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THE RETURN OF THE MORALIST

THE moralist never left us, of course, so he can hardly be accused of coming back. What is returning is the idea of individual morality, as distinguished from the collectivist systems which, a century or more ago, began to take its place. Anyone fifty or more years old has no difficulty in remembering the days when any sort of appeal to rules of private morality was generally regarded as medieval, impudent, and irrelevant. Those were the days when the Unitarian preachers were saying, "Never mind your theology, what are your views on *sociology?"* and when the organization men of the radical movement would argue, with some show of rhetoric, that to have no political views at all was worse than being an Old Guard Republican.

Popular conceptions of morality derive from the prevailing theory of good and evil. They change when it becomes manifest that they have become a cover for gross irresponsibility. For example, the Marxist slogan, "Religion is the opium of the people," although found in no anthologies, epitomizes the rejection by millions of the traditional rules of personal morality. John Dewey's books, such as *The Quest for Certainty* and *Human Nature and Conduct,* are brilliant exposés of the hypocrisy in conventional Christian morality. The Freudian revolution, whether by historical accident or by some inner consistency of human development, was a complementary influence, showing that certain of the "moral" conceptions of Western religion amounted to a production line of neuroses and psychoses. The Behaviorist system of psychology was another representative intellectual current of the time when doctrines of personal morality reached their lowest ebb of influence.

The total effect of these several attitudes was to remove the individual from the equations of moral theory. The feeling-tone of words like "individual" and "individuality" no longer had any importance. "Individual" meant simply "unit," in collectivist systems of morality. The unit had to function in proper relationship to the whole, and if it did not, it was simply dispensed with. In that system, you didn't use terms like "conformist" and "nonconformist." These words represented values alien to collectivist morality.

Deviant individuals had to be reckoned with, of course. But these were dealt with either as unfortunate remnants of the past, or as irrational elements which could not be assimilated in a true system of culture, and so were liquidated. The "remnant" theory had the virtue of being part of an impersonal concept of analysis, but when it could not be applied, simple billingsgate was substituted and the offenders were gotten rid of as soon as possible. Their greatest offense lay in violating in their very persons the dominant theory of morality.

This was the way things went in an openly communist context. In the West, where the collectivist morality has never been ideological, but only practical and functional, an elaborate facade of hypocrisies and rationalizations still masks the operations of collectivist values. The individual is still held to be "free," but a *good* individual is expected to behave in certain well-defined ways. He is supposed to maintain cheerful and cooperative relationships with the various institutions which are dedicated to his service as a *consumer.* Since the health of the national economy depends upon his increasing activity as a consumer, acts of conspicuous consumption are a means of sanctification. It is not openly asserted that the earnest acquisition and enthusiastic use of a large purchasing power are marks of spiritual attainment, or moral excellence, but this is the unspoken message of virtually all the propaganda of the system. The humanistic elements in the

political theory of the West are also subjected to this association, it being taken for granted that human freedom and what we call "free enterprise" are at least inseparable, if not indistinguishable. This being the case, the maintenance of the political and economic status quo acquires the atmosphere of a Holy Work. The individual who neglects this ideal is therefore not a true individual, but a sick anomaly who threatens the "individuality" of everyone else. He is to be shunned, left without a job, and convicted of ingratitude before the young of the nation.

Well, in what sense is the idea of individual morality returning? When there are men, all over the world, whose ideas and work are sufficiently impressive to make them stand as *symbols* of individuality, it is fair to say that a new theory of individual morality is on the way. Today, the deviationists of the Communist system of morality have the respect and attention of all thoughtful people. From his prison in Jugoslavia, Milovan Djilas (*The New Class*) has been heard around the world. Boris Pasternak may remain in enforced isolation in his native Russia, but his *Dr. Zhivago* will probably have sold close to a million copies in the United States alone by the time this article appears. Meanwhile, the intellectual foundation of political collectivism has been dissolving into a soft bog of uncertainties for some fifteen or twenty years. The mechanists in biology are no longer popular authorities. The Behaviorists in psychology no longer hold the center of the stage. The Freudians have been replaced by the neo-Freudians, whose views include an obvious hospitality to conceptions of individual responsibility. In philosophy, the Existentialists have made a new beginning as radical as the Cartesian return to *cogito, ergo sum*. In general, there is increasing rejection, everywhere, of the compulsions of the system—any compulsions of any system.

It can be no accident that the rejection of the morality of the system has nowhere become so coherent and explicit as it has in India. Of all the cultures of the world, that of India seems to have been least affected by the collectivist revolution in thought and in politics. The notion of individual responsibility, while doubtless greatly weakened in the sophisticated urban centers of population, has survived as a vital energy in India's half a million villages. Traditional Indian philosophy supplies a clear metaphysic of individual responsibility—something almost entirely lacking in the West—so that the articulation of the new spirit by men like Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, and Jayaprakash Narayan has not suffered from lack of a conceptual vocabulary. In fact, it is precisely this draft upon the religious language of the past in the expressions of the Indian leaders which slows down the sympathies of Westerners in whom the agnostic tradition is still the chief defense against oversimplifying programs and solutions. It is doubtless for this reason that the communist movement has been unable to sweep India, despite the efforts of an active communist party.

The great question for the West, not yet widely posed, yet obviously critical in any new view of personal morality, is, What *is* the individual? So far, the identification of the individual is in functional terms, with very little said about "essences." The individual is a being, we say, who needs freedom, but he also needs discipline; he is a being who ought to value the creative impulse, and who moves toward maturity in his judgments and relationships with others. His great objective is, or ought to be, the discovery of the meaning in his life; and having found it, he has then to work out its fulfillment.

Obviously, there is an element of vacuum in this sort of thinking. You might say that the attention of modern man has been returned to himself by a sense of deep failure from other preoccupations. He has not made a direct, classical approach to the question of his identity, but is embracing the Delphic maxim for pragmatic reasons. He is purposely vague concerning the self, which he declares to be all-important. This is a caution born of centuries of intellectual house-

cleaning and a hangover from the days, not so distant from the present, when philosophers were explaining that it is a mistake to assign substantial being to a "function."

The value in this caution lies in its safe avoidance of metaphysical entities around which dogmas and theologies can accumulate. Its weakness is in the inability of men to associate a sense of moral responsibility with a "function." If there is responsibility, there has to be something or somebody who is responsible. And who or what might that be? Manifestly, the new moralists are undertaking a perilous flirtation with metaphysics. They fear it, yet can hardly do without it.

The problems of metaphysics attending the deliberations of the new moralists are like stately ghosts out of the past. If, for example, there is what we call "moral responsibility"—if the individual is considerably more than a shuttlecock of external forces—then how is this responsibility to be measured or determined? What is its relation to a principle of justice? If the human individual is accountable for what he does, then what of the other side of the equation? What about the agony suffered by children, who have hardly had time to make themselves accountable for anything at all? Mother Nature, for all her majesty, seems a stone-cold parent much of the time.

The need to equate man's dreams of infinity with his all-too-mortal flesh seems to require some far-reaching assumptions. Otherwise, the dreams have no validity, save for the few individuals in whom imagination is the primary faculty. But no merely invented system of beliefs would work for this purpose. Whatever the reality may be beyond the veil of mortality, it is most certainly capable of a wide range of expressions. Even knowing that reality, the problem would be to give an account of it in terms that would be of service to men of very different sorts. This is not a matter of devising appropriate psychological placebos to shore up the confidence in themselves of those who feel beaten down. There may have been periods when such window-dressing of the dark holes in the cosmos could be tolerated, but in our time, men give evidence of being prepared to take their metaphysics straight, without aid of myth or allegory, and certainly without benefit of clergy.

Yet there is this problem: Some men are constitutionally in flight from life, while others are resolved upon a career of daring. These men will view the same inner realities with different eyes. They will seem to live in separate universes, if you judge from their reports. Some self-correcting principle or formula will have to be available, as a part of the metaphysic of the new moralists.

What is to be avoided, of course, in any such undertaking, is the repetition of the past in the form of "authorities" on matters of good and evil and the moral obligations of the individual. Anything like that would be a violation of the spirit of the age. Whatever morality we are able to come up with will be in response to the spontaneous demands of man's inner life, which has for so long been denied expression. One thing we must not do is invite the system-builders to have another try at ordering our lives.

Already they are after us with extremely plausible appeals. It is absolutely essential, they tell us, to put a stop to the growth of the population. This is not really a moral problem, although it takes on a moral guise, when the figures of our multiplying humanity are placed along side of the statistics of food supply. But the problem of feeding the earth's millions exists in a frame of warring nationalisms and reluctantly dying imperialisms. It is incredible that, given a world in which men were determined to live in harmony with one another, there could be any sort of food problem at all. The genius that is going into speculative plans for adjusting our lives to the moral status quo ought to be directed at changing the status quo.

We can tolerate no program which by implication prejudges the nature of the human individual, who is the source of all morality. We

have had a century of this sort of theorizing, and have ended by producing the most hideous tyrannies the world has known. The assumption we need to adopt is the assumption which allows no limit upon the potentialities of the individual. If we are going to agree to get rid of the stockyard theory of human welfare, let us get rid of it entirely. These mechanistic systems of the good have nearly been the death of us. Apart from their practical political effects, which are bad enough, their psychological effects have reduced the great majority of human beings to timid, unresourceful sheep who can't even catch a cold without hastening to the doctor to get a fancy name for their running noses, who need a lawyer to ratify even the simplest agreements, and who, in times of uncertainty, will cling to the very worst of authorities in order to avoid the horrid fate of having no authority at all.

To revivify the sense of individual morality, we need a rich variety of human beings who are determined to follow the star of their own moral inspiration, who are intensely concerned with its authority for themselves—men who will leave a track of moral inspiration wherever they go. That inspiration will be for other men to go and do likewise—to find an authority for themselves.

Unfortunately, the rules of the several collectivist moralities of our time have a way of marking free men—men who make their own, private morality—with a stamp which declares that they are all the same. Suppose a few men reject war and decide that they will have no part in a military organization. The national State has laws which these men run afoul of, in one way or another. So they are defined as law-breakers. But this is the least of their identity and nature. Their real nature, for all we know, may be a rich individuality and inner content which is entirely concealed by the label they gain at the hands of official society. So with other types of men—free-thinkers, artists, anarchists, mystics, poets, and others who find themselves unable to fit into the neat categories of conformist behavior. The pity of it is that they become known to the world by their least important characteristic—their resistance to a crude compulsion or a commonplace convention, while what they really represent—their true human quality—is lost from sight.

The gradual return of an authentic individual morality will change all this. It will provide a new center of gravity for human decision and action.

REVIEW
"AMERICANISM" AND RUSSIA

IT has been our consistent view that the most helpful discussions of Soviet Russia, or of Communism as represented anywhere else in the world, focus on what is good or understandable in these cultures. Setting aside for the moment the opinion of qualified observers—that we shall be forced to get along with Russia whether we like it or not—it seems apparent that the American approach to foreign problems has always been woefully insular. One reason for frequent reference to British journals is that their treatment of political questions is broadly cosmopolitan, a result, no doubt, of sophistication gained over centuries of foreign affairs.

The few "cosmopolitans" among our own writers are, we think, to be cherished. These are seldom found outside the pages of liberal journals of opinion. The *Saturday Evening Post*, however, keeps at least one cosmopolitan on hand, for we have noted that Demaree Bess's articles as he travels abroad for the *Post*, display attitudes going considerably beyond the characteristic rigidities of American opinion. Writing under the title of "How Americans are Like Russians" in the *Post* for June 28, Mr. Bess contributes such paragraphs as the following:

> Perhaps it is because Russians and Americans both developed from racial diversity that they have shared a fascination for the notion of "one world"—a single community incorporating all the world's peoples. This "one world" conception made headway in both frontier countries long before Bolshevism perverted it. It has appealed as strongly to lifelong conservatives like Wendell Willkie—who made it the title for a wartime book—as it did to nineteenth-century Russian mystics like Count Leo Tolstoi. Today the American and Russian "one world" schemes have collided head on. We Americans have been so confident that we have produced the best existing way of life that we expect the whole world to recognize its superiority.

Milton Mayer, long a favorite among unorthodox Americans, has also been to Russia, and we recommend his "View From the Metropol Window" in the October *Progressive* as an interesting piece of writing. Nor does Mayer's wry humor work against his central aim; both we and the Russians would indeed seem "funny" or illogical to a visitor from another planet. And that of course is what Mayer contrives to be, wherever he goes—an odd fellow who always believes what no one else believes and refuses to believe "what everybody is saying."

Mr. Mayer begins his reflections on the Russian visit with an observation to which hardly anyone could take exception:

> Leaving Russia the other day, by way of Leningrad, I met an East Texan. I asked him how he'd liked Russia, and he said, "All I can say is thank God that I'm a citizen of the U.S.A."
>
> The Texan was, I think, simply venting the common persuasion—from which the tumbleweed itself may not be exempt—that it is better to be one place than another. He did not mean that the U.S.A. was a good place to be or a bad one, but had always been there. You will not be amazed to learn that there are Russians who have always been in Russia and who, after seeing East Texas (or the Bowery, or Shantytown, Pa.), thank Lenin that they are citizens of the U.S.S.R.
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> I went to Russia because I never knew what to say when people got up in the audience and said, "If you don't like it here, why don't you go to Russia?" Now I can say, "I did go to Russia, and I didn't like it there, either. Besides, I like it here. I like it there, too, as a matter of fact. Some of my best friends are Russians. Others are Texans."
>
> You bring your Russia to Russia with you, and the Russia you brought with you is the Russia you take home. The Russia I brought with me was wonderful, and it's the Russia I take home.
>
> We are all walking bundles of preconceptions. Mine were formed by Russian literature and by the idea of Christian communism (Acts 4:32-35), which, disused by the Christians, was being misused, but at least used by the anti-Christians. These preconceptions rested in turn upon my dissatisfaction with the popular, or Bad Man, theory of history. This dissatisfaction is, I hope, a manifestation of the faith that there is that of God in every man, even in Stalin and me, but it may be nothing but perversity.

Now let us turn to Mayer's praise of characteristics he observed in the "average Russian." Mayer, of course, would be having all kinds of trouble if he lived in Russia, until shipped to Siberia or elsewhere, for he is an impassioned anti-authoritarian, but his feeling of warmth and liking for the Russian people might well be duplicated by any of us, under similar circumstances:

> You never meet the Man in the Street, but if you stay in the street, and out of the ministries and the universities and the restaurants, you meet his eyes, and his meet yours. You show him on your map where you want to go, and he insists (the spy!) on going with you to make sure you get there, and, when you get where you're going and you make the mistake of offering him a cigarette, he declines, or insists on your taking a more expensive Russian cigarette from him in exchange. The Russian Dialectical Materialist is the first non-Materialistic man, as a whole people, you have ever met. He expects, and will accept, none of the customary contemptuous gratuities that, at home or abroad you toss to the servile. The Swiss—says the German—live off the world's tips; not the Russian. There's no *Service 15%,* no *Kurtaxe,* no *Imposta di soggiorno,* no head-waiter's petty panhandling. A day's wages—low—for a day's work. The Russian who does you a personal service and smiles, smiles because he wants to. Does it take an inhuman dictatorship to restore personal sentiment to personal relations? Heaven forfend.
>
> You have learned that this Russian "slave" is a man of more dignity than you are accustomed to meeting abroad or at home. You reserve your astonishment, mistrusting your morning's experience. At the end of a month on the streets, your experience unvaried, your astonishment is complete. Your experience has extended to the kids you meet at the Kremlin, who offer you Russian lapel pins of all sorts; what they want in exchange is an American (that is, a foreign) coin or stamp (of any denomination), and when your supply is exhausted and you offer a kid *Russian* money for a pin you want, he refuses it; and if you have some way of letting him know how badly you want that pin, your chances of his giving it to you are good.
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> This is the Russian, who, your first morning out on the street, seemed to you to carry himself in a manner that reminded you of someone you had seen before; but of whom? Your third morning out you know: the Russian carries himself exactly like the jaunty, self-confident, and unself-conscious Yank, the "outgoing man" of the sociologist's jargon; not the salesman, the panhandler, or the pusher, but the man who knows who and what and where he is, where he is going and why and what he's about, and is ready to make friends for no other reason than friendship's.
>
> Your eyes—and the Russian's—did not deceive you. He doesn't know he's a slave, and it is his view of his situation, not yours, that's decisive. You have not persuaded him that he is oppressed; maybe because he has always been oppressed but, in that case, where is the hang-dog-grin, the bowing and scraping, the "Yas-*suh,* boss" of the long oppressed who always mean "No-*suh*" and always say *"*Yas-*suh"?* This slave (as you call him) acts as if he owns the place. Maybe he does.

Another perspective on the "world conflict" between "Communism" and "Americanism" is found in Nehru's personal political credo (printed in the New York *Times* for Sept. 7). The Indian Prime Minister wrote:

> I have the greatest admiration for many of the achievements of the Soviet Union. Among these great achievements is the value attached to the child and the common man. Their systems of education and health are probably the best in the world. But it is said, and rightly, that there is suppression of individual freedom there. And yet the spread of education in all its forms is itself a tremendous liberating force which ultimately will not tolerate that suppression of freedom. This again is another contradiction. Unfortunately, communism became too closely associated with the necessity for violence and thus the idea which it placed before the world became a tainted one. Means distorted ends. We see here the powerful influence of wrong means and methods.
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> Communism charges the capitalist structure of society with being based on violence and class conflict. I think this is essentially correct, though that capitalist structure itself has undergone, and is continually undergoing, a change because of democratic, and other, struggles and inequality. The question is how to get rid of this and have a classless society with equal opportunities for all. Can this be achieved through methods of violence, or can it be possible to bring about those changes through peaceful methods?

After pointing out that Communist violence is in complete opposition to what Gandhi stood for, Nehru adds that "Communists, as well as anti-Communists, both seem to imagine that a principle can be stoutly defended only by the language of violence, and by condemning those who do not accept it. For both of them there are no shades; there is only black and white. That is the old approach of the bigoted aspects of some religions. It is not the approach of tolerance, of feeling that perhaps others might have some share of the truths also. Speaking for myself, I find this approach wholly unscientific, unreasonable and uncivilized, whether it is applied in the realm of religion or economic theory or anything else. I prefer the old pagan approach of tolerance, apart from its religious aspects. But whatever we may think about it, we have arrived at a stage in the modern world where an attempt at forcible imposition of ideas on any large section of people is bound ultimately to fail."

Nehru concludes his remarks on "the tragic paradox of our age" by stating that neither Communist nor American partisanship meets world economic problems intelligently—precisely because of the extremes of the partisanship:

> Western economics, therefore, though helpful, has little bearing on our present-day problems. So also has Marxist economics, which is in many ways out of date, even though it throws considerable light on economic processes. We have thus to do our own thinking, profiting by the example of others, but essentially trying to find a path for ourselves suited to our own conditions.
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> In considering these economic aspects of our problems, we have always to remember the basic approach of peaceful means; and perhaps we might also keep in view the old pedantic ideal of the life force which is the inner base of everything that exists.

COMMENTARY
MORE IMPUDENT THAN SPUTNIK!

FROM Holland comes a magazine, *Delta,* a quarterly devoted to "art, life, and thought" in the Netherlands, which sets, but does not solve, an interesting problem. In an article on Pieter Geyl, a distinguished Dutch historian, the work of Arnold Toynbee is examined. Geyl is critical of Toynbee. He finds Toynbee indifferent to facts when they contradict some great moralizing thesis. Geyl asks:

> "Does the generalization accord with these facts?" When it does not, that is the end so far as Geyl is concerned. But that is not the end for Toynbee. It is not even the beginning; it is nothing at all. For, since he makes up generalizations to suit his convenience or his religious whim of the moment, the fact that they do not accord with the evidence is irrelevant to him.

In the eyes of Geyl and some other meticulous scholars, Toynbee is a great sinner, his great piety notwithstanding. In fact, for Geyl, the piety makes the offense greater—"a blasphemy," he says; "a betrayal of Western civilization." This is an odd situation. Throughout the Western world are religious-minded people who feel that Toynbee is the scholar of the century. He is the man who brought his incredibly resourceful armament to bear against the irresponsible forces of materialism. We needed him, and like an angel of the Lord, he appeared.

There is the further fact that Toynbee has undoubtedly said some things of great moral beauty and far-reaching value. Conceivably, his Sunday supplement writings have greater merit than his more "scientific" studies of historical destiny. But how confusing this is! Is it conceivable that the man who promises to be a scholarly savior can also be a wishful thinker, a bad historian?

How do dilemmas of this sort arise?

They come, it seems to us, from the centuries-old separation, in the West, of truth into two divisions—sacred and profane. With this separation is the tacit admission that "sacred" truth may be irrational—and therefore intellectually irresponsible while "profane" truth must be rigorously correct, yet never decisive in "non-material" issues. But when a man of high reputation in the profane sciences lets it be known that the holy spirit has begun to move in his breast—this is the religious consummation of the age, in which both heaven and earth unite to testify to truth and righteousness.

How can we bring ourselves to listen to criticisms of this man? Anyone can see where the *real* betrayal lies!

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE HEART IS THE TEACHER

WHETHER one takes this title to mean that true teaching flows as a result of rapport between teacher and pupil, or whether the phrase connotes that the personality of the teacher is much more important than the modernity of the plant in which he instructs, Leonard Covello's *The Heart Is the Teacher* is a gently inspiring story.

When we first heard this book described, the thought came to mind that Mr. Covello's life-story in teaching might be very much like Jesse Stuart's *The Thread that Runs So True.* It came as pleasant confirmation, then, to find that Covello's publisher, McGraw-Hill, had obtained a comment by Stuart on *The Heart Is the Teacher.* Mr. Stuart, who comprehends without difficulty that the "teaching-learning" situation is the same in any jungle, whether the hill country down in Kentucky, or the jungle of East Harlem, wrote that Covello's story makes "a great book." He continues: "I say this without qualifying one word. Leonard Covello has written a warm, lovable book. He has a great, warm heart—and sees far into the future in his teaching and in this book. I say it will be read not only by teachers, but by parents, high school students and college students. This is a book for everybody."

Leonard Covello spent fifty years as a teacher and principal in the public schools, forty-five of them in the New York City system. His devotion to a true equality of educational opportunities for the immigrant children and underprivileged in East Harlem led to an inspiring monument—the Benjamin Franklin High School on Manhattan Island. The general tendency among school superintendents in New York was to provide manual training and trade school background for children whose unfamiliarity with the English language made an introduction to "the liberal arts" seem impractical. But Covello himself had come to America as an immigrant Italian, a boy who could not speak English properly, and he knew that there were many East Harlem boys who had the same passion for "wholeness" in learning that he had discovered in himself. He insisted that opportunities of all sorts should be made available, in spite of the additional teaching difficulties encountered among children of underprivileged backgrounds. The success at Benjamin Franklin has doubtless inspired many others who comprehend the principle Covello stands for well enough, but who had previously doubted its practicability. Fiorello La Guardia, then an East Harlem Congressman, played an active role in securing approval for a school which could be fair to *all* youngsters with college aspirations. After the founding of Benjamin Franklin, of which Covello became the first principal, the New York *Sun* remarked prophetically that "this will be a 'fluid' school in the truest sense of the word; it will seize upon any interest discovered in a boy and endeavor to build his education on this basis; it will be an experimental school with its entire personnel saturated with the spirit of experimentation and willing to do anything and be anything for boys."

Covello is not by nature a disciplinarian. He has always opposed the "get tough with the tough ones" credo which many principals and teachers have adopted in areas teeming with delinquency. But he also knows, again from firsthand experience, that rigorous discipline in *learning* may actually be appreciated, and that discipline in learning and discipline in regard to deportment may not be the same. Describing his own experience with a sincere but strict teacher, he recalls that he was able to realize that she really wanted children to learn, and that her strictness was only to gain the requisite attention:

> I learned arithmetic and penmanship and spelling—every misspelled word written ten times or more, traced painfully and carefully in my blankbook. I do not know how many times I wrote "I must not talk." In this same way I learned how to read in English, learned geography and grammar, the states of the Union and all the capital cities—and memory gems—choice bits of poetry and sayings. Most learning was done in unison. You recited to the teacher standing at attention. Chorus work. Repetition. Repetition until the things you learned beat in your brain even at night when you were falling asleep.

I think of the modern child with his complexes and his need for "self-expression"! He will never know the forceful and vitalizing influence of a Mrs. Cutter.

A good teacher *always* teaches. This is plain from the story of Covello's life. When he traveled overseas with the AEF, he found his knowledge of languages in demand, and proceeded to organize French classes on shipboard. In the midst of war, because of talents which he displayed after embarkation, Covello spent his time until the Armistice teaching respect for foreign languages to men who would be encountering "foreign" people abroad. Thus Covello's early career seems to have led directly to opportunity for work of humanitarian quality. Just as he never found it necessary to inflict harsh punishments, so was it never necessary for him to attack his fellow men on a battlefield.

Covello did of course encounter many "difficult" students in East Harlem. But while some had to be dropped for the sake of the school, a great many "incorrigibles" became fine students as a result of Covello's patience. The following incident, describing the despair of a teacher and the pride of a confused youngster, is undoubtedly typical of Covello's influence:

After a few moments in my office, she broke down and started to cry. "It's as if he ridicules me. He's utterly contemptuous of everything I say. There in class I'm always conscious of his presence, like some animal ready to pounce on me. I've never handled such a student. Tell me, Mr. Covello, how do you do it?"

Her appeal was almost pathetic, as if I had some magic formula I could give her. "I don't know," I said. "It's easier for me, I guess, because I was raised the same way and have lived all my life in the same neighborhood. But then there are other women teachers who come from other parts of the city who understand the boys too. I don't know what it is, exactly. I do know, however, that if you convince yourself deep down that these boys, Lupino included, are basically not much different from others you have known, and that they would like to be liked by you, then most of your troubles will be over."

As for Lupino, I told her not to concern herself about him. "If he disturbs you or the class in the least way, just let me know. He'll be out of here that very day. But let's give him another chance. I know we can straighten him out." After she had gone, I sent for Lupino and made him write out a statement to the effect that at the very first adverse report he would voluntarily expel himself from school.

Lupino kept his word. He graduated a few years later. I never had cause to regret what I had done for him. Nor had his teachers, for that matter.

Mr. Covello concludes his story:

"The student must suffer," my uncle, the priest, used to say to me over sixty years ago. That also has truth today despite educators who have advocated the "no-failing theory" and the concept of uninhibited self-expression. For, how is it possible to inculcate discipline—self-discipline—and develop the desire to improve in a child if he is not taught a sense of duty and responsibility along with his rights and privileges.

Yet I do not believe in beating lessons into boys. Far from it. "Foolishness is tied up in the heart of a boy," the proverb says, "the rod is what will remove it from him." This "get-tough" idea which seems to be gathering momentum in some quarters today proves only that man has a short memory. The severity of punishment practiced in days gone by neither corrected, nor reformed, nor lessened delinquency and crime. I never found it necessary to lay hands on a boy. I know that corporal punishment is not the answer. However, I am convinced that a firm hand when the child is young is the best method for instilling in him a normal and healthy attitude toward life and living in the society of his fellow human beings.

The teacher is the heart of the educational process and he must be given the opportunity to teach—to devote himself wholeheartedly to his job under the best circumstances. Half a century as a teacher leads me to the conclusion that the battle for a better world will be won or lost in our schools.

FRONTIERS

The Anachronistic Agnostic

A RECENT contact served to renew my acquaintance with the agnostic. This particular specimen calls himself a scientific rationalist, but agnostic is less cumbersome and it serves the same definitive purpose. While etymologically the agnostic is a Don't-knowist, this hardly describes him because he is usually a cocksure man with a method of thought based on what he considers to be the facts of life, and his claim is essentially a claim to positive knowledge within the area of those facts. He is anything but a Don't-knowist in his own (frequently smug) estimation; on the contrary he is the only Knowist. His is a world of "realism" which rejects as fantastic and groundless all that does not pertain to that world, and anything that cannot be demonstrated to his immediate and unaided reason is *ipso facto* an illusion tolerated only by weak-minded, credulous and unscientific people. In a word, as the dictionary puts it, the agnostic is a man who "disclaims all knowledge of anything but material phenomena, and holds that nothing beyond such phenomena can be known."

Now the interesting thing about this definition is that the moment the agnostic accepts it, as he readily will, he places himself in a very odd position. The agnostic is a materialist; he takes his stand wholly on "material phenomena" and a three-dimensional absolute known to him as physical substance, beyond which nothing can be known. Very well, let us apply some of his cherished science to his cherished absolute.

There was a time, not so long ago, when Western science thought the atom was a little lump of something. It was a very small solid particle providing a safe and sure mental basis for all agnostics and rationalists. Remote and elusive as it might be (for no man had actually seen it), it was yet a three-dimensional object forming the physical complement to the solid business of three-dimensional reasoning. The human brain functions most easily in the triple terms of syllogistic logic because they are the dimensional terms on which its vehicle, the body, exists. The trouble begins when thought inevitably carries the intelligence beyond that stratum of Creation in which the vehicle and its five senses operate, so that there is an increasing breakdown of "fundamental" terms. At this point, unfortunately for the agnostic, even the ultimate unit of his solid world refuses to stay put; his very *raison d'être,* the atom, begins to slip from his grasp like a handful of dry sand. Within the last half-century it has become such a ghost of its former self that Eddington now has to write of it: "All we can say of the atom is that something unknown is doing we don't know what." We have, continues Sir Arthur, "chased the solid substance from the continuous liquid to the atom, from the atom to the electron, and there lost it altogether." And with the disappearance of the solid substance of the atom went the solid substance of a vast amount of scientific certainty. "The most important discovery of modern science," writes Dr. A. M. Low, "is that we know almost nothing about anything."

Where was the agnostic while this scientific vanishing act was going on? Where was he while the solid substance beneath his intellectual world was melting away? Well, wherever he *was,* there's no doubt about where he now is. Like the equally impossible characters in the movie cartoons, his scientific rationalism has carried him in a straight line out over the edge of a yawning chasm. Presently he will look down and notice that something has happened to *terra firma,* and being unprepared for the situation he will go plummeting into the void. At least we hope he will. To anyone acutely aware of the type of intelligence needed if mankind is to survive and prosper, his drop into oblivion will be unlamented.

There is no such clearly differentiated "real world" as the agnostic envisions, and there never was, except in the circumscribed mind of the man who—bedfellow to the orthodox religionist—had

to have the security of a tri-dimensional prop for his tri-dimensional understanding. And now that Einstein, Bohr, Planck and the rest have demonstrated that there is indeed no such world, where does the agnostic draw a line to distinguish his solid realities and scientific certainties from a vast amount of "super-material" phenomena and concepts which he contemptuously dismisses as mere moonshine? If a steel rail or a mountain of basalt are not, in the old absolute sense, material objects at all, but only appearances produced by whirling centers of force in which physics can discover no ultimate material unit—how does the agnostic purpose to make a basic distinction between their substance and that of the ghost of Hamlet's father?

Talking of ghosts, here, for what it may be worth to the case, is one personal experience from the far side of the agnostic's fence. During the Hungry Thirties my home became a Mecca for stray cats, and one day I had to relieve the situation by humanely destroying a lovable and intelligent tabby who was fast colonizing the property. A few days later, while resting on the couch, fully awake but with my eyes closed, a cat jumped up off the floor onto my feet, trod casually up my body, circled round on my chest, and lay down. I didn't open my eyes during this performance, simply taking it for granted that the actor was our remaining cat—though it occurred to me that I had not seen him around the house for some time. It must have been about three minutes before I reached up to stroke the animal, opening my eyes at the same moment. I was surprised, to say the least. Though the sensation of weight remained, there was no physically existent cat.

This is only one very minor example from a great field of higher dimensional data which the agnostic dismisses with a wave of his scientific hand, content thereby to expose himself as years out of date in science and unimpressive as to intelligence. Despite his claim to being solidly scientific and realistic, he hasn't actually learned enough science to know that for nearly half a century the West's leading physicists have recognized the Cosmos as a multi-dimensional continuum; a state of affairs in which there is at bottom no break or dividing line at any point in the series, that of either matter or mind—which are in fact not two things, but one. This of course was not a discovery, except perhaps for the Western scientist. It was merely a technical verification of something we had been told many times beforehand by the philosophers. "The Universe," said Spinoza, "is one. There is no supernatural: all is related, cause and sequence. Nothing exists but Substance and its modes of motion." Needless to add, Spinoza's "Substance" is not that of the agnostic—although it includes it. The trouble with the agnostic is that he refuses to include in his scheme all that Spinoza meant by the word.

If you imagine a shadow on a sheet of paper to be a conscious two-dimensional being, inhabiting the two-dimensional world of the paper surface, you can conceive him as either a two-dimensional agnostic or a two-dimensional philosopher. In the first character he would resemble our own three-dimensional agnostic, believing only in the material reality of his two dimensions and scoffing at the whole idea of a third dimension which might explain to him why you, from the vantagepoint of a three-dimensional world, are able to prick his sheet-paper world with a pin—just as *we* experience many events that could be likened to the pricking of our three-dimensional world with a four-dimensional pin. In the second character, that of the philosopher, he: would be a genuinely scientific thinker, intrigued by every aspect of life, and concerned to examine, sans prejudice, *all* the evidence of experience, not merely a selected stratum of it. In my own experience with the cat, if I'd been an agnostic it wouldn't have taken me thirty seconds to "explain" everything. Obviously no dead cat could do such a thing; therefore, equally obviously, I couldn't possibly have felt what I felt! My notion that I was awake was a delusion; I was

really asleep, and the whole affair was merely a dream-fantasy—etc., etc. It happens, however, that I am not subject to delusions of any sort, including the agnostic's talent for self-delusion when called upon to deal with evidence he finds unpalatable or disturbing to an unstable intellect (instability is indicated by a worship of "pure" intellect, just as disorderliness is indicated by a mania for organization).

I take the view that a scientific thinker is not a man who does all his investigating in a field he has taken the liberty of narrowing down to suit himself, but a man willing and anxious to examine every aspect of human thought and experience for which any degree of evidence exists or can be discovered. To dogmatize negatively from a restricted section is to be, not a scientific thinker, but an unscientific impostor. The business of science is not to prove a limited number of things proposed by a half-blind man, but to prove all things. When it sets out in an exclusive frame of mind to deal with only a given kind of data, it is not Science and it cannot in any direct way succeed as Science, because when any single concept, or body of concepts, is treated apart from and unqualified by that which appears to be its opposite, but is really its complement, the conclusion is bound to be misleading and destructive. Man thinks one-sidedly at the peril of his mind, his life, and his world—and the current state of his world is a sinister proof of it.

Bertrand Russell—oddly enough, considering a lot of his own ratiocination—once wrote the following: "The greatest men, who have been philosophers, have felt the need both of science and of mysticism. The attempt to harmonize the two was what made their life—and what always must, for all its arduous uncertainty, make philosophy, to some minds, a greater thing than either science or religion."

It would be hard to find a more accurate index to the nature of mature human intelligence than this. It is an index to the complete mind, functioning interactively and unitively on a basis of two mutually complementary poles, science and mysticism, head and heart, technique and intuition, and the like. Placed for inspection alongside such a mind, the agnostic is a man who deliberately hamstrings himself so that he can't properly serve even his own elected mistress, Science. His counterpart at the opposite extreme is the "believer" type of religionist, whose intelligence is hamstrung by unreasoning faith in Bibles, messiahs, churches and theologians, with the result that he has no real understanding of Religion and no power to be of positive service to it. In order to have a productive electrical field you must have the balanced interaction of polarity, an immanent interplay of positive and negative—either of which, pursued for itself alone, leads to sterility and death. In terms of modern psychology the agnostic is merely a man playing extrovert to the introversion of the orthodox religionist. Shyness in a human being does not represent a release from the ego element; it is only an inversion of it. So also the agnostic, who prides himself on his liberated mind, is only an inverted churchman—a man suffering from rationalistic blindness instead of pietistic blindness. He is not a creative thinker; he is only a human pendulum secured to mechanistic reaction and swung from right to left. So here we have the pair of them—theist and atheist, believer and agnostic—each tucked up in a double bed with the very man he hates! The philosopher long since arose from that bed and walked forth to herald the day when, in the words of Charles Fort, "there may be an organic science, or the interpretation of all phenomenal things in terms of an organism that comprises all."

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