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THE GLORY OF OUR SPECIES

THERE are epochs of history when men are confident that they know right from wrong, are sure of what they should do to fulfill the meaning of life, and thus are able to formulate clear-cut objectives. The bringing up of children is no problem in such periods. The reliability of tradition is taken for granted by the young. Epic song and agora aphorism confirm parental counsels. These times mark the beginnings of a course of great events. Men and women rise to heroic heights. Homeric classics are composed to celebrate their achievement. The ethical issues are known to all, giving moral substance and color to classic works of art. Custom embodies didactic instruction and the definition of virtue presents no difficulties.

Then, inevitably, the serpent enters the garden. Prometheans learn the moral thrill of disobedience, although having to pay the price exacted by Zeus. Fausts are born, and Machiavellis are studied in secret, then openly. Old ideals are stood on their heads, as by the Nihilists, who turn the inward truth of sacrifice into the ardor of destruction. Then, as Yeats put it, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." From what seems full disclosure, the meaning of life withdraws into mystery or parody, and what once seemed well known is proudly declared to be unknowable—the learned man's polite way of saying there is no hidden reality and that only poets and fools pursue it.

In the eighteenth century, what we now term "single-issue" politics found full justification. The condition of life, for reasons too numerous to name, assumed greater importance than its *meaning;* or, to look at that epoch in another way, what men called "freedom" became the abstract foundation of all meaning, taking the place of theology and metaphysical speculation. The constraints of inherited ideas of meaning—what is right and what is wrong—gave freedom its rebounding definition: it meant taking down the barriers, removing the obstacles, unseating the kings.

But freedom—real freedom—is practically undefinable. When you are actually free, you don't think about it, talk about it, or want to define it. It is a word of use only to those who are not free. For meaning, in other words, freedom depends upon its opposites. This is true of practically everything else, but the unfree have difficulty in reaching this sound conclusion.

Today, looking back on the past two hundred years, it seems fair to say that the men of the eighteenth century fought revolutions in order to obtain freedom as they were bound to define it, and then made use of their freedom to obtain what they regarded as its natural fruits. They wanted, and more or less got, what had been denied them by the old regime. Increasingly, however, in the present, we are dissatisfied with what we've got. Collateral dissatisfactions—those expressed by the disharmonies evident in nature—add strength to our subjective apprehensions. Can it be, people are asking, that we don't know much of anything about the meaning of life?

Since we have for at least a hundred years identified the old ideas on this subject in terms of their inversions, excesses, corruptions, and abuses, past counsels which appeal are hard to find. The entirety of what is called the "Modern Tradition"—a term careless of the reality of Relativism—embodies the rebellion in the arts and literature against all meanings declared in the past, but bringing also the terrible insecurities felt by single individuals who reject the comforts and reassurances of tradition. As Ellmann and

Feidelson say in their preface to *The Modern Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1965):

> If we can postulate a modern tradition, we must add that it is a paradoxically untraditional tradition. Modernism strongly implies some sort of historical discontinuity, either a liberation from inherited patterns or, at another extreme, deprivation and disinheritance. . . . Committed to everything in human experience that militates against custom abstract order, and even reason itself, modern literature has elevated individual existence over social man, unconscious feeling over self-conscious perception, passion and will over intellection and systematic morals, dynamic vision over the static image, dense actuality over practical reality.

Along with the excitement of personal insight and experimental daring comes, as a critic has said, "a sense of loss, alienation, and despair." We of the present, inheritors of both "traditions," combine harsh skepticism with longing, nostalgia with apprehension. We don't want to be fooled again, but the need of a sense of meaning increases daily. What shall we do?

Is there anything in tradition—any sort of tradition—that might at least frame the inquiry we want to pursue? Has there been a classic expression of our dilemma? The answer is yes. At any rate, we have lately been persuaded by Louis Halle that his reading of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* justifies this answer. Halle's new book is *The Search for an Eternal Norm—as Represented by Three Classics* (University Press of America, $9.75). The "classics" are *Hamlet*, the *Odyssey*, and Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Then, for a brief conclusion, he adds an essay on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. The title of the book conveys Halle's, and Hamlet's, conception of the meaning of human life. It is the search for a norm. We used to say "ideal," and some people now say "model," but the common usage of "norm" seems suitable—a basis on which to judge all that we think and do. Mr. Halle says in his introduction:

> Every authentic work of literature, art, or music represents a vision of this realm of being in terms of what it is or what it might be. As such, it is a philosophical vision, so that one can say of Bach's B-minor Mass or Botticelli's Venus or Homer's *Odyssey* as of Plato's *Republic*, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, that it is essentially a work of philosophy. Where a philosophy is explicit in Plato, Hobbes, and Kant, it is implicit in the music, the painting, and the poetry.

There are various ways of defending—demonstrating the validity of—this view. Mr. Halle has done this at the beginning of his *Men and Nations* (Princeton University Press, 1962), using a Platonic argument. Here he says:

> What is basic to human life, as distinct from all other life is a discrepancy between a normative order in men's minds and the existential circumstances in which they actually find themselves. Every human individual must necessarily have in his mind, whether he formulates it or not, and even if he is not conscious of it at all, a conception of some order that is proper in terms of what God or Nature intended. (It makes no difference whether he does or does not believe either in God or in a Nature that has intentions.) To take the simplest example, all of us would agree that our kind properly walk on two limbs where horses properly walk on all four. Saying that "Nature intended" us to walk on two limbs may be merely a figure of speech, yet the normative distinction, the distinction between what is and what is not proper to us, remains.
>
> When it comes to conduct that is not purely instinctive, each of us has to have a normative order in his mind on which to base it. He has no other way of deciding what he ought to do and how he ought to do it.

This is the fact, although it is equally a fact that people adopt quite different norms, and while literature is an ample record of most of these norms, some undoubtedly "truer" than others, we have and, as humans, can have, no external authority concerning the "ultimate" norm.

Working this out for ourselves—although learning from one another—is the chief business of being human. Halle remarks:

> I do not believe that the world of man, which is still evolving, has arrived at any ultimate end in terms of a normative order applicable to the organization of his societies. If there is such an order, representing the one and only propriety for our kind as the order of the hive represents the one and only propriety for the

> honeybee, then our evolution, unlike that of the honeybee, is still some distance from its attainment. . . .
>
> What impresses me in the present state of mankind is the discrepancy between any normative order at all that we men try to realize and the necessary limits of our actual achievement. In our individual lives and in our societies we strive to realize normative orders of one sort or another, and our attempts all end in failure. But the failure is like the death that occurs in the mythology of so many agricultural societies, a death forever followed by resurrection, a winter forever followed by another spring. Although men always fail, they always try again; and we must hope that these alternating seasons of striving and failure are leading to some ultimate end, however distant.

Do the various modes of striving and the subsequent failures have any influence on actual human affairs—that is, do we *learn* from experience? If so, what? Halle takes for illustration the Athenian conquest of Melos, after which the Athenians slaughtered all the males of the defeated city and sold the women and children into slavery.

> Before they did this, however, the Melian spokesmen pleaded that the people be spared in the name of the generally accepted view of what constitutes justice. Thereupon a classic debate took place. Said the Athenians: "You know and we know, as practical men, that the question of justice arises only between parties equal in strength, and that the strong do what they can, and the weak submit. . . . We believe that Heaven, and we know that men, by a natural law, always rule where they are stronger. We did not make that law, nor were we the first to act upon it; we found it existing, and it will exist forever, after we are gone; and we know that you and anyone else as strong as we are would do as we do.
>
> Here was a confrontation between two normative conceptions: the justice on the basis of which the Melians felt entitled to be spared, and what the Athenians called "natural law." Men who represented intellectual and moral authority at the time, and those who have represented it since, have been unanimous in supporting the normative position of the Melians and condemning that of the Athenians. Indeed, it is striking how the Melian outrage provoked anti-Athenianism among sensitive Athenians in much the same way that the Vietnamese War provoked anti-Americanism among Americans. The Athenian Thucydides, identified the crime at Melos with the moral downfall of Athens that preceded its political and military downfall.

Of the three classics examined in his book, Halle says that they "equate heroism and tragedy with the struggle of distinguished individuals to realize their respective visions of a normative order in an existential world that represents anarchy."

What is *Hamlet* about? One answer would be that it is about a bright but ineffectual young man who couldn't make up his mind. The comment is not inaccurate, but it tells nothing of the circumstances in which decisions became difficult for him, nor of the issues behind his ambivalence. Such casual dispositions of the play lead Mr. Halle to say:

> One can appreciate the character of Hamlet, I think, only to the extent that one is Hamlet himself. No doubt this is equally true of all the real characters in literature, of Macbeth or Othello, of Don Quixote or Sancho Panza, of Dmitri Karamazov or Prince Andrey Bolkonsky. Hamlet, however, represents the solitary individual who does not share the common mind by which his environment is governed. It therefore seems to me out of the question that anyone who, sharing the common mind, is happily adjusted to his environment, could understand him. Many who read the play think it must be great, as they have been told it is, because its lines are sonorous and high-flung, or because there is a mystery about his "madness" as about the Mona Lisa's smile, but they take Hamlet to be something different from what he is. . . . Again, men of the greatest intelligence who are, however, men of action rather than introspective contemplatives, could have no sympathetic understanding of Hamlet—could not, that is, identify with him. (For example, I cannot believe that the play could have as much meaning as *King Henry V* for Sir Winston Churchill; and this appears to be true as well of Sir Laurence Olivier, who was memorable in the roles of Henry V and Hotspur.) One must suffer from a certain maladjustment to feel the reality of Hamlet.
>
> Finally, there is the quality of Hamlet's mind. He is the prime example in fictional literature of intellect. Other heroes of Shakespearean tragedy—Lear, Othello, Macbeth, Antony—are capable of great

> passion or great moral nobility. Hamlet suffers and feels self-contempt because he is not capable of great passion, or of moral nobility in the conventional terms imposed by his environment. It is the quality of his mind that accounts for this incapacity. He is essentially solitary because he thinks and, thinking, cannot truly believe what everyone else believes; and because he therefore cannot, in any ultimate test, act on the common beliefs.

Shall we say, then, that Mr. Halle is making a bid for the idea that only very bright intellectuals can really understand Hamlet? No; he is arguing for the penetration of intelligence of another sort:

> I cannot believe that Socrates, by the standard tests, would have proved the best brain in Athens—that he would, say, have beaten everyone else in chess or in the solution of mathematical problems. . . . Men who can solve complicated mathematical problems in their heads will still live by the conventional beliefs of their environments, without questioning them, even when those beliefs make no sense. The intelligence that Socrates and Hamlet represent, each in his own way, is simply the intelligence that cannot accept without question, that has to think for itself at all hazards. More important than the possession of a great brain, for the appreciation of *Hamlet*, is the retention from childhood of the questioning innocence represented by the little child in Andersen's tale of "The Emperor's New Clothes."
>
> There are, however, degrees of appreciation, corresponding to the degree in which each of us is Hamlet. That the play has, for almost four centuries, been generally regarded as one of the greatest monuments of literature shows how many of us must have at least a touch of Hamlet in us however we may have succeeded in suppressing its appearance in public.

Hamlet, the unconventional son of a conventional king, feels himself to be miscast. Drawn to the contemplative life of a philosopher, he is precociously thrust by heredity and birthright into public responsibility by the very moral decline he would avoid. He feels that he has now to be "a man," and to balance the scales of justice before the world—but what, indeed, *is* a man? Further, many of the balancings of the past, even if performed by heroes, have not turned out so well. Then there is that Ghost—was it truly his father, speaking with his father's familiar voice, or only a semblance, a fragment of the departed psyche, fired into specious animation by the madness of revenge? Hamlet could no longer believe in so ugly a world with a full heart, yet that world had legitimate claims upon him; he could not escape:

> The time is out of joint; O cursed spite
> That ever I was born to set it right!

Mr. Halle takes us through the play, scene by scene. The case for his interpretation grows, and as it grows the idea of "interpretation" becomes a slight and unimportant thing; it falls away because what seems the truth of the play takes charge. The Hamlet in the author of the book comes to life, too. Why did he write it? In one place he says:

> What I have attempted to show . . . is the corruption that prevails at all the levels of power and influence in our world of today, as in ancient Greece, in Rome, in Medieval and Renaissance Europe, in ancient Persia, in Byzantium, in Confucian and in Communist China. This corruption is always tending to engulf us, to become total. The saving grace, time and again, is that of the incorruptible individual who thinks for himself is under an inner compulsion to utter what he thinks, and still survives long enough to be heard.

A reflective comment:

> The paradox of Hamlet's position was that, to realize the normative world in action, he would have had to embrace all the sordid devices of the existential world. He would have had to practice corruption to overcome corruption. He would have had to adopt the pragmatic means of conspiracy: secrecy, double dealing, hypocrisy, and violence. He would have had to give himself entirely to the struggle for personal power, thereby corrupting himself—so that he might indeed have ended as Nero did.

He wouldn't—couldn't—do it. So he was a failure. Or was he? Certainly not a complete failure, yet a failure, and it fell to Fortinbras, the clear-headed man of action, to set things right in Denmark. This, surely, needed to be done. But, Halle muses: "Even if Hamlet had set himself to carry out his role as Prince of Denmark, trying to be another Fortinbras, he would have failed, just

as I would have failed if I had found myself Prime Minister of Britain in World War II and had tried to be another Churchill."

A paragraph to work with—there are many others like it—comes toward the end of the discussion of the play:

> I question, moreover, whether the pure man of action represents the highest type of mankind. To me, the glory of our species is the human mind at the extremes of self-conscious awareness represented by a Socrates, a Montaigne, a Pascal, a Shakespeare—or a Hamlet. To me Voltaire represents a higher type than Napoleon, and much as I admire Pericles I would set Thucydides above him. This is to say that I set Hamlet above Fortinbras, although it would have been better if Fortinbras had been born Prince of Denmark. It is not that mankind does not depend alike on its Fortinbras and its Hamlets; but it depends on the former for its present salvation, on the latter for its ultimate salvation. We must save the world from day-to-day, and for that we need our Fortinbras, but if we are ever to emerge from the tragic dilemmas of this post-paradisial age it will only be by that constant enlargement of our understanding for which we depend on the few thoughtful, introspective, and incorruptible minds that are able to work in something approaching the ideal of academic detachment. Hamlet's personal tragedy was that this, his true vocation was denied him by inescapable circumstances.

It happens again and again. Yet such individuals go on being born.

REVIEW
THOSE OVERLAPPING REGIONS

HAVING in recent years read with pleasure and edification the series of articles now named "Portraits of Great Teachers," in the *American Scholar*—by far the best serious quarterly published in this country—we asked for a review copy of the current volume which contains them: *Masters,* edited by Joseph Epstein, who also edits the *Scholar* and was probably responsible for their initial appearance. Who are the teachers thus honored by now mature teachers and scholars who were once their pupils? In all they are eighteen, among them Morris Raphael Cohen, Alfred North Whitehead, Frederick J. Teggart, Arthur O. Lovejoy, Ruth Benedict, Hannah Arendt, and J. Robert Oppenheimer, to name a few. (Mr. Epstein's book is published by Basic Books at $14.95.)

We should like to begin by saying something about teachers. There are numerous knowing people in the world, but teachers are not only knowing, they are also caring. Their true pleasure in life is in helping others. Their joy is in the light of understanding that begins to show and then to glow in a serious student's eyes. There are not enough people in the world who live by nourishment of this sort. If there were, we would have another sort of world. This is a truth—a thumping, decisive, crucially important truth that is commonly overlooked in these days of bottom-line thinking. What decencies there are in the world are the result of the work of teachers. Our debt to teachers is immeasurable. It is impossible to read even one of these essays about distinguished teachers without feeling, at some point, an actual awe for the teaching profession at its best. And it is at its best in this book. Whatever is said from week to week in these pages about "academics" and "professionals" and "institutions," harsh though it be, is never meant to reduce the dignity of teachers of this sort—no more than "Woe unto you, ye lawyers" was intended to apply to individuals like Oliver Wendell Holmes, Benjamin Cardozo, Louis Brandeis, and William O. Douglas.

A list of names on a jacket—names of persons such as these teachers—has a peculiar effect. Some of them recall old (literary) friends, and before you dip into the book of appreciations you may be moved to look one or two of them up on the shelf. Seeing the name of Morris Raphael Cohen, we took down his *Preface to Logic*, first published in 1944. Usually you pick up a book like that with apprehension. Most reading about "logic" is both dull and formidable. But it isn't in Cohen. What he says may become so engaging that you take the book to bed with you. It's demanding, yet continuously inviting. The great thing about Cohen is his capacity for luminous explanation. The same may be said of his *Logic and the Scientific Method,* which he wrote with Ernest Nagel. Here, however, we are drawn to tell about a wonderful section titled "Concepts and Twilight Zones" in A *Preface to Logic.* The book is mainly about how logicians get into trouble, and how a better use of logic would get them out. The reader begins to understand why applying logic to life is so incredibly difficult, yet worth attempting all the same.

He starts out by saying that concepts are not mere generalizations from sense experience, but much more. In a clearly Platonic vein, he says that "Concepts are signs (mainly audible or visible words and symbols) pointing to invariant relations, i.e., relations which remain identical despite the variations of the material in which they are embodied." The ordinary percepts of daily life—tables, metals, animals—may vary in content, "But the genuine concepts of science, especially the mathematical ones, denote the relations or transformations that are the clues to the understanding of the various changes around us. This they do by making us see the pattern of these changes and the invariant characteristics which make things keep their identity throughout the change."

But there are what Cohen calls "Twilight Zones" in which the application of concepts (invariant relations) becomes obscure. The pure certainties of logic fade into ambiguity. Why?

> How do we reconcile the absoluteness of logical distinctions with the actual coexistence of opposites in these twilight zones?

What follows requires some thinking, but it has its reward.

> The answer is that the laws of logic apply to the realm of essence, i.e., to natural existences only in so far as they are determinate. If nature means the realm of the determinate, then obviously all the indetermination exists in another realm which we may call maya, mind, or something else and which will necessarily have to be viewed as nonnatural. If, however, nature includes both determination and indetermination, our empirical view of things can be explained as well as the growth of scientific or mathematical knowledge. . . .
>
> There is, however, nothing in logic or nature to prevent the existences of complexes in which contrary tendencies are conjoined. The law of contradiction is that nothing can be both *a* and not-*a in the same relation.* But physical entities or complexes of relations admit and often demand contrary determinations within them. Of any given individual it may be true to say that he is generous and not generous at the same time. The truth of both of these statements becomes clear and determinate if we draw a distinction and say he is generous to his family and in public charities, but ungenerous to his employees and economic competitors. A body cannot be moving north and south at the same time, but it may be pulled both north and south, and its actual path may be the resultant of the two opposite poles. The law of contradiction does not bar the presence of contrary determinations in the same entity, but only requires as a postulate the existence of a distinction of aspects or relations in which the contraries hold.

What could be more important for both thinking and writing than this discourse by Morris Cohen? Of course, great writers apply what he says intuitively, with grace and humor, but the rest of us need to study and work at learning from Cohen. He goes on:

> The last example suggests that to make logic applicable to empirical issues, we must employ the principle of polarity. By this I mean that the empirical facts are generally resultants of opposing and yet inseparable tendencies like north and south poles. We must, therefore, be on our guard against the universal tendency to simplify situations and to analyze them in terms of only one of such contrary tendencies. This principle of polarity is a maxim of intellectual search, like the principle of causality, against the abuse of which it may serve as a help. If the principle of causality makes us search for operating causes, the principle of polarity makes us search for that which prevents them from producing greater effects than they do.

Think of the high literary crimes and misdemeanors that might be eliminated by close attention to Morris Cohen! He goes from obvious illustrations to others that lead you to think somewhat as he did:

> In physical science the principle of polarity would thus be represented by the principle of action and reaction, and the principle that wherever there are forces there must be resistance. In biology it has been expressed by Huxley, in the aphorism that protoplasm manages to live only by continually dying. This finds its ethical analogue in the mutual dependence of the concepts of self-sacrifice and self-realization. Philosophically it may be generalized as the principle, not of the identity, but of the necessary co-presence and mutual dependence of opposite determinations. It warns us against the greatest bane of philosophizing, to wit: the easy artificial dilemma between unity and plurality, rest and motion, substance and function, actual and ideal, etc. . . .
>
> From the point of view of the principle of polarity, twilight zones are regions about the point of equilibrium of opposite tendencies. For this reason all concepts which swallow up their own negatives, like the concepts of reality, existence, experience, the universe, etc., are essentially indefinite in meaning.

Amplifying the "etc." would be a good way of being sure you understand Cohen. Soon after the above he warns the reader "against the widespread fallacy of supposing that any classification of natural objects can have the absolute rigor of logical division." He continues:

> The twilight zones between the classes of plants and animals, between vertebrates and invertebrates, need not disturb the biologist whose principles of division are based on concepts of wide and significant

> application. For practical purposes also we must adopt classifications that have even larger overlapping regions, for example, the sane and the insane, the normal and the abnormal, the well and the sick. It would be the height of unwisdom to refuse to adopt a useful classification because it breaks down in a practically negligible number of cases. But the confusion between the practicality of empirical classifications (to be tested by their applicability) and the absoluteness of division based on logical principles, is perhaps the most fruitful source of philosophic error. No other group of intellectual workers is so addicted to the use of sharp alternatives and to the easy assumption that things mast be in one of the compartments we provide for them *a priori*. There is reason to suppose that most philosophical errors (except when dealing with purely logical concepts) are downright fallacies; and metaphysical certainty as to matters of fact is the result of ignorance of anything to contradict our assertion.

Well, this may not be much of a review of Joseph Epstein's splendid book. But it might have the effect of getting the reader to wonder what sort of fellow Morris Cohen was to go to school to, and then he might want to read Sidney Hook, who did go to school to Cohen, and in his essay tells about the experience of learning from him, and how tough it was, also. In one place Hook says: "Morris Cohen was a critical genius wise enough to realize that the truly great philosopher must have creative vision and the power to embody it in detail."

Here we have given a sort of sample from Joseph Epstein's book, *Masters*, which includes articles on seventeen other teachers—some Cohen's peers, some not—but all worth reading about, and tracking down as we have the work of Morris Cohen.

COMMENTARY
SOME CONTRASTS

AN interesting contrast with Louis Halle's account (on page 7) of the dilemma confronting Hamlet—that in order "to realize the normative world in action, he would have to had to embrace all the sordid devices of the existential world"—is provided on the first page of a book that has just come in for review—Pyarelal's *Mahatma Gandhi—The Discovery of Satyagraha* (Sevak Prakashan, Bombay). In his Introduction Pyarelal describes the measures adopted by Gandhi during his years in South Africa:

> Rejecting the time-honoured notion that the practice of law was not possible without compromising on truth, he turned it into a means of service and his service into a means to self-realization. This invested whatever he did with a suggestion of universality. His legal clients became more and more his co-workers and colleagues, who shared his ideals and in the end threw in their lot with him in the Satyagraha struggle to share with him the hardships of imprisonment.

Another contrast is that between the press report of the arguments of Richard K. Turner (see page 5), the attorney who represented Kelly Segraves, and the explanation given in the Summer-Fall *Towards.* Segraves, he said, is a Baptist who "does not propose that public schools teach Christianity, and particularly his brand of Christianity exclusively."

> As a matter of fact, he is opposed to the public schools teaching religion, period. He is not opposed to the public schools teaching values, however, and he is not opposed to the public schools teaching about evolution. But his position is, he thinks the schools ought to be intellectually honest and teach the pros and cons, not just the pros.

In court Segraves maintained that he wanted the schools to actually practice their announced policy of teaching evolution as theory, not as a scientific dogma. Commenting, Turner said: "We took a case involving fundamentalist Christians and made it into a case representing all faiths." In Sacramento he contended that the California schools were ignoring the guidelines adopted by the Board of Education in 1970—"to the effect that evolution should not be taught dogmatically and that a variety of beliefs might be presented." However, the attorney said nothing about a statement attributed to Nell Segraves, founder of the San Diego Creation Science Research Center, mother of the plaintiff, to the effect that: "We want the authority and endorsement of the state removed from evolutionary theory. . . . We can't begin to get scientific creationism into the schools until this step is taken."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE MARCH OF BIGOTRY

THE politicalization of the "Evolution" issue in relation to the curriculum of the nation's public schools continues apace. The *Christian Science Monitor* for July 23 reported on a new law passed by the Louisiana legislature—following the example of Arkansas—requiring the teaching of "Creation Science" in the schools of that state. The *Monitor* Science editor calls the passage of this law part of "the march toward the U.S. Supreme Court, where at least some creationists say they want to put the concept of evolution itself on trial."

Similar efforts on the part of the Fundamentalists in other states have been defeated on constitutional grounds, leading to "new tactics" on the part of the advocates of "Creation Science."

> Creationists contend that teaching "godless" evolution in public schools amounts to state sponsorship of a religion which they sometimes call "secular humanism." They maintain that the scientific evidence supporting the theory of evolution is so vague, and its interpretation among biological scientists so controversial, that belief in evolution amounts to a religious conviction rather than an objective scientifically derived conclusion. . . . in urging equal time for their view, creationists now say they do not want religion or the Bible taught as such in natural science classes. They do want their view taught as a valid scientific interpretation of the evidence on an intellectual par with evolution. Moreover, they say, failing to do so amounts to state sponsorship of "religious" belief in evolution.

The American Civil Liberties Union has brought suit in federal court against Arkansas—and will also contest the Louisiana statute—on the ground that the law violates the constitutionally established separation of church and state. The ACLU argues that the law "does not prevent religious instruction but actually mandates such instruction in the form of a thinly disguised fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible." Interestingly, various religious groups have joined scientific bodies in support of the ACLU action.

The *Monitor* notes that the Creationists hope for a victory over the evolutionists in the Supreme Court. The California attorney Richard K. Turner (who represented Kelly Segraves of the Creation Science Research Center in Sacramento last March—see MANAS for June 17) has explained that he hopes to show before the Supreme Court that "the theory of evolution is just another religious faith." He will maintain, he said, that evolution is a "poor" theory because scientists fight over it, and that therefore believing in it is "akin to believing that there's a God."

Such arguments, one might say, make the best possible justification for the First Amendment and the separation of church and state, since it shows the futility of attempting to settle such matters by resorting to the courts. Evolution is an incomplete rather than a poor theory. More than half a century ago scholarly criticism pointed out that the world of learning is amply convinced of the fact of evolution, although *how* it proceeds is by no means agreed upon or established. There can be no rational objection to pointing this out, but if it should lead to making the uncertain advance of science into an excuse for imposing a pseudo-scientific interpretation of Bible teaching on schoolchildren, there is an obvious misuse of both reason and the courts.

Besides raising the constitutional issue, the ACLU's complaint charges that the Arkansas law "abridges the academic freedom of both teachers and students." As pointed out in *Civil Liberties* for June:

> The law requires teachers to teach a doctrine which they believe has no scientific basis or merit, the complaint states. To avoid teaching creationism, many will refrain from teaching evolution, "thereby depriving their students of the constitutionally protected right to acquire useful knowledge."

A plaintiff who lives in Little Rock (Ark.), Charles Bowlus, said that "materials distributed by creationists contain 'bogus facts and bogus quotes'." Niles Eldredge of the American Museum of Natural History in New York was heard at a news conference:

> "Science is the human activity of testable explanations of the universe," Eldredge said. "The

> only ground rules are that we can reject our ideas if we find that they don't agree with mother nature. Creationists, however, would have us believe a whole bunch of fiat assumptions, all having to do ultimately with some kind of supernatural creator."

Bruce Ennis, Legal Director of the ACLU, said at the conference:

> I'm concerned that we may be on the verge of another era of really serious intolerance and bigotry and hatred among various religious denominations. Those who founded this country knew that religious divisions can tear a country apart, and that's why they wrote into the very First Amendment to the Constitution a requirement for separation of church and state.

So much for the confrontation between creationists and scientists at the political level. It seems fair to say that the portion of the argument which gets into the papers reveals the creation advocates as irresponsible demagogues and the scientists as educators who are trying to be fair-minded, but who may be driven to extreme statements by the devious tactics of the fundamentalists.

The choice between blind belief and materialism is a painful one, but it is made almost inevitable when the issue is argued in political forums. The ACLU is well aware of this, as were the Founding Fathers, and—if one must take sides the scientific side has at least the self-correcting tendency of scientific endeavor to win open-minded adherents.

But it is a great pity that the claims of the "scientific creationists" should be publicized at a time when general scientific thinking is itself undergoing far-reaching changes—starting, say, with publication of Michael Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* (1958). The subtle, wondering, and tentative revisions in the attitudes of numerous thoughtful scientists need to proceed in an atmosphere unmuddied by the polemics of political controversy. It seems time for someone to point out that the choice, for educators, is not, and has never been, between scientistic materialism and the single dogmatic religion of sectarian Christianity. Evolution, as scholars have pointed out, appears in another form in the philosophic teaching of the early Gnostic Christians, and as Lafcadio Hearn and others have shown, Buddha taught a spiritual conception of evolution. Finally, as Theodore Roszak noted in *Unfinished Animal,* the theosophists, following Madame Blavatsky, are convinced of a non-physical evolution for human beings. What our present problems call for is a generation of teachers who will help students to remain open-minded and at the same time reverent in attitude toward the wonder of the universe and the mysteries of nature.

Can things like that be taught in the schools? Maybe they can't. But individual teachers can embody such attitudes and sometimes transmit them by a wonderful osmosis. Searching for an expression of this sort of "religion," we came across the following in Wendell Berry's *Continuous Harmony*, in an essay now reprinted in *Recollected Essays 1965-1980* (North Point Press, 1981, $7.50):

> We have obscured the question of faith by pretending it is synonymous with the question of "belief," which is personal and not subject to scrutiny. But if one's faith is to have any public validity or force, then obviously it must meet some visible test. The test of faith is consistency—not the fanatic consistency by which one repudiates the influence of knowledge, but rather a consistency between principle and behavior. A man's behavior should be the creature of his principles, not the creature of his circumstances. The point has great practical bearing, because belief and the principles believed in, and whatever hope and promise are implied in them, are destroyed in contradictory behavior; hypocrisy salvages nothing but the hypocrite. If we put our faith in the truth, then we risk everything the truth included—by telling lies. If we put our faith in peace, then we must see that violence makes us infidels. When we institute repressions to protect democracy from enemies abroad, we have already damaged it at home.

This is the sort of religion our country needs. The courts cannot help, nor can the government. How to spread it about is a question that has occupied the greatest of minds and lives. Yet speaking of it may possibly help—a little.

FRONTIERS

A Cosmic Principle

FOR foreword to the two articles we have for comment this week—one on waste and one on using it—we have a quotation from Katie Kelly's *Garbage* (1973):

> America produces over 360 million tons of garbage per year. No other country can begin to approach the amount of garbage generated by an alert and dedicated populace such as ours. This figures out to approximately 10 pounds a day or 1.8 tons per year for each and every one of us. (India can scratch up only 200 pounds per year per person. Imagine how the Indians must feel. It is one thing to own the Taj Mahal; it is another to produce only 200 pounds of garbage a year.)
>
> Three-hundred-and-sixty million tons of garbage. That is enough garbage to fill 5 million trailer trucks, which, if placed end to end, would stretch around the world twice. To shovel this pile of garbage out of harm's way costs American taxpayers $3.7 billion a year.
>
> We spend only $130 million on urban transit, only $I billion on urban renewal, only $1.5 billion on medical research, only $2.5 billion on food stamps and other nutrition programs.

Wes Jackson, director of the Land Institute in Salina, Kans., ends an article on Waste in *Catholic Rural Life* for June by saying:

> We can recognize that the precise moment that any food is wasted, it is an instrument of destruction. Immediately it is a weapon against ourselves, then a weapon against the life-giving soil and water, and as such, a weapon against unborn generations. We can't afford this for the earth is already over-taxed because of wars waged.
>
> Some will ask, "How successful will we be?" But that is not the right question. The Mennonites taught me several years ago, not in their words, perhaps, but in their spirit, that we are not called to success but rather to obedience to our vision.

Jackson begins this discussion with a recollection:

> My frugal mother would return so little as half an egg to the refrigerator and introduce it to the family again, probably in a hash. Many of us had similar experiences though the story in almost every home now is very different. And so is the story of the supermarket.
>
> Several of my students at The Land Institute go "trashing." They visit the rear entrance of a couple of supermarkets for food that has been set out or tossed into the dumpster. In two evenings they carried away 500 pounds of good bananas. One night they picked up 40 pounds of frozen red snapper.

Another time a student saved from the market's huge garbage disposal unit 30 dozen eggs, which were added to the compost pile at the Land Institute. "How," Jackson asks, "does this waste differ from a family's garden where a seeming waste is the consequence of abundance?"

> There is a fundamental difference when we grow the food ourselves. If one has too many turnips, the extra can be thrown to the cows or hogs or the chickens. If such animals don't exist on the premises, the nutrients can be returned to the garden to become some other food product next year.
>
> Once food leaves the field for distribution, oftentimes completely across the continent, it begins to bite heavily into the fossil fuel economy for transportation, processing, etc. When the extra or slightly wilted is run down the garbage disposal and chased with water to a sewage treatment plant and eventually into a river, then we can readily see that the American food system promotes the rush of useful atoms to the sea. . . . We all know the living world lives on waste. In one sense life exists because of waste. But from the garbage disposal to the treatment plant to the river and the delta is a continuous chain of atoms which stand little chance of ever being used again in the human food system—a fundamentally different kind of waste. This is the waste due to alienation from the land. Where there is alienation, stewardship has no chance.

How long will it be before a sizeable number of people begin to think in this way, spontaneously or naturally? There's not great hope for a population which fails in this. Our other article is "Recycling Ghettos," an interview with Wendy Johns and Walter Pierce, of the Ontario Lakers Youth Organization (in Washington, D.C.), in *Rain* for June. The Lakers were formed in 1964 in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood of Washington when it was

predominantly a minority and low income area. Neil Seldman, of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, asked: "What does recycling mean to you and the Ontario Lakers?"

The answer:

> Recycling means several things to our members. First it means the collection and sale of newspapers, aluminum and other items to raise money for sports programs. . . . The Lakers have done this since 1964. In the early 1970s we learned from a group called Community Technology that tools and skills can also be recycled. The more skills our youth learn the more money will come back to them. There's nothing new about recycling. Poor people always learn to re-use and use up everything in the survival game. But in Adams-Morgan we began fighting for public services, land and buildings because we knew that this was the closest we would come to owning things permanently.

Their sports programs grew, became popular, and now their Ghetto Invitational Basketball Tournament attracts over fifty teams, and the Lakers found a way to acquire their own headquarters building. Commenting, Pierce said that pride and responsibility grow from this sort of owning. Kids come to him and say, "We want to come back to Lakers. We didn't get paid but we did things. Our CETA jobs are not real jobs. We're getting lazy." Seldman asked if ghetto youth are able to relate to the "traditional environmental concerns which started the waste recycling movement." Pierce replied:

> It will be hard. Because low-income, unemployed youths are totally powerless and have no security. They do not worry about poisoned rivers, foul air, and carcinogens in food even though these evil things are hurting them. They have to worry about crime in their schools, and streets, about surviving, and managing to grow up with enough skills. But garbage recycling can be a bridge. A job has direct meaning.

Wendy Johns recalled a visit to the large-scale Bronx Frontier Development Corporation's composting project in New York, saying:

> Fifty jobs created. Our people can get into that. I mean, work hard for something. After recycling puts us to work baling paper and smelting aluminum, then natural curiosity will lead us to learn about energy savings, and material conservation. Then we'll all be environmentalists, too. But will the environmentalists come to appreciate our world and our day-to-day reality?

The first thing the Lakers did on the land they acquired was make a community garden. In 1980 they had fifty garden plots, and now they're doing "terrace gardening like the Japanese and intensive farming to get every inch of available space under cultivation."

Recycling has expanding meanings. It's a cosmic principle. No less.