

TO BE OR NOT TO BE

THE lead article in MANAS for May 13, "The Worlds We Live In," dealt with a subtle philosophical issue, so that a letter of objection comes as no surprise. The problem of this discussion might be set by the questions: How is the One in the Many? How are the Many in the One? Of course, *any* verbalization of matters of this sort will sound ponderous and heavy-handed. If insights are to be gained in relation to these questions, they will almost certainly come as delicate undertones of feeling, rather than propositional responses. Yet there may be value in trying to see how the propositional approach limits itself. So, then, the letter:

You write that Maslow criticizes Zen thinkers "for failing to distinguish between finding ultimacy in one particular thing and finding it in the totality of the world." It seems to me that this criticism overlooks the basically paradoxical nature of Eastern thought. Ultimacy in the particular and ultimacy in the totality are not distinguished by the Zen thinker because they are not distinct. When there is a focusing of the attention (that which Maslow refers to, somewhat unfortunately, as "fascination") on a flower or the face of a child or a tree, it is true that one is focusing to an extreme degree, but one is also entering the door to a wider participation and I am not sure that some such focusing isn't the only door. The Quaker speaks of it as "centering down." It doesn't matter what the object of focusing is, but the rest of the world is excluded from the field of attention, and all of the individual's consciousness pours through the tiny opening of immediate perception. The experiencing of the particular and the experiencing of the totality are not two separate states; they are phases of one experience, phases which cannot be sharply distinguished. The total absorption with the particular is the initial phase and is necessary to the experience of totality which follows. The self flows out into the flower and all the world flows back in. It may flow back in so that there is a sense of gradual filling to overflowing, or it may flow back in so rapidly as to yield a sense of being exploded and in the brilliance of the explosion seeing the oneness of self and world.

In cases of those who have had experiences of a cosmic unity, but have not spoken of the narrowing of consciousness, I believe it is because the initial phase of focusing has not been recognized as part of the experience—it is not always intentional. Walter Stace (in *Mysticism and Philosophy*) has recognized two ways of focusing—"extrovertive" and "introvertive," but this distinction does not separate the focusing from that which follows. The religious mystic may focus on a concept (such as God) rather than on a percept, . . . but the object of attention is important only as it opens the way—a way that begins with a narrowing down to the extreme loss of self, goes on to the reception of the world into self, and culminates in an illumination in which all differentiation becomes illusory, and the identification of self and the world is seen and known.

To attempt to break down this experience, as it seems to me that Maslow is doing, is to try to reduce the whole to parts which cannot be understood in isolation.

Further, I would object to Maslow's parallel between the Zen attack on abstract thought and the neglect of the difference between the innocence of ignorance and the innocence of wisdom. Is it wisdom that we gain by abstraction, or is it a pseudo-knowledge which extracts from the concrete in order to generalize and then mistakes the abstractions for the real and negates the value of the particular? I do not deny the value of abstract thinking, but would object to that overvaluation which sees the concept as master of experience rather than its servant. Zen, so far from being a plea for a return to the innocence of ignorance, is a recognition of the wisdom that lies beyond the reach of "knowledge."

There are at least half a dozen questions, here—some of them clear, some implied. For example, there is the question of whether it is worth while to discuss at all "what happens" subjectively in meditative brooding, when you start with a particular object, and proceed to awareness of the universal in the particular. Certainly, "argument" about such matters must be fruitless, as anyone who has attempted this kind of

reflection will surely recognize. The potentialities of subjective experience are as infinite as the potentialities of objective experience, and while the charts of earlier explorers may give guidance, they cannot give "certainty." The possibilities—and therefore the possibilities of confusion and self-deception—become clear from a single reading of Patanjali's treatise on yoga. He says, for example, that "The meditative state attained by those whose discrimination does not extend to pure spirit depends upon the phenomenal world." Now who, in giving testimony, would be so presumptuous as to assure the rest of us that *he* is freed of the preoccupations of the phenomenal world and can range freely in "pure spirit"? Patanjali informs us, further, that the meditation "which has a subtle object in view ends with the indissoluble element called *primordial matter*," and is known as meditation "with a seed." On the other hand, that meditation which depends altogether upon itself, being independent of "objects," or phenomena, rises to higher planes and is known as meditation "without a seed." In any event, we see that no "authority" can attach to the reports of individuals on these great questions. We have to find out for ourselves, and it seems likely that those who find out will become reticent in direct proportion to what they learn. The value of Patanjali lies as much in his capacity to help the reader to protect himself from self-delusion, as in generalized blueprints of subjective states.

Another question has to do with the role of Dr. Maslow. It must be recognized that he does not set up as a critical student or scholar of Eastern modes of the contemplative life and its various psychological disciplines. He is a Western psychologist pursuing investigation of psychological (which may be read, "human") health. During this work he has come upon the fact that with psychological health there seem to go certain basic attitudes which are related in some fashion to subjective experiences of an elevating nature. His approach to these experiences is subjective-empirical. Notice that in his books, when he attempts to describe these

experiences, he does so by making a train of adjectives which, by their impact in series, generate a feeling of what he means. He does not limit these identifications with any particular tradition of high religion. He uses words for their feeling-tone, not their historic connections in ancient religious systems. And he communicates with extraordinary success in this way, at the same time preserving the integrity of his naturalist-humanist position.

So, the thing to do, it seems to us, when you read Maslow on Zen, is to *find out what his point is*, instead of starting a scholastic argument with him. His point may be valid, even though a subtlety of Zen exposition (is there really such a thing as Zen exposition?) may have escaped him.

Having an argument about *real* Zen is too much like having an argument about *real* Christianity. Who speaks for Christianity? The Church? (Which one?) The Gospels? (Whose reading?) If you reduce it to "essentials" on which all may agree, is there really enough left? You may, if you like, excise the anxiety from interpretation by making it depend upon the Inner Voice, or "Inner Light," of the individual, as the Quakers have done, and this seems by far the best course; but it is also a great responsibility, for then ordinary human beings bear the burden of keeping a *living* expression of Christianity continually present in the world. It is, no doubt, from their effort to do this, and from their humility in trying, that the Quakers earn the respect they have from both the Christian and the non-Christian worlds.

So, in responding to the letter of our reader, we shall not attempt to argue a matter which we cannot possibly pretend to understand in its fullness—ideal, original, symmetrical Zen—but move the problem into an arena where we are a little more at home.

Our reader says: "The experiencing of the particular and the experiencing of the totality are not two separate states; they are phases of one experience, phases which cannot be sharply distinguished." Let us argue about this.

Now if words like "particular" and "totality" or "universal" have meaning, they represent things which can and must be distinguished, if there is to be a dialogue about them. But the point, here, is that the universal can be found in the particular—and this, indeed, is the way to regard all our experience: To see the universal in the particular is to live *sub specie eternitatis*; it makes the world a *sacred* world. From this identification of particulars comes that "reverence for life" which discovers the self in all things.

Fine. So far, so good. The man who *feels* this realization will be "natural" in the highest meaning of this term, in all his relationships. There is, however, an unexamined question, for which, if we are to have wisdom in our relations with particulars, we require an answer. The question is: What *is* a particular? Other forms of the question are: What is happening in the phenomenal world, besides the delusion of the subject? Is anything being served by all the buzzing, blooming diversity which the aspirant strives so conscientiously to see through and beyond?

This is the question to which, so far as we can see, the Zen teachers make no adequate reply. They do not have—or they do not stress—a theory of history. They have only a theory of the dissolution of history.

Well, why should this be, supposing the criticism is in some sense justified? The reason for taking an anti-phenomenal, anti-historical position is plain enough to anyone who has studied the past three hundred years of Western history. If ever there were a civilization hypnotized, boxed up and sold down the river by people with plausible theories of history, it is our civilization! If ever there were people made slaves to intellectual abstractions and the resulting doctrines of "progress," it is ourselves. So, naturally enough, the iconoclasm of Zen toward history and all external process speaks mightily to our condition. Behind it we see the gleam of a long-sought freedom. Liberation, we begin to

understand, is not in history at all, but *out of it*. And Zen will get us out.

It is not a part of our argument, here, to question this possibility. What we want to question is rather the *price* of getting out; or of getting out too soon.

We are inclined to suspect that this is what bothers Dr. Maslow, also.

This question brings us back to the matter of the particular. It is a piece of something, as well as a strange and wonderful window into totality. What is it a piece of? What is it doing, "out there"?

Well, in our imperfect moments, we are "out there," too. And what are *we* doing? We, the mystics and philosophers tell us, are trying to realize the perfect in the imperfect—to see and know ourselves as the One, despite the illusory forms of the Many.

So, you could argue that the entire universe is a spectacle made up of potentially divine fragments—atoms, egos, monads—all of which/whom are seeking at-one-ment. Now this quest is a *process*—the process of life. It takes place in time, and it has form. The form is described by the periodicities of nature. The quest has an inherent rhythm. Life is made up of periodicities and rhythms, all interwoven, all modifying one another, some external, some internal, all together producing the symphony, the roar, the melody and the chords, the sound and the fury of existence.

When a man says a particular is different from a universal he is saying that a particular line of expression, a particular phase of the life-process, is worth noticing, studying, and understanding.

He is asking, once more, for a theory of history. He is saying that finite events have ends, and that there is value in those ends, even though they be "finite." He is saying that history has *meaning*, that experience is not *only* delusion, although it is certainly that.

Now it is easy enough to talk your way out of needing to answer such questions. You can take a high view and say that only the "eternal" concerns you.

But we must ask: Is there no beauty in the crack of dawn? No wonder, no solemnity, in a baby's glee? *Why are there babies?* Why this incessant going out into the world and its confusion by moving lights of consciousness which, in the course of the cycles, become babies? In some classical, ancestral sense, every baby is a Prometheus with some stolen fire clutched to his heart. He is going to try to illuminate the processes of life. He isn't just longing to get away from it all. He isn't going to mark the entire universe useless, aimless, and not worth staying in.

Why do men want "liberation"? They want it because they know that at the motionless center of things is Nirvanic bliss and fetterless freedom. But is that all there is to reality? Whence the periodic Christs, the Buddhas, and all the avatars? Why didn't *they* stay in Nirvana? Why did they let themselves get mixed up with history? Do they *like* to be crucified?

Look at the question in another way. We talk a great deal, these days, about "creativity." What does a "creative" person do? Well, one thing he does is make forms—new forms that delight himself and others. He makes an original form—which is a microcosm of being. It is a new piece of the world.

Now what is the discipline of meditation? It is the opposite of creation. It is the release of the perceptive and creative powers from involvement with form. It is the sinking of the string of thought behind the veil of formal existence. It is the absorption of the life powers into the region of formless reality.

Again, what are the primary sources of motivation in all human undertakings? They are the mind and the heart. We need to love and we need to know. Knowledge without love is a dry,

sterile, and ultimately destructive thing. Love without knowledge invites one into the bottomless swamps of partisan emotion.

One who really loves suffers the constraint of really knowing. He has to see into the mechanisms of every limitation, and, finding out, his love turns him into a teacher. It is now *himself* who suffers limitation, in the persons of all those other selves. What will he do about this? He has to make a theory of history, a science of the relativities in limitations, and of the exercises of consciousness within the changing forms of limitations. Why else would a kindergartner bother to learn about children? Why would a Madame Montessori *care*?

So there is a great reason of the heart for involving the mind in a study of the meanings of finite existence.

There is also a great making of courses and terraces in the world. People don't just sit and meditate; they build schools. There is structure and magnificence in human achievement. The human spirit makes an enormous variety of fields in which to order and illuminate human experience. These enterprises have *meaning*. They relate to the hungers of the heart, which include outgoing as well as in-seeking longings. It isn't enough to know the world's delusions. You have to feel and sympathize with the creative surge, the model-making enthusiasm of human beings and of all nature.

In this case the love is for the secret potentialities in every grain and clot of earth, in every cell of manifested life. It is to picture the world as a vast chambered nautilus, conceived, structured, and cunningly evolved out of the limitless resources of nature, with all the forms subject to the rhythmic Brahma-Vishnu-Siva flux.

So, when one speaks of the fact—and in the deepest sense it is the most important fact—that the true identity of the particular lies in the universal, since each particular writhes with longing, twisting toward the One, and is

consumed by a desire to encompass All, it is none the less a fact which is drained of meaning unless that *other* fact—the fact of otherness—is given its due. For by the particularity of all otherness comes the great net of existence which we, along with all others, weave, and in which we suffer the confinements of the human condition.

Otherness is the matrix of romance, of striving, harmony, vista, and vision, and all the limited meanings of work in the world. What is the philosophy of otherness? It is *measure*. When we use words like "appropriate," "fitting," "timely," or an expression such as "moment of truth," we are acknowledging the reality of the other, the particular. We are not denying the Ariadne's thread of the universal, which is the secret essence of the particular, but we are trying to express in the crude vehicles of language the feeling of how the universal and the particular endlessly combine.

We have here a basis for understanding the intuitive demand of the artist for symmetries which somehow make us feel the brooding presence of the universal in his work. We know it is there, but something more than mathematical analysis is needed to understand it. Analysis will give the anatomy of meaning, but not its living flow. The beauty of living things is like the song of a bird—which you hear, but you can't *do* anything with. So it is with all meanings that emerge from within process, yet are epiphenomenal to process. They defy the "progressive" urge. They frustrate all contracts, all buying and selling, all measurable advance. Yet they are somehow the accidental, the Aeolian, "music of the spheres" which has by no means been "produced," but invoked by true creativity. It is as though a far cry of Nirvanic ecstasy has extended its subtle wave-motion to the outermost limit of the phenomenal world and made itself heard in an instant of time.

No man has any business closing any shutters on any world—neither the world out there nor the

world within. All the worlds have to be understood.

But even if the set of abstractions we have thus far employed prove serviceable in some degree, the work of the mind is but barely begun. There are terrible mysteries, matters almost obscene in their life-denying quality, which must be penetrated and rendered harmless. The world of men is marked by unendurable cruelties. The terrors inflicted by the righteous on the unrighteous are worse, if anything, than the dark doings of criminals. How shall we untie these knots of the heart if we do not join knowledge of particulars with our feeling for universals? Some science must be involved here.

No doubt, as our reader avers, there is "a wisdom that lies beyond the reach of 'knowledge'," yet the suffering world is so entangled in delusions of a lesser sort that it is perfectly natural for men in whom compassion is an instinct to give attention to intellectually solvable problems.

The problem, obviously, is one of balance in all these undertakings. And if the world is not yet ready to enter a monastery, then the monks, if they would be of any use to other people, will have to go out into the world. And if they do this, they will surely suffer from forgetfulness. Here, perhaps, is another of the meanings of Lethe.

People who work in the world in behalf of the freedom of men from delusion quite naturally become partisans of the remedies they are able to devise. Zen Buddhism, if what we understand is correct, gives particular stress to the importance of becoming free of the delusion of *Nama rupa*—of name and form. The name given to something is not the something; the form assumed by an intelligence is not the intelligence. Yet since names and forms are convenient means of identification, they are often allowed to substitute in thought for the realities which lie behind. So intellectual abstractions, conceptual formulas, elegant equations, and all manner of precise and "doctrinally correct" propositions come to be

mistaken for the living awareness of truth. When an entire culture victimizes itself in this fashion, the error takes on arrogance and is embodied in pompous institutions—and since institutions cast long shadows in the world, proclaiming their indispensability, men attend to the needs and pretensions of the institutions instead of to their own capacity to learn and to know.

This is the characteristic pattern of the corruption of institutions which represent the human longing for truth—a pattern that is usually attacked in the same way by those who see the corruption and resolve to make an end of it. The reformers become *iconoclasts*. They break the idols—the institutional idols and the conceptual ones, too.

But concepts are a part of the human capacity to understand. Their misuse is not an argument against concepts, but against the over-simplifying championship of any partial tool for understanding with which human beings are endowed. History is filled with the nonsense of such distortions, some of them incredibly naïve, such as the curious enthusiasm, these days, for "glossolalia," or "speaking with tongues," which is the latest fanaticism of human escape from hard thinking.

We suspect that, within the Zen tradition, there are lines of recognition of the function of concepts in human development; and also a conception of the meaning of the function of concepts in human development; and also a conception of the meaning of history which does not scout the need to differentiate among the various epochs of progressive self-recognition; what else could real *teachers* do but master these difficult matters in order to be able to teach? And what is a *Bodhisattva* but a teacher?

We say this, as a speculation about Zen, because we feel no compulsion to become antiquarians and try to "prove" this idea from Buddhist history. The modern world is not living in Buddhist history and it has its own saving traditions to create. The dignity and promise of human beings are always in the present, as also the

capacity to make themselves free. This is not to suggest disdain for the philosophical past. The West has already gained deeply from its experience of Zen thought. It has been a freeing catalyst and an instructor in self-reliance for Western thinkers. At its best, Zen puts men on their own. But no moment of discovery in self-knowledge is like any other, and one of the things the Western thinker may have learned, from or through Zen, is that communicable tradition, however rich in insight, can never, and ought never, to compete with the subtle awarenesses of the present. As those who seem to know never tire of warning, Zen is not a body of tradition about knowing, but the act of cognition itself.

REVIEW

THE RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

"SECOND Thoughts on the Religious Revival" is the title of an article which appears in *Harper's* for February—an essay drawn from Prof. Herbert J. Muller's book, *Religion and Freedom in the Modern World* (University of Chicago Press). Prof. Muller's agnostic perspective is in the tradition of William James. James honored the spirit that makes many men distrust religious belief while recognizing the right to believe in ideals which have no means of objective verification. Condensing James, Prof. Muller writes:

While granting that most men are always inclined to believe too much, too easily, James observed that the scientifically minded were inclined to reject possible truth because of a squeamish fear of error. Humanists who find life meaningful enough without religious faith also deplore the positivism that saddles much contemporary thought, too easily discrediting basic human interests and values by limiting significant meaning to scientific truth, dismissing as meaningless or false what strictly is only unverifiable. On less philosophical levels we all know the type of sophisticate, or semi-sophisticated "realist," who is fearful of ever being duped or taken in, and so is suspicious of all avowed idealism. . . .

James also stressed the need of respecting the "wild data" that do not fit into the conventional scientific scheme—the kind of data that Freud was then investigating, thereby incurring the hostility of both positivists and churchmen. In James's own classic, *The Varieties of Religions Experience*, he impressed scientists too (including the great Max Weber) by treating religious experience as a scientific reality, to be explained instead of explained away. He heralded a growing tendency of psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists to give religion more intellectual prestige—as well as the orthodox more headaches—by serious, often sympathetic studies of it. In this view the work of Jung was no mere aberration.

Short of his celebrations of the irrational, most unbelievers might agree as well that man cannot live on reason alone any more than bread alone, and that wisdom requires respect for needs, old and deep, which rationalists have too often dismissed as primitive or merely neurotic.

Prof. Muller quotes Paul Tillich:

Briefly, Tillich asserts that the Christian must be at once in history and above it, knowing that the only salvation for the community must be through history, not from it. Above it he must cling to the "religious reservation," the attitude of "in spite of"; faith declares an eternal meaning in spite of "the tragic destiny of all human truth and goodness" on earth. In history the Christian must be loyal to the "religious obligation," or the attitude of "because of," the unconditional demand that he keep striving to realize truth and goodness even though he knows that all earthly aims are "fragmentary and ambiguous." His only hope of assurance lies in giving up all illusion of security, accepting the uncertainties of the human "boundary-situation," the inescapable limits of possibility on earth, symbolized by the Cross itself.

Many encouraging transitions are taking place in contemporary Christian thought, one tangible evidence being the refusal of the National Council of Churches and such journals as the *Christian Century* to support the "Becker amendment," which would neutralize the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights so that Christianity may be taught in the public schools. As a *Century* editorial remarks:

When the hearings started, sentiment in Congress overwhelmingly favored some kind of action which would "put God back into the schools." The desire to reprove the Supreme Court for its rulings in the regents' prayer and Bible reading cases was general, especially since it appeared that political capital might be made out of the issue. Bishop Fulton Sheen, Daniel A. Poling and a variety of spokesmen pleaded passionately for the Becker or other proposals. Then the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church and other church assemblies spoke out and churchmen of another type had their innings before the committee. They made it clear that the real target of those who attacked the court was not the court but the First amendment. The vision of what havoc would ensue if the First amendment was weakened quickly cooled the heat of many protagonists of the Becker amendment. Credit for arousing the Protestant churches of the country must go to many church and synagogue leaders. The big problem now is to see to it that the party conventions get the message that the exploitation of prayer for political ends is as profitless as it is indecent.

In his *Harper's* article, Prof. Muller defends non-orthodox believers in both the Catholic and the Protestant traditions, but opposes the literalism and the "original sin" compulsions of the orthodox, remarking: "I know of no evidence that orthodox believers are the staunchest champions of democracy, but considerable evidence that they are not very staunch defenders of civil liberties." On the other hand, the positive aspects of thought within religion today reflect an open-mindedness and willingness to learn from others—which is certainly to respect individual conscience and "civil liberties" as inalienable rights. Prof. Muller continues:

Modern religious thought points to an ideal aspect of the actual religious drama on the world stage today. This is less a struggle among the higher religions for the loyalties of mankind, as in the bad old days of crusades and holy wars, than an increasing cooperation—mostly informal or unconcerted but involving more consciousness at once of their common values, the common interests of mankind, and of possible profit from their differences, an exploration of new religious possibility.

Prof. Muller concludes:

All this leaves us up in the air—and me open to obvious complaints from the reader.

Up in the air? So much better for religion viewed as spiritual quest. No one who really respects human dignity, who values human freedom, will believe that the last word has been spoken about God or the good life. Uncertainty remains an essential condition of freedom, or specifically of a critical, adventurous spirit suited alike to science, to the needs of a free society in a revolutionary world, and to the endless quest of the good life.

With the word "ecumenical" very much in currency today and with such copious evidence of ferment within most Christian denominations, it is tempting to predict that the hostilities which divide dead-letter orthodoxies will eventually cease. To paraphrase Joseph Campbell in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, orthodoxy eventually insures only one thing—that temples will become mausoleums, while thinking or aspiring men will seek elsewhere for regenerative

faith. Before such a millennium comes about, however, we may expect strenuous political struggles within the churches, since orthodoxy, in the last analysis, must rely on political means for its preservation. But the true regenerators of religious idealism in the future will, we think, recognize such agnostics as Prof. Muller as allies.

COMMENTARY THE FURIOUS GOOD

A MORE or less grim truth in this week's *Frontiers*, by Alfred Reynolds, will stand further exploration. After listing a number of the clichés of prejudice, Mr. Reynolds remarks that the whole structure and institutions of modern society "would break down if all these patterns of thinking were to disappear." This parallels the warning, made some years ago by a British clergyman, that our civilization would not last two weeks, were the teachings of Christ to be consistently applied by those who call themselves Christians.

Now the point, here, we think, has in it more than a ruggedly honest iconoclasm. And its moral is more than an implied justification of prudent conservatives.

You can, if you will, join with the angry Nihilists and the radical Sampsons who want to bring down the unworthy temples of our common life. This is the *Götterdämmerung* theory of progress—depending upon the social psychotic break of men who slowly go mad from their feelings of impotence.

But what the frenzied self-righteousness of this theory ignores is its terrible consequences for the *children* of the world—and for all the child-like grown-ups, and they are many—who will have to live out their lives in a world lying in ruins.

The world we have may be despicable enough—it may even be, as we say, unworthy of survival—yet its sudden and ruthless reduction to primitive conditions might turn out, in the long run, to have been only an expression of the sick self-love of angry men. They cannot, they say, *wait* for education. It does not *work*, they say, and meanwhile generations are born and die away, in continuous bondage to all these social lies.

It is a curious faith—this rage for instant and absolute revolution or reform. Nothing we have found out about human development shows that

people really *learn* anything from such catastrophes. The violence may break the mold of corruption, but it also establishes violence as a kind of sacred political magic. And it erases from memory what few secrets men may know of human growth.

There is a frightening ignorance of the authentic ends of human life in the programs of people who hate evil so wildly that they have no time to comprehend its roots. They never ask what their anger is displacing in themselves, and what it will deny to everyone else.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

CREATIVITY IN A PREPARED ENVIRONMENT?

MAGIC words are not uncommon in the linguistic museums of demonology and religion. However, the modern mind, while usually abjuring both demons and saviors and their appurtenances, has continued to rely on incantation.

"Creative" and its derivatives have now become a kind of password. They are a verbal "rite of passage"; they out-jargon the jargon in any field because they are applicable to all fields without being specifically relevant to any field. Of course, people who are fluent with "creative" jargon may occasionally write a poem or paint a picture—closer to a good definition than those who limit creativity to procreation, or who associate the word and the event with the theory of Spontaneous Generation.

Anything and everything can be "creative." This appellation is probably so widely applied because no one knows what it means. Writers tend to relegate the subject to the "unknown wonders of the human mind." Psychiatrists are just beginning to chart the outskirts of the pre-conscious—the domain of human integrative and symbolic organizing processes (*Neurotic Distortion of the Creative Process*, by Lawrence S. Kubie, M.D., Noonday Press). However, for the popular mind a person, event, or thing is "creative" when its origins are mysteriously spontaneous; it is associated with either, or both, academia and bohemia; it is vaguely beneficial to Mankind, or New and Useful; it is uncommon enough to have leverage as a status symbol (if many of one's friends have not heard about it); and it has something to do with beating the Russians to the moon.

Even toys are creative, according to a recent catalog of Creative Playthings, Incorporated of Princeton, New Jersey—if the "playthings" are part of a "prepared environment." One wonders

what sort of "play" could emanate from a "prepared environment"? This catalog (called a "parent guide to play and learning") describes and lists the prices of "playthings" which are designed to allay the fears and guilts of modern parenthood. A handy list of fears and guilts are conveniently to be found on the inside cover.

You cannot discharge your educational responsibilities merely by putting your child in the hands of a teacher. *By that time it may be too late for your child.*

These children who use Creative Playthings are the prepared children. . . . The unprepared child does not have the imagery needed for learning and abstracting ideas. It shows up in later years as disinterest in schooling, leading to college drop-out {what about the high school drop-outs}, emotional disturbances, an unfulfilled, dissatisfied life.

Surely you want to and can provide your child with a state of readiness for creativity and invention—spark him with the will to learn.

The "parent guide" lists the names of the management ("probably has more child education oriented executives than any other firm in the United States") replete with their degrees and academic backgrounds. Also, the "guide" states that Creative Playthings are "not available through department, discount, or retail toy stores." Of course not. Who would want to buy a "plaything" that could be purchased by just anyone? The activities of the home office are described. "Beneath the rustic quietude of Creative Playthings, Inc., near Princeton, New Jersey, there is developing a tremendous outpouring of creative endeavor on behalf of children everywhere [no profit motive, or course] Backed by the acquisition of two new factories . . . and reinforced by a fine research and design team, a new qualitative approach to play and learning is emerging. . . ." Doesn't this sound like Creative Playthings Incorporated is a cross between a missile plant and a sanatorium?

Supposedly based on the ideas of Dr. Maria Montessori—although it remains a question just what she would have had to say about a "prepared

environment"—Creative Playthings claims to be equipped to "prepare" the child's environment while providing him with a variety of "experiences" without which his "imagery" (and God knows what else) would be "hampered," his vocabulary "postponed," and his general "development" delayed. As if that were not enough, the company states that it is primarily interested in "Freedom for Infants!" because "If a young child is to assimilate some of the complexities of our world, he will require early experiences of our world, he will require early experiences with the touch, taste, sight, and sound of it." However, nearly every "plaything" in the "guide" is constructed with smooth, uniformly textured, tasteless, and "quiet" plywood, hardwood, tubular steel, and aluminum. Few items are colored; balance and symmetry predominate. Whatever happened to mud, leaves, sticks, rocks, and those little bugs that roll up into a ball when touched?

The parents' choice is clear; either they buy from Creative Playthings or their children will probably turn out to be retarded.

As one thumbs through the "guide," one is struck with the high cost of "creativity." A plaything called the "Super Jet"—a kind of kiddycar resembling a surrealistic jet airplane—made of plywood and tubular steel, and rolling on heavy casters that "quiet noise," costs only \$35.95 shipped express collect. A set of blocks, "Large Family Block Set," for three or more children, and which Frank Lloyd Wright allegedly described as "the finest material that came into my house," costs just \$55.00. Forty hollow plywood boxes (what's wrong with orange crates?) sell for a mere \$108.00. For just \$21.95, you can buy your child (or yourself if you want to be "creative," I suppose) an electric steam engine. The steam is not used to produce electricity, but rather electricity is used to produce steam which actuates a simple piston which turns a suspended wheel. You plug it in and the wheel rotates: that's the whole show. (This might confuse a budding

engineer. It could be years before he found out that municipal power plants are not for making steam from electricity.)

Creative Playthings, Incorporated is used here as a locus of ideas radiating from the often subtle assumptions underlying our definitions of what is creative and what is not, what is human and what is not, and what contributes to human growth and development and what does not. Creative Playthings, Incorporated does, no doubt, produce some well-built, intriguing toys worth buying.

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FRONTIERS

Pillars of Society

IN the Russia of the nineteenth century there was a movement which styled itself "Nihilist." Its idea, briefly, was that the institutions of society being evil, they ought to be destroyed. Anything coming after them could only be better and not worse. The Nihilists had faith in the regenerative powers of society and the inherent goodwill of men.

Today, a century later, such a political creed sounds naïve and unrealistic. We know that the smashing of old coercive and anti-human institutions would not lead to Utopia. We know that the new tyrants and their rule would no less abuse the human being than the tyrants of old have done. We know that the emancipation of the individual cannot be circumvented: only free and responsible persons can create a free and responsible society.

Nevertheless, we are surrounded by institutions which we recognize as anti-human: the State and its punitive "justice," the Churches and their absolute "truths," the educational system and its contempt for education, marriage and its disregard for a genuine human relationship.

Do we, then, advocate their abolition? Alas, this would be an impossible task. They are the very fundamentals upon which our social order is built and their destruction (if it could be achieved) would bring down the whole structure in ruin. Sadder still, the new architects would have to replace the old institutions of evil with new, equally evil ones.

I wish to show that all these institutions—the Nation-State, the Law and its organization, religious bodies, the educational system, the organs of violence and even marriage—are kept alive and perpetuated by the very things we dislike and try to eliminate from our own attitude and character: they are kept alive by prejudice,

superstition, violence and vengefulness, thought-habits and group-thinking.

None of us would extol prejudice, the readiness to form judgments and opinions on insufficient grounds. Yet, only a wide range of prejudice can keep the institutions of our world going.

(1) "We can't do without government." (2) "Democracy is a good thing." (3) "Man's history shows that all the time there is progress." (4) "This is correct, all scientists agree." (5) "He's been to university, he's an educated man." (6) "You can't expect women to be as good as men." (7) "Of course, the Negro is inferior. You wouldn't want your daughter to marry a Negro." (8) "You can trust him. He's a good Christian." (9) "They live in sin, he being a married man." (10) "Haven't you heard the disgusting truth? He's a homosexual." (11) "There have always been and there will always be wars." (12) "Serves him right. He has stolen the money. You can't let people get away with theft." (13) "You mustn't be squeamish about murderers. Have you ever considered their victims?" (14) "I'm British and proud of it."

This sorry list shows prejudices and thought-habits which are fairly general, as well as forms of group-thinking (thinking in terms of groups, such as women, the British, etc.). Every one of these inept statements is, by itself, one of the pillars of society. (1) and (2) support the State and its political regime; (3) provides the social optimism which makes people accept the tutelage of an oligarchy; (4) achieves a willing conformism with institutions and attitudes that can marshal scientists in their support; (5) results in an acceptance of the educational system serving an oligarchy; (6) secures the political and economic superiority of one half of mankind over the other; (7) gives a sense of adequacy and self-confidence, however false, to the white man; (8) identifies goodness and trustworthiness with a religious attitude and, indirectly, with the body proclaiming it; (9) enforces respect for the institution of

marriage; (10) upholds the patriarchal character of our social order and renders suspect love between man and man; (11) serves to make people accept a holocaust that would be meaningless for them and is, in fact, only a consequence of the activities of their rulers; (12) brings about unquestioning subservience to the Law and a sense of horror against the transgressor; (13) sanctifies the right of the State and its punitive organs to take human life; and (14) perpetuates people's allegiance to the "nation" into which they were born.

It is more difficult to pinpoint superstition. Often the beliefs of one are regarded as superstitious by the others. The word itself means beliefs held not only without, but contrary to, reason. These beliefs endow things, phenomena and words with powers they do not possess.

Religion has a double aim. It attempts to give an answer to man's quest for purpose, for truth outside the verifiable aspects of existence. This is religion's metaphysical aim. The other, the ethical, provides guiding principles for man's conduct. The teachers of all great religions attempted to give metaphysical and ethical answers to perennial human problems. Institutional religion, however, soon discarded the principles underlying these answers. While crudely clinging to the letter of the teaching, they overburdened religion with rites and cults that had nothing to do with the teachers' ideas. Unfortunately, these very superstitions were those factors which provided the cohesive and integrating force for the institutions that have survived, while the original ideas have taken second place or disappeared altogether.

Violence and vindictiveness which, I am sure, not only our readers deplore, are at the very core of the survival of Nation-States, of law and order, and indeed of our whole social structure. Attempts to secure an ordered commonwealth without violence have failed, and many a lawgiver had to realize that, without enforcement, coercion and punitive "justice," his laws would be disregarded. Law is the opposite side of the coin "lawlessness," said a great sage, and indeed these

two are complementary factors, one giving justification to the existence of the other.

It has also been said, and rightly, that group-organizations can get away with actions that would expose individuals to general contempt or even land them in jail. Deception, robbery, murder, rape, arson and wholesale destruction of life and property are condoned when practiced by the State. Any doubt as to the State's "right" to do this, any demonstration of protest against such actions, merely shows that the opponent has not even understood the State's *raison d'être*.

By thought-habits I mean certain patterns of opinion unthinkingly held and respected by people who are anxious to have the "right" views. Such thought-habits are, for instance, the view that *all* problems must have a solution; history a "meaning"; human relations legal sanction; nations a group "character"; statesmen aims; intention and action identity; punishment a deterrent effect; and the law honour. Value judgments, implanted in immature minds alongside with the alphabet and the tables, will be upheld as unchallengeable thought-habits throughout adult life. Thus it is accepted that people are good or bad; that groups are endowed with the same attributes as individuals; that success, money and sex are the supreme values for which to strive. At the same time righteousness, consideration and "God" are affirmed, without any attention being paid to their claims. The accepted thought-patterns tell us what is good, just, right and the "will of God," and what is evil, unjust, wrong and the "lure of the devil." A hierarchy of values is accepted in which men are superior to women, Christians to heathens, whites to blacks—and Britons are best of all.

The most dangerous of these thought-habits is the image of the group as a super-personal entity which has the same qualities and attributes as the individual. The result is the unsavoury smugness through identification with the group ("I'm British and proud of it!") or the equally stupid and stubborn refusal to see in foreigners

individuals rather than identifying them with the (usually worst) actions of their leaders. Group-thinking brings about the ready acceptance of "axioms" such as: *the Jews are dishonest, the Italians cowards, the Americans materialists; the Germans cruel and brutal, the French immoral, women are inferior, Negroes uncivilized, Catholics unthinking fanatics, etc.* Workers put coal in the bath-tub, foreigners take our jobs, foreigners are *so* clever, etc.

Is there, then, no way out? Is there no solution? I fear I can see none as far as the social organism is concerned. Its whole structure and its institutions would break down if all these patterns of thinking were to disappear. The reader may conclude that a structure based on things like these does not justify its own survival—the reader may be right.

There is, however, an effective way for the individual to meet his predicament. While in his external life, where he has no choice, he has to endure the interference of institutions based on the cupidity and stupidity of his fellow men, in his attitude and his thinking these factors and institutions need play no role. He may try to free his mind from prejudices, superstitions, thought habits and group thinking, he may live without the use of violence and the desire for revenge. If he achieves this form of freedom he becomes not only a potential citizen of Utopia, which may never come—he becomes, in his own person, an example and a vision of Utopia.

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