

THE PSYCHIC FERMENT

NOW and then, the boil and bubble of anxious world—wondering and world-weariness throws up a genuine symptom of the future—some premonitory evidence of the direction that human inquiry soon may take. Naturally enough, these symptoms are most frequently disclosed by writers, whether serious or popular, for writers seem to be agencies—whether consciously or not—of a kind of psychic prophecy. They "feel" and articulate great swellings of human sentiment and foreshadow changes in polarity of great masses of mankind. Heine, Amiel, and others of the nineteenth century were able to foresee and to describe both the psychological and material disasters of the twentieth century. In *Looking Backward*, Edward Bellamy anticipated much of the technology and something of the social theory that was to come. More recently, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* depicted the unsouled horror of a society technologized not only mechanically, but politically and psychologically, and George Orwell completed this horrid dream of the future in *Nineteen-Eighty-four*.

Not only "serious" utopian fiction reflects a dread of the future. The science-fiction novelists, presently enjoying an extraordinary vogue, seem to agree that the Earth is no longer a fit place from which to Govern the Universe. From being heroes of technological genius, the earthmen of many of the science-fiction tales of today have changed into guilt-ridden neurotics who need the help of trans-galactic wisdom from the denizens of the outer rim of the cosmos. From being bright models of efficiency and adventuresome daring, earthmen are now often the objects of pity for the men from Mars, Venus, Jupiter and points endlessly beyond. There might have been an actual convention of science-fiction writers, and a gathering of the sense of the meeting, so consistently do they seem to agree that human

beings have made an almost irreparable mess of their planetary existence.

A ferment is a transition state, preparatory to some new development. It should finally lead to some sort of precipitation—a viable birth, perhaps, of some new form of thinking and imagining, and therefore of living—or at least an explosion or eruption to end the uncertainty and clear the atmosphere. Just because the ugly part of the ferment, the threat of another world war, presses the most insistently upon our fears and because we know, or think we know, what war means, we tend to ignore the other aspects of the turbulence in thought and feeling

But do we know, really, what modern war is? A recent editorial in the *Washington Post* quoted from the dispatch of a war correspondent in Korea, leaving us with the impression that *no one* knows about modern war: not the men who are fighting it, for they, as the editorial remarks, "are slipping into the language of the sports world, as if the campaign were a kind of giant pheasant hunt"; and hardly the victims, for they seldom have time to measure the experience. As the war correspondent's dispatch tells it:

This armored column today took a little hamlet north of Anyang a napalm raid hit the village three or four days ago the inhabitants throughout the village and in the fields were caught and killed and kept the exact postures they had held when the napalm struck—man about to get on his bicycle, 50 boys and girls playing in an orphanage, a housewife strangely unmarked, holding in her hand a page torn from a Sears-Roebuck catalogue crayoned at mail order number 3,8111,294 for a \$2.98 "bewitching bed jacket—coral."

We have all read something like this, in a story from Grimm, or the *Arabian Nights*, but in those tales the sorcerer or witch only put the people to sleep with some malign spell. Now, in Korea, it is the sleep of death, and the magic is

flaming, jellied gasoline. This is no longer "war," in any familiar sense, but some sort of technological diabolism, impersonal, all-consuming, which knows no distinction between an armed and threatening enemy and "50 boys and girls playing in an orphanage." This magazine is sometimes accused of having a strongly pacifist flavor . . . well, what would you propose as an alternative, in these circumstances?

The world and the people in it are certainly getting ready for a change. Either we shall all become like beasts, rooting and snarling at one another, recalling Circe's transformation of the followers of Ulysses into swine, or a great revulsion, slow in beginning, but due to spread like the light of a new dawn, will restore us to our humanity. "Are we," the *Washington Post* asks, "all becoming hardened to the degeneration of warfare into barbarism?" But this is no mere "barbarism." Barbarism, while crass and brutal, is practiced with candor and without high-sounding ethical pretensions. But modern wars, fought between rival technologies, in which "villages are blotted out, civilians killed indiscriminately with soldiers," are justified by ideological slogans. To kill for gain—that is barbarism; but to exterminate for freedom—that, we say, is superior to the vulgar, acquisitive wars of the past.

It seems reasonable to suggest that modern man will not be able to continue with this sort of fighting accompanied with this sort of talking for very long. Something will snap, either in his brain or his heart. Either he will die or he will be reborn. Either he will become more human or he will become less human.

A modest, almost matter-of-fact story by Nevil Shute—*Round the Bend*, just published by Morrow—introduces a new note in modern fiction, a note that may call forth other efforts in the same direction. To go "round the bend," in the vernacular employed by Mr. Shute in his story, means to lose one's mind, and the implication of this title is that men who seem to have lost their balance in a world like ours may be the only really

sane people among us. Mr. Shute, besides being a well-known British author, is a professional airplane engineer and pilot. This book is about the starting of a new religion. The idea is sound enough, even for a good novel, Mr. Shute's trouble being that he can't really imagine what a new religion that would take hold would be like. The new religion of *Round the Bend* is born in a hangar. Connie Shaklin, the half-Chinese, half-Russian British subject who is its unostentatious teacher, is the best ground engineer commercial aviation ever produced, and he builds his religion around conscientious care of airplanes. This sounds a bit unbelievable, and it will still be more or less unreal after you read the book—it is difficult to remember, for example, just what the religion is all about, even after going over what Shaklin has to say—yet the hunger of the world for a new faith lends its urgency to this novel, and the reader finds himself willing to take the magic of Shaklin's teachings for granted, even though it isn't there at all.

Mr. Shute, in short, has felt a world-wide need, and put it into a story. He has felt the need for a new faith which joins Christians, Buddhists, Moslems and others in a genuine fraternity of cooperation. Shaklin has no rhetoric to offer. He, and Mr. Shute, take the religious instinct of human beings for granted, and with devices that make fairly interesting reading they spread a new kind of brotherhood and cooperation all the way from Arabia—where the man for whom Shaklin works, and who tells the story, is based—to Indo-China. It is the East, mostly, which responds to Shaklin. The English and Europeans and Americans seem to think that he, although a remarkably good ground engineer, has gone "round the bend." And, from their point of view, he most certainly had. This, we suppose, is one of the points Mr. Shute is making, along with some others. The book moves through a world in which Americans and Europeans are some sort of "outlanders," not expected to become interested in Shaklin's great moral reform.

The critics have not been particularly kind to Mr. Shute, probably because he has manifestly started something he cannot finish. Yet we suspect that nothing any critic can say will make the author of *Round the Bend* sorry he wrote it. He seems to be saying to his readers, "Don't you see how thin we have worn our lives—how hungry we all are for some deep inspiration to take possession of us, something that we can give ourselves to?" One reason why Mr. Shute has Shaklin's new religion take hold in the Orient may be that Easterners, having suffered the dispossession of their freedom by Western materialism, have no real stake in the cultural institutions of the West. This may explain why Mr. Shute chose an oriental locale for his story. But there are other reasons why a religion of the sort Shaklin proposes would not be very likely to capture the East. The religion of India—Hinduism—has a profound metaphysical foundation. The same is true of Buddhism, and Islam, also, has a mystical metaphysics in the teachings of the Sufis. A religion or a religious philosophy which can root and establish moral reforms in the East will have to be capable of dealing effectively with the same great philosophical problems that existing Eastern religions deal with. And it will have to do it better than they do. But Shaklin offers no metaphysics. One does not ask for metaphysical disquisitions in a novel, yet a story which attempts to tell of the founding of a religion becomes a rather shallow affair when it ignores the fundamental psychological issues of human life.

If there is any one thing that modern man needs and will ask for in a new religion, it is a credible account of man's relationship with the rest of nature, with the world and the universe. We have an Einstein Theory to relate the elements of physical experience into one grand whole, but what about the experiences of the feelings and the mind? To what or whom do *we*—not our bodies, but we, ourselves—belong? We are not "characters in search of an author," perhaps, but we are, all of us, men in search of a purpose. The

golden rule is a nice thing to believe in, but mere niceness will not do in the twentieth century. We want to know how goodness works, and why one thing is good and not another.

What happens when a child is born? When those little round eyes look up and see, for the first time, is it a moment of great beginning? Is it a new chapter in some hidden destiny, or do the texts of the physiologists tell us everything that is to be known? And when the lights of perception glow in those eyes, in later years, what does that mean? *Who* is the being behind those "windows of the soul," as someone has called them? Is there some community of being between the light of the sun and the stars and the feeling in a man's heart? Are we a part of the grandeur of the universe? We should like to know, and to know for certain. A man who can believe great things of himself can be capable of great things. This, really, is our true hunger. It is for a faith in ourselves, that we count for something, that we have a calling which fits in with the rest of nature's majesty. It is a need that calls for daring of the mind, a generosity of heart. Most of all it calls for a fearlessness in the face of the present ignobility of man—an invincible conviction that greatness hides somewhere, somehow, within us, and that we, every one of us, can be born into its realization.

Letter from **ENGLAND**

LONDON—Prof. H. H. Butterfield has said that the study of history matters, "not because it turns men into statesmen—that at least is a thing which it palpably does not do—but because in every genuine victory that it gains, it is contributing to the growth of human understanding." The trouble is that the genuine victories are so very few, while the defeats are recorded imperishably in every fossilized prejudice and enmity. In these days, with world war succeeding world war, we hardly remember who were our former allies and who our enemies! As to how the present state of affairs arose out of the past, we have but the haziest ideas. Without subscribing to the late Henry Ford's dictum that "history is bunk," we may legitimately suspect that most historians (particularly the "scientific" variety) have not played fair with the public. Under the guise of impartiality, they have forgotten the truth of which Prof. G. M. Trevelyan reminded us in one of his lectures a few years ago: "Men are too complicated, too spiritual, too various, for scientific analysis; and the life history of millions cannot be inferred from the history of single men." And in the nineteenth century, Froude referred to the "baffling duality of principle" in man, which defied scientific analysis. This being said, there is every importance to be attached to our approach to the history that is being made' today. Can we ask history, for instance, for an explanation of the Russian enigma? Mr. Max Beloff, author of *Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, 1929-41*, has called attention to the difference between the nature of historical studies in the Soviet Union and the western world respectively. In our world, historical study is regarded as essentially autonomous. In Soviet Russia, "historical studies are only tolerated so long as they fit in with the plans of the Government and the Communist Party for the control and direction of intellectual life as a whole." Marx and Engels are deemed to have laid down for all time the nature of the historical process, with Lenin and Stalin filling in gaps and obscurities in the presentation. Beloff mentions the mysterious offence of "cosmopolitanism," charged against some of the Soviet intellectuals. It is not easy to define this crime; but one of the things that have to be guarded against is any suggestion that "the Russian Revolution had been

helped much by divergencies between the 'imperialist' powers, or by the sympathies of workers abroad." Another sinister move is the influence brought to bear upon the historians of those countries now dominated by the Soviet Union. Their duty has been clearly defined. It is to put Russia into the most favourable light. "Poles and Czechs must write history to the greater glory of the Russian people and the Russian state."

How is this challenge being met? When it comes to essential things, is our approach to history in the West so vastly different from that of the Marx-Engels school of thought? We may pride ourselves upon our disinterested intellectual curiosity, and call it the life-blood of our civilization. But what if our disinterestedness involves also a complete disregard of moral values? The truth would seem to be that our views of the historical process have been neither scientific, in the sense of discovery of the laws of causation that might interpret all the influences arising from man as unit or in association with his fellows, nor poetic—in Carlyle's phrase as "the right interpretation of Reality."

Certainly, anyone with even a modicum of intelligence looking at the world today will agree that it is impossible to think of historical progress as cumulative and inevitable. The Greeks had no word for "progress," which seems to have been a by-product of nineteenth century thought, derived from the popularization of the Darwinian theory of evolution. We shall have to return to Heracleitos, the ancient Greek "Naturalist," who taught that "the same path leads up hill and down." No solutions of our problems will be possible unless we change our way of looking at things. Ideas are not enough. We have to effect a transition of human consciousness in all its phases to a basis of universality.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

UNCOMMON VERSE

THIS Department has no compunction about breaking an editorial "rule," so long as the reason for breaking it is the same as the reason for making it. So, in this week's review, we take leave of the custom of not offering our readers any lengthy discussion of poetry. We made the rule because of a feeling that poetry is—or has become—a purely "literary" form, and we are not much concerned, here, with literary forms. We are after content and meaning, and if the form is passable—good enough to get by—it is good enough for us. Poetry is so often mannered and self-conscious, the poet so busy making us admit his dexterity with words, that the words get in the way of his communication; and the communication is so often not worth the effort needed to get at it.

Mr. Donald C. Babcock's contribution to the *Atlantic* for January made us break the rule, for at least this one time. His poem is called "Pre-Valedictory," and starts out being mostly about "Time," but is really a poem about death, and by far the pleasantest set of reflections on the subject that we have lately come across. Somewhere in his *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge has a passage on a special sort of faculty—call it "intuition," or the sixth sense—by which unusual persons are able to grasp the intangible as firmly as the rest of us pick up a stick of wood. The idea is not a "popular" one. It hints that the minds of some people have a finer grain than others', and may even seem a covert deprecation of the supposedly "democratic" dogma that no mind is any better than any other. Mr. Babcock seems to us to prove Coleridge's theory beyond hope of contradiction. And he still writes a lighthearted and extremely witty poem.

The opening lines are a friendly jibe at the sententious clichés of conventional utterance about death:

I hear people say, "Well, when my time comes . . ."
But as for me, there will be no such time.
My time, on the contrary and thank God,
Will have gone—oh yes, every bit of it, . . .

I shall close it out; some younger person may
handle
Until he too learns better.
I shall be done with Time.

Pray do not then leap to the conclusion
That I have resigned my existence.
I propose to check in, not out.
And just because one is freed from Time
He does not therefore cease.
Freedom from Time is Eternity,
And Eternity is not endless Time, not at all.
Time is a thoroughly irritating thing.
You don't get anywhere until you are shed of it . . .

Mr. Babcock, as his mood grows on the reader, seems able to make out of the fifth essence,—quintessence, the schoolmen called it,—the stuff of the mind, a quite substantial terrain. His poem could be taken as a short treatise on what makes all "Great Books" great. For the Great Books have a way of persuading you that the commerce in ideas is almost the only trade worth indulging. Many men can reason about "things," but to reason about values, and to use ordinary, everyday language in doing it—this is the art of the genuine philosopher. For him, the questions of life and death, of time and eternity, are not airy nothings or webs that fancy weaves, but the very breath of existence. They are his speech, his work, his product, and his nourishment. Mr. Babcock seems to be something of a philosopher:

And please do not waste thought, either,
on *where* I have gone.
Remember it is written, "Say not Lo here, or Lo
there."
I shall be in such wise that "Where"
cannot even put the question,
Nor "There" give an answer.
You must believe this: I never was any *where*.
My body? Oh, I didn't know we were talking
about that.
Why, yes, my body has always been here and
there,
In a manner of speaking,
And perhaps I negligently conveyed the
impression that I was, too.
My mistake and your error.
I was never any *where*; I simply was, simply
shall be. . . .
Take heed to St. Paul, and do not ask
"With what manner of body . . . ?"
Why, I wouldn't be caught dead with a body.

Those who are won to admiration for these verses may want to look up Mr. Babcock elsewhere. His book, *Man and Social Achievement*, of which we know nothing, was published by Longmans in 1929. In the *Christian Century* for March 14, however, he has an article, "Interview with Deity," which is so good that it is almost "unChristian." Early in this rather extraordinary dialogue is the interchange:

Mr. Babcock [addressing the Deity]: . . . I feel exactly as though you were something I had myself created, of my own thought, a very long time ago.

Deity: You are quite right. I am.

B. But this is to concede more than I am prepared to.

D. Concede to whom?

B. Certain persons who doubt your existence, and who would use your expression of acquiescence as evidence that you are only a fictitious thing, a figment of my thought.

D. Have you never considered, in your discussions with your doubting friends, that the more you can concede at the beginning of an argument, the greater will be your reserves of mutually accepted data at the final stages?

Perhaps the most piquant passage of all is that in which the Deity rewrites a bit of Emerson's Brahma, in order to make a point, bringing this comment from Mr. Babcock:

B. Since you unbend so far as to sanction a parody, may I say that it is not nearly so good as the original lines?

D. Quite true, and for the simple reason that Emerson and I wrote the original, while Emerson had nothing to do with the revision. And I am not at my best when I am not collaborating.

In the matter of the "Creation," Deity remarks:

D. I shall never cease creating you. But neither shall I ever cease to become more and more in my own being, through what you, in responding to me, call forth creatively in me.

B. And now it is my turn to seem to leap off at a tangent. I suddenly see that what you have said quite definitely answers the question of immortality.

D. Our immortality is mutual and reciprocal.

B. But mine can more easily be submerged—I will not say lost—in yours than yours could in mine.

D. You have not quite emancipated your mind from the primeval fear. You revert emotionally to the idea that Death can hurt you.

B. Do I not come honestly by that fear?

D. Yes. But you cannot honestly retain it . . .

We have space left for brief notice of a rather remarkable volume of poems, *Quicken the Current*, by Mary Cummings Eudy (Harper, 1949). We call them poems, and yet they are the merest of couplets and quatrains in form—odd bits of quizzical wisdom. They are bits one would like to remember; for example:

I dare not wash my hands
Of Life;
For I do not know
Where to turn to dry them.

Miss Eudy's verses may be lacking in lyric quality, but they have a canny, New Englishish sensibility which delights the mind. "Success," she writes, "is often tawdry, but never can tragedy be." Most people fear tragedy as though it were an evil. It is not to be embraced, perhaps, but neither should it be evaded. Quite possibly, the man who comprehends tragedy will know the meaning of both good and evil; and will understand, too, that

People grow more weary
Trying to attain
The success of the average
Than if they climb—and climb—
To touch a pinnacle Beyond all human sight.

Reading these lines, one is driven to wonder, Is there a wisdom which cannot be set aside? Which burns its insistence upon the brain, and like an unflinching torch, makes a man live with the truth that he cannot deny, until it becomes a part of himself? A poem, perhaps, can make such a question, but who can make an answer?

COMMENTARY

THE UNKNOWN THOUSAND

PERHAPS there are things worth dying for, but wouldn't it be a welcome change to cast around for a few things men *needed to live for*? The leading paragraph in a front-page story records concisely the loss of another battalion, the killing of so-and-so many men, the wounding of a certain other number. And what can we, the members of the home-front, say? If we knew someone in the lines who is now, cosmically speaking, Out of Line, there are many things for us to say: we do not even have to pause to reflect. Our feelings are definite, immediate, and completely recognizable, for death has happened many times before, *to one person*. But death to a thousand—what is the proper response? Somehow a thousand deaths-of-a-thousand-men leave us with no human way of taking the news, no clear notion of what we should feel or say or do. Each one of the thousands was known to and is mourned by someone, perhaps by many. There even used to be a way of remembering the "unknown soldier." Shall we now propose patriotic attention to the Unknown Thousand ?

How cruel are numbers, when they mean human lives! How callous are nations, when they have nothing to give each other but—human lives! Are we moving toward the necessity of celebrating an Unknown Million Day? And will the shedding of a crowd's tears be all we can propose as a rite for the occasion? Or is it that we die by thousands *because* already and for years we have thought and threatened, cried and cursed, by thousands?

There is something wrong about condolences by the thousand. The human being is never the thousandth part of a mass; even though standardized within an inch of his integrity, he remains still an individual. This may be the reason we cannot mourn an unknown battalion: we literally do not know to whom to direct our sympathy and sorrow. But we might ask

ourselves upon what logic we, as nations, accept the "lives" sacrificed by a thousand unknown soldiers, when we as human beings cannot discover a way to do them honor in death.

We talk about the noble dead as if their nobility was in their dying, when we ought to be seeking out the nobility of living. If, in the latter process, we came to feel that the death of even one man, from anything but natural causes, is more than all humanity can afford, *Life*—not just "our" lives, as distinguished from "their" lives—might hold a meaning we shall never find in Death.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THOSE who have read the discussions here during the past two weeks may feel a growing sympathy for the few "radicals" in education who have resisted the standardization policy of large public schools. There are many reasons for radicals in every field—personal dissatisfactions and the search for scapegoats for one's own inadequacies accounting for a certain proportion. But radicals in the field of education have seldom done disservice, and are often in the forefront of advance. Each little community of experiment in education has contributed something to the spirit of inquiry, as well as providing facts and statistics of importance, and those most uncompromising men and women who dissociated themselves and their children from public school systems may well be given some special attention.

The Jan. 15 *Interpreter*, published by Mildred Loomis and Ralph Borsodi, Brookville, Ohio, contains a long account of the experiences of a radically-minded parent who took the bull by the horns as soon as her children became of school age. She was determined to give them something better than exposure to the manufacturing centers of big schools. Under the title, "We Educate our Children at Home," Violet Siefried explains her decision to do her own teaching at home in this way:

Our children have never been in public school. We have taught them at home with the help of the Calvert Home Training Lessons, and other material. Although Stefan is 8 and Rosemary 7, this is the first year any notice was taken of our presence in the community by the school. One morning in September, 1950, the truant officer came and asked that both children be sent to school. I replied at some length, pleasantly, about our convictions pretty much as follows.

We believe the present school system (beautifully modern though the equipment is) would fail to educate our children into the self-reliant individuals we would like them to be.

We believe it is the responsibility of the family to educate the children. It means work for us, but it is rewarding work. It is because the average parents shirk these responsibilities that juvenile delinquency and the disintegration of the American home is such a major problem.

Woman is in her deepest nature a nurturer. Yet, influenced by the modern tendency to specialization, she has turned over to the state the most interesting and creative of all work, the rearing of her own children.

The child appears to me a three-fold being—mind, soul, body. We do not believe the public school tries to develop him in all three ways or even knows how.

The tendency of the materialist philosophy of today is to uphold worldly success as the goal of living. One who works with his hands is looked down upon as not quite as bright or worthy of the same recompense as the white-collar worker. We have the factory and business world filled with wage-slaves, each trained for some small specialized task, leading non-creative, monotonous lives, resulting in a constant rise in mental and physical ill-health.

To those of us who see clearly the degeneracy of this materialistic civilization, the falseness of its values, the rapidity with which it is hurtling its way to destruction, the only conclusion is to try to bring up our own children to recognize and resist the evils inherent in the system.

We are not here suggesting that all self-respecting parents will immediately remove their children from public school because the whole country is becoming more totalitarian and war-minded. The individual child may need, more than anything else, to meet that condition at first hand for himself in the school. It is impossible to say which child will learn the most from home instruction and which from public school training, not only because of the differences in teachers and parents, but also because of the startling differences in children. But, as we have suggested, for all those who hold that independent thinking is both the first step and the final goal of true education, the relevance of such attempts as the Borsodis' and Siefrieds' can be pondered with profit. One thing is certain, the parents who take on such a task will have placed themselves in a

position where an extension of their own learning will be practically unavoidable.

The Borsodis and the Siefrieds are above all anxious to protect their children from becoming stereotyped sounding boards for conventional prejudices. Wherever their children go, moreover, and whether they are right or wrong in whatever particular "bias" they acquire through their home environments, they will cause questions to be raised in the minds of other young persons—and questions are the forerunners of self-reliant thought.

The Borsodis and the Siefrieds may to some degree be isolationists, and criticizable to whatever degree this is so, but their devotion to a simpler and more basic form of living would indicate that their isolation would never be from men of any age or race who find happiness in the simplest and greatest pleasures of creative artisanship and continual sharing in the learning process. The back-to-the-soil people, as a matter of fact, can never do us any harm, nor any harm to themselves. Even when they oversimplify the problems of the modern world and create a special type or doctrine of religion of their own, they never provide ground in which either real fear or real intolerance may grow.

If the home-education enthusiasts are guilty of a little private superciliousness and pride in what they are attempting, who are we to say they have not done enough to earn this indulgence? Hosts of revered names may be invoked to support the theory that too many pupils together usually means too little independence of thinking, just because of the standardizing examinations which teachers almost always feel forced to adopt. Even the time-worn saying about Mark Hopkins at one end of the log and the pupil at the other has relevance.

As for the matter of distrusting military-minded educational supervisors, we might remember that Gandhi was sufficiently worried about government interference to make the first dogma of his Basic Education School its complete

independence of any State subsidy. He also believed in "home education," though the situation was reversed at Sevagram, with the expectation that the young people would return home to "educate" their parents. This, by the way, might be a good idea in our more "civilized" land—if we could find or develop the right schools.

FRONTIERS Pantheism Reconstructed

THERE have always been "back to nature" movements. Whether in the guise of a denial of sophisticated pleasures in the interests of religious concern, as was the case with the early Christians, or represented by the Transcendentalism of the early nineteenth century, the urge to sink psychic roots in a faith characterized by naturalness, simplicity and stability has been powerful.

During the past decade a belated respect for the implicit teleology of nature's ways has cut through the preponderating influence of scientific specialization; we now find many biologists, social scientists, and practicing physicians writing about "Nature" as a living, intelligent organism rather than as a series of chemical events. The literature of this revival of an ancient viewpoint concerning man's relation to the universe is voluminous and diverse. As we have pointed out before, the ideas of such writers as Vogt and Osborn have spread so widely as to become familiar—at least in terms of their basic theses—to a large portion of the educated reading public. While it could be argued that the causes for such revaluations of our misuse of the land are the simple facts of soil depletion and a growing overpopulation, there is much to indicate that the basic "world-view" associated with modern science has undergone subtle revisions at the philosophic level as well. Grantly Dick Read's *Childbirth Without Fear*, the Organic Gardening movement, the increasing interest in dietetics, and the increasing criticism in even orthodox journals of the large-scale use of miracle drugs, may express a sort of mental gravitational flow toward a pantheistic outlook.

Among current magazine articles indicating this trend is a contribution by Laura Thompson (to a review of General Semantics), bearing the formidable title, "Operational Anthropology as an Emergent Discipline." Miss Thompson explains "an emergent discipline" as a "change in approach from social engineering to the search for nature's

innate goals in order to harmonize man's purposes and activities with them":

The clinical test, involving the life and welfare of local communities deeply rooted in nature and tradition, compels him to relate practical long-range aims to ecological, psychological, and cultural processes. In other words, the necessity to solve the problem clinically in the broad framework of living reality requires him to move beyond the positivist social engineer's type of approach. It necessitates the discovery and the *explanatory* description of all relevant factors, *whether or not they may be directly observed*, in the emergent life situation in environmental context; it calls for reinforcement or reconstruction of their evolving internal relationships in line with the inherent "directiveness of organic activities."

In other words, to solve the problem in action and not merely on paper, the anthropologist has to ignore the boundaries between traditional academic disciplines to experiment with promising techniques wherever they can be found, and to develop an adequate, multidiscipline methodology

Finally, as a last decisive step, solution of the problem leads to the discovery of intrinsic norms and goals in the life-web process itself and calls for the identification of man-made purposes with those inherent norms and goals. Witness, for example, the substitution, in resources conservation work, of predominantly ecological and cultural approaches.

The reader is invited to pay particular attention to the italicized clause, "*explanatory* description of all relevant factors, *whether or not they may be directly observed*," for despite the complicated verbiage we are here told that it is all right to be philosophical or mystical, if we feel inclined, since it will be necessary to pass beyond familiar laboratory techniques. Miss Thompson continues:

Operational anthropology, however, has this in common with positivism. Both hold that "all scientific progress depends on first framing a formula giving a general description of observed fact." . . . It departs from and transcends positivism in that it proceeds from a formula describing observed fact to a deductive theory which attempts to *explain* observed fact. In contrast to positivism's rejection of metaphysics, this deductive theory has an implicit

metaphysical base. It is rooted in what may be called a philosophy of holism. . . .

Holism has grown out of a preoccupation with developing organic life in its total setting. According to this school of thought, law is conceived as immanent in nature rather than (1) as mere observed sequence which may be the result of aimless fortuity, or (2) as power superimposed from without by a transcendent or supernatural force. Furthermore, immanent law as conceived within the holistic orientation is primarily a formative process rather than, for example, repetitive or rigidly reproductive process. As manifest in a tendency in nature toward the formation of wholes, in the directiveness of organic activities, etc., it is basically *one-way* and *irreversible*.

A semantic journal is perhaps an odd place for the Ancients and the Moderns to get together, but there is no doubt that this consummation is furthered by Miss Thompson's article. She concludes:

The implications of this approach are, one may suggest, revolutionary. For it reveals how, by relating human purposes and values, or what Korzybski called "evaluations," to nature's innate norms and goals, man can resolve the ethical dilemma that arises from the man-made dichotomy between "science" and "values."

Elsewhere, as in the current *Antioch Review*, we find a similar yeast. Gerald Barnes, writing on "Democracy and the Birthrate," often sounds like Miss Thompson:

The imbalance between food resources and population underlies the more immediate question of the prevention of war. It is perhaps more fundamental and far reaching than any problem humanity has heretofore faced. Yet few subjects have been more bedeviled and obscured by narrow specialists. The population experts have often known little about natural resources and their conservation. The students of conservation and agronomy have rarely appreciated the basic principles of population growth. And very few of either group have clearly understood the basic interdependence of agronomy, conservation, population, and social change.

Unfortunately, Mr. Barnes' greater simplicity of expression does not guarantee consistency. In his conclusion, he seems to revert to characteristic

disdain for one of the oldest and greatest of all "Holisms":

It is a regrettable fact that most religions do not adequately stress our obligation to our great-great-grandchildren. Many religions have insisted on the value of the individual soul and the sacredness of all and any human life, but rarely have they admitted that these ideals can be incompatible. Some eastern religions have contended that even animal and insect life is sacred, and this belief has led to a fatalistic and fantastic resignation to disease, suffering and social degeneration. The modern religious conviction that it is sacrilegious to meddle with any potential human life even before conception, has led and will lead to similar tragic results.

It is pertinent to question Dr. Barnes' cavalier dismissal of a "fantastic belief," on the ground that an important and fascinating revolution in respect to man's view of nature *may be only presently in its earliest stages*. The "fantastic belief" that "even animal and insect life is sacred" may yet become our own. If so, we shall re-establish the sanity of many of the ancient philosophers of Greece and India. It was, of course, easier for the Ancients to see "the forest," since there was so much less they felt they needed to know about the specific chemistry and botany of each species of tree. Today, we obviously must do both jobs if we are to have finally "emergent" sciences capable of sustaining man's physical existence without destroying his hope and faith in comprehensible, interdependent purpose.

Has it Occurred to Us?

THE "conventions," we may observe, have somehow ceased to be things people come together upon. These days, they are more often grounds for dissension. Now, aside from the convention that youth must always abolish conventions, is there anything to be said for the persistent iconoclasm toward the Accepted Thing?

Has it occurred to us that, however pointless a social observance may be, its reform must be more than mere rebellion, or iconoclasm is only brute force? The impulse to sweep away all musty, silly sham, and old-fashioned *stays* is healthy, but the status quo remains, protected by the irony of the situation: only rarely do those who have the reforming impulse know what to do with it.

Let us assume, for a moment, that all conventions need overhauling. No system of codified checks and balances, no charming theories of etiquette or coy disclosures of correct behavior, can guide anyone but social butterflies—a species, we suspect, that is mostly mirage, entirely useless, and always misleading as a measuring-stick. The man or woman who could live on the letter of Emily Post's constantly revised textbooks could just as well subsist on sawdust, although few born to this planet arrive thoroughly briefed in thoughtfulness. Stripped of fashions, human behavior—to be right—must be at all times considerate of others. Why is it that this simple rule multiplies into a mass of conflicting evidence, and ends up buried beneath a mountain of social usages? Why does an appeal to "common decency" so often meet with a bleak and scornful reception?

In our right mind—or should we say, right feeling?—we do not dream of denying the necessity for eliminating friction in human contacts. The blending of opposite temperaments has produced too many works of art and literature for us to face the prospect of a culture dependent on Milquetoasts-in-collaboration. When two

highly original personalities begin something both feel must be done, and that neither can do alone, they are bound to discover themselves at loggerheads after a while. Then, they either abandon the project, or set about the exacting business of finding an uncompromising compromise. The plan or design that appeals strongly to such diverse natures will naturally have a wider appeal—a greater universality—than would the personal, private, unmodified "form" of either creator. It is a matter of history that Gilbert and Sullivan together exceeded the talent each could muster, alone.

The use of friction, the harnessing of "polar opposites," the counterpoise of two over-individualized geniuses—this is not the province of etiquette. No "conventions" apply. Yet what more necessary to human society than the encouragement of such collaborations? It may be pleasant to describe the little graces which adorn social behavior, but the need is for a masterly science of cooperation, by the practice of which great natural human forces may be appropriately combined.

What form of consideration should the talented individual receive? Society lionizes its favorites until the honest artist is driven to an assumed rudeness if he would escape with his integrity. What a travesty of "manners" is this! Meaningless flattery may be more of a danger to the sincere craftsman than the most venomous attacks, yet etiquette would require him to rejoice in the one and grandly ignore the other. Where, under such a code, is he to find the stimulus to work, the spur to outdistance his former efforts and to reach more distant goals? The needle-prick of a discerning eye, when a subtle pomposity mars his art; the calm, direct verdict of an assured taste to dispel the jitters, the glooms, the eerie despairs that often haunt the lonely hours of composition, creation, and artistic embodiment—without these, no labor in the arts is complete, and many works and wonders have been dreamed for years but never produced until a favorable fate at last joins

discoverer and critic in precisely the right relationship.

The Artist (using that term in the widest sense) cannot produce any real work without setting some convention on edge. Unless he utterly imitates some previous effort (his own or another's), he will disturb a familiar arrangement; and unless he does replace an Accepted Thing with a rightful rival and improvement, he is merely being mistaken for an Artist, and is not one at heart. Why should the word "Artist" be bestowed upon self-conscious egotists (the unconscious species is trial enough!) or upon a parcel of renegades from responsibility? Must we be medieval to have Artists who are not ashamed of devotion to great ideals and of self-denial for the good of the work they have *yet* to do? Is the notion of immortality become so outmoded, today, that there is no heart left for the fostering of powers which may be needed in the future?

Conventions—are they actually so important that one's life may fruitfully be spent in potshotting them? Has it occurred to us that perhaps every dullest convention was once the bright image of a new grace in behavior, *for the man who first conceived it*? Let us respect the inventor—who, we are sure, seldom thought to invent a "convention"—while laying to ourselves the task of refining his social legacy, but let us not indulge poor marksmanship and parade an even poorer sportsmanship by letting fly without skill or self-respect at the "walking shadows" of social life. And there may be conventions yet to be evolved, in the observance of which mankind will develop a more stable brotherhood: the possibility is at least worth a few generations of exploring.