necessary to remember that neither book nor film aim at being "documentary." The conditions portrayed in the film are limited to those portrayed in the book. These are true but they are not the whole truth. This can best be illustrated by commenting on a few points.

The urban areas shown in the film are all slum areas. But there also exist new townships with rows of neat houses each set in its own piece of ground. The incidence of crime in these townships is high, but not as high as in the slum areas. In the townships the major problem has shifted from housing space to food. Built by European labour (since the Trades Unions have done their utmost to keep the building trade limited to Europeans), the cost of rentals is too high for the low African wages of the breadwinner, so, if starvation is to be avoided, the woman must also go out to work. Since only a minority of the children are able to get into the few schools, the majority bring themselves up. With rogues and criminals at large, the anxiety of working parents about their children is constant and great.

The film is in English. Through the almost uniform use of English in the dialogue, one of the greatest causes of the general lack of sympathy and understanding

between black and white is obscured. To the Rand with its enormous opportunities for employment come Africans from many parts of the Union and from beyond its borders. Consequently there are at least six major dialects in use among the Bantu, no one of which will consistently serve the white man's need for communication. Few of them, therefore, speak any of these tongues. Most Africans, but by no means all, pick up a smattering of essential terms in English or Afrikaans, but freedom of converse is very rarely of a degree that could contribute very much to a genuine mutual understanding. In spite of this there is far more sympathy for the difficulties of the Africans and a greater will to help them than is shown by the film. State and voluntary social welfare work is now considerable in proportion to the white population. The trouble is that in proportion to the black population, this work is only a drop in the ocean of the need.

By the very nature of its story the film shows Africans almost entirely in sombre mood and does not portray that capacity for enjoyment which is one of their most striking characteristics. Most of the Bantu have a wonderful ability to live in the moment and they can often be seen dancing or be heard singing, even in uncongenial surroundings with little cause for rejoicing. It is this same factor which, incidentally, so often makes them seem feckless by European standards and also makes the raising of their standard of living difficult.

These points may help to show the need to regard even so good a story of South Africa as this film as limited in its portrayal, but at the same time all who see it should take to heart their own social responsibilities for those who are the victims of industrialisation, for the tragedy of *Cry the Beloved Country* is not only the tragedy of colour prejudice, although that is deeply woven into it; it is also the tragedy which can come from rapid industrial development in any part of the world.

SOUTH AFRICAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW "RACE" NOVELS

SINCE discussion here of the exceptional subtleties of "race" psychology explored by William Faulkner's *Intruder in the Dust* (MANAS, Dec. 28, 1949), other novels illuminating the issues of racial tension have been appearing in impressive numbers. While some of these books, perhaps, will not be accorded notable praise as "literature," each of the dozen or so we have in mind has surely brought new and constructive feelings or ideas to thousands of readers. This achievement may be attributed both to the constructive idealism of the authors and to an enforced awakening of the general public to the desperate need for elimination of racial prejudice.

It is a pleasing fact that these "racial" books are being circulated and widely read, since without exception they plead for understanding and wear away at irrational biases. No one, we expect, could charge any of these novels with either excusing or fomenting race prejudice, and, for this reason, even poorly written efforts in this category do good as timely expressions of positive idealism. It may be noted, by the way, that no matter how many other political and cultural prejudices may be retailed through the medium of low-priced, paper-covered reprints, any writing in such books on the race issue, of late, seems to have its value. Why is this so? Simply, we think, because the average mind has gained receptivity to the meaning of racial equality. Accordingly, when we rail against the inferior quality of popular literature in general, we should reserve a little breath for recognizing and appreciating this step of fundamental "progress."

Several novelists have been effectively applying tools of psychological analysis. A Book-of-the-Month period novel, *Double Muscadine*, by Frances Gaither, draws psychological correlations between some of the worst "Achilles heels" in our general cultural traditions and their dangerous, even vicious, manifestations in

Southern "race issues." Employing a delicate scalpel, Miss Gaither shows how a twisted religious moralism became a part of the inequality assumption. Many of those affected—otherwise fairly decent and intelligent persons—are caught up by and borne along with emotions which *had* to be nurtured for the justification of slavery.

Double Muscadine focuses on the trial of a slave girl indicted for murder. As the plot unfolds, we see that, whatever the girl has done—and this is left in doubt—the real responsibility for her attitudes and actions lies with the white gentry. Yet when *only the possibility* of her guilt in the death of a white child arises, even the most humane members of the white community feel themselves affronted and react with that righteous emotion which is the only recourse of unreason among the reasonable:

There's something about *this* trial in *this* place that's fundamentally different. There's a might and power released against this accused woman that's elemental in its force, like the wrath of God Himself. The whole white community is picked up and carried along by it. Listen to them talking there under the trees and on the tavern porch. Each one speaks as if he had been personally violated, outraged. And take that editorial read in court just now. Surely Moses himself, just back from the burning bush addressed his flock with no less fervor and conviction of divine guidance.

Of particular interest are almost identical points of view found presented in novels written by different authors at different times, since these are especially significant barometers of cultural opinion and feeling. For example, a passage from *The Other Room* (Worth Tuttle Hedden, 1947) is strikingly paralleled in *Reprisal* (Arthur Gordon, 1950). The writer of *Reprisal*, we see, is determined not to oversimplify, and raises a further question, but the attitude of impartial investigation is plain in both.

From *The Other Room*:

"Maybe you should set about ridding the South of its inferiority complex as I—"

"But the South hasn't an inferiority complex," I said complacently.

"Then why can't it take criticism? Why does it get its back up and 'wrow' every time an alien points to one of its shortcomings? Why is it always on the defensive, explaining, passing the buck? Why do the states huddle together in a bloc? If any one of them had an iota of self-confidence it would stand on its own feet." His tone fell an octave. "Even I, seeing it from the wrong side, know how much it's got to be proud of, but no matter how loud and emphatically it says damnyankee, it's felt inferior to the North ever since the North conquered it. That was understandable enough right after *The War* but fifty-five years is too long 'to bite off your nose to spite your face'." He leaned against the desk, folded his arms. "You know, sometimes I wonder if the psychological basis of White Supremacy isn't right there—in the South's feeling of inferiority toward the North and its human compulsion to feel superior to somebody?"

From *Reprisal*:

"That Crowe woman," Melady said at length. "Listening to her makes me think that what you've got down here is a white problem, not a Negro problem. Is her attitude typical?"

"She's typical of an uncomfortably large majority, I'm afraid."

"But they're so inconsistent. She hates the colored people, and yet I'm sure she wouldn't hesitate to entrust her child to one—assuming she had a child—to be fed and bathed and cared for by one of these untouchables."

"That's right." . .

"I think I know what it is," Melady said finally. "They've got a guilt complex about the Negroes. They knew slavery was morally wrong—and they'd probably have freed the slaves themselves in another decade or so. But they weren't allowed to salve their consciences that way. The Yankees came down and freed the slaves forcibly. That left these people with a guilt feeling they never could get rid of. The Negroes make 'em feel guilty, subconsciously, and they hate 'em for it."

The Judge smiled. "A pretty theory, my dear sir. But it doesn't fit the case. One of the things that should be obvious to a clear-eyed observer like yourself is that the lower you get in the social scale—I'm talking about the whites, now—the more violent

is the antipathy for the Negro. If your hypothesis were correct, Southerners of the upper classes, whose ancestors owned the slaves, would be the most prejudiced of all."

Melady decided to abandon a subject which offered such endless possibilities for confusion and entanglement. He said as much.

In the quotation from *The Other Room*, the chief speaker is a Negro. *Reprisal's* spokesman is a "white" Judge. Notably, no distinction is made, in any of the novels we have recently seen, between the logical or intellectual abilities of Negroes and Caucasians. The Uncle Tom, Stepin Fetchit, and Amos n' Andy versions of the Negro make no appearance at all.

Phyllis Bottome's *Under the Skin* (1950) develops sympathy and mature wisdom on the problems of a mixed marriage and the difficult dilemma of what to *do* about discrimination and segregation. *Under the Skin* is unusual as an interracial romance for the reason that boy gets girl, instead of boy gives up girl, or girl gives up boy. The latter theme is elsewhere frequently repeated, as for instance in *Pinky* (the motion picture starring Jeanne Crain), in *The Robbed Heart* by Clifton Cuthbert and in *The Other Room*. However, it is not justifiable to conclude that such "noble relinquishment" endings are necessarily due to the author's determination to make his book widely palatable; more often it seems that the writer is striving to be realistic, and that the chances of a successful courtship and marriage between members of the two races are very slim because of towering social and psychological obstacles.

In the first meeting between Phyllis Bottome's sensitive West Indian Negro doctor and the English school teacher he comes to love, the inward turmoil caused most Negroes by "white supremacy" is reflectively described. The doctor speaks:

As long as connections are illicit, miscegenation is countenanced; it is only in these rare cases when white men *marry* colored women that it becomes a stigma not to be handed down. People talk of a color

bar but what they mean of course is a psychological disgrace. Jews were less despised—in the countries where they are still despised—*before*—than *after*—six million of them were murdered for the sake of their inferiority. It was not, you see, so obvious that they *were* inferior until they were murdered. Such knowledge as this is a part of what you must learn on the Island in order to safeguard yourself against your unfortunate lack of color prejudice.

We dark people in countries owned and run by white ones drink in this agonizing sense of inferiority with our mother's milk. If we try to escape into the life of the mind we find you there before us. Our thoughts are colored by your thoughts, inhibited by your restrictions. It is true that some of us break out of our strait jackets and some of your people even help to release us, but there are a million dark people on this island—Africans, Indians, mixed races—and how many of these can stand upon their own feet and compete on equal terms with their rulers? Who possess the riches of the Island? Who controls them? Do you suppose the mere handful of us who get over our limitations enjoy our isolation? The link between us—if there should be such a link—would ruin your work and mine. You have something to give our Island children. I respect your work and we are all grateful for it. I realize that you are not prejudiced, that you recognize and can train our children's potentialities into fresh powers. I wish I didn't. It would be a great help to me if I could think you arrogant and ignorant, as the arrogant always are.

Perhaps these few quotations are sufficient to indicate the not inconsequential thinking of novelists on this subject. We can see, too, that it is thought with a living quality of growth, and this is far more important than any amount of commentary on statistical, sociological, or "welfare" studies, or any particular point of view we may ourselves happen to have.

COMMENTARY
THE GAMUT OF MORAL BEHAVIOR

SOME weeks ago (MANAS, Jan. 16), the story of the "two Tibetans," first told by George Orwell during the war, was printed in "Review." These two Asiatics served on practically every side there was in World War II. They continued to speak only Tibetan to each other, and understood nothing of what was happening to them. In the current *Partisan Review*, the writer of an unsigned article shows that a similar fate can overtake one who is entirely literate. He begins:

Who am I? I doubt whether I still know myself. I opposed the Hitler regime, and, because I could not prove my Aryan descent, and belonged to an outlawed anthroposophical society, I had the status of an opponent. When the Soviets captured me during the war, however, they immediately took me to a Moscow prison to make me confess that I was really a ranking SS officer. Three years later, in 1947, another prisoner was sent to the mines for two years because he refused to confess that I was an American agent. Yet in 1950 the Soviets, through the East Berlin Politburo, entrusted me with the position of professor at the University of Leipsic. Now, finally, after fleeing to West Berlin from a warrant for my arrest, I am suspected of being a Russian agent and have been denounced to the police as a criminal against humanity. Through State Security Police channels, the Soviets explained to my brother in East Berlin that I had been an "American agent" for a long time.

Who am I, then? . . .

The title of this article is "The Original Sin of the Intellect," and the "sin," the writer makes plain, is the attempt to reason impartially, to decide for oneself what is good and what is bad, and to expect the appeal to reason to be respected. The point of the quotation is that it places before us the "logical" result of the rule of fear and suspicion, when pressed to the limit of possibility. The crime, in this case, is not to think mistaken or "erroneous" thoughts—the crime is simply to think at all, for who can tell what a thinking man will do next?

We of this generation in America ought not to overlook our great good fortune in living in a

time when the entire gamut of moral behavior lies before us. We have had the example of a Gandhi—a man who was entirely free—and we have the example of a society which is completely unfree—unfree *by rule*. And then we have endless illustrations of all the degrees along the scale between the two extremes. (See *Frontiers*.) We can see where these tendencies lead, and what they look like in full development. Where and when, in past history, has any people been given such educational opportunity?

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

[The following 'guest contribution' may be noted for its close parallel to much that Isabel Cary Lundberg had to say in last week's "Exits and Entrances." Both contributions were received on the same day, but from two different seaboard, and from writers who are unacquainted, making, we think, an interesting coincidence. This recurrence of ideas perhaps constitutes some part of one of those "natural cycles" referred to by both writers.]

AN article in a recent *Woman's Home Companion* describes a nursery school teacher's efforts to meet the problem of "explaining" death to her children, for which an unavoidable occasion had been provided by the fatal illness of one of their number. The teacher had been asked by several of the parents to help out, because, it seems, they found themselves at a loss to meet the situation.

This teacher tried to present the incident in a straightforward manner, hoping to allay fear and make for ease in the minds of her pupils. She also desired to invite discussion of aspects of the question which disturbed them, but did not want to make too lasting a focus on the idea of "death." A natural opportunity came during the usual routine of taking attendance, when she asked for the names of those who were absent. The name of the one who had died was not mentioned by the children until she asked if there were anyone else missing. The teacher then explained that this one had gone away, never to return; she had died of a very rare disease. The teacher had prefaced her explanation by saying that "a very sad thing has happened to Rachel." Several of the children volunteered comments about brothers or sisters or grandmothers who they knew had died, too. One little boy said, "My brother died, but he will come back again." The teacher felt that, unreasonable as this idea might be, it clearly made the child happy to believe it, and there was no point in trying to talk him out of it.

The discussion was continued, off and on, well into the day's activities, giving the children

the opportunity to think over in their own time what had happened and what had been said about it.

A theosophical educator once wrote that "we should aim at creating *free* men and women, free intellectually, free morally, unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, unselfish." What a man thinks and feels about death, it is clear, has much to do with how "free" he is, and how unselfish he is, in every aspect of his life. The child *begins* "free" enough, in many respects, and is certainly free from fear of death. Whatever horror of death small children finally reflect is derived from the attitudes, expressed or implied, of those they trust and admire—attitudes of prime importance in the educational equation. Not that one should exhibit nothing but a cheerful detachment about a death which deeply disturbs, for "the benefit of the child," since this kind of behavior always tends to create a wide chasm between what one regards as true and what one is actually able to live. But it does require a distinction in the parent's mind between the nature of a fact and his own present emotional attitude toward it. Making this distinction *honestly* creates an atmosphere of calmness which is genuinely comprehensible to a child. If the *basis* suggested to children for their reassurance is inherently rational and does not have to be abandoned later, when their reasoning powers are more developed, one may have confidence that like disturbing events of the future may be similarly regarded.

The main concern, then, should be to arouse in the child a reflective attitude without the implication that death is an "awful thing," yet at the same time to refrain from offering, as a substitute for developing the child's own understanding, any specific dogma in final "explanation" of what happens after death. This is perhaps where the nursery school teacher of our discussion fell short of complete honesty with herself or with her pupils. For, although diligently avoiding reference to any religious *dogma*, she still preserved a degree of dogmatism by

characterizing the fact of death itself as "sad," and by assuming the irrationality of an opinion expressed by one of the group, in admitting that since it was satisfactory to the child, it should not then be disturbed.

One way of avoiding all such pitfalls and of moving toward a more philosophical position might be to point to processes in nature which duplicate that of death, yet which we do not think of as "sad," and with which the child is already familiar. Cycles, the rhythms of nature, are an integral part of all natural processes. "Death" is everywhere, a part of every cycle. We are not saddened by this, perhaps because we feel a sense of fulfillment and of continuity in the natural process. If we were able to feel a sense of continuity in respect to ourselves, death would not seem so appalling. What happens to our sense of individuality when the body ceases to live?

The "will to live" in nature never dies, but constantly returns after each transformation, whenever and wherever conditions are favorable. The cocoon-caterpillar cycle of the moth is a particularly vivid example. Even the humus on the forest floor may serve as further illustration. Man, another part of "Nature," is also continually undergoing a process of creation, preservation and destruction or regeneration. He usually calls this "growing." But the cycles of growth for him are much greater in scope than those of the orders of life below him. He actually accomplishes all learning in cycles.

Seldom does anyone learn anything important the first time a given set of circumstances crosses his path. We seem to be constantly brought back, by some hidden law of psychological attraction, to the same or similar situations, and only after we have *noticed* the repetition do we become thoughtful enough to commence learning. Then, too, man grows *through* all manner of changes, never being allowed to retain exactly the same feelings or opinions for very long, while yet remaining the same ego-center of consciousness. We outgrow many of the things important to us in

youth. The child, too, is constantly outgrowing, not only his clothes, but also his toys, his baby talk, his habits of mind and body, and his limited ideas. These obvious facts can be related to the "outgrowing" of the physical body which leads to "death" in old age, and to the insufficiency of some physical forms to sustain the needs of the being within, who requires a vehicle able to withstand considerable strain.

Such an explanation could, at least, be said to be derived from facts which any mind can admit. It would not interfere with the development of independent creative thinking in the child, yet it gives rise to a sense of the dignity of man as both an individual and an integral part of great Nature—a being of responsibility and innumerable possibilities, rather than a poor creature who, with all his great powers, must nevertheless submit to an inevitable final "doom."

FRONTIERS The Tide of Fear

THE problem of preserving their civil liberties is not a new one for the people of the United States, whose appreciation of the Bill of Rights is tested during every national crisis. The crisis of the present, however, gives every evidence of continuing for years, and things are happening now which might, in time, make any sort of defense of the principle of free expression of opinion a dangerous and fearful thing. This threat has already grown to a point where a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States speaks of "The Black Silence of Fear" that is becoming characteristic of the American scene. In an article of this title in the New York *Times Magazine* for Jan. 13, Associate Justice William O. Douglas writes of the blinding fear of communism which, he thinks, has produced in the United States an era of intolerance unique in American history:

Irresponsible talk by irresponsible people has fanned the flames of fear. Accusations have been loosely made. Character assassinations have become common. Suspicion has taken the place of good-will. Once we could debate with impunity along a wide range of inquiry. Once we could safely explore to the edges of a problem, challenge orthodoxy without qualms, and run the gamut of ideas in search of solutions to perplexing problems. Once we had confidence in each other. Now there is suspicion. Innocent acts become tell-tale marks of disloyalty. The coincidence that an idea parallels Soviet Russia's policy for a moment of time settles an aura of suspicion around a person.

Suspicion grows until only the orthodox idea is the safe one. Suspicion grows until only the person who loudly proclaims the orthodox view, or who, once having been a Communist, has been converted, is trustworthy. Competition for embracing the new orthodoxy increases. Those who are unorthodox are suspect. Everyone who voices opposition to the trend away from diplomacy and away from political tactics takes a chance. Some who are opposed are indeed "subversive." Therefore, the thundering edict commands that all who are opposed are "subversive." Fear is fanned to a fury. Good and honest men are

pilloried. Character is assassinated. Fear runs rampant.

Fear even strikes at lawyers and the bar. Those accused of illegal Communist activity—all presumed innocent, of course, until found guilty—have difficulty getting reputable lawyers to defend them. . . .

Justice Douglas writes in general terms, but it is important to fill in at least some of the details. Too often, the general indictment fails to affect us because we, personally, have not been victims. The question, however, is this: Shall we wait until all our distinguished citizens who think for themselves have been silenced or "contained"? Until the requirements of conformity become so exacting that they overtake the "average" man?

It is easy to illustrate what Justice Douglas is talking about. At the present time, fifteen communist leaders in the Los Angeles area are on trial for alleged violations of the Smith Act. Among the attorneys who have agreed to defend them in court are Alexander H. Schullman, a specialist in labor law, and A. L. Wirin, who is counsel for the local branch of the American Civil Liberties Union. Schullman agreed to participate in the case only after long reflection. In the *Nation* for Dec. 29, Hannah Bloom tells what happened:

In less time than it took Schullman to reach his decision, his law practice vanished. Both labor and non-labor clients informed him in careful phrases that his legal services would not be required so long as he associated with and defended Communists. . . . "Unfortunately," he told his former clients, "labor itself has forgotten its objections to the Smith act, as it has forgotten its objections to the Taft-Hartley act." "I disagree completely and unequivocally with the principles, aims, and pronouncements of the defendants," he said, "but as long as no clear and present danger exists and no overt act is established, free speech must be safeguarded."

Similar treatment has been accorded Wirin by labor organizations which he has represented. And he, too, has a long record of service in behalf of democratic principles. Hannah Bloom's comment is pertinent:

By penalizing such distinguished friends of labor as Alexander Schullman and A. L. Wirin for their disinterested and consistent defense of the Bill of Rights, sections of the labor movement in Los Angeles are neither winning friends nor placating their enemies. On the contrary, they are betraying the best interests of organized labor.

One would almost think that, for the organizations which are dispensing with the services of these attorneys, the principles invoked through the long years of the labor unions' struggle for the rights of labor have ceased to be important, now that labor has won its "place in the sun." Why is it so difficult to see the very great difference between defending a principle as it applies to communists and defending communism itself? Spokesmen for the American Way have always said that the failure to see this difference is precisely what is wrong with the communist system. Is the same thing wrong with our system, too?

Another example of the effects of the "fear" described by Justice Douglas appears in a letter to the *Nation* for Jan. 19. Burnham P. Beckwith, an economist who terminated eight years of service with the federal government in 1948, in order to write a book, tells what happened to him last year when, his book complete, he applied for work with the government in Washington:

. . . I was denied a position, not on the ground that there was a reasonable doubt as to my loyalty but, literally, on the ground that *there was a reasonable doubt as to whether there was a reasonable doubt as to my loyalty*. In other words, the loyalty probers of the agency where I found an opening (OPS) could not make up their minds in two months' time, and my prospective chief had to hire someone else because he could wait no longer.

Beckwith points out that he cannot be "cleared" through appeal for review by the Civil Service Commission for the reason that "no appeal decision on my loyalty has been reached." Meanwhile, the likelihood of his obtaining work with the government or a university has been seriously reduced by this incident.

He explains that he is a Fabian socialist by conviction, and an active Democrat in practice; that his published books give clear evidence that he is not a Communist. The only reason he can conceive for doubting his loyalty is that one of the charges against him was that he visited Russia in 1939 with a group of communist sympathizers. He did plan a tour of Russia in that year, and probably there were communist sympathizers among those who went; but Beckwith *did not go*. He never used the passport and visa which, presumably, were the evidence brought against him. He also made the mistake of learning to read Russian in 1935, in order to study contemporary Russian literature at first hand. He concludes his statement thus:

I am in a position to reveal the questioning of my loyalty and the damning facts upon which it may be based only because I have a small private income. The vast majority of those who have been similarly treated dare not reveal their misfortune because this would make future employment more uncertain. I speak, therefore, for thousands who are voiceless. For them more than for myself I protest against the vicious practice of questioning a man's loyalty and denying him federal employment without a hearing and on such grounds as former study of communism or Soviet Russia, the malicious testimony of discharged servants, and the intolerance of some religious and political opponents.

The plight of these "voiceless thousands" is tragic enough, but what of the plight of the millions who can remain complacent while these things go on? It is here that the battle for freedom is being lost, and neither guns in Korea nor loyalty tests at home can turn the tide.