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THE HISTORY OF IDEAS

A READER has asked for suggestions of a few books on intellectual history. This is a project that can be undertaken with enthusiasm so long as it be understood that it is done by amateurs in the interest of amateurs, without pretensions to professional scholarship. A person can get along, of course, without knowing much about the history of ideas. The ideas are more important than their history, and many men experience intellectual and moral inspiration without being aware of its sources, whether in themselves or in the cultural heritage. The springs of philosophy rise not only in books; men must think and feel before they write books, and the timeless realities of the nature of man are hardly dependent upon chronicles concerned with their expression throughout the ranges of the past.

Yet there is a sense in which the communication of great ideas is enlarged and clarified by an appreciation of their role in shaping the epochs of civilization. It was Joseph Glanvill, a comparatively obscure thinker of seventeenth-century England, who first pointed this out. A brief passage in Glanvill's *The Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661) establishes the importance of the study of intellectual history and at the same time places Glanvill as one who, without being himself a "relativist" in historiography, had consciously equipped himself with the tools of relativist criticism. Glanvill wrote:

> . . . they that never peep'd beyond the common belief in which their easie understandings were at first indoctrinated, are indubitably assur'd of the Truth, and comparative excellency of their receptions . . . the larger Souls, that have travail'd the divers *Climates of Opinions,* are more cautious in their *resolves,* and more sparing to determine.

This is the case for the study of the history of ideas, and it has been but little improved since Glanvill's day.

The first question that needs to be settled by one starting out on this project is where he will begin. The assumption of the project—the reason, that is, for undertaking it—is, or should be, that it will lead to ideas for living by. In other words, the project is a part of the search for a philosophy of life. For one born in the West, Plato is probably the best place to begin. "Out of Plato," said Ralph Waldo Emerson, "come all things that are still written and debated among men of thought." All subsequent philosophy, said Alfred North Whitehead, is but "footnotes to Plato."

The questions pursued by Plato are well summarized by Edward J. Urwick in his *Message of Plato* (Methuen, 1920):

> What is knowledge? How is it possible to know anything? What is it that is known? Is there such a thing as absolute knowledge, of permanent fact in and behind the ever-changing universe? Is there a knowable reality? And if so, is it one or many? What are the faculties of cognition? What are the correct processes and methods of learning, of separating truth from error? What is happiness or pleasure? Is good conduct based upon knowledge—and of what? Can society get that knowledge, and so manage itself satisfactorily and scientifically? Are there any real teachers of political or ethical knowledge? If so, upon what is their teaching based?

Urwick is useful for one other reason besides his ardor and his simplicity. He obviously believes that Plato is the interpreter of Oriental philosophy to the West. But why, if Urwick is right about this, do we start with Plato instead of the primary sources in Eastern thought? Why not go first to the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita?* Well, one can go to them first, if he likes, and may profit by the decision. The reason for beginning with Plato, however, is that Plato represents the questioning mind of a man who *seeks*, not one who reverently believes. Plato is an appropriate link between East and West in that he is both gnostic and agnostic in his approach to the great questions. He transmits the content of the Mysteries, but he also questions everything. Plato makes the great and important distinction between knowing and believing. Socrates

has peculiar eminence in the eyes of the Oracle at Delphi, not for what he knows, or thinks he knows, but for knowing how little he knows.

The immeasurable service of the Orient to the world has been its symmetrical presentation of primeval wisdom in the form of instruction from teacher to disciple.

The genius of the Occident has been to insist upon knowing instead of believing. You could say that many of the follies and agonies of the cycle of Western civilization have arisen from the practice of believing without knowing, with the result that the Western contribution to universal history has been in the form of a rebellion against "belief" by thinking men who have been betrayed by believing too much and knowing too little. We might even propose that the path of Western thought is the path of the return to the Gnosis by an agnostic route. If you choose, you can read this meaning in the expression, "freedom of conscience," and in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States.

An excellent means of getting up one's enthusiasm for the study of the history of ideas in the West is a reading of W. Macneile Dixon's *The Human Situation* (Longman's). It would be difficult to find a man better acquainted with the course of Platonic philosophy in the literature of European civilization, or a better advocate of the idealist position. Dixon is good to read because he is an ardent, civilized, wise and sophisticated scholar—an extraordinary combination. His book is itself a compendium of the history of ideas, and also one which puts the ideas to use for the purposes for which they are intended—the emancipation of the mind and the discovery of truth.

Now, turning to the more formal histories, one might read the greats of the nineteenth century—W.E.H. Lecky, who wrote *History of European Morals* and a *History of the Rise of Rationalism;* John W. Draper, who wrote *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe* and *The Conflict Between Science and Religion;* and Henry T. Buckle's *History of Civilization in England.* Two American writers ought to be consulted: Andrew D. White for his *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology,* and the much later John Herman Randall for his *Making of the Modern Mind* (Houghton Mifflin, 1926).

With these texts behind him, or rather read and before him—they will never really be behind him—the reader may turn to special lines of development to obtain something like a living touch with the unfoldment or eruption of ideas. For example, the Neoplatonic forms of the Platonic tradition have probably been the most stirring intellectual force in all European history. It is fascinating to trace the influence of Plotinus and Proclus across the centuries of Western thought. No doubt one should begin by dipping into Plotinus, who is available in a Pantheon edition of the *Enneads,* translated by Stephen MacKenna. For general perspective, Thomas Whittaker's *The Neoplatonists* is good. Those who become lovers and enthusiasts of the Platonic tradition should not neglect to look up Thomas Taylor, an eighteenth-century translator of Plato and Plotinus who quite plainly adopted Platonic idealism and Plotinian mysticism as his own religion and wrote almost as an epopt or hierophant of Platonic Mysteries.

There have been four great flowerings of Neoplatonic inspiration in Western history, with perhaps more to come. The first was in Florence under Cosmo and Lorenzo de Medici, called the Revival of Learning—a major beginning in the Italian Renaissance. We have never found a book on the Florentine Platonic revival we have liked well enough to recommend strongly (J. E. Sandys' *Lectures on the Revival of Learning,* Cambridge, 1905, is worth looking at), but any book that tells the story of the white-bearded, eighty-year-old Gemistus Pletho's coming to Florence in 1438, bearing Platonic manuscripts and moving Cosmo with his account of ancient Greek wisdom, will serve as a beginning. Cosmo had Marsilio Ficino, the son of his court physician, instructed in Greek and Ficino proceeded to put into Latin the works of Plato, Homer, Hesiod, and the Neoplatonic writers, Plotinus, Iamblicus, Proclus, and Synesius. The re-education of Europe was well on its way as a result of this new center of learning, brought to a brilliant climax of influence by Pico della Mirandola. John

Reuchlin (1455-1522), sometimes called the Father of the Reformation, was a friend and correspondent of Pico who pursued the work of education and Platonic revival in northern Europe. Books on Reuchlin are almost nonexistent, the best one we know of being by Barham *(Life and Times*, London, 1843), a single copy of which rests securely in the Union Theological Seminary Library. Reuchlin was one of the first northern Europeans to master Greek, which he then taught to his pupils. He also learned Hebrew and became a famous defender of the Jews, and of Jewish literature, which the bitter anti-Semites of the time were determined to burn. Pico and Reuchlin were the renewers of the civilizing Humanism of the Platonic tradition, performing their tasks of education at the same time that Christopher Columbus was discovering the New World.

For the story of the spread of this influence to England, Seebohm's *Oxford Reformers* (Everyman) is a good book to read. The Platonic current now finds expression in England through such men as Thomas More and John Colet. But the dramatic flowering in England of Platonic philosophy came later, in-the seventeenth century, with the work of Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, John Smith, and Joseph Glanvill. Cudworth's *True Intellectual System of the Universe* is an encyclopedia of this revival. J. A. Stewart's *Myths of Plato* has an excellent chapter on the Cambridge Platonists, and Basil Willey's *Seventeenth Century Background* gives a lively portrait of the ferment and struggle caused by the conflict between Platonic idealism and Hobbean and Cartesian materialism. Recent, almost contemporary inheritors of the Platonism of these seventeenth-century philosophers include John Ellis McTaggart, G. Lowes Dickinson, and W. Macneile Dixon.

The German Transcendentalists provided another outbreak of Platonism and Neoplatonism. Herder and Lessing are a pair who should be inspected. Herder's *God: Some Conversations* (Veritas, 1940) is an extraordinarily exciting volume, and the reader will have no difficulty in finding his way to others. Fichte and Schelling exhibit the same Platonic enthusiasm, which easily infected Coleridge, as his *Biographia Literaria* makes plain.

Then, in the United States, Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott embodied the last great Neoplatonic Revival. By this time the sacred books of the East had become available, so that the reader can now see for himself how easily Platonic and Vedic inspiration intermingle and grow together as one in the hospitable minds of the New England Transcendentalists.

There are other ways to get on the track of this great succession. If you start out with the intention of studying the tendency of the heresies which have rent orthodox Christianity throughout the two thousand years of its history, you will again find the fertile stimulus of Platonic thought. For a beginning, there is Bigg's *Christian Platonists of Alexandria* (Oxford, 1913). Christians have borrowed much from Platonic philosophy—practically the entirety of their theology, which was previously metaphysics—but they have never been able to contain the explosive independence of Platonism because of its Pantheistic tendency. Every cycle of Platonic renewal within the fold of Christian thinking has produced its harvest of pantheist heretics. Peter Abelard was perhaps the first Christian thinker sufficiently sophisticated to recognize this dreadful consequence of Platonic Realism, which he was quick to point out to William of Champeaux as a means of replacing him in the Cathedral School, later to become the University of Paris. (Henry Adams' *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* is good on this, as it is on the heresies which lurk for the unwary in the writings of Thomas Aquinas.)

But the first great heretic of Platonic inspiration came much earlier, in the ninth century, in the person of Johannes Scotus Erigena. Erigena was an Irish monk of considerable erudition. He knew Greek, possibly because of a survival of the Druid tradition of learning in Ireland, and absorbed the Platonic philosophy in the pirated form of the sixth-century writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Not much is known about this writer, supposedly a Syrian monk, except that he converted the writings of Proclus, the last great philosopher and compiler of the Platonic tradition, into works with a Judeo-Christian vocabulary, and signed the name of a disciple of Saint Paul to this plagiarism of his

Platonic sources. Study of the Pseudo-Dionysius turned Erigena into a lyric poet of Platonic mysticism. Ever since, his ideas have been going off like time-bombs to disturb the complacency of the faithful. His first theological assignment was given him by Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims (like Alcuin before him, Erigena had been called to France to teach the illiterate French their letters), who needed someone skillful to refute a determined young follower of St. Augustine intent upon spreading the demoralizing doctrine of predestination among gullible believers. Erigena wrote a tract dissolving the youth's arguments, but in the process he also dissolved sin and Hell, the latter being, Erigena explained, only a metaphor. Erigena was a philosopher. He used the Gospel stories as Plato might have used an anecdote from Homer, to illustrate a point or metaphysical principle. The content of his major work, *The Division of Nature*, is uninhibited transcendentalism, unblemished by anthropomorphism. For Erigena, creation is a process, not an act. Christ is the Logos, not a man or the Son, except metaphorically. As a Christian critic has put it, in Erigena Christ is "an ideal Figure, a universal relation between cause and actuality, and has no significance for a real redemption." The reader soon recognizes that Erigena is expounding the cyclic ring of return of Orphic religion, the emanation and reabsorption of the Gnostics, and the descent and ascent of souls as taught by Proclus in his grand summation of Platonic philosophy. The best place to look up Erigena is in George John Blewitt's *The Study of Nature and the Vision of God*, which has some beautiful extracts, to be preferred to a wooden translation St. John's College has made available.

Erigena's influence is too vast to be calculated. He was of manifest importance to Aquinas, he turns up among the Albigenses, the heretics Amalric of Bena and David of Dinant are indebted to him, Eckhart drank at his well, and from Eckhart Tauler and Ruysbroeck transmitted his genius to the Reformation. Another line stretches from Erigena to Nicholas of Cusa and ends in the fires of the Holy Inquisition when it burned Bruno at the stake in 1600.

It is easy, in a quest of this sort, to get lost in works of dull scholarship. We have tried to make our suggestions lead the reader into works of devotion to the truth, rather than studies of undoubted technical excellence. It goes without saying that once a person is well launched on the investigation, he will be on his own anyhow, and if he can be misled by religious enthusiasm or bad scholarship, he will never find his way no matter how much help he gets. But he had better stay as close as he can to the authors who have some ardor, for without ardor there is no life. A good illustration of the vivid spirit that can be found in works of philosophy is a *History of Pantheism* by Dean Plumptre (London: Gibbings, 1878), an English divine and Greek scholar who pursued the thread of pantheistic thought throughout the ages of Western civilization as though it were the grace of salvation. The book is filled with choice quotations, giving his history a vigor possessed by no other on the subject. (One may ignore the early chapters, devoted to Oriental religion, as superseded by more recent works—Zimmer's, for example.)

Still another cycle of renascent Platonism may be seen in the philosophizing of some of the contemporary or almost contemporary theoretical physicists and mathematicians. It is easy to find Plato in Sir James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington. The inspiration of Pico is still the foundation of all true Humanism, and it is to be discerned among modern philosophers in the works of Ernst Cassirer. Robert A. Millikan long ago acknowledged the incalculable debt of modern science to the Platonic inspiration and Albert Einstein, as an objective idealist, qualifies as belonging to the Platonic tradition. Joseph Wood Krutch is filled with Platonizing conceptions (especially *The Great Chain of Life)* as, in fact, are all those who strain after the realization of an ideal order which is to be reached by participation in its principles.

There are dozens and doubtless hundreds more of books that might be suggested, many of which we have not even heard. One could, for example, go carefully through the writings of A. E. Taylor, a most conscientious Plato scholar. Werner Jaeger would be another author to read. A scholar of undoubted

capacity, although hardly sympathetic to the enthusiastic tendency of the Platonists of whom he writes, is Arthur O. Lovejoy, whose *Great Chain of Being* (Harvard, 1936) is a study of the stress between what he conceives to be Plato's two deities, the God of the *Timaeus* and the God of the seventh book of the *Republic*—in philosophic terms, the manifest and the unmanifest deity. Dr. Lovejoy traces the tensions between these apparently contradictory ideas down through all of Western thought and literature. Finally, there is a professional periodical, *Journal of the History of Ideas* which might be looked into, and which at one time printed the entirety of Pico's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*—the classical statement of Western Humanism.

Thus far, by reason of the Platonic theme, our suggestions have been openly in favor of idealism. It is practically necessary to review also the course of materialism in its various forms, in order, if for no other reason, to recognize the correctives men devise for the extravagances and corruptions of idealism. Frederick Lange's *History of Materialism* (Harcourt, 1925, with an introduction by Bertrand Russell) is far more than its title suggests, being one of the best histories of philosophy available. Then, for a concise statement of the materialist position, there is Chapman Cohen's *Materialism Re-Stated* (London: Secular Society, 1927), a minor classic. For those who are curious about what Lenin had to say on philosophical questions, there is *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* (International Publishers, 1927).

Another great succession of ideas is represented by the revolutionary tradition of Western history. Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station* (Anchor Book) is indispensable to an understanding of the radical movement. A more recent volume, equally important, is Dwight Macdonald's *The Root Is Man* (Cunningham Press, 1953). Macdonald shows, for example, what happens when the Platonic notion of hierarchy is turned into a justification for "organic" politics.

Two books will be sufficient initiation of the reader into the history of scientific ideas: Dampier's *History of Science,* and Edwin Burtt's *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* (Harcourt). Then, for sheer intellectual delight and a general bearing on the history of ideas, Carl Becker's *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers* and his *Every Man His Own Historian* are illustrations of how helpful a relativist in historiography can be. Finally, and again for pleasure as well as profit, two books, *The Revolt of the Masses* and *Toward a Philosophy of History* (both Norton), by Ortega y Gasset, complete our reading list in this uneven and plainly partisan response to our reader.

REVIEW
"HANGED IN ERROR"

LESLIE HALE'S volume of this title (companion to another Penguin special, *Hanged by the Neck,* by Koestler and Rolph) supplies much effective material against the death penalty. It is also the sort of book that will be informative to those who have never thought to question either the morality or the justice of capital punishment. Leslie Hale is a Member of Parliament who has devoted many years of attention to problems of penal reform, while also supporting all efforts for colonial freedom and human rights in general. The present book, a study of miscarriages of justice, chiefly in capital offenses, begins with these remarks:

> A pessimist has been described as one who has just spent a week-end with an optimist, and the cynicism serves to remind us that the over-zealous defence of any cause can produce a revulsion of feeling. The over-presentation of a case is bad advocacy just as the over-painting of a picture is bad art. Still there remains something of exceptional poignancy in the case of the victim of a miscarriage of justice. Even in "minor" cases the result may be terrible. Mr. Montague Williams, who was engaged in the Pelizzioni case related in this volume, was at about the same period briefed to defend a man in an "ordinary" case of sheep stealing. His client was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment. Twelve months later the real criminal was apprehended and confessed. The innocence of the first man was tardily recognized, Her Majesty's Free Pardon was granted, and there was even talk of compensation. The prisoner emerged to find that his wife had died and that his children and his aged parents had been removed to the workhouse. By the time a small payment had been assessed as "compensation" the victim was incurably insane.

On the content of *Hanged in Error,* Mr. Hale continues:

> This book presents eleven cases of murder in which error clearly occurred. In the six cases given in Part One the capital sentence was carried out and thus the first and most important point is firmly established: that innocent men have hanged. The five other cases of wrongful conviction have been chosen because they illustrate some of the recurrent features of all cases for which capital punishment has been prescribed and in which there is a suggestion of error. The fact that an error cannot be rectified instead of putting the authorities on their guard against the hideous possibility of hanging an innocent man rather seems to drive them to incredible lengths in order to deny and to keep from the public the idea that a mistake can happen.

In Mr. Hale's view, the tendency of government agencies to present a united front—true, apparently, of England as well as of the United States—weakens constructive criticism and reduces exposure of error in judicial processes. Mr. Hale writes:

> Throughout the whole history of miscarriages of justice, both here and abroad, the importance of free and frank criticism is glaringly obvious. The pen of Voltaire, and of a Conan Doyle, have made powerful contributions not only to the detection of error but to the understanding of its causes. Justice cannot be seen to be done in the dark. The condition upon which liberty has been given to man is eternal vigilance, and that vigilance can best be exercised by a free and independent press. Restrictions on criticism, by judge-made law on contempt of court, have gradually increased. A reconsideration of the present limitations on the right to question and to criticize, *before it is too late, as it has been in the past,* is surely necessary.

It is always frustrating to attempt to review a book dealing with case histories, but an example or two can be given. One involves a nondescript individual named Edmund Galley, who was apprehended after an "identification" (later proved false) on a charge of striking the victim of a robbery in such a way as to cause death. Galley had no money or influence for his defense, and it was apparent that the police and prosecutor wished the case to be speedily closed. Remarks by the ruffled British Home Secretary indicated the temper of the times in respect to people like Mr. Galley. When normally decent people sought a pardon for Galley, the Secretary declaimed before the High Court of Parliament: "If Galley was wrongly convicted, he certainly assisted very much in his own conviction by the irregular and improper life he led. . . . It is something like contributory negligence on his part." Well, there was finally enough protest in behalf of poor Galley to get his sentence commuted to transportation for life to a penal colony. His

innocence was finally established, but by the time a full pardon was granted Edmund Galley was seventy-seven years of age, having spent forty-five years as a convicted murderer in penal servitude. The government munificently rewarded him £1,000 for compensation, but apart from the question of whether £1,000 is adequate compensation, Hale shows that Galley was very nearly executed, and that if he *had* been executed, no one would even have bothered to investigate the case at all.

Of course, in the view of an increasing number of penologists, psychiatrists, and thoughtful citizens, every man executed is "hanged in error"—the point made so effectively by the Koestler-Rolph book (reviewed Feb. 21). It is always a mistake to snuff out the life of a man who can still learn, or from whom, even if he be twisted and distorted beyond ordinary social recognition, society itself may be able to learn. It is also apparent that a highly publicized execution such as that of Caryl Chessman awakens deeply-felt protest throughout the world. We have at hand a copy of a talk broadcast by the Berkeley Pacifica station KPFA, by Dr. Richard Drinnon, history professor at the University of California, which collects the reactions of a number of graduate students. One of these, Michael Miller, who joined the march outside San Quentin walls on the eve of Chessman's execution, had this to say:

> Chessman's resistance was that of the lone man, with allies, yes, but essentially alone. Somehow here was a man who could be respected. . . . Lurking somewhere in these feelings is, I am sure, some kind of romantic identification with him. Because he was not a *cause célèbre* in the usual political sense, the full moral meaning of the case was clearer. Here was a man who had been of no special "good" to his fellows—one who was a self-admitted robber. Yet he had remade himself, he had fought the whole thing through in himself, had come to grips with life. . . . This, I suppose, was what happened to him in prison—the stance of the critic was retained and it was given the new dimension that Chessman gave himself with his self-education. . . . Nowhere have I seen the beast (in man) more frankly exposed than at the time of the Chessman case when we picketed for his life. What impoverished lives the jeerers who wanted to be hangmen must lead—that they could so much want to kill a man. Thus it was this too—the feeling that keeping Chessman alive somehow had to do with keeping sanity, and humanity, alive.

This reaction and others of a similar nature originated from attitudes that had little to do with whether Caryl Chessman was actually "guilty." So far as we know, almost every independent investigator of the Chessman indictment and trial gradually became convinced that a miscarriage of justice had taken place, on several grounds. But whether or not Chessman or any other condemned criminal is accurately charged or accurately convicted, according to the intent of the law, there are ample grounds for saying that every person killed by society is killed "in error."

COMMENTARY
THE NEW MORALITY

A READER has found in Laurens van der Post's book, *Venture into the Interior,* a quotation which she feels has apt relation to material appearing in MANAS, as follows:

> It seems to me that people's private and personal lives have never mattered as they do now. For me the whole of the future depends on the way people live their personal lives rather than their collective lives. It is a matter of extreme urgency. When we have all lived out our private and personal problems we can consider the next, the collective step. Then it will be easy but before it will not even be possible.

This is a true *volte-face* from the popular stance of a generation ago—a time when any sort of emphasis on personal morality was dismissed contemptuously as a way of evading social responsibility or a means of justifying the status quo. What is remarkable is not the essential truth of this writer's view, but the fact that it is becoming so widely accepted in so short a time after the almost total reliance of men of good will upon the political means to the good society.

The point, of course, is that Mr. van der Post is *not* proposing simply that we look after our private salvation, and let the wicked world go its way. This would be only a repetition of the selfish piety of past centuries, which honest humanitarians could not tolerate, turning them atheist and materialist in sheer disgust at the indifference to social justice of the conventional religious community.

We doubt very much that he is thinking at all of the rewards of virtue in this passage, but is rather concerned with the fact that a wise and humane social community cannot be formed except out of wise and humane people. Systems and laws will not do for human beings what they are unwilling to do of themselves. Systems and laws are guides and controls, but they are not and never will be the source of the moral energy that gives the community whatever excellence it possesses.

To speak of "private and personal problems," these days, is by no means to exclude the problems of society and the world. The problems of society and the world are now central to the lives of every one of us, so that van der Post's counsel becomes an injunction to consider our personal relation to those problems, as distinct from our political relation to them. There can hardly be a good personal life, today, which does not include some deliberately chosen personal relations to the great issues before the world.

One of the fine things about the influence of modern psychology is the way in which it has redefined morality in the terms of human or interpersonal relations. "Private and personal problems" no longer mean the difficulties one encounters in overcoming "sin." Basically, they now mean whether or not we are learning to deal with other people as ends in themselves, and not as means to our ends.

In short, the orientation of "morality" has changed. Actually, morality is now less morality than it is a conscious attempt at the practice of ethics. For this reason, one is able to accept what Mr. van der Post says with very little hesitation. Or, put in another way, we are learning to be more impersonal in relation to our private problems, which means that every solution contributes to the general as well as the personal good.

This sounds as though the great need of the age is for some kind of religious revival, and there may be a sense in which this is so, but it will have to be a revival based upon man's love of man, and if this means, as the Quakers say, to see that of God in man, we can find no fault in that. It will certainly not be the kind of religious revival which turns men against those who have another or no religion.

But what Mr. van der Post might have added is that working on one's private and personal problems, in relation to the welfare of others, can hardly fail to generate a clear perception of what should be "the next, the collective step." This of course is his implicit meaning, but there is a value in saying it out. The good society will have to exist in the motives and temper of human beings before it can be modelled in the law.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

COMIC STRIP COUNT-DOWN

BEN H. BAGDIKIAN'S "Stop Laughing: It's the Funnies," in the Jan. 8 *New Republic,* reveals a trend which should have the attention of both parents and teachers. Young readers of the comic strips are now being propagandized in the heaviest of heavy-handed ways. According to an increasing number of strip cartoonists, a red-blooded American not only feels that any means is a good means which attacks the Soviet menace, but also that many of our government agencies having to do with foreign relations are wishy-washily supporting the Communists through exaggerated "tolerance." Of course, as a people, we are still, as Terry Lee of "Terry and the Pirates" says, "friendly to all colors except Red!" The trouble, though, is that Terry and similar heroes find a Red under every bed, and lots of pink people wandering around talking about disarmament, opposing bomb tests and advocating other defeatist nonsense. This is great for the John Birchers and for any up-and-coming McCarthys of the future, since the kiddy crop is being nicely prepared for them. But it is tough on any parent or teacher who wishes his children to grow up with a respect for just decision and for the ideal of human brotherhood.

Mr. Bagdikian has his own kind of fun with the funnies:

> Relax, Mr. Kennedy. Little Orphan Annie has landed and the Cuban situation is well in hand. Well, sort of.
>
> The girl with the vacant eyes managed it with a few bursts of machinegun fire and a public hanging. She left some bothersome loose ends but they can be picked up by the Pentagon, Department of State and Central Intelligence unless, of course, those government agencies are what Daddy Warbucks seems to think they are—really working for the other side.
>
> Annie is more than the moving spirit of the funny-page solution to Cuba. She is also the leader of a new trend in American "comic" strips: presenting real political situations at home and abroad, often with extremist rightwing solutions.

Rightest pioneer among the comics is undoubtedly Little Orphan Annie, who, as Bagdikian puts it, "has been fighting democracy, social welfare, high taxes, universal suffrage, reform, education, culture, and human love for years." Annie always gets directly to the point when expunging political error. In only three months, Mr. Bagdikian counted seventy-five killed or maimed in Annie's strip in behalf of patriotic righteousness. But Annie is now but one of many. Mr. Bagdikian continues:

> The new political comics, however, leave little to the imagination. Many, though not all, are ideological cousins of Little Orphan Annie. Villains tend to be foreigners and do-gooders. Thorn McBride, a handsome naval officer, began a recent sequence with the boxed message: "Many aliens who enter the United States leave behind pasts they do not want known. However, when such pasts ARE known by Mr. G. (and many are) the luxury of anonymity can get expensive . . . " This is an introduction to another foreigner-forced-to-spy-for-the-Reds adventure in which one character is described: "This is Eva's father after the war. He had successfully created an anti-Communist of himself. . . . Actually he was a secret agent FOR the Communists, working to establish a Red Dictatorship." Thorn McBride is the Copley News Service syndicate's answer to Buz Sawyer, who propagandizes for Navy doctrine in 557 newspapers.
>
> The dangers of aliens were similarly the theme with "Smilin' Jack" whose buxom girls used to be fascinated by ailerons and Immelmanns. Here the girl comes over to our side and is being used against Soviet agents, although one hopes other American operatives display more guile (the girl in "Smilin' Jack" works largely by kissing a pilot violently and then panting lines like, "What's the secret of controlling those guided shots at 400 m.p.r. ?")

On the other side of the ledger, we note only two defenders of the liberal democratic tradition. Al Capp's "Li'l Abner" has dared to be funny with such sacred institutions as Harvard, Yale, Big Business and Dick Tracy. As revealed by Abner's innocent adventures, pomposity, foolishness, and

closed minds are the same wherever you find them, and Capp finds no need to send Abner to Russia for the targets of his humor. The creator of "Pogo" gets in his licks by allegory, digging at the McCarthy-John Birch complex of attitudes, but in this case the allegories are so subtle that few adults and fewer children are apt to get the point. So we have a new socio-cultural problem—how to encourage youngsters to rebel against the comics. It will not be an easy task, and Soviet youngsters may have a better chance for ultimate rebellion, since it is easier to see that the state is pushing you around than it is to realize that the comic strips are loaded with bias. (We don't know about Soviet comic strips, of course; if *Pravda* has any such frivolous features they could be as bad, or worse.)

Incidentally, in the same issue of the *New Republic* William Korey reports an upsurge of determination to practice free cultural criticism among Soviet youth. Under the title, "A Soviet Poet as Rebel," Korey describes the controversy stirred by Yevgeny Yevtushenko, twenty-eight-year-old poet, who years ago acquired a reputation as an *enfant terrible,* and, as one Soviet critic put it, has now "declared war on the old cliches" of the Soviet regime. While Yevtushenko is often censured by exponents of the Soviet line, he "nonetheless enjoys a wide popularity in intellectual circles and among the students who gather by the hundreds and thousands at public meetings to hear him recite his poetry in a deep powerful voice well suited for declamation." About three months ago, Yevtushenko dared to suggest that anti-semitism (contrary to all official publicity) is a real force in Soviet life, and "dared call into question a conception of the Jew which the Soviet doctrinaires held to be fundamental." According to Korey, neither the poet nor the magazine which published Yevtushenko's poem on this topic has "retreated under the barrage of semi-official criticism that followed."

One recalls that when the San Francisco-to-Moscow Peace Walkers ran out of their allotted time for presenting their views to the students of Moscow University, the students demanded that the time be extended, often disagreeing in a friendly fashion with the peace walkers, but also sometimes agreeing with them.

The important point to be made, however, is not the lesson of any comparison between the mature hedonism of the United States and the on-the-way hedonism of Soviet Russia. The tragedy of our age lies largely in the shallowness of the sources of righteousness found by such people as those who make up patriotic comic strips. Our mass production culture knows how to make and distribute everything but sound sense and good taste.

FRONTIERS

It's Not All Nonsense

THE problems of the world, in terms of war and peace, rival social and political mechanisms, the race between morals and technology, and related questions are by no means under-written about. If you take several of the journals of opinion, and the newsletters and releases of movements which are concerned with these questions, you are soon snowed under by the volume of reading matter, most of it pertinent, most of it good, that lies around waiting for attention. There are times when an almost overwhelming feeling declares that there *must* be another way to get at such problems besides dividing one's energies among all these causes, until, at last, the world is changed.

Sometimes the whole question seems to have a simple answer. You listen to a Bach fugue, played with exquisite feeling and incomparable technique, on a long-playing record—possibly the supreme grace and achievement of modern technology—and you wonder how anyone can possibly want to kill anybody else, when this rare sound could be enjoyed by all, with just a little sensible management of the distribution of the good things of this world. It's nonsense, of course, to muse in this way, but it's not *entirely* nonsense. There is this other side of our common life, the side that goes on and on, enriching and extending the region of aesthetic experience, broadening our appreciation of other peoples, other cultures, and the arts and literature of all the world.

Years ago, after he had spent some time at the visionary community of the New England Transcendentalists—Brook Farm—Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote: "I was beginning to lose the sense of what kind of a world it was, among innumerable schemes of what it might be, or ought to be." He made this comment:

> No sagacious man will long retain his sagacity if he lives exclusively among reformers and progressive people without periodically returning into the settled system of things to correct himself by a new observation from that old standpoint.

Of course, a "settled system of things" may be somewhat harder to find, these days, but Hawthorne's point is well made. There are other aspects of life besides "causes," and if they do not proceed with a normal metabolism, the work for the causes may become too high-strung or sour. But there ought not, on the other hand, to be a merely mechanical division—so much time for "doing good," and so much for "my life." One gets the impression from, say, Mr. William O. Douglas, that there can be a natural and unlabored collaboration between the inward current of one's existence and its outward expression in behalf of the social or common welfare. Last week's review of Mr. Douglas' recent book, *My Wilderness*, surely exhibits this balance.

What we are suggesting is that there ought to be a natural tropism in contemporary expressions of the arts and literature, drawing the individual into fields of activity which lay a natural groundwork for a better world. In a *Listener* article for Feb. 18, 1960, Czeslaw Milosz spoke of such possibilities with a rare perception:

> First, comes a feeling of wonder at the extraordinary achievements of our contemporaries, accomplished in the midst of such chaos and cruelty that Gibbon's chronicles of Rome seem to us pale. By achievements I mean less science and theology than certain peculiar applications of them which enlarge our humanistic possibilities. There has never been such curiosity about the whole past of Man on the Earth, nor so many signs of exploring civilizations in their sinuous growth. We enter a sesame of our heritage, not limited to one continent. And this is accessible to the many, not only to some specialists. For instance, there has never been so great an interest in the art and music of the past. A price has to be paid, and recorded music or reproductions of paintings have their reverse side in cheap "mass culture." There is also a danger of syncretism. Yet a new dimension of history, understood as a whole, appears in all its dependencies. We deplore the dying out of local customs and local traditions, but perhaps the rootlessness of modern man is not so great, if through individual effort he can, so to say, return home and be in contact with all the people of

various races and religions who suffered, thought, and created before him.

As Mr. Milosz suggests, countless minute forces for mutual friendliness and understanding are at work, wearing away the antipathies which divide the world. A simple illustration: You hear on the radio a program of folk music, and it includes some songs of the South African Boers. The charm and delight of the melodies, the humor of the lyrics, make you look critically at the image of these people formed by reports of the acts of their government. It isn't that you grow "soft" on injustice, but that you renew your awareness of the fact that men who do injustice are not monsters and abstractions of evil. The thread of common humanity still exists; possibly it can be strengthened; at any rate, we know that if that thread should be made to break in our minds, then nothing can be done.

Years ago the Royal Institute of Economic Studies in London published a pamphlet by David Mitrany entitled, *A Working System of Peace.* Our copy has been lost, but the thesis of Prof. Mitrany's proposal, which seems more sound than ever, is that the foundation for peace needs to be built by establishing as many non-political relationships as possible among the nations of the world. The point is that by these means people get used to thinking of others who live in distant places as ordinary human beings and not as symbols of rival political systems. The image that grows strong is the one that is fortified by immediate experience in daily life. A little import-export business may be doing a lot more for peace, involuntarily, than some of the angry campaigns of intransigeant political remakers of the world.

One tires, occasionally, of the intolerance in controversies as to means of doing good, or "right," among even the best-intentioned men. The habit of intellectual condemnation of another for embracing the wrong or inadequate abstractions in political argument dies hard. In a second installment of the Committee of Correspondence *Newsletter* symposium on Cuba, dated January, 1962, David Glazer, a sociologist, leads off with a letter critical of the Castro regime in Cuba. It is not our purpose to review his judgments, nor the replies from other contributors to the symposium. The peculiar virtue of Mr. Glazer's contribution, which we wish to note, is in his candid admission of how his views are shaped. His opening observations, it seems to us, make an extraordinarily perceptive account of how people are caused to take sides in political controversy; but, instead of gaining appreciation because of this insight he was practically tromped on for it by some of the contributors who took the other side.

Mr. Glazer starts out by proposing that side-taking in crucial political or revolutionary issues seems to depend upon "the question of what one is horrified by." He continues:

> I find the exploitation of the poor by the rich so widespread in history, so legitimated by tradition, law, time, so much part of the way Societies of all sorts have been run, that my reaction to it is not horror but the desire to carry out reform. What horrifies me is when a man is shot for holding a different opinion; when people in power take it as a matter of course that opposition of any kind should be suppressed, that words should be perverted, that lies should be the normal form of public discussion, that the effort to correct them should be punished by jail. For while I can conceive of myself living as my father did (if he had happened to live on estates worked by landless laborers, etc.), I cannot conceive of myself acting as Castro acted and acts—I cannot conceive of the trial of Matos, the denunciation of the radio commentators and the threat of mob violence forcing them to flee, etc. I understand politics through myself—what I would do, what I would feel, what I might conceivably do, what I might conceivably feel. What Lenin did, I could not do, nor what Castro.
>
> The important thing in politics is what creates division, what makes one feel that between him and me there is nothing, an impassable gulf. . . .

Without meaning to endorse Mr. Glazer's opinions, we should like to suggest that it would be difficult to find a better criterion for reaching conclusions in political decision. It is implied by some of his critics that Glazer is a somewhat

mushy moralist instead of a hard-headed political thinker. But what is mushy about conscientious objection to being a tool of terrorism? The sentimentality, it seems to us, lies elsewhere, in rhetorical justifications of or apologies for actions from which one would recoil as an individual human being.

The trouble with this argument is that it involves side-taking in an atavistic conflict; yet, if you don't take sides, you are an isolationist, an ivory-towerist, or simply indifferent to the social progress of mankind. The dilemma is real. But the side-taking puts a man in a false position, morally; this he finds oppressive, so he tries to make himself "tough," or glosses over the unpleasant aspects of the side with which he is allied. Anger and impatience are natural consequences of becoming involved in such situations.

If there were ever evidence of the tremendous importance of Gandhi's contribution to revolutionary thought, it appears in the default of common purposes in such arguments as this one. And if you wanted to press the point by making a big abstraction, you might say that, in the past, the ends of revolutionary action have seemed (and perhaps have been) more important than means, but that today the means seem (or indeed *are*) more important than the ends. While a revolution accomplished with the right means may take longer, it will not have to be fought over again in the next generation.

In any event, the years of the 1960's is no time to be indulging in polemics in the style of the controversies of the political fractions of the 1920's and the 1930's. Articulate members of political groups, these days, are not about to lead their followers to the barricades. The gross political action of the present is conducted by massive power states which soon throttle or at least submerge the fine points of such arguments. The social intelligence of the present ought to be more directly concerned with the elaboration of new means, in keeping with the new psychological knowledge of conflict resolution, and with more realistic acknowledgement of the devastating dilutions of any kind of idealism that must result from power politics as practiced today. The true revolutionary initiative no longer lies in power politics, whatever the nostalgic emotions aroused by the Cuban revolution.