

## NEW FAITHS IN THE MAKING

GREAT changes have come over the world during the past thirty years, and the most important of them are probably the least recognized. One major change has been in what might be called the foundation for opinions—in, that is, the sense of what is "real" and what are regarded as acceptable doctrines concerning human betterment. Remember the 20's? That was the "Jazz Age," but it was also a period of intense radical conviction—a conviction which grew out of feelings of clarity as to what "ought to be done." The Great Depression came as a kind of dark vindication of radical thinking—it was what they said would happen, and it happened. The Moscow Trials were still far away, the Revolution was still the solution to almost the entire gamut of human problems—or, at any rate, it was the solution that had to be applied, first, before subordinate issues could be dealt with.

The logical underpinning of radical thought lay in philosophical materialism. Socialist, communist, and John Dewey instrumentalist and social Progressive shared alike the basic nineteenth-century picture of the universe and were pretty much agreed on the forces which had shaped it. Those forces were physical and biological, and the physical, life, and social sciences were the sources of knowledge about our earth and the human beings who live on it.

Since the eighteenth century there has been this natural association between radical and humanitarian idealism and what may be called scientific materialism. It was the materialists, after all—the materialists and the agnostics—who were the real lovers of and fighters for human freedom. The materialists were the prophets and ideologues of the French Revolution, just as, in the United States, the Deists (who today would be classed as agnostics) shaped the issues which led to the American Revolution. The Deists also consolidated American freedom in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. These French and American revolutions were the "Do-It-Yourself" movement of

the eighteenth century, and this meant, "Govern-Yourself," in those days. Materialism was the philosophic attitude which justified the do-it-yourself attitude; so that it was natural for believers in freedom to become materialists.

Three forces preserved the integrity of philosophical materialism throughout the nineteenth century. First, it was believed to contain the truth—what truth was then known, and the promise of more, from scientific inquiry. Second, it became a habit, and any habit of belief becomes a source of psychological security which resists change. Third, materialism was, and still is, a doctrine which guarantees science freedom from theological interference. A religious demagogue cannot claim theological "rank" and dictate to materialists. They don't recognize his status as having any authority. So long as religion or religious organizations show an inclination to bias the conclusions of scientific research, or attempt to influence legislation or government with their sectarian motivations, so long will materialism remain an attractive resource and weapon to those who believe that freedom is the highest value in human affairs.

Not until the fourth decade of this century were there any really unsettling influences in the ranks of the materialistic idealists, or the materialistically inclined. But when the Russian Revolution began to reveal the brutish evidence of its failure as a humanitarian enterprise, one great emotional justification for materialism began to diminish in force. The reduction of this force has continued until the present day—although with a suspension of the process during the war years, when more urgent preoccupations claimed attention—and accelerated greatly about ten years ago, when powerful political motives added a "patriotic" reason for condemning "Red materialism."

The fear of theological interference with scientific inquiry has also fallen away, from several causes. First of all, most religious people learned to

respect the integrity as well as the contributions of scientific research. Of all the religious groups, only the Fundamentalist sects remain partisan opponents of Science. Fundamentalist Christianity is a monolithic faith with no room for appreciation of the scientist's devotion to impersonal truth. The attention paid to science by the Fundamentalists is entirely opportunistic. A revivalist will seize upon some fragment of scientific information in order to exploit it for his own purposes, but he will never credit any value to the scientific spirit, as such. The rest of the Christian community, however, no longer sees any threat from the scientific pursuit of truth. In fact, Christian belief has undergone extensive modification as a result of the findings of the sciences. Endless books have been written by Christian apologists to show how science and religion may be "reconciled"—with religion experiencing considerable modification as a result. Finally, "liberal" Christianity is the overt expression of religion which has endeavored to unite with both the scientific spirit and the movement for political freedom and social equality. Liberal Christians do not feel that they have compromised on their ancestral faith, but that they have exchanged their old "theology" for modern "sociology," in keeping with the needs and spirit of the times. They have, they believe, adopted what is good in the scientific movement and the movement for political freedom, without embracing the materialism on which these movements were founded. (They may discover, however, that they absorbed various elements of materialistic conviction, without knowing it, in the process!)

These general tendencies have naturally reduced the apprehensions of the scientists with respect to the threat of dogmatic religion. The denunciations of science which thundered from nineteenth-century pulpits have been replaced by acceptance of science as a revealer of the glory of Creation (through "evolution"), so that, today, few scientists indeed are militant free-thinkers or outspoken "atheists." Actually, there has been an opposite trend in recent years. Several distinguished scientists have turned their attention to religion, sometimes in a genuinely philosophical mood, and sometimes, apparently, with

the hope of reconciling themselves with some brand of orthodox religion. Alexis Carrel's *Man the Unknown* was probably a turning point in the broad inclination of scientific opinion, although this work was more a dispassionate review of the side of life which conventional science tends to ignore, than an embracing of religious attitudes. Lecomte du Noüy's *Human Destiny* (1947) was a direct effort to bring science and Christianity together, and since that time there have been other volumes with similar intent. That these attempts at reconciliation of science and Christianity are not particularly successful is irrelevant to the fact that, taken together, they reveal a definite change in the temper of the scientific attitude. In noting this, it should be added that the change need not be regarded as entirely a swing back to orthodox religion. There is plenty of other evidence to suggest that other scientists are open to wider philosophical considerations—Erwin Schroedinger's remarkable little book, *What Is Life?*, is an impressive instance—and it is likely that many men of scientific mind are thinking and speculating along such lines.

Of course, the wars of the twentieth century, which are rapidly becoming the wars of competing technologists, have had great influence on the scientists themselves. It has become increasingly difficult for scientists to feel confident that the future is—and should be—entrusted to their hands. A profession which has created an atom bomb and a hydrogen bomb can hardly ignore the threat to all mankind which their work has produced, even though they may personally disclaim the motives which turn these weapons to political and military purposes. In short, even if Robert Oppenheimer was wrong when he said that the scientists have "known sin," there can be little doubt that they are becoming well acquainted with humility. And the rest of the population, including the young and idealistic who in the 1920's would probably have been aggressively "materialistic" and eager supporters of a "scientific" solution of human problems (whether "scientific socialism" or some other plan for social change or reform), are now at least neutral regarding the promise of Science. Science, they now tend to believe, is technique, and very little more.

In these several ways, then, the principal forces which preserved philosophical materialism have been worn away. All that remains is the *habit* of regarding things from a materialistic point of view. And a habit which loses its reinforcements of justifying motivation can be easily displaced.

This brings us to the idea of "new faiths in the making." While there is no great, integrating conception on the horizon at the present time, a number of new influences are emerging—influences which, given time, may grow together to produce a new "world view." In any population, there are always those who seek ideas which seem to have "leverage," in order to find fulfillment for their lives. Every generation has its quota of strong and determined individuals who feel frustrated unless they can find work that requires dedication and all-out commitment. There are of course special fields young men and women can enter—fields often written of in these pages—which give scope to humanitarian enterprise. Mental health is high on the list of areas where deeply engrossing work can be done. Food supply and nutrition define another great region of effort. In the Orient, politics affords opportunities different from political activities in Western countries, chiefly for the reason that, in the present, Eastern lands uniquely combine the problems of both traditional and progressive industrial societies. Asian countries are industrial societies of the future, revolutionary societies of the present, and traditional societies of the past, so that a great challenge exists in the politics of the East. It is likely, however, that as the Asian nations "catch up" with the West in industrial achievement, the political challenge will diminish to the same rather uninspiring level as prevails in the West, making it plain that the fundamental issues of our time are not political.

Of more far-reaching significance, perhaps, than the apparently "practical" developments of the present, such as the interest in psychotherapy and the soil-food-nutrition axis, is the slowly emerging concern with psychic research and related matters. While, superficially, the "glamor" of the supernatural seems sufficient to explain the popular attraction of the case of "Bridey Murphy" and similar "regression"

phenomena, there may be a much more profound longing of the human heart at work in these interests. A hundred years or so ago, science was supposed to have slammed the door on all such possibilities, but people—not just "the masses," but people of every sort, learned as well as humble—want to believe in an *open world*. The closed system of mechanistic cause and effect which many of the scientists adopted would never have seemed attractive at all, except for its value in the scientific polemic against religious dogma, and now that there is not even a "cold war" between science and religion, why should anyone keep his mechanistic powder dry?

The intellectuals have long since abandoned any semblance of strict loyalty to formal materialism. Kierkegaard, Vedanta, and Zen Buddhism, in approximately that order, have become absorbing studies for men who have lost confidence in the bold "social" credos of the 20's and 30's. Gandhi and Schweitzer have left their mark as greater humanitarians than any of the heroes of earlier, "progressive" persuasion, and determined *disbelief* is no longer a badge of merit permitting a man to call himself "enlightened." The feeling, these days, is that an intelligent person is entitled to believe whatever he can, while the rest of us will probably do well to examine his beliefs with something more than curiosity.

Against the background of this temper of opinion, the world of psychic wonders assumes a new significance. What if there *should* be undiscovered country in these happenings? With a shrewd editorial instinct, the pulp magazines have been working this vein for ten or fifteen years, but pulp audiences have never cared much about being consistent with prevailing learned opinion. The point is that, today, there isn't any sure and articulate learned opinion. There are no clearly marked boundaries to say where the "real" world begins and where it leaves off. Only the old habits of thinking define the world in conventionally materialistic or "scientific" terms.

It seems advisable to view this situation with a little alarm, as well as with some wonder and delight. An obvious virtue of the old world-picture was the discipline it imposed upon anyone who decided to try

to say something about "reality." He could speak freely, but he had to learn the rules and stay within the limits of the prevailing notion of the scientific method. The danger, now, is that, with an enormously expanded universe in prospect—a world with a psychic *inside* as well as a physical *outside*—otherwise orderly minds may easily fall prey to the temptation to do without any rules at all! After all, in the opinion of many, no "rules" exist for psychic matters, so why worry about them?

These speculations anticipate a really awful confusion. Anyone who has explored the corner of a second-hand book store devoted to so-called "metaphysical" titles will have no difficulty in imagining the riot of visionary sentiments, sweetness-and-light, and magical nonsense that will result when all the barriers of nineteenth-century skepticism are down and belief in superphysical reality becomes *fashionable!* At the present writing, we can see nothing to prevent a fashion of this sort in pseudo-intellectual circles, and much to bring it about.

Joining the rear-guard of a skeptical reaction will do no good. The *Partisan Review's* "Failure of Nerve" series, printed some years ago, said about all there was to say from the skeptical viewpoint, and was about as effective as throwing rocks at an oncoming tidal wave. Moreover, if you believe, as we happen to, that psychic phenomena are natural expressions of the non-physical aspect of the world, and not supernaturalist delusions or frauds, to deny them in the interest of "sanity" and intellectual order would be like trying to suppress swelling seeds by sitting on them.

The thing to do, instead, is to find out what order already exists in our understanding of the world of psychic happenings. In most cases, people who acquire a sudden interest in psychism—their "habit" of materialistic assumption suddenly disappears, leaving them free—fail to realize that a handful of people kept on studying psychic phenomena and writing about them all through the cycle of materialistic denial, and that there is a rather remarkable "library" of serious works on the subject, ranging, in the resources of Western culture, from the time of Jamblicus of the Neoplatonic School,

through the epoch of Mesmer in the eighteenth century, to the nineteenth-century literature, where readers may find discussions in the works of Crookes, Wallace, some of the more philosophical Spiritualists, and books by Madame H. P. Blavatsky. There are numerous present-day students of the psychic, the most eminent of whom is presently Dr. J. B. Rhine. No one need launch himself upon an investigation of psychic reality without warning and instruction, nor should he, for this is a field which holds as many intoxications as any bar-room, and is as rich in delusions as a psychiatrist's case-book.

New faiths *are* in the making. The question is, are we equipped to make them any better than the faiths we had before?

## REVIEW

### MORE "EAST-WEST" PHILOSOPHY

SUBSCRIBERS may be pleased to note that *Philosophy East and West*, unique quarterly published at the University of Hawaii, has resumed publication. While many of the articles appearing in this journal since its origin in 1950 have been too detailed and academic for the average taste, a current of constructive give-and-take between East and West has been notable, with two or three articles in each issue well worth anyone's reading.

In the October 1955 number, E. A. Burt, professor of philosophy at Cornell, asks, "What Can Western Philosophy Learn from India?" Professor Burt, who compiled *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha* for the Mentor religious classic series, is an interesting sort of philosopher to read, for one of his specialties seems to be constructive reevaluation of former personal points of view.

Although Burt's stay in Eastern lands left him as much or more a Buddhist than a Christian, we are sure that neither his Christianity nor his capacity for philosophical subtlety suffered from the change. In his present writing, he endeavors, particularly, to convey a sense of the value which others might derive from an Eastern adventure of the mind. "The great thing that we can gain," he writes, "from the study of Eastern thought is a new and provocative perspective in which to pursue our philosophic thinking. It can give us a more inclusive orientation in our understanding of what sort of thing philosophy is. In terms of that orientation intriguing possibilities will emerge as to the role that philosophy should fill, as to the major questions that each of its branches should attack, and as to the basic presuppositions which it is wise to adopt. Along with this enriching experience there come, of course, many less adventurous rewards."

There is indeed a wonderful inclusiveness about the atmosphere of Eastern philosophy, a

demonstration of the capacity for "drawing a larger circle" and "taking in" even the contentions of contentious people. This attitude, Burt thinks, should be emulated. After all, much of the conflict between rival schools of thought—religious, scientific, or psychological—has led directly away from understanding and intellectual progress. Perhaps the habit goes back to those medieval disputants who, because of the partisan atmosphere of their day, were chiefly concerned with vanquishing an opponent. And we want the vanquishing to be *complete*. Our triumph is automatically the defeat of our foe; it is seldom conceived as the gaining of further insight from what the opposing partisan has to say. Prof. Burt puts the matter well:

We Westerners want to be able to say to a philosophic opponent. "If I am right (and, of course, I am), you who have said something different must be wrong and no fooling about it. If I say that S is P, then that assertion is to be accepted and your statement that S is not-P is to be rejected. None of this pussyfooting about maybe S is P, and maybe from another point of view it is not-P." This makes for spicy debates and hilarious argumentation; when two redoubtable pugilists engage in such intellectual sparring the rest of us crowd the sidelines in the philosophic journals and watch the fray with excited absorption. And anyone skilled in the device of "massive verbal retaliation" after the style of G. E. Moore can be sure of a host of admirers. But it is a terribly slow, wasteful, and cantankerous way of getting ahead in philosophy. Satisfying though it is to our belligerent instincts, sober consideration must recognize that it puts us under a serious handicap in comparison with thinkers who can grow toward the larger truth without battering each other through these obstructive conflicts. The sane and rapid technique for philosophic progress is, surely, to be ready at any moment to distill the positive insights from what other philosophers say, not worrying overmuch about their blunders, and to apply one's power of searching and ruthless criticism to one's own present ideas so as to purge them of their errors with the least possible delay.

Prof. Burt is not of course alone in trying to broaden the base of Western philosophy. We might say instead that there is a considerable trend in this direction, with writers such as Joseph

Campbell, Eric Fromm, and C. J. Ducasse heading a MANAS "list" of contributors to this effort. John Wisdom, of Oxford, as Burt reports, is another who is interested in plans for ridding ourselves of unconscious sectarianism:

John Wisdom has contended, in opposition to the dicta of the logical positivists, that it is unfortunate to reject metaphysical doctrines as senseless because they cannot be pronounced either true or false by adequate empirical evidence. Rather, the more generous and constructive position is to recognize that, while the champion of either side in a metaphysical issue is claiming more than he has a right to, there are yet reasons which incline a thinker to adopt the one side and there are also reasons which incline to the adoption of the other. For example, are general propositions reducible to some combination of particular ones? There are considerations which support an affirmative answer there are considerations which render that answer difficult. Neither set of considerations seems to be decisive, at least when due account is taken of the other set. So, whatever decision one makes in such an issue, he should make it in full realization of the reasons that incline others toward a different decision, and therefore in full awareness of the total situation which is involved. This constitutes a recognition, in the terminology and setting of present-day English philosophy, of the appropriate role of "both P and not-P" and "neither P nor not-P." Since neither of the two answers is rejected as wrong, the alternative "both-and" is playing its part in Wisdom's solution. Since neither of the two is accepted as unqualifiedly right, the alternative "neither-not" is playing its part. If Western philosophy should follow the lead of such suggestions to the extent of developing a "logic" of metaphysical decisions in which the role of these two alternatives is explicitly recognized, it would have gone a long way toward adopting the principle of fourfold negation in the context of its own problems.

Whatever validity there is in the suggestion that religion and politics should never be "argued," is here supported. While both may be *discussed*, the value of discussion does not reside in the vigorous defense of one's own position, but rather in shifting the argument to new ground, where what we have to say may be better appreciated. Even a new vocabulary may be in order. We of the West have long refused to speak the language of metaphysics because we have

falsely held that any "ultimate" conviction must arise in the sphere of emotion rather than that of reason. Metaphysics is then seen as an attempt to make our reasoning conform with emotionally produced assumptions. This, we believe, leads to false reasoning, and when the psychological warfare between religion and science is carried on by false reasoning in the name of metaphysics, we feel entitled to be distressed by the entire enterprise. However, since philosophy, as Burt puts it, "will not allow itself to be permanently imprisoned," it may yet come of age in the minds of even average work-a-day men. And the values to be gained in politics, education, and religion will, in such an event, be far-reaching.

We have to be willing to dethrone our own absolutes, in other words, in order to come relatively nearer to truth, and if we enthrone them once again, we'll do it with the same sort of reservation that a scientist practices while exploring a hypothesis in which he has great faith.

## *COMMENTARY*

### KOINONIA MEANS COMMUNITY

KOINONIA FARM is the name of a cooperative community in Americus, Georgia, founded some fourteen years ago by people who resolved to put into practice the New Testament injunction to "have all things common." During the years since, Koinonia has grown into a highly successful farm of 1100 acres operated by sixty members. According to an article by Dave Dellinger in the December *Liberation*:

They live in Christian communism, sharing the work and the proceeds, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." . . . They have no hierarchy of leaders or elected rulers, but make all important decisions in group assembly. The members refuse to serve in the armed forces. They have been excommunicated from the neighboring church. They have been told that they are selfishly trying to live ahead of the times, that they belong in the factories, the unions, the segregated local church, the army—in order to work with the people wherever the people are. But they have an "open door" for others to join them, and an open heart toward all humanity.

Koinonia is made up of both black and white Americans. Through the years, the members accomplished much in overcoming local resentment of the community's interracial population. But last year, when Clarence Jordan, one of the founders of the community, joined with an Atlanta minister to sign the applications of two Negro candidates for the Georgia State College of Business Administration, Koinonia became the object of vicious attack. The Americus paper accused the community of wanting to overthrow "our true democratic way of life." Koinonia (Greek for "community") was harassed in many ways. Licenses were withheld. The community's insurance policies were cancelled. Merchants turned down Koinonia both as producer of goods to sell and as a buyer of supplies. Koinonia's 4,000 laying hens had no market for their eggs, a \$2,000 order for peanut seed was cancelled, and even gasoline for trucks and tractors became difficult to buy. The State of Georgia decided that

Koinonia was not a non-profit institution and, reversing an earlier ruling, assessed the community retroactively for taxes for the preceding five years.

Then, on the night of July 23, the Koinonia roadside market was "bombed" with ten or fifteen sticks of dynamite. No human beings were hurt, as the market is about five miles from the main farm, but the front of the building was wrecked and about \$3000 worth of equipment was destroyed. There were other attacks. A buckshot charge ruined refrigerating equipment valued at \$300. Clarence Jordan avoided a menacing shotgun held by a man whose car blocked the way across a narrow bridge, only by quickly backing his car out of range.

Shortly after midnight on January 14 of this year, a large charge of dynamite was again set off in the roadside market. This time it was placed inside the building and blew the entire structure to bits. Nothing of equipment or goods was saved. The total loss was between \$5000 and \$7000.

A mimeographed newsletter from Koinonia Farm remarks:

We have decided, at least for the time being, not to clean up the wreckage, but to leave it beside the highway as a mute testimony to passersby of the fruits of hate and prejudice. It is fairly certain that, due to its distance from the main farm, we will not rebuild the market on the same location within the foreseeable future.

Koinonia is now dependent upon mail order business for its economic survival. While 125 smoked hams, 100 pounds of shelled pecans, and large quantities of bacon, sausage, and tongue were lost in the Jan. 14 explosion and the fire which followed, the community still has foodstuffs of this sort with which to fill orders. The hams weigh from eight to eighteen pounds and sell at 85 cents a pound. Bacon (in sides) sells at 60 cents a pound. Other items include shelled pecans (\$1.25 a pound) and unshelled pecans (\$2.75 for five pounds), and unroasted peanuts. Any order of five pounds or more comes postpaid East of the

Rockies. Add fifteen cents a pound for West Coast orders.

The Jan. 14 explosion did not end Koinonia's troubles. At 2 A.M. on Jan. 18, a vacant dwelling belonging to the community, about half a mile from occupied buildings, burst into flame. This loss amounted to about \$1500.

Koinonia is not without friends in this region of Georgia, but its friends receive much the same treatment as the community. One farmer who had cooperated with the community found four kerosene flares on his place—soon enough to prevent a blaze—and another farmer's barn which housed machinery worth \$30,000 was mysteriously destroyed by fire.

But the people at Koinonia are not giving up.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### CORRESPONDENCE AND OURSELVES

NOTES here in MANAS for January 16 quoted a friendly comment on Russian primary schools, from an article by Morris Ernst in the *Winter American Scholar*. A reader who has apparently been in a position to know something of the unpleasant side of life beyond the Iron Curtain, including what oppression by rigid ideologies can mean to adults and children alike, is unhappy with our apparent complicity in a whitewash. He voices his complaint:

Of course what appears in the *American Scholar* under the name of Morris Ernst is really their and his affair; but when quoted by you in the January 16, 1957 issue, becomes your and my (as "faithful reader") affair. The tone on the children observed by Ernst in Russia is curiously like that of the nineteen thirties, and like that of present-day journals of soviet origin which seem to avoid the heart of the matter of what is going on today by dealing with the children, who in any land seem to stand above reproach.

Like Ernst's essay on "the human side of life behind the iron curtain" the recent issues of MANAS have had a tendency to liquidate the valid concern of the West which has even penetrated to Washington to deal with this inhuman side of life behind the iron curtain! The only travellers who have the true picture of this life behind the curtain are those who never returned to tell their story.

Our only point, really, was that it is good to remember, as our correspondent says, that the children in any land "seem to stand above reproach." And the responsibility for optimistic emphasis is chiefly ours. Any reader who shares the reaction of the present correspondent would do well to clear Mr. Ernst of the charge of "whitewashing" by referring to the *Winter American Scholar*, for our quotations were admittedly chosen to highlight a few bright aspects of a dark picture. Mr. Ernst deplors many other aspects of the Russian schools.

However, to find assurance that a Russian school is "run by a kind woman who obviously understands kids," and that Russian educationists have "achieved a miracle, though they have yet a long way to go in terms of the best American education," does not imply that authoritarian control may be a fine thing or that one would like himself to live in Russia. We have often stressed favorable comments on some aspects of Russian life in an effort to contribute what may be possible to international understanding. Most of our reading on the subject is so heavily politicalized that we need such reminders to prevent us from regarding every unknown Russian with hostility. It is precisely the inculcation of hostility in Russian propaganda which conditions the Soviet population to accept as necessary the "protective" and "defensive" extremes of authoritarian control.

We are reminded here of passages in Dwight Macdonald's "Responsibility of Peoples," showing that one of the most dangerous delusions of the modern world is the idea that peoples can be collectivized, entified, and charged with guilt *en masse*. Macdonald was here analyzing (he wrote in 1945) the psychology of wholesale condemnation of Germans, and pointing out that the logic which impelled and supported condemnation is precisely the same logic which seemed, to the majority of the German people, to justify Hitler's fanatical hate of Germany's "ring of enemies." Macdonald writes:

In place of the rigid, unexamined customs which determine the individual's behavior in primitive communities, there is substituted today a complex politico-economic organization which is equally "given" and not-to-be-criticised in its ultimate aims and assumptions, and which overrides with equal finality the individual's power of- choice.

The parallel goes farther. As primitive man endowed natural forces with human animus, so modern man attributes to a nation or a people qualities of will and choice that belong in reality only to individuals. The reasons are the same in both cases: to reduce mysterious and uncontrollable forces to a level where they may be dealt with. The cave dweller feels much more comfortable about a

thunderstorm if he can explain it as the rage of some one like himself only bigger, and the urban cave dwellers of our time feel much better about war if they can think of the enemy nation as a person like themselves only bigger, which can be collectively punched in the nose for the evil actions it collectively chooses to do. If the German people are not "responsible" for "their" nation's war crimes, the world becomes a complicated and terrifying place, in which un-understood social forces move men puppetlike to perform terrible acts, and in which guilt is at once universal and meaningless. Unhappily, the world is in fact such a place.

"Political animism" is dangerous doctrine, for it enables one to support or excuse blanket condemnations, and with such excuses comes tolerance of McCarthyism and witch-hunts within our own boundaries, and such attitudes as the "bomb-them-all" approach to the problem of Russia.

An unexpected source of emphasis on this point comes from a recent newspaper clipping which reports the remarks of Steve Allen, television humorist. Supplying a guest sermon from the pulpit of a Universalist Church in New York, Mr. Allen got down to some constructive fundamentals. As reported by the *New York Times*:

The subject of Mr. Allen's sermon was "Pride." He stressed the importance of perspective, and cited statistics to illustrate the vastness of the universe.

"The earth is only one of a billion balls juggled in space," he said. He suggested that the inhabitants of this planet would do well not to indulge a sense of self-importance.

One of the most dangerous manifestations of pride, Mr. Allen said, is nationalism. "Our planet is a grain of sand in God's Sahara," he said, then asked: "How can we call the United States God's country if we're not even sure ours is His special planet?"

Saying that he hoped he did not take pride in his own humility, Mr. Allen took issue with Stephen Decatur's often-quoted statement upholding "my country right or wrong."

Mr. Allen said his own view was that "we owe a far greater loyalty to other good men and ideals the world over than we owe to any American men or

institutions that are not acting in a justifiable manner."

So, while we sympathize with our correspondent's dislike for painting any aspect of soviet life in rosy colors, we like the other point better. Striving and achievement, and the urge to educate, deserve recognition and sympathy wherever they exist—the more so when found in a country whose internal and external policies give us so little to admire.

## *FRONTIERS*

### Natural Enchantments

[From England comes this letter, written at Christmas time, in which the writer records what seem some of the most delicate evocations of the human heart. Few men, surely, have failed to wonder about the mysterious movement of the feelings in response to both heard and unheard symbolisms of such beings as Saviours, but fewer by far have been able to communicate their wonder in terms so clear as the expression of this correspondent. It is as though the inspiration of that hour has been distilled and carried forward to this—rendered from the voices of the boy choristers to the speech of the mind, and repeated in a musing spirit. Since our English friend suggests that we comment, some few thoughts have been appended to this rare contribution, but only in a tentative and wondering mood.—Editors.]

DEAR MANAS Friends: This won't reach you till well on in 1957, but as I write it on Christmas eve, let me begin with the seasonal good wishes. And as the reasons for my writing to you involve both Christmas and the significance of time, I may as well begin by assuming that my Christmas greeting is just as effective even if you know nothing about it for a month.

Well, now, I am always stimulated by your discussions bearing on religion, and as I count myself a "Christian" who believes that all theological dogma is the worst enemy of true religion and of the teaching of Christ (perhaps it is better to say "Jesus"), I am usually in agreement with what you write. Now, just this afternoon, I have been having one of those experiences which I believe most people have at some time or other, and life would be very much poorer without them—an experience charged with emotion, of the type that is sometimes called an exalted emotion, and in the context of what is usually called religion. In other words, I spent over an hour listening to some of the most familiar Christmas carols, and some less familiar, interspersed with readings from the Bible, chiefly about the birth of Jesus. The service was relayed, as it regularly is each year, from the wonderful chapel of Kings College, Cambridge, and the rendering of the

carols, through the voices of a well-trained choir, including some exquisite unbroken boys' voices, again and again brought tears to my eyes. But even whilst I was in the grip of this emotion, I was asking myself what it all meant to me.

Of course, there are a lot of things that one can say about it. First, I suppose that the orifice and the tear-ducts are in close proximity, so that certain sounds may have a special effect on the tear-ducts. The high notes in "Once in Royal David's City," as sung solo by a young chorister, were altogether too much for me. Even now, I find myself caught up in the emotion again, as I recall the experience. No doubt it is the combination of several factors that produces this result: the beauty of the sound, the recollection of my own childhood, and the sense of the perpetual wonder of human birth—and maybe other factors too. In other words, the very acme of sentimentality, or of emotionalism. Yes, certainly, but what is this thing that we call emotionalism? Why is it so potent within us? What are the forces that evoke it most effectively? And why? Is it wholly irrational? Is it a vital part of a well-ordered human life? If we deliberately try to eliminate it, do we damage the human creature in some way? In other words, is its expression, within limits, from time to time, desirable or even necessary?

The hymn I have referred to, by a Mrs. Alexander, who, I believe, lived in North Ireland a hundred years ago, expresses what to me is an entirely naïve view of Jesus. The last verse pictures us all as seeing Jesus in the future, not in a cattleshed, but in very tangible fashion, "set at God's right hand on high." Now, even while I listen to those words, with tears in my eyes, my mind dismisses them as nonsense, all the more so as I am convinced that their authoress meant them in all seriousness and very literally. So, too, with some of the statements contained in the passages read from the Bible. But the whole service is so beautiful, so well ordered, so perfect in its conception, that I do not want a syllable altered.

Even at the very moment when my intellect rejects much of it, my emotion applauds and accepts the whole *as a whole*.

Now, what does this mean? Does it simply mean that I am living in two worlds at once, and that I have not had the strength of mind to throw out the childish emotions? I do not think so. Does it mean that every man contains within himself some elements of the whole of human history, and that he is well advised to allow some of the earlier chapters to come to the surface every now and then, provided they are parts that are not a danger to human society (obviously I must not suddenly let the ancient Britain take hold of me, and throw off my clothes in favour of woad, and go out with a club to hit my neighbors in the next "cave" over the head)?

But I suggest that it may be very healthy for the mature man sometimes to remind himself of the beautiful experiences of his childhood, in such a way that in an important sense he *becomes a child again*. It can have a very cleansing effect on the mind. At the moment, as I hope this letter shows, my own mind is strongly stimulated by the experience I have had this afternoon, so much so that, as you see, I want to stimulate you to discuss some of these issues in MANAS. (Will someone say: "You are merely intoxicated by the music; alcohol could have done it." Very well—another point to discuss.)

I will, as it were, recapitulate my two points by saying something fresh on both. First, I am sure that many intelligent men and women continue to be practicing members of the Roman or Anglican Churches, not because they accept the creeds of those Churches (sometimes they convince themselves that they do, by means of marvellous mental gymnastics), but chiefly because the beauty of the ritual and the music, with its ancient historic content, feeds a part of their nature that might otherwise be starved.

Secondly, I recall once hearing Eddington say in a lecture that the physicist could see no special reason why time only goes one way. Well, can it

be that humanity is dimly aware that in the nature of things time might go backward as well as forward? So, in projecting himself backward from time to time, he is not violating the laws of eternity, but only the ordinary rules of daily life—perhaps. Well, anyway, there are a few ideas for you to comment on some time if you so incline.

I hope you are all flourishing. You seem to be, judging from MANAS which I still commonly read from cover to cover.

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Two memories remain with the reader from this account of inward experience—the scene of boys singing carols, and the scene conjured into being by the old Irish hymn which tells a "literal" or "naïve" story of Jesus. Our correspondent wholly persuades us of his conclusion as to the appropriateness of his own reaction. No such barren comments as he anticipates parenthetically will come from this quarter! But what does occur is the need for pondering the meaning of this sort of response—which recalls, interestingly enough, the feelings written about last week by John Collier, which were induced for him by seeing once again the Red Deer Dance performed by the Pueblo Indians of Taos, New Mexico.

It is enough, perhaps, to say that any symbolic performance representative of something which the performers regard as filled with ultimate meaning should generate in others a feeling of deep respect, and on occasion, rapport. A consecrated act is an act which moves out and beyond all ordinary behavior. It is the act of a man being more than a man, and the realization of this, since time began, has gripped the human heart. It is an act which bespeaks the transcendency of the human spirit, bringing a sacred promise for all men, and for ourselves.

But the songs of the choristers seem to bear a special significance. Boys whose voices have not changed produce a kind of limpid sound which may call up unconscious memories of ancestral purity. This sound means something to us as

individuals, and it goes beyond individuality in the sense of intimating the beauty of an antique innocence—before, perhaps, what theologians call the "Fall." It is inconceivable that this universal symbolism should be without authentic meaning, whatever its hidden truth. Boys' voices echo something of the austere pageantry of nature, the beauty of life not yet twisted into the postures of struggle by the agony of moral decision. They sing of ages when the world was young, theirs is truly the art of pastoral symphony. It would be poor religion indeed which had not in its forms and rituals some reminiscence of that ancient past—of the golden time when men were not yet, but were, perhaps, still becoming.

These are mysteries, no doubt, yet the presence of these mysteries in the great religions of the world is doubtless the reason why so many men remain convinced that there are depths of truth in religion which cannot be ignored. Theologies may have covered up such truth with superficial claims and interpretations, but meanwhile the organic quality in religious expression survives, and survives best when religion finds natural union with the arts. The true artist always purifies religion in embodying its themes in his work, since it is a part of the artist's genius to be an agent of the "divine economy." He tends to dispense with the irrelevant, the false, and the pretentious. What the artist can feel and express is likely to be true, although often not in the way that the spokesmen of religion have intended.

There is also, alas, a beguilement in the employment of the arts in the service of religion. Not all *forms* of the arts embody the freeing inspiration of the artist. Formal beauty can be a captor of the mind, just as music may enthrall the feelings. No instrument for good can avoid misuse, no charm of harmony protect against the delusion of wholeness in which it may dress some partisan institution. There comes a time, indeed, when the æsthetic yearning of men may have to wait, while they busy themselves with the rude

tasks of reform and reconstruction. When Jesus was born in a stable, the choristers, if such there were in his time, served quite another dispensation. The forms and rituals were not of his mission, but belonged to the temples where the money-changers pursued their calling.

The thing that will always claim our respect, even our reverence and response, is the wholeheartedness of human devotion. If there be delusion in it, the errors are somehow made slight by the strength which we know exists within. But when wholeheartedness dies, then the time has come for a new embodiment of truth, for new songs, and subtler symbolisms, closer, perhaps, to the high and recreating visions of which the mind is forever capable.