

## GREAT REFORMERS: PYTHAGORAS

PYTHAGORAS is one who earned, among modern critics, the curious distinction of being regarded as both a great philosopher and a "medicine man"—a teacher in the lofty ethical precepts, but also one who engaged in theatrical devices to beguile the common herd into thinking him a God.

This blatant and monotonous inconsistency in recent works concerning Pythagoras makes them, we think, approximately worthless. We had rather take the Egyptian Iamblichus for our authority, and be convicted of believing that Pythagoras conversed with an ox and was addressed, "Hail, Pythagoras!" by a river he was crossing, than to adopt the view that he "put forward marvelous pretensions which he must have been conscious had no real ground, and which, we must suspect, were calculated to attract the veneration of the credulous." Regarding such innuendoes as something less than astute, we have put away our classical dictionaries and will use in sparing and skeptical manner the precise works of reference that would chisel the image of Pythagoras to a wholly credible and respectable proportion.

Not that we purpose to embrace the miraculous. That sort of blind enthusiasm would be directly contrary to the spirit of Pythagoras himself. Rather, the tissue of myth which surrounds this man is irrelevant to a serious inquiry concerning his life and work as a great reformer; we simply refuse to patronize his memory because certain of his biographers, themselves philosophers of some repute, belonged to an age when belief in psychic and spiritual forces was as common, say, as belief in protons, neutrons and electrons is in this.

Unfortunately, another barrier lies between ourselves and the thought of Pythagoras, one

more formidable than a prejudice against magical operations. It is a question whether the present-day reader can hope to understand his theological teachings at all, with the dark stain of the Original Sin upon virtually all the religious ideas of the Modern West. For the Greeks, whatever they believed, knew no such doctrine. They had no dogmatic blueprints of the origin of evil. The infamous doctrine of the native depravity of man was as yet unborn. As a Pythagorean thinker of the eighteenth century, the French Fabre d'Olivet, has said:

It is necessary . . . to give close attention to one thing, which is, that before the establishment of Christianity and the admission of original sin as fundamental dogma of religion, no founder of sect, no celebrated philosopher had positively denied the free will, nor had taught ostensibly that man may be necessarily determined to Evil and Good and predestined from all time to vice or virtue, to wickedness or eternal happiness. It is indeed true that this cruel fatality seemed often to follow from their principles as an inevitable consequence, and that their adversaries reproached them with it, but nearly all rejected it as an insult, or a false interpretation of their system. (*The Golden Verses of Pythagoras*, Putnam, 1917.)

In the Pythagorean view, man's place in nature is between two ruling powers, Necessity and Will. Necessity is the power of circumstance, the decree of *Nemesis* or Destiny, while Will is the moral power within the man himself. Just as Destiny is variable, sometimes good, sometimes evil, so Will may work right or wrong, depending upon the individual choice. But man has freedom to exercise his will wisely, and it may be said that the ethical and psychological system of Pythagoras in its entirety was devoted to the training of the Will and to informing it with moral intelligence.

But by what standard is the nature of moral intelligence to be determined? This, naturally, is

the crucial question, and on this point there seems to be a general agreement of authorities:

His [Pythagoras'] leading thought appears to have been that the state and the individual ought, each in its way, to reflect the image of that order and that harmony by which he believed the universe to be sustained and regulated. He did not frame a constitution or a code of laws; nor does he appear to have assumed any public office. He instituted a society—an order we might now call it—of which he became the leader . . .

This celebrated society, then, was at once a philosophical school, a religious brotherhood, and a political association; and all these characters appear to have been inseparably united in the founder's mind. The ambition of Pythagoras was, assuredly, truly lofty and noble. He aimed at establishing a dominion which he believed to be that of wisdom and virtue, a rational supremacy of minds, enlightened by philosophy and purified by religion, and of characters fitted to maintain an ascendant over other by habits of self-command.

To Pythagoras, it thus becomes evident. Western civilization owes the conception of unified education of the whole man (and woman—for his brotherhood included women); it also owes him the beginnings of the systematic study of geometry, in the formulation of the Pythagorean Theorem, the scientific study of music, the heliocentric theory in astronomy, and, finally, the doctrine—now the credo of modern physics—that all things are formed *according to number*, which introduced the discipline of mathematics, of abstract thought, to cosmological investigation.

We said nothing about the Pythagorean conception of Destiny, the Power, that is, to which every man is subjected from without, and over which he seems to have so little control. This question, obviously, bears on the origin of evil in human ignorance and wrong use of the will. This is to be overcome by personal discipline. And—in the words of the "Golden Verses," written down by a disciple -

As to the evils which Destiny involves,

Judge them what they are: endure them all and strive,

As much as thou art able, to modify the traits:

The Gods, to the most cruel, have not exposed the Sage.

What is this "Destiny"? Have we here only another "Will of God" that Pythagoras hides behind, to avoid by mystification a discussion of the external causes of suffering?

At this point it is necessary to know something of the place of Pythagoras in Grecian history. He was born on the island of Samos, about 580 B.C., the contemporary, therefore, of Gautama Buddha in India, and Lao Tze in China. The story goes that in his youth he traveled to Egypt, where he was instructed by the priests of Thebes. "He thus passed twenty-two years in the sanctuaries of the temples," Iamblichus relates, "studying astronomy and geometry, and being initiated in no casual or superficial manner in all the mysteries of the Gods." Other travels took him to Sidon, to Babylon, and even, some say, to India, and in all these places he pursued his studies with sages and priests. (The wide journeyings of Pythagoras are called "of course, apocryphal" by some authorities, but we are content that he spent these years *somewhere*, and profitably, in view of his later accomplishments.)

According to Iamblichus, he returned to Samos in his fifty-sixth year. His native city, however, had been ravaged by a Persian invasion, and it was at Krotona, a city of Greater Greece on the shore of the "boot" of Italy, that he finally settled. Like so many colonial cities, Krotona represented a more vigorous culture than the older Greek states, and Pythagoras went there, "conceiving that his real fatherland must be the country containing the greatest number of most scholarly men."

There he was welcomed by the citizens and made the teacher of their youth. The Senators of Krotona built him an Institute where, for years, he instructed the young men and women of the city

who could pass the preliminary requirements for entry into the Pythagorean brotherhood. The training, tradition tells us, was rigorous; the results extraordinary. The details of the school's organization are described by Iamblichus and are impressive evidence of Pythagoras' profound knowledge of human nature as well as of practical educational principles. The brotherhood deeply affected the lives of hundreds of persons, and they went forth into the world to take up careers in public life, animated by the highest ideals. It was, as Myers says in his *History of Greece*, "a sort of moral reform league, characterized by certain ascetic tendencies, and which exerted a wide and important influence upon the political affairs and the thought of the times." It was, indeed, their zeal for reform that finally created the enmities which led to an attack on the Pythagoreans in Krotona, and the death of many of their number in a fire set by their political opponents.

The heart of the Pythagorean teaching was the Orphic religion, introduced in Greece centuries earlier as a reform of the Bacchic Mysteries and the amoral traditions deriving from Homer. Pythagoras, it may be said, sought to transform Orphicism into science and philosophy. There is a natural connection between the deep interest of Pythagoras in music and the teachings of Orpheus, the gentle singer. As Radhakrishnan says in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*,

The Orphic cult transcends the limit of blood groups. It affirms that all men are brothers. The sense of solidarity not only includes all mankind but embraces all living things. All life is one, and God is one. The pictures of Orpheus in which wild and tame animals were represented as lying down in amity side by side all alike, charmed by the notes of his lyre, illustrate the unity of all living creation. The influence of the Orphic cult was on the side of civilization and the art of peace. Orpheus was entirely free from warlike attributes, and his lyre was often used to soften the hearts of men. Orphic religion is different from the anthropomorphic worship of the Greeks. Its adherents are organized in communities based on voluntary admission and initiation.

It is in the living religion—the "way of life"—of the Orphic brotherhood that we find the moral foundation of the Pythagorean philosophy and its explanation of good and evil. It is one great doctrine—that the "germ of divinity," potential godhood, exists in every human being, is in fact the soul—that the Orphics believed, that Pythagoras taught, and after him Plato, and still later, the Neo-Platonists of Alexandria. And by his teaching, the Greek philosophers were able to account for the presence of evil in the world without blaming it on some outside power, whether the Gods or God, or the blind malignity of physical life. In a passage of commentary on the Golden Verses, Fabre d'Olivet explains the doctrine:

Man, . . . according to the idea of Pythagoras had conceived, placed under the dominion of Providence [the moral law] between the past and the future, endowed with a free will by his essence, and being carried along toward virtue or vice with its own movement, Man, I say, should understand the source of the evils that he necessarily experiences; and far from accusing this same Providence which dispenses good and evil to each according to his merit and his anterior actions, can blame only himself if he suffers, through an inevitable consequence of his past mistakes. For Pythagoras admitted many successive existences and maintained that the present, which strikes us, and the future, which menaces us, are only the expression of the past which has been at work in anterior times. He said that the greater part of men lose, in returning to life, the remembrance of these past existences; but that, concerning himself, he had, by a particular favor of the gods, preserved the memory of them. Thus according to his doctrine, this fatal Necessity, of which man unceasingly complains, has been created by himself through the use of his will; he traverses, in proportion as he advances in time, the road that he has already traced for himself; and according as he has modified it by good or evil, as he sows so to speak, his virtues or his vices, he will find it again more smooth or laborious, when the time come to traverse it anew.

These are the dogmas by means of which Pythagoras establishes the necessity of Destiny, without harming the power of the Will, and left to Providence its universal empire, without being obliged either to attribute to it the origin of evil, as those who admitted only one principle of things, or to

give to evil an absolute existence, as those who admitted two principles. In this, he was in accord with the ancient doctrine which was followed by the oracles of the gods. Maximus Tyrius has made a dissertation upon the origin of evil, in which he asserts that the prophetic oracles, having been consulted on this subject, responded by these two lines from Homer:

"We accuse the Gods of our evils, while we ourselves

By our own errors, are responsible for them."

This was the teaching of Pythagoras—a foundation for ethics, a credo for self-reliance and personal moral accountability. It is found throughout the ancient world and emerges, in Christian tradition, among the early Gnostics, for which the latter were attacked with exceptional vigor by the orthodox Fathers of the Church. The Heresiarch Basilides, for example, as quoted by Clement of Alexandria, asserted, "I will affirm anything rather than call Providence evil"—or, as we might put it, rather than impugn the Moral Law. Every suffering, Basilides contended, was the due of the sufferer, from causes sown in this or in some previous life. Clement is at great pains to dispute the gnostic argument, urging that martyrdom for the "love of God" would mean nothing if the martyr's ordeal were only the workings of justice. And on this passage in Clement, the worthy Christian editors of the works of the Fathers remark in a footnote: "It is very doubtful, whether, even in poetry, the Platonic idea of pre-existence should be encouraged by Christians, as e.g., in that sublimest of modern lyrics, Wordsworth's ode on *Immortality and Childhood*."

For some reason unaccountably obscure, Christian apologists invariably reject the Pythagorean doctrine of immortality, regarding it with a kind of horrified aversion, as though the teaching of universal justice were somehow an offense against the dignity of their God. But for the Orphic Greeks, for Pythagoras and Plato, and for their many heretical admirers who, across the centuries of European history, lighten the gloomy

record of bigotry and irrational belief, this reasoned conception of moral justice was a necessary part of religious sanity, and in its support they endured ostracism, persecution, and even, as in the case of Giordano Bruno, a flaming death. For the Pythagorean teachings gained a new life from Bruno, as they did in another way from Copernicus and Galileo. And it seems likely that so reasonable a view of the meaning of life and the truth of immortality can never die out.

## *Letter from* **GERMANY**

BERLIN.—The claims for control of the emotional life of Germans are extraordinarily high. What they are forced to live through and to suffer every day is so revolting, the degradation of human life and the hindrance of freedom of action and movement so severe, that it seems necessary to write some lines about it.

A few examples should clarify the situation: hunger verging on starvation, and completely one-sided nutrition by potatoes and bread have become a permanent state. Rationing of all goods and clothing seldom allows the replacement of worn-out things. Means of communication are always overcrowded and in a very bad state. Millions of refugees crowd in towns and villages—unwelcome guests. The sight of ruins in most of the towns maintains its depressing effect. The lack of political freedom is the same as years before. The hindrance of speaking frankly about what is and what should be continues from the time of the Nazis.

Thus, day after day, violent emotion accumulates in the people of Germany, in revolt against an inhuman existence. It is quite certain that, should rigid military control and exercise of power cease to exist, the unchained rebellion would lead to extreme horrors. The social psychologists of other lands would again remark the "enigma" of Germany and in astonishment look for hidden "cruel instincts," for the "psychosis" of a whole people, whereas the experience of today already gives the clue to the reactions of tomorrow.

These burdens cannot be endured by a normal emotional life. During the time of the Nazis, the news of terror, concentration camps and gas chambers was more than enough to shake the normal state of soul and to enforce a physical "hardening." Now the growing burden leads to a repression of emotional life, to conscious indifference. A purely objective and technical

behavior (attitude) is imposed on people by the force of the conditions.

And here we come to a problem that is not restricted to Germany alone, or to the present time. During the last and the first World War, the peoples of all belligerent nations lived through similar situations. The actual, world-encircling acquisitive society no longer allows men to realize a normal emotional life. A rational and technical-objective attitude had therefore to become the new fetish of present society. Normal emotional life is impossible and is hardly valued today. The machine-like man, dispassionate, is the "ideal" type in the last surge of a society which is tyrannized by its need of machines and goods.

GERMAN CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### THE LADDER TO HIGH DESIGNS

THE author of *Ideas Have Consequences*, Mr. Richard M. Weaver, has a secret. As his book is excellent, in some ways remarkable, and as, quite evidently, his secret lies behind his book, we are extremely curious to know what it is. Basically, Mr. Weaver seems on the side of Plato in philosophy. We share his view that Aristotle was a middle-class moralist whose doctrine of prudence established "comfort and mediocrity" as the goal of the virtuous life. Aristotle was rather a "natural historian of the virtues" than a spiritual idealist. Thomism, following Aristotle, forsook counsels of perfection for a nice compromise between the goods of this world and those of the next.

So Mr. Weaver is neither Aristotelian nor Neo-Thomist. What is he? The only decisive clues we were able to find in his book occur on pages 2 and 3:

For four centuries every man has been not only his own priest but his own professor of ethics, and the consequence is an anarchy which threatens even that minimum consensus of value necessary to the political state. . . .

The defeat of logical realism in the great medieval debate was the crucial event in the history of Western culture; from this flowed those acts which issue now in modern decadence. . . . The issue ultimately involved is whether there is a source of truth higher than, and independent of, man; and the answer to the question is decisive for one's view of the nature and destiny of humankind.

But if the individual man is not to be his own priest and professor of ethics, who or what *is* his moral authority? This is what we want to know, and what Mr. Weaver does not tell us. And if the ultimate source of truth is "higher than, and independent of, man," how can man have any traffic with truth at all? Throughout the nearly 200 pages of *Ideas Have Consequences*, these questions sat on the doorstep of every chapter; and while we read with increasing enjoyment and undoubted profit, the questions remained unanswered. So, with this warning, we shall proceed to praise and to attempt to explain somewhat Mr. Weaver's book.

It is, as he says in his first sentence, another book about "the dissolution of the West." To appreciate fully the criticism offered, it is necessary for the reader to have some familiarity with the transcendental tradition of Western thought, from Plato to Ralph Waldo Emerson, and to be able to feel, with Mr. Weaver, a sense of reality in the truth of that tradition. The author, obviously, is a devotee of the Great Books, and at the moment we can think of no better argument for studying the Great Books than the quality of his thinking. The difference between the protagonists of the Great Books and their pragmatist and "scientific" critics is that the former *understand* the latter, while the reverse is not the case. (The question of an "outside" moral authority, hinted at by Weaver, is of course a basic issue in this controversy, and one which the Great Bookers have never squarely faced, thus giving the opposition a point of legitimate attack.)

Mr. Weaver holds that the world is a Great Chain of Being, a vast hierarchy of *souls*. One who has read either the *Theology* of Proclus or the plays of Shakespeare will always know what he is talking about. For life, according to Weaver, is a spiritual enterprise, and the sequences of human experience are scenes and acts in a sacred drama. The players are all united by order and degree. There is a "balance of nature" different from the merely biological equilibrium noted by scientific specialists—an interrelation of the cosmic, human and physical orders bespeaking a universal harmony behind and within the whole. *Ideas Have Consequences* might be regarded as a brilliant commentary on the speech of Ulysses in *Triolus and Cressida*, in which the Hero explains the mishaps of the Greeks before Troy as resulting from their neglect of "order" in plan and attack. After describing and illustrating the principle of order as it rules both heaven and earth, Ulysses says:

O! when degree is shak'd  
Which is the ladder of all high designs,  
The enterprise is sick. How could communities,  
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,  
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
The primogenitive and due of birth,  
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,  
But by degree, stand in authentic place?  
Take but degree away, untune the string,  
And, hark! what discord follows; each thing  
meets  
In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters

Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,  
 And make a sop of all this solid globe:  
 Strength should be the lord of imbecility,  
 And the rude son should strike his father dead:  
 Force should be right; or rather, right and  
 wrong—

Between whose endless jar justice resides—  
 Should lose their names, and so should justice  
 too.

Then everything includes itself in power,  
 Power into will, will into appetite;  
 And appetite, a universal wolf,  
 So doubly seconded with will and power,  
 Must make perforce a universal prey,  
 And last eat up himself.

As Weaver reads history, the Platonic order was first attacked in the Middle Ages, by the Nominalists, who asserted that universal ideas did not represent degrees of emanated spiritual reality, but were only names—mere verbal generalizations. Finally, cut loose from all spiritual moorings by such arguments, mankind was set adrift in a sea of irrational forces and dead matter, and from the denial of moral value came the loss of a *sense* of value. The denial of value produced the "ideas" whose consequences Mr. Weaver finds in the neuroticisms, the totalitarianisms and institutionalized delusions of our time.

His criticism, in the area of scientific method, is directed at the idea that a "fact" can be known apart from its metaphysical connections. This, Weaver suggests, is the attempt to define meaning in a context of meaninglessness.

It is characteristic of the barbarian [he writes], whether he appears in a precultural stage or emerges from below into the waning day of a civilization, to insist upon seeing a thing "as it is." The desire testifies that he has nothing in himself with which to spiritualize it; the relation is one of thing to thing without the intersection of the imagination. Impatient of the veiling with which the man of higher type gives the world imaginative meaning, the barbarian and the Philistine, who is the barbarian living amid culture, demands the access of immediacy.

*Ideas Have Consequences*, while far from "academic," is written at a high level of abstraction and the reader may feel the need of additional "substance," not in the critique of modern civilization, which is quite specific, but in the philosophic background whereon

Mr. Weaver stands in order to move the world to better ways—or ideas. A book that would be helpful for this purpose is Theodore Spencer's *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*. As his Preface and his concluding chapter show, Spencer is thoroughly aware of the problem Weaver sets out to discuss. There are times, he says, when the problems of human nature "come to the surface with more than usual urgency and are expressed with more than usual vigor," and both Shakespeare's time and our own are such periods of history. "Shakespeare's age," he suggests, "was breaking into chaos, while our age is trying to turn chaos into order." *Ideas Have Consequences*, we think, is among the most notable attempts to find in the past some principles of order for the present.

There is, however, one idea of which Mr. Weaver takes no account: the idea that there is a movement—"progress," in a sense—in the entire scheme of the transcendental order itself. In other words, it seems to us a likely possibility that the moral order he seeks can never again be established or confined in human institutions of the old sort, but must grow, through education and self-search, from individual moral perception, and so evolve an order and a unity that flow immediately from the human spirit, without the mediation or "consolidation" of either church or state. When Mr. Weaver says that every "attack on religion" eventually turns out to be an "attack on mind," we want some serious qualifications, for some religions have conducted the worst attacks on the mind that history knows of. The whole skeptical movement, whose excesses he exposes so successfully, began as a kind of free religion practiced by men who refused to submit to theological perversity and even theological materialism, and the ultimate responsibility of Western religion for the atheistic reaction its dogmas produced is something which Mr. Weaver does not mention at all.

In other words, the modern world is too deeply involved in tragedy for any more "side-taking" on the old terms of the struggle between science and religion. Mr. Weaver sees the tragedy well enough, but, to our way of thinking, he does not see it whole.

## COMMENTARY

### DISTURBING CONVERGENCES

BY far the harshest judgment we have seen of Lecomte de Noüy's *Human Destiny* appeared last March in the *Journal of Philosophy*, in an article by Ferdinand Lundberg. A number of scientific objectors have written disparagingly of du Noüy's undisciplined and wishful integration of science and faith, but it remained for Lundberg to carry the criticism a step further into the area of social analysis. After exposing some major inconsistencies in du Noüy's logic, Lundberg says:

Fundamentally Noüy's book is neither about religion nor cosmic matters. He is interested in science, evolution, philosophical questions, and religion in the main only as they have a bearing, in the end, on the establishment of an ultra-conservative social order—an authoritarian, hierarchically-ordered society devoted to the leader-principle and dominated by an intellectual elite holding sway over an obedient, tractable, breeding mass of church-going inferiors.

We quote this passage, not in thorough-going endorsement, but because we think that even if extreme, it marks the *direction* of Dr. du Noüy's thinking, whether or not he was aware of the implications. We have no doubt that the late colleague of Dr. Alexis Carrel believed his attempt at religio-scientific reconciliation a most benevolent enterprise; but, on the other hand, we strongly suspect that he might have been quite indifferent to instances of overt authoritarianism in the name of religion. One wonders whether Dr. du Noüy, were he still alive, would view with the same articulate alarm he accorded modern materialism the recent action of the New York City Board of School Superintendents to ban the *Nation* from the public libraries of the city schools. Starting with the May 1 issue, the *Nation* printed a series of extremely informing articles by Paul Blanshard on the various activities of the Catholic Church. The School Board called them "anti-Catholic" and withdrew the *Nation* from circulation. Objectively, there is no distinction to be made between this effect of Catholic influence

and the censorship and suppressions exercised by the "atheist" Soviet State, unless it be that religious censorship operates in the United States through official channels, while Communist censorship does not.

It should be realized that the desire to control public education on behalf of sectarian religion is not limited to Catholics. The Evangelical denominations stand ready to use the schools for religious indoctrination if they can ever acquire sufficient political ascendancy to do so. W. S. Fleming's *God in Our Public Schools* (1942) states the case for the National Reform Association, which underwrites the view that "The verdict of history agrees with the word of Holy Writ that the nation that forgets God will perish." Mr. Fleming cares little for Constitutional restrictions. His plan for national salvation includes the elimination of non-believing teachers. "As God returns to the schools, the few non-religious teachers will seek other employment and be weeded out by school authorities."

So, it is not too soon for the sort of analysis Mr. Lundberg applies to such books as *Human Destiny*. Nor, we might add, is it impertinent to ask Mr. Weaver, the author of *Ideas Have Consequences*, some leading questions to elicit his position in the same connection.



## CHILDREN ... AND OURSELVES

THE many available volumes on child psychology tell us that we must expect children to pass through phases of transition, during which they will manifest traits which are disturbing to their parents and other adult relatives. There is also the comforting assurance, implicit when not explicit, that a child with a great deal of spirit may cause more trouble simply because he has more energy and more imagination—"problem children" are often, in the long run, the most promising. Yet there is one psychological phase, common to all children, which receives little attention from psychologists. This is the period of inertia which follows any sustained expenditure of energy in a given direction. Sometimes the reaction manifests as a general feeling of frustration; sometimes it is discernible as physical lassitude. This is the child's participation, along with the rest of mankind, in a mild form of what psychiatrists call the "manic-depressive" cycle.

All human learning is cyclical—instead of moving steadily to greater comprehension, our efforts are punctuated by depression and some introspection. It is in this manner that all adults, as well as children, "grow." We move from one mental world to another; we die, so to speak, with the failure of one grouping of ideas and ideals to meet the tests of time and circumstance, and finally find rebirths conscious and meaningful. Tolstoy's noblest writing, for instance, came when a previous world of ideas, a whole structure of life, so to speak, had collapsed. Children are more like Tolstoy than we usually realize. They are confronted with the same brutal destruction of dream-world after dream-world. Father or Mother, Grandparent or Teacher ceases, perhaps, to be a veritable God. Or their friend or first love betrays them. Or even, there is no Santa Claus. Children are, or course, reborn finally, into a new structure of values, although it, too, will some day be destroyed in turn. But there is always the

period of difficult building after destruction, and in this shipping of a new mental world to replace the old comes opportunity for suggestion and guidance, for real education.

Psychological death and rebirth is the fundamental process of character growth. It begins to reveal itself in early childhood, as anyone who has the ability to recall early states of mind may remember. And what we also know—or should by this time know about ourselves—is that the power to preserve *something* of worth from the destruction of what we have previously believed gives continuity to human life. We use many words to describe the most desirable traits which we hope our children will achieve, but perhaps the best of them all is "integrity." Integrity is inseparable from an individual's knowledge that, just as he has passed through disturbing internal changes in the past, he can pass through the others which lie ahead. No other viewpoint gives confidence, or a basis for making the most of each experience as it occurs, and this, in turn, is the foundation upon which "integrity" rests.

Followers of Dr. Gesell of Yale University and other statistically-inclined child-psychologists will benefit considerably from the normative facts and figures which show average behavior characteristics at various age levels. Yet we here suggest that such parents will be both confused and misled if they assume that the purchase and application of these handy slide-rules can give them actual knowledge of their children. The child, no less than ourselves, is Ulysses on a journey, a soul on a pilgrimage, and as with adults, no child is like unto any other. His external behavior may not reveal at all exactly what is transpiring in his mind, and is especially unsatisfactory in conveying the intensity and complexity of mental and emotional changes. As before suggested in this column, no parent can provide the maximum of help to the child unless he, as adult, is able, temporarily and at will, to regain a "child-state" himself.

What is the "child-state"? It is a condition of mind where everything is more wonderful and inspiring because everything is so simple, and at the same time a condition of mind wherein everything can become in a moment terrifying and disillusioning, as complexities and obstacles invade the mental horizon. When the horizon is clear, the child's energies and emotions, with legendary freshness and eagerness, are expressed with great intensity. Yet like the man who thinks to build a good house in a day, the child discovers that his schemes do not bring all the results pictured by his imagination. In the first place, there are many taboos, both parental and social, which inhibit his actions in many directions. In the second place, his parents, in seeking to curb what they regard (perhaps rightly enough) as misdirected energy, may display impatience toward the child, cutting him short with insufficient explanation for a prohibition. If, in addition to this, he observes that his parents, hitherto thought the source of strength and justice, quake and complain under their own burdens, he begins to doubt everything in his mental and emotional universe. Lassitude of various sorts results. An inner world of faith has died. And it means nothing helpful to the child if *we* are able to conclude that the previous "world" was not good enough. The child needs to know *why* the structure crumbled—whether it was based on impossible assumptions, or whether it was destroyed by unnecessary human weaknesses.

One of the finest accounts we know of the crucial quality of childhood dilemmas is a description by Carl Ewald, a Danish author, of what seems a unique father-son experience. Ewald's son, when about five years of age, had given his solemn promise that he would visit his playmate if the latter were caught by the dreaded epidemic of scarlet fever then ravaging the town. Deaths from the disease were a daily occurrence.

When the playmate did become ill, it was obvious that from every standpoint of health the visit should not be allowed. Yet the father

perceived that if the son were forced to break his word, something would die out in him at that moment, perhaps never to be reborn—his belief in promises. The physical hazard might be escaped, but not this more subtle danger lurking behind a parental prohibition. So the son went to the infectious bedside, accompanied by a parent who trembled at the possible result, but who trembled more at the thought of making his tiny man-child fail in a promise made with sincerity and unselfish intent.

The child, we may assume, survived two ordeals successfully, in this case, rather than simply one. He was allowed to develop integrity at a time when his parents might easily have felt unjustified in denying the child the conditions demanded by his integrity. But this son came to know that his father understood—that both could live in the same world of values, and that here was a parent who would always aid a worth-while intention, however peculiar, rather than thwart it.

## *FRONTIERS* MUSICAL EDUCATION

THE impressive contents of a recent compilation—Music Education Source Book, prepared and published in 1947 by the Music Educators National Conference, a department of the NEA—calls to mind the spontaneous interest in music which characterized the early days of American history. In the 1780's, Noah Webster gave singing lessons in Baltimore, by what he called "a regular scientific method." For payment he took in exchange "gloves, shoes, slippers and silk stockings." Coming to Philadelphia in 1787, Webster's lectures on nationalism in language and literature were supplemented by the choral renditions of Andrew Adgate's group of 230 trained voices which sang the works of American composers. Webster and Adgate agreed that music held an important place in every scheme of education and the latter organized in Philadelphia a free school which was latter called the Uranian Academy. Adgate's books on musical education ran through numerous editions before the turn of the century.

Early American music and musical education of the sort promoted by Adgate were a part of the general democratic movement of the time, which, in politics, culminated in Shays' Rebellion. The first American composer was a friend of Samuel Adams, William Billings, a tanner who used to chalk music on the hides hanging in his Boston shop. He was self-taught, but his talent soon brought a recognition that enabled him to give up his trade for music by the time he was twenty-five. Billings' revolutionary airs, setting his own verse to music, were popular for decades, and his religious music broke with the "theocratic" style consistent with ministerial dignity. His church songs, as Constance Rourke says in *The Roots of American Culture*, "were affirmative, joyous, full of praise, strongly rhythmic, easily memorized." Wrathful attacks by the clergy showed the spirit of this new movement in music, which seems to have

drawn on the riches of Elizabethan balladry for its uninhabited expression.

In time, Billings' odes and anthems were sung in Boston and Philadelphia along with the music of Haydn and Mozart. He gave the release of buoyancy and glee to religious singing—one of the many forms taken by popular insurgence against the old conservative forces. As a result of the efforts of Billings and other, among them Oliver Holden—a carpenter who turned singing teacher—social singing "became a fever, a passion"; and while the emphasis was upon the "homespun music," in the singing schools which sprang up everywhere the "object was to teach, to induce musical literacy." Song books and manuals on instruction were published by enterprising teachers, and the Great Revival of 1800 swept the movement of popular singing across the country.

The general issue of the pitch-pipe was introduced by Billings, "single-handed." He founded singing groups in Boston and the neighboring towns, and one such society, which was organized in Boston in 1786, is still in existence. The German choral song book of Mennonite farmer, Joseph Funk, was printed in Harrisburg in 1816. When revised and issued in English, it sold 30,000 copies. John Wesley contributed his share to the musical movement in America, with his sentiment that the devil should not have all the pretty tunes. Taking the hint, religious composers borrowed from hornpipes and Irish jigs, and religious dancing music was defended as similar to David's dance before the Ark.

Billings, the unabashed Yankee, replied to the ministerial charge that his compositions were nothing but "jargon" by writing a piece with this name, and providing instructions on how it should be played: "Let an ass bray the bass, let the filing of a saw carry the tenor, let a hog who is extremely weak squeal the counter, and let a cartwheel, which is heavily loaded, and has long been without grease, squeak the treble; . . ." The

words to be sung to this extraordinary accompaniment began:

Let horrid jargon split the air,  
And rive the nerves asunder.

Billings was entitled to all the "barbaric yawps" he felt like emitting, for he had not only given form to the new spirit in musical composition, but had also started America well on the way to being a singing nation.

And now, after this introductory dithyramb, we return to the *Music Education Source Book*, to say that it seems a worthy successor to these pioneering efforts on behalf of a musical America. A child—or a grown-up—insensitive to music is an incomplete human being. The *Music Education Source Book* represents the voluntary, unremunerated effort of literally thousands of music teachers in the United States to bring the values of a musical education to the children of the United States. The resolutions of organizations are usually dull and uninspiring affairs, but a portion of one passed by the Music Educators National Conference seems worth repeating:

Throughout the ages, man has found music to be essential in voicing his own innate sense of beauty. Music is not a thing apart from man; it is the spiritualized expression of his finest and best inner self.

There is no one wholly unresponsive to the elevating appeal of music. If only the right contacts and experiences are provided, every life can find in music some answer to its fundamental need for aesthetic and emotional outlet. Education fails of its cultural objectives unless it brings to every child the consciousness that his own spirit may find satisfying expression through the arts.

While prepared for teachers, the *Source Book* is a reservoir of practical suggestions for parents as well. Its greatest contribution, we think, is the multiple suggestiveness afforded by the scores of contributors, each writing from his own experience concerning some phase of musical education. The volume deals with every type of group instruction, the art of listening to music

receiving as much attention as training in musical performance. It also reflects, incidentally, a general awakening to music on the part of the people, and an intensified interest in learning to play some musical instrument.

What is striking in all the various contributions to the *Source Book* is the unqualified devotion of its writers to the young—their hunger to transmit, as effectively as they can, the rich cultural heritage of music to the coming generation. It is easy, in the ideological controversies over modern education, to lose sight of this quality in the teachers of children—a quality which may be more frequently found in specialists such as music teachers than in some others, for persons who choose a special field in education are likely to have felt a definite calling to this work, and it is natural that this spirit should reflect itself in their attitude toward children. While the pattern of the *Source Book* is both formal and formidable, the material for educational inspiration in music is there, needing only eager readers to make it come to life.