ARE IDEAS EFFECTIVE

I SHOULD like to resume the discussion started in the Feb. 21 issue, in the article, "What Can Be Done with Words," and continued in the March 28 issue, in which Harry Zitzler disagreed with MANAS.

As the reader will recall, MANAS, in its original article, stated that the purpose of the serious writer was to help form opinion. This could best be done, MANAS said, when the writer lived at the "height of the times." After quoting both Lecky and Buckle regarding the cultural lag in the acceptance of ideas, MANAS concluded that the writer who lived ahead of or behind his times was not effective. On the other hand, MANAS ended on a note of wistful longing for the exceptional man of genius who, like Carlyle's Hero, is ahead of his time.

In the second article, Harry Zitzler questioned the effectiveness of ideas in changing either individuals or society. Mr. Zitzler pointed out that we mistake words for deeds, over-emphasize the intellectual, act hypocritically, and wrongly judge men by their ideas rather than by their lives. The purpose of communication, he said, was not to educate or to persuade, but to experience the feeling of solidarity between men of like mind. In commenting upon Mr. Zitzler's letter, MANAS agreed with him that truth is a "lived rather than a verbal experience," but pointed out that men could not be judged entirely by their actions alone.

Although MANAS agreed in part with Mr. Zitzler, it did not meet the main issue head-on. It merely "explained away" the ineffectiveness of words with the debasing effect of hypocrisy without explaining this hypocrisy itself. The issue of the effectiveness of ideas in creating change is, on the philosophic level, the difference between Platonic idealism and realism (or existentialism). This philosophic problem is so basic I believe

MANAS should run a series of articles on it, written by proponents of each view. In this article, I shall expose my own leanings only briefly when I discuss "cultural lag," and shall confine the discussion to the "effectiveness of ideas" taken in the everyday or psychological sense.

In this sense, the difference of opinion between Mr. Zitzler and MANAS can, I believe, be reconciled. In the first place, we must admit they are both right. We can easily think of situations exemplifying both the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of ideas.

Ideas are effective in that they are products of thinking, and thinking affects our actions. If it did not do so, we would never learn by experience. Thinking is a kind of trial-and-error activity, a trying-out of the situation in symbolic or imaginary form in order to anticipate what will happen in reality. Ideas are also the result of understanding, of insight, into the relation between things or events. This insight, whether true or erroneous, affects our subsequent actions. If we believe illness is caused by demons, we will hire a priest to chase them out; if we believe it is caused by improper diet, we will change our diet. Moreover, almost all concepts or ideas hide evaluations which affect our actions. Benjamin Whorff began studying semantics because he noticed that people understood the word "empty" to mean "safe" even when printed on empty gasoline drums, which are more explosive when empty than when full.

Yet ideas are ineffective in bringing about a basic change, as Mr. Zitzler pointed out. An alcoholic may assent intellectually to the fact that he should stop drinking without being able to stop in actuality. But we need look no further than ourselves to see how ineffective words and logical arguments are in making us change our behavior

patterns; else why all this fuss over dieting and giving up smoking? When the desired is not the desirable, the desired usually wins! And surely few political or religious beliefs are changed on the basis of logic.

How can we explain the paradox that ideas are both effective and ineffective? I believe the explanation lies in the fact that ideas are *effective* under *normal* psychological conditions but *ineffective* under *abnormal* psychological conditions.

The truly normal individual is the integrated individual; that is, his emotions are integrated with his reason. He is aware of his emotions. He loves some people, dislikes others, perhaps hates a few. He does not blame himself for hating his enemies; he does not pretend he loves everyone. Yet, being aware of his emotions, he can allow his reason to modify them. He learns from his own experience that grief passes as well as joy; the next time he suffers a loss, he grieves less. He is able not only to admit his real desires and goals, but he can criticize them, analyze them, and modify them in accordance with what his reason tells him is possible.

This kind of integration between reason and emotions makes it possible for an individual to be affected not only by his own reason, but also by the reasoning of others. Since he feels secure in his own integrity, he can accept ideas from others if his reason finds them valid. Nor does he have a rigid character, daring to make *no* change for fear of disintegrating like the "one-hoss shay."

Insofar as each one of us is normal, then, we are open to influence by ideas, as MANAS maintained. However, few of us are completely normal in this sense of being integrated; in fact, the truly integrated individual, who acts upon his convictions, like Gandhi, is so rare that he is called "abnormal." The sad fact is that Mr. Zitzler was right in pointing out how ineffective ideas are because most of us are abnormal to some extent. As Erich Fromm has shown, our society is self-alienating, and to the extent we are adjusted to it,

we are self-alienated or schizophrenic. I shall use the term "schizophrenic" rather than "alienated" partly because there is no real difference except that the person we hospitalize as "schizophrenic" has retained more of his real self than the completely alienated person who has adjusted to our society; and partly because the classical symptoms of schizophrenia are exactly those characteristics of which Mr. Zitzler complained.

Schizophrenia, as everyone knows, is characterized by a split between the intellect and the emotions. The intellect, instead of basing its reasoning upon the evaluations of the emotions, bases its reasoning upon the evaluations instilled in the child by his parents. These pre-judgments or prejudices, collectively called by Freud the "super-ego," are internalized through punishment and reward, disapproval and approval. The concepts so internalized range all the way from "Fire is hot; don't touch" to "America is the greatest country in the world." These concepts also include evaluations of the child's own emotions. "Anger is bad" or "Jealousy is bad." If punishment for these "bad" emotions is severe, the child soon represses *all* his emotions. He lives according to the dogmatic rules of society as taught him by his parents rather than according to his own feelings. The schizophrenic, up to the time his repressed emotions "blow up," lives a model life. He acts and speaks like the polite people at a polite party. Like Eichmann, he performs his fob perfectly. His character, because it is built over the ever-increasing potential of his repressed emotions, becomes more and more rigid. The schizophrenic *dare not* change for fear he will "blow up." He resists all new ideas, although he may accept them intellectually on the plane of "pure logic."

Ideas are ineffective in changing the schizophrenic for another reason. Unlike the "normal," completely alienated person, the schizophrenic does not take hypocrisy for granted; he is unable to rationalize hypocrisy. Yet as his emotions reach the explosive stage, he becomes

sufficiently aware of them to realize his own hypocrisy in playing the roles assigned him by society. He becomes bitter about his own hypocrisy and the hypocrisy of others. Words become meaningless to him. He trusts no one, listens to no one, and either answers automatically or not at all. He feels completely separated and isolated; completely alone in the Universe. All communication with others ceases.

Schizophrenia explains not only the ineffectiveness of ideas, but also the other characteristics of our society of which Mr. Zitzler spoke. The over-emphasis of the intellectual, even to the extent of mistaking words or ideas for reality, is a symptom of schizophrenia. Having repressed his own feelings, the schizophrenic must motivate his actions through logical argument. His reasoning whirs around on the circular arguments provided by the dogmatic assumptions he has been taught, churning up the surface of his consciousness, while the emotions which could really activate him lie untouched at the depths of unconsciousness. He then becomes panicky, like a drowning man, flailing the water even harder, hoping to find a "logical foundation" on which to base his reasoning, not realizing that the basic assumptions cannot themselves be based on reason. Thus the schizophrenic, like the Scholastics of old and the Academicians of today, becomes so concerned with intellectual problems that he begins to live in the imaginary world of ideas.

But our civilization is not the only one to be schizophrenic. All civilization is inherently schizophrenic. By very definition, civilized behavior is contrasted with natural behavior; civilized behavior is formalized and ritualized in contrast with natural, spontaneous behavior.

Although Freud and others have stressed the inherent conflict between the individual and society, I do not believe the child, or man, in his "native state" is nearly the "nasty brute" Hobbes made him out to be. Children have as many "social" emotions as "anti-social" ones, and primitive tribes are based much more often on voluntary cooperation than on compulsory cooperation or on competition. However, in a competitive society like ours, the conflicting interests between individuals is stressed, and society, as the arbiter, becomes opposed to all individuals *as* individuals.

But there are two other more basic reasons for the schizophrenic nature of civilization. In the first place, much of civilization is concerned with the *play* world rather than the *real* world. It is the play world in the sense of being imaginary and in the sense of being a game or contest. All symbolization and ritualization is imaginary; it super-imposes a meaning which is in us rather than in the object. Symbols may at first express genuine feelings, but as they are passed on from generation to generation, the symbol no longer expresses the feelings of the new generation, and the ritual is repeated without meaning. Civilization is also play in the sense of a game. Huizinga claims that the desire to excel is the motivating force of civilization rather than necessity. Courts of justice, academic examinations, "civilized" war, codes of honor, are all the ritualization of the contest of the skill of one person against the skill of another. Veblen also shows how "barbarous" what we call "civilization" is, with its emphasis on status symbols and conspicuous consumption. The rules of civilization are imposed upon Nature like the rules of a game, but the *"gentleman"* is *obliged* to obey them as if they were laws of Nature. "I *can't* sit down until someone asks me to," says the gentleman in *Waiting for Godot*.

In the second place, civilization is schizophrenic because it incorporates its ways of doing things into actual physical organizations in which individuals "play the part" assigned to them. Individuals act, not as men, but as "president," "secretary," "clerk," or "third man on the assembly line." Specialization of skill thus becomes confused with representation of an imaginary organism. Unlike other organisms, these "bodies"

are immortal (or at least long-lived) because their parts can always be replaced with new individuals. The individuals who gain their livelihood in this way (as most of us do in a complex society) naturally want to perpetuate the organization, even when it no longer serves a useful function in society. This is all the more true when an individual's role brings him status and luxury. If the organization is vested with social power, as the Church used to be, and as States now are, then it can perpetuate itself with physical force. The more rigidly it perpetuates itself, the more out of tune it becomes with the real world, which is always changing. The institutions which were once useful to society become a hindrance to meeting its real needs.

The fact that civilization is schizophrenic explains the cultural lag in the acceptance of ideas about which MANAS quoted Lecky and Buckle. The quotations from both these men made the same point that Mr. Zitzler made, that the acceptance of an idea comes *after* the change in society. MANAS also appeared to agree with this at first, but then started thinking about the "exceptional" man, and, I think, overemphasized his importance, and the importance of his "idea."

The genius is the first to recognize the disparity between the social institutions and reality. He is not so much ahead of his times as he is the only one who is *contemporary* with them, as Gertrude Stein pointed out. Not until the growing disparity brings actual suffering to more and more people does it become obvious to them that "something is wrong." Even then, the concepts instilled in their super-egos resist change. Some commit suicide rather than lose status. Others begin to question the dogmas of their grandfathers and begin to seek new solutions. They then begin to think along the lines which the genius had thought years before, and accept his "idea." Thus the gradual acceptance of the idea does not indicate a mysterious force latent in some "ideal form," but is the channeling of the needs of the people into a new solution. The force is the force of life itself.

What does the fact that civilization is schizophrenic mean with regard to the place of the writer in society?

So long as our civilization is as specialized and complex as it is, there is as great a need for specialized "thinkers" (whether they express their thoughts in words, painting, sculpture, or music) as there is for specialized transport workers. But in return for being allowed by society to spend full time just "sitting and thinking," the serious writer or artist is obligated to serve society. The serious writer will not write merely for the entertainment of the elite. Nor will he spend his time in idle speculation about questions to which there is no answer. Nor will he indulge in "pride of his specialty." This is the temptation most easily succumbed to and which results in evaluating "the arts" or "culture" as more important than human life. Thinking and writing are specialties, but no more important than other specialties.

How can the thinker or writer best serve society? The fact that all civilizations are schizophrenic and undergo a recurrent crisis means that the function of the writer is to help his society survive the crisis and evolve more realistic ways of meeting its needs. If we think of society as an organism of which the institutions are equivalent to the super-ego of the individual, and the mass of people equivalent to the emotions of the individual, then we see that the traditional functions of the writer are those of the psychotherapist. Just as the psychotherapist helps to break down the superego of his patient, so the writer helps to break down outmoded institutions as a social critic. Just as the psychotherapist helps his patient to become aware of his real emotions, the writer helps to inform the people of their real needs. Just as the psychotherapist helps his patient to integrate his emotions with his reason, so the writer helps to bring about the revolution or reform which will better meet the needs of society.

Of course he can do none of this alone. He can only really communicate with those of similar mind, as Mr. Zitzler said, but as Mr. Zitzler also said, the communication itself results in a feeling of solidarity. He might well have added that this experience of solidarity is in its turn a stimulus to action. Thus the writer does help change society in the same way that a psychotherapist helps a patient find himself: he acts as a reflector through which the patient learns to communicate with himself.

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REVIEW
PHILOSOPHICAL POLITICS

BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE, a collection of Hannah Arendt's writings, is described by her as "Six Exercises in Political Thought." It is difficult to know whether to characterize these brilliant essays as political application of philosophical thinking or as politics become philosophical. But as any reader of Miss Arendt will realize, she is concerned with the *roots* of political situations in men's *minds,* rather than with the maneuverings for power which we usually associate with "politics."

On the other hand, her writing is far more than theoretical. Miss Arendt believes that thinking begins with experience—sometimes with incidents called "political"—and that it is through thinking about them that we make our experience with political "realities" more real. Miss Arendt says in her Preface:

> The book is divided into three parts of two essays each. The first part deals with the modern break in tradition and with the concept of history with which the modern age hoped to replace the concepts of traditional metaphysics. The second part discusses two central and interrelated political concepts, authority and freedom; it presupposes the discussion of the first part in the sense that such elementary and direct questions as What is authority? What is freedom? can arise only if no answers, handed down by tradition, are available and valid any longer. The two essays of the last part, finally, are frank attempts at applying the kind of thinking that was tried out in the first two parts of the book to immediate, topical problems with which we are daily confronted, not, to be sure, in order to find definite solutions but in the hope of clarifying the issues and gaining some assurance in confronting specific questions.

Merely traditional thinking is clearly not *thinking* at all; Miss Arendt sets out to show why there are so few valid questions and therefore so few valid answers in our time:

> If one were to write the intellectual history of our century, not in the form of successive generations, where the historian must be literally true to the sequence of theories and attitudes but in the form of the biography of a single person, aiming at no more than a metaphorical approximation to what actually happened in the minds of men, this person's mind would stand revealed as having been forced to turn full circle not once but twice, first when he escaped from thought into action, and then again when action, or rather having acted, forced him back into thought.

> The trouble is that we seem to be neither equipped nor prepared for this activity of thinking, of settling down in the gap between past and future. For very long times in our history, actually throughout the thousands of years that followed upon the foundation of Rome and were determined by Roman concepts, this gap was bridged over by what, since the Romans, we have called tradition. That this tradition has worn thinner and thinner as the modern age progressed is a secret to nobody. When the thread of tradition finally broke, the gap between past and future ceased to be a condition peculiar only to the activity of thought and restricted as an experience to those few who made thinking their primary business.

A discovery we are in great need of making, as Miss Arendt puts it, is that "the human mind has ceased to function properly." Actual thought and Realpolitik have become divorced. But the Existentialists, at least, have been aware of the separation and have protested:

> Since, under the circumstances of the twentieth century, the so-called intellectuals—writers, thinkers, artists, men of letters, and the like—could find access to the public realm only in time of revolution, the revolution came to play, as Malraux once noticed (in *Man's Fate),* "the role which once was played by eternal life": it "saves those that make it." Existentialism, the rebellion of the philosopher against philosophy, did not arise when philosophy turned out to be unable to apply its own rules to the realm of political affairs; this failure of political philosophy as Plato would have understood it is almost as old as the history of Western philosophy and metaphysics; and it did not even arise when it turned out that philosophy was equally unable to perform the task assigned to it by Hegel and the philosophy of history, that is, to understand and grasp conceptually historical reality and the events that made the modern world what it is. The situation, however, became desperate when the old metaphysical questions were shown to be meaningless; that is, when it began to dawn upon modern man that he had come to live in a world in which his mind and his tradition of thought were not

even capable of asking adequate meaningful questions, let alone of giving answers to its own perplexities. In this predicament action, with its involvement and commitment, its being *engagée,* seemed to hold out the hope, not of solving any problems, but of making it possible to live with them without becoming, as Sartre once put it, a *salaud,* a hypocrite.

A summary of *Between Past and Future* in the publisher's blurb seems apt: "Arendt describes the crisis, or rather series of crises, that we face as a result of the breakdown of tradition. That tradition, our heritage from Rome, no longer relieves us of the necessity of thought by supplying usable, ready-made answers. It has ceased to bridge the gap between past and future." We are brought to the onset of crisis:

> And so this gap, once visible only to those few who made thinking their business, has become a tangible reality and perplexity to us all. It has indeed become a pressing and inescapable fact of politics.

> The modern world has not been trained for the task of reexamining its basic words and concepts. Fundamental thinking has never been a general requirement. Faced now with the imperative need for it, as the traditional key words of politics—justice, reason, responsibility, virtue, glory—lose their meaning, we see crises developing in every direction, and no way of meeting them. In fact, we lack the very concepts with which to envisage our problems.

Miss Arendt's examination of the meaning of "mass culture" poses searching questions for the individual who encounters "mass cult" propaganda. (A chapter, "Crisis in Education," received separate attention in the May 16 "Children . . . and Ourselves.") *Between Past and Future is* probably available in most book stores, but may also be obtained from the Viking Press, 625 Madison Ave., New York 22, at a cost of $5.00 plus postage.

COMMENTARY
THE IDEA OF THE SELF

ONE way of pressing home some of the conclusions implicit in Eleanor Woods' lead article is to consider a small, "specialized" society such as the group of men who run afoul of the law through criminal behavior. This is not to suggest that persons who suffer imprisonment are in any important way different from the rest of us, although it is probably true to say that certain traits common to all human beings acquire special emphasis in prison populations.

In a paper, "A Psychiatric Study of Recidivists," published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* for November, 1937, Dr. Charles B. Thompson presents an analysis of the psychological attitudes of some nine thousand prisoners examined during four years of the work of the psychiatric clinic attached to the Court of Special Sessions in New York City. Dr. Thompson says in this paper:

> In this problem of the repeater criminal [recidivist], that has long puzzled the best of our students, lies a direct challenge to our civilization. The reactions common to the criminal are reactions that are common to mankind generally. In the behavior of the recidivist this observation is equally pertinent. We are confronted not so much by a problem that is isolated in the behavior of a few individuals as by a condition that exists throughout the race of man. Accordingly in our need for a broader approach to our problem we must establish a basis of observation that will encompass the generic factors that lead to anti-social behavior in mankind.

For Dr. Thompson, the key factor is the idea or "image" each man has of himself:

> In the early period of his life each of us as individuals is conditioned to react with a special affective content to the stimulus of the word "you," or, as he himself feels it, "I," and the picture or image denoted by this word comes to have more importance than everything and everyone else in the world.

> That which is "good" is to the advantage of this "I" and is to be sought, and that which is bad is to the disadvantage of the "I" and is to be avoided. . . . Each one becomes so conditioned that his thought

automatically is, "How will what is going on in this moment cause me gain or loss?"

> By virtue of the image of himself, which is thus secondarily acquired by the individual, and which differentiates him from all others of his kind, an over-emphasis has been placed upon the individual and he has in turn been given an exaggerated sense of his own importance.

> It is sufficient for our purposes in the moment that this conditioned, separative "I" image represents a common denominator for the compulsive egocentric acquisitiveness of man throughout the species, including the reaction of criminals as well as the non-criminals. Getting for one's self at the expense of others is both civilization's outstanding characteristic and its fundamental anomaly. . . .

In general comment, Dr. Thompson says:

> In our superficial angers and hatreds or in our agreements, in our wars and in our equally superficial and evanescent arrangements called peace, "normal" man, like the criminal, is himself a repeater of pathological reactions. Naturally, then, if we are all involved automatically in repeated reflex actions that have to do with oppositions, self-acquisitiveness and competition, the nature of the behavior of the recidivist is not far to seek, for the problem of the recidivist is but the problem of man's behavior generally.

> We might as well keep in mind that society has its own crimes which, however, are not recognized as such because they are committed on so large a scale. Society has its mass-homicides called wars, its mass-robberies called invasions, its wholesale larcenies called empire-building. As long as the individual's behavior fits in with the mass-reaction it is considered "good" behavior. As long as he does not question by word or deed the validity of the mass behavior he may be called a "good citizen."

Here, it seems to us, is laid out in specific terms the nature of the human problem. These are terms in which the discussion of how ideas are effective might be continued indefinitely. The place where "work" is needed is in the idea of the self, on both an individual and a social basis. All the great religions and philosophies come to a focus in the idea of the self and are to be judged by what they have to say on this question. Behavior is a function of this idea—not merely as

an "intellectual" notion, but as the form of thought and feeling which shapes behavior.

Primitive societies and ancient religions gave a great deal of attention to the problem of "getting through" to the individual with an elevating and morally strengthening content for the idea of the self.

In our post-revolutionary, anti-hierarchical, atomistic society, the problem is made much more difficult by the fact that the social community is no longer "sacred," no longer a source of great emotional impact, no longer an acceptable "authority." Instead of a priest who conducts a sacrifice, or a player who acts out the Mysteries, you have an anarchist who accepts life imprisonment as the penalty for his "anarchism of the deed," you have a civil disobedient who defies both the wrath of the omnipotent state and the resentment of the conforming populace, or a freedom-rider.

The important communicator is no longer the community, but the individual. There are two great questions: what to communicate and how to communicate it. The true *avant garde* of the age is working on both problems.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

RITUAL AND NATURAL RELIGION

THE following suggestion for discussion involves three areas of consideration—sociology, psychology, religion:

> Editors: I would be interested in seeing a discussion of the question whether or not children aged, say, 10-14, need something external to the family to devote themselves to as a beginning to establishing an identity separate from the family. Do you think this "something" need be an organized church, with ritual, in order to satisfy the emotional longing of a young adolescent to lose himself in something greater than himself, or is an idealistic group such as the Scouts sufficient? Might a youngster who joins a church of his own desire become so instilled with the dogma that he cannot break away from it or is it a stage in development, such as the belief in fairy tales which passes of its own accord? If it is a stage of development (as, for instance, the Buddhists and Vedantins imply when they allow those who need ritual to use it), should one deny it to a child? For instance, I believe it is wrong to deny a child the opportunity to develop his ego, for only if he has a "self" will he later be able to "lose" it. In this regard, should a girl of 10 be permitted to make her own decision about joining a church in order to build her own ego, or is the belief in God merely a father-substitute which puts off the growth of the real ego hardy enough to fend for itself in this world? If the latter is the case, then I should think it wise to take the child to as many different kinds of churches as possible to show him how many beliefs there are and how they all believe they are the One True Way. Or is this mere manipulation which will deny him the experience of complete Faith in Something?

Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd,* Friedenberg's *The Vanishing Adolescent,* and Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd,* are extremely useful in presenting the impact of a shifting sociological scene upon young people in general. The field of psychology enters also—by way of the same books—in terms of what it is that the parent or teacher can do, and what the youth can do himself, to awaken the feeling of responsible personal identity. The essential contribution of an

inspired religious tradition is measured by the degree to which the courage of one's own individuality is fostered—and joining any "crowd" for prestige reasons obviously tends in the opposite direction. It is at this point that a well-meaning parentally-devised program involving visits for children to a number of churches may break down, for the child may never come close to making an identification or idealistic choice for affiliation. Joining a neighborhood church on a prestige basis involves little more than joining a fraternity during college years: the selection is made on the basis of more colorful or rewarding personal identifications. This is all "natural" enough, but it tends towards fulfillment of one of the least agreeable renditions of the word "religion"—which, from the Latin, can mean to "bind fast," as in a clique or provincially partisan group. According to Joseph Shipley's *Dictionary of Word Origins,* a genuinely religious impact is to awaken "devoted care," and this implies acceptance of certain sacrifices for the benefit of others.

Along with many MANAS readers, we would prefer to see each child spend his Sunday mornings in some "nature appreciation" rather than in Sunday School. One cannot exactly teach "reverence for life" by way of encouraging hikes in the hills, or in the better public parks if no hills are available, but most children can at least gain a *respect* for the mysterious life forces which express themselves in plant and animal forms. What the child needs above all is an introduction to universal feelings and perspectives, and rituals are useful adjuncts only when they serve this end.

There have been various attempts to establish universalism in religious outlook. Bronson Alcott's labors as an educator are in this category, and the "transcendentalism" of Thoreau and Emerson. In the days of the founding of this Republic, Thomas Paine conceived a new approach to religion and established an association around the word "theophilanthropy." The ideal for the society of theophilanthropists was a world

religion whose devotees would conscientiously seek to transcend all partisanships into which they had been born. Another ennobling conception was adopted by the founders of the Theosophical Society in 1875 and, although after a few years the Theosophists fell into sectarianisms and partisanships among themselves, the basic modulus of the Theosophical Movement was a vital one. The chief aim was "to keep alive in man his spiritual intuitions"—an aim resting upon the premise that each individual, as an individual, is capable of such direct perceptions of truth as the word "intuition" implies. Involved in this approach to religion is a comparative study of great scriptures, both Eastern and Western.

These, of course, are philosophical considerations, while our subscriber speaks of the practical decisions which are to be met when most of a youth's contemporaries have affiliated with a neighborhood church and are enjoying social companionship in that area. But the point is that such decisions will have to be worked out between children and parents according to the particular demands and needs of the current situation, and since the parent cannot make the decisions for the child—at least not forever—it is the quality of communication between parents and child on the subject of religion that will make advice most useful. Offhand, we would say that any work undertaken by liberal churches— especially by the Quakers—in the direction of improving interracial understanding provides an association of worth, in that something positive is worked *toward.*

We have nothing against the Scouts, considered as an "idealistic group," but the wearing of uniforms or the acquisition of badges does not involve a ritualism that is of significance. Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Paces* is in part a brilliant explanation of a current social situation in relation to the adolescent; he shows, by comparison, that today there are no natural initiatory rites or "rites of passage" which allow the youth to feel that he is progressively

moving from one level of significant accomplishment or responsibility to another and yet higher one.

What are the progressive "initiations" most meaningful in our time? That is the basic question. The point is, we suspect, that you have to build your own contexts for such "initiations"— and this is no less important in the area of religion than it is in respect to other possible commitments of the young. We also suspect that if one's youngster joins a neighborhood church or a group of scouts, there should be some over-arching conception of *what comes next.*

FRONTIERS
Principle of Survival

THE opening words of a commentary program by Hallock Hoffman over the Los Angeles Pacifica station, KPFK, sets the stage for an inquiry into nature, workings, and problems of "conformity." Mr. Hoffman began:

> Once an FBI investigator called on an acquaintance of mine who was professor of political science at Harvard. The investigator wanted to inquire about a former student of the professor's. The young man had applied for a government job, and the FBI was doing its usual thorough job of asking whether the young man could be trusted with government authority.
>
> "Do you believe the young man is loyal?" asked the investigator.
>
> "No, I am afraid I don't think he is," replied the professor. "I fear he does not measure up to American standards of loyalty. In my experience with him, he always showed himself to have a weak character. I don't believe you should trust him in a government post of any responsibility.
>
> "Let me explain a little," the professor continued. "The young man is an undistinguished conformist. He always accepts the popular idea of what is right. He hurries to express the approved opinions. He is the sort of man who would be likely to perform without question any order his superiors gave him. In short, he is not a loyal American, but a man more suited to some dictatorship. I don't think you want him."

The story doesn't go on to tell how the FBI man reacted to this analysis, but it stands to reason that what the professor said had little relation to what the investigator came to kind out about the applicant. You don't send out an FBI investigator to locate self-actualizing people with feelings of moral independence and creative possibilities. The investigator came to determine whether the young man could be relied upon not to raise disturbing questions about the assumptions of the system he would be serving as a federal employee. A "loyal" man, from the viewpoint of an administrator, is a man who recognizes the importance of a smoothly operating system, who knows or is willing to learn the necessities of the system, and who has a natural inclination to subordinate other considerations to these necessities.

The professor, charged with quite different responsibilities, took another view. He did not see the qualities of a good organization man as evidence of loyalty. For him, a man who automatically reflects "the popular idea of what is right" menaces the welfare of a democratic society. By this criterion, every conforming bureaucrat is a potential Eichmann who is quite willing to leave all moral decisions to the Better Minds. In a democracy, the professor would no doubt go on to point out, the evasion of moral responsibility is the ultimate subversion.

This is a conclusion, however, which puts a great strain on the theory of organization. There are tests (personal histories, dossiers, etc.) for reliability and predictable behavior in the service of organizations and systems, but hardly any way of telling whether a man is capable of making original moral judgments concerning what he is asked to do. Further, efficient administrators seldom really *want* people who are prone to raise fundamental questions. The assumption is that all those questions were settled at the time the organization was formed. Only "trouble-makers" want to argue them over again. This is not to suggest that originality and deep questioning have no place in relation to organizations, but that these qualities may be disturbing or demoralizing unless they are restricted to the top-policy makers. The assumption here is that some people are competent to raise basic questions and that others are not. This idea is enormously efficient for some types of organization, as in the case of, say, the army, where the need to keep the decision-makers rigidly separate from the obedient conformists is recognized and satisfied by an elaborate caste system designed to develop one set of qualities in the officers and another set in the enlisted men. There is elaborate pageantry for dramatizing the punishment of those who break

the rules in each group. The enlisted man who disobeys is shot (in wartime), and the officer who violates the mores of his profession is publicly dishonored. These procedures are no doubt necessary to the maintenance of a military organization. The rigidity and the severity of army policies reflect the crucial role of the military in guarding the national security.

Of course, the originality of the army officer is strictly limited to a role within the prescribed function of the military arm. It is, therefore, a technical kind of originality, and when this is exceeded, as by General MacArthur, when he questioned the policies he was expected to carry out, or as by General Walker more recently, when he insisted on indoctrinating his troops with political dogmas, steps of restraint are taken.

What, precisely, did the Harvard professor mean when he gave the FBI man his opinion about the man under investigation? He meant, it seems to us, that it is more important to maintain a realizing sense of the first principles of a democratic society than it is to insure the efficient operation of its governmental mechanisms. Or, you could say, he meant in addition that it is the duty of the loyal citizen to inspect the working of the governmental mechanisms from time to time, in order to assure himself that they continue to serve those principles.

This, it may be argued, is no more than a repetition of basic democratic theory. In the town meeting, *everybody* votes. In the democracy, every man is king. So the Harvard professor's criterion of loyalty is by no means new. What may be taken as new is the spreading conviction that conscious, individual validation of the philosophical principles on which one's society rests *is* absolutely necessary for the health of that society. An illustration of this awareness may be taken from an article by A. A. Berle in the first issue (October, 1961) of a new quarterly, *Journal of Religion and Health.* Writing on "Religion and Health in Modern Statecraft," Mr. Berle says:

Modern statecraft rests on a publicly accepted body of philosophical premises derived from or through religion or its equivalent. These premises set up a value system that alone makes management possible. The one thing an administrator or planner cannot allow, permit, or even contemplate is anarchy. He can, in a well-developed civilization, accept pluralism, that is, the fact that there may be many differing, though overlapping, conceptions of the good society, the good life, and universal order. But if ever the society in which he works conceives that the only reality is anarchy, individual, social, and universal, he and the state with him are lost. His only recourse then is to use such force as he can mobilize, as long as he can hold it together. And he knows it will not be long.

Mr. Berle says that he uses "religion" as "meaning the individual's acceptance, proceeding from inner conviction, of the expectations and obligations of an assumed system of order in the universe." Proceeding theoretically, he discusses the health of societies in terms of what has been called the "transcendental margin," which means the flow of a society's energies toward an end which reaches beyond the immediate or material interests of the community. The transcendental margin is directly related to the religious or philosophical premises on which the society is based. Mr. Berle illustrates:

Certain societies have been socially and politically effective and economically prosperous and dynamic. Others have not. For example, the state of Utah has had a brilliant social and economic record. Nevada, comparable in resources and in number and ethnic composition of its settlers, has not. The obvious difference lay in the fact that the dynamic of Utah lay in the Mormon Church, the dynamic of Nevada was speculative mining and, more recently, legalized gambling. The contrasting problems are equally obvious. The motivation animating the Mormon Church transcended the direct, calculable, short-term individual interest of its members. The speculative and gambling motivation, on the other hand, is in terms highly individual, short-range, entirely opposed to any ideal transcending the calculable interest of the individual. In result, the economic effectiveness of the Utah community has been outstanding.

The results of the transcendental factor are apparent in many situations—perhaps in all. The

effectiveness and prosperity of the early Reformation communities of New England seem to have been caused by this factor. A similar result, arising from a transcendental factor, has been attained in modern Israel. For that matter, the values to which Nazi Germany committed herself transcended the individual, and the result was an effective and economically prosperous period—though the qualities of its transcendent values led directly to war and destruction. Transcendence can be negative and diabolical as well as positive and beneficent.

Mr. Berle points out that little work has been done to verify the theory of the transcendental factor, but its application in all societies seems plain enough for him to offer the following conclusion:

> In blunt terms, a community is safer, more effective, economically sounder when it seeks to help less favored elements, and perhaps other less favored peoples and countries, than when it follows a policy of selfishness. In all cases, apparently, there must be altruistic motivation—a genuine attempt to realize an ideal. . . . A society apparently is healthy when it does not think entirely of itself. But such a society connotes an aggregate of individuals who do not live in a universe bounded by their individual sense of material advantage. . . . May it not be that, for the individual as for society, the transcendental factor—theist or rational—is essential to maintain a physical and mental state enabling men and women to participate in their time? To the layman, this would seem logical. A directive principle makes possible a fairly serene life. But if the universe is anarchy, if no prior experience has any validity for the next problem or the next step, bafflement becomes complete. Life in that event would do to men what psychological experimenters have done to animals. If a gong sometimes means food, sometimes a knock on the head, and sometimes nothing at all, if data of every previous experience are negated by the next, the animal's nervous system breaks down. . . .

> Granted our definition of health as the capacity to participate in society, there would seem to be an intimate relation between the health of the community or state and the consensus on a philosophical conception of life in the universe.

While one may see how it would be possible to use the theory of the transcendental factor as the basis for special pleading—in terms of social benefit, Mormons are better than gamblers, but for still greater benefits, the x-y-z's are better than Mormons . . . and so forth—we are far from having enough knowledge to sanction any "philosophical conception of the universe," unless it be the "democratic" one to the effect that the only kind of a universe fit for man to live in is a universe which requires that its nature be discovered and understood by individuals, however much help they may give one another in pursuing this task.

It follows that what Mr. Berle is saying to us is that no society can afford to pretend that it "knows" very well the philosophical meaning of the universe, and knows it with the kind of knowing that makes individual thought about this question unnecessary. The "orthodoxy" of a free society is an orthodoxy with only one dogma—the dogma that fresh discoveries of meaning are always possible. The unmistakable issue of the Harvard professor's remarks to the FBI man, and of Mr. Berle's paper, is that we dare not leave off thinking about philosophical meanings. War may be the health of the State, but thought about ultimate questions is the health of the human community.

What advance, then, is there in this kind of thinking? Its main feature, it seems to us, is that it adds a scientific confirmation to the moral convictions of the Founders of the American Republic. They wanted a free society because they *felt* that freedom was right and good, and circumstantially left openings for change and growth. It is now becoming apparent that the maintenance of a free society depends upon the maintenance of living thought about the principles of freedom and how they can survive in a changing society. This all seems obvious on a rational basis, but from Mr. Berle's analysis it seems to be becoming obvious on scientific grounds. The inevitable conclusion is that a closer watch must be kept over the administrators who take the "value system" of the society they set out to manage and make of it a code of rules for the organization men to follow. Administrators want

simple, unequivocal guides to conduct, judges want unambiguous rules of law, and the police want simple definitions of public enemies. The fact is that the easy solutions to these questions are never the important solutions. A living, growing, free society needs open questions and tentative, uncertain answers. So, "the sort of man who would be likely to perform without question any orders his superior gave him, . . . is not a loyal American," as the Harvard professor said.

It hardly needs pointing out that a technologically advanced society which is precariously balanced on the edge of nuclear war is in a poor position to acknowledge this view. But if this society is so conducting itself that direct attention to the life principle of the good society is becoming increasingly difficult, failure to recognize this trend is an invitation to the "anarchy" Mr. Berle talks about.