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AN ESSENTIAL OF RELIGION

NOT long ago, in a discussion concerning the changes in religious attitudes in the United States, a friend and occasional contributor to MANAS remarked that he did not "like" the Unitarians—or rather, he did not much appreciate their conception of the meaning of religion. He readily admitted that the Unitarians, as a group, are probably more "socially aware" than any other religious body, but this aspect of the Unitarian credo was not pertinent, except perhaps indirectly, to the criticism he made. "They," he argued, "have taken the *mystery* out of religion." The implication of this comment, which was admittedly vague and impressionistic, was that liberal religion in general, as it has gained in rational humanitarianism and impartiality regarding the various religious traditions of the world, has lost to the same degree the intensity of feeling which he regarded as being the very essence of religion. There are non-rational roots of life in every man, he proposed, which the generalized, humanitarian faiths disregard or fail to appeal to. He went on to speak of what the story of Jesus meant to him, and here we shall have to stop in any attempt to convey his ideas, not because we did not understand him, but rather because, as we hope, we did—and now recognize the inadequacy of putting into words the inner feelings of another, or of anyone, concerning what is thought to be ultimate, transcendent, or "peak" psychological experience.

This is the region of inquiry which, in the dead language of analysis, is called "eschatology." It is concerned, according to the dictionary, with "death, resurrection, immortality, the end of the world, final judgment, and the future state" — precisely those questions which modern thought has ruled out of serious consideration ever since the scientific categories of "reality" were accepted by Western man as the raw materials of meaning.

We know well enough why such matters were outlawed from the disciplines of modern knowledge. It was not because any of the discoveries of natural science gave a clear direction to the conclusions of materialism. The founders of modern materialism were basically moralists who thought that by digging away the foundation of religion— belief in God and soul— they could put an end to theological oppressions and religious conflict. There were two great spokesmen of this view in the eighteenth century—men who set the temper and established the justification for the atheism of the nineteenth century and the skepticism and agnosticism of the twentieth. The first of these, Julien de la Mettrie, wrote in *Man a Machine:*

> If Atheism were universally disseminated, all the branches of religion would be torn up by the roots. Then there would be no more theological wars: there would no longer be soldiers of religion, that terrible kind of soldier. Nature, which had been infected by the consecrated poison, would win back her rights and her purity. Deaf to all other voices men would follow their own individual impulses, and these impulses alone can lead them to happiness along the pleasant path of virtue.

De la Mettrie was a pioneer of the French Enlightenment. A few years later in the century came Paul Dietrich von Holbach, a German baron who was even more outspoken and who commanded an audience of the learned and literate of his time. It was Holbach's contention that the only important barrier to human happiness lies in the deceptions of religion. The preface to his famous book, *The System of Nature*, begins:

> Man is unhappy merely because he misunderstands nature. His mind is so infected by prejudices that one must almost believe him to be forever doomed to error; the chains of illusion in which he is so entangled from childhood have so grown upon him, that he can only with the utmost trouble be again set free from them. Unhappily he

> struggles to rise above the visible world, and painful experiences consistently remind him of the futility of his attempts. Man disdained the study of nature to pursue after phantoms, that, like will-o'-the-wisps, dazzled him and drew him from the plain path of truth away from which he cannot attain happiness. It is therefore time to seek in nature remedies against the evils into which fanaticism has plunged us. There is but one truth, and it can never harm us. To error are due the grievous fetters by which tyrants and priests everywhere succeed in enchaining the nations: from error arose the bondage to which the nations are subject; from error the terrors of religion, which brought about that men mouldered in fear, or fanatically throttled each other for chimeras. From error arose deep-rooted hatred and cruel persecutions; the continual bloodshed and the horrid tragedies of which earth must be made the theatre to serve the interests of heaven.
>
> Let us try, therefore, to banish the mists of prejudice, and to inspire man with courage and respect for reason!

With such leaders to guide them, the thinkers of the Enlightenment wore away at the doctrines of religion, their object being to establish natural science as the authority concerning what is true and actual, and to make human welfare, which they defined as "happiness," independent of divine concern or intervention. They wanted causation to be understood in terms of mechanical action, more or less along the lines of ancient atomism, and in psychology their reasoning foreshadowed the doctrines of modern Behaviorism. Since the threat of Hell-fire was a major weapon of the church's psychological power, they were eager to eliminate any belief in a surviving soul, for if no soul exists, it cannot suffer punishment in a theological Hereafter. Holbach argued:

> The dogma of the immortality of the soul has made morality into a science of conjectures, which teaches us nothing at all of the true means to influence mankind. If, aided by experience, we knew the elements that formed the basis of the temperament of an individual, or of the majority of the individuals in a nation, we should know what is suited to them—what laws are necessary, and what institutions useful for them. In a word, morality and politics might derive advantages from Materialism that the dogma of an immaterial soul can never give them, and which it prevents us even from thinking of.

We should need an entire text, or a half dozen texts, to cover the long period of assimilation of these attitudes into the general body of modern knowledge, and the absorption of the philosophical assumptions they represent into moral dynamics of twentieth-century thought, but no one who gained his education within the past fifty years can fail to recognize the general ground of modern belief in the key ideas of the eighteenth century, once they are pointed out. What we have now to consider is the possibility that serious thought is presently preparing itself for a great shift to another ground of assumption.

It ought not to be supposed, as is sometimes argued, that progress in science is alone responsible for the beginnings of this change. While the dissolution of matter into constellations of energy and electromagnetic fields, following upon the discovery of the electronic constitution of the atom at the turn of the century, has had a permissive effect upon anti-materialistic thinking, there is really no more reason in modern physics for us to turn to "spiritual ideas" than there was for turning to materialism in Newtonian physics. The moral needs and hungers of mankind are the decisive cause of changes in philosophy, not the developments in the sciences, although the science of any age undoubtedly supplies the conceptual frame for moral argument and often much of its polemical vocabulary.

What we are after, here, is a sense of historical orientation in respect to eschatological thinking—eschatological thinking, not as the dictionary defines it, but as the deep brooding about oneself, one's origin and future, the meaning of one's life, and whether and how it is worth living. It was Carl Jung, we think, who first pointed out the recurring insistence of this kind of thinking during recent decades. He found it to be the characterizing theme of the epoch, and if the books published on psychology during the past ten years are any guide, such questioning of meaning

and identity is now the major preoccupation of serious thought. It fills the modern novel, animates the research of the new self psychology, and is a constant theme in Existentialist literature and drama.

There has been nothing provocative in physics or modern cosmology to suggest this trend, unless you are willing, as some have been, to stretch the Heisenberg principle of Indeterminacy into a justification of Free Will, and see in the neo-Pythagorean mathematics of modern physical theory the forerunner of transcendental metaphysics. It seems more reasonable to us, at any rate, to propose that the two hundred years of modern history—since the Enlightenment— left without any living cultural source for a philosophy of the inner life for human beings, have produced quite desperate hungers and longings for a kind of nourishment that neither democratic politics nor the progress of science and technology can provide. It is no wonder, it seems to us, that the angry revolutions of the twentieth century were spawned by essentially religious emotions, and that the states which emerged from them bore all the indicia of surrogate religion.

What does a man want of religion? He wants individual encounter with meaning. If the religion of his time is dead or dying, he must find it elsewhere, and he keeps on looking until he finds it, or a likely substitute; or until he is made sick by the frustrations and disappointments of failure in the quest.

There is probably a deep truth in the idea that a man must lose his life in order to *find* it. All the ancient religions taught something like this. In the modern political substitutes for religion, a man could lose himself in the political community, but he could never find himself there. There was no transaction, only a permanent loss of identity. That is the trouble with the political surrogate religions. We have no doubt that, in time, after the high dreams and revolutionary elation of the Soviet experiment have died away completely, some kind of religious or religio-philosophical revival will take place in Russia. The Soviets have all the makings of the same kind of tired, overfed rejection of the final fruits of humanitarian material progress that we are experiencing. They need only a little time.

What, in psychological terms, does religion provide? The means to non-historical self-realization, or some inward feeling of the possibility of this kind of contact with individual meaning. The promise of meaning in ideologies is always collective, and when that promise begins to break down, it leaves the faithful in a state of psychic collapse. They do not know how to stand alone, and in this world a man *needs* to know how to stand alone. The idea of immortality might be a great help, here, but for many moderns, the answer, if it is to be found at all, is found, not in a teaching of immortality, which smacks of the traditional, but in some psychological equivalent which shares the values of the idea of soul, identifying them as functions rather than as attributes of a substance called "the soul."

We have some examples of this in the Fall 1962 issue of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, in A. H. Maslow's "Notes on Being-Psychology." The notes represent extensions of the ideas in Dr. Maslow's recent book (Van Nostrand, 1962), *Toward a Psychology of Being.* Presented for "discussion only," some of these "notes" will serve to illustrate what we mean by saying that the values associated with immortality are entering the thought of the time as functions of consciousness rather than as "episodes" in the life of the soul. Dr. Maslow begins by suggesting that Being-Psychology—

> Deals with ends (rather than with means or instruments); with end-states, end-experiences (intrinsic satisfactions and enjoyments); with persons insofar as they are ends-in-themselves (sacred, unique, noncomparable, equally valuable with every other person) rather than as instruments or means-to-ends; techniques of making means into ends, of transforming means-activities into end-activities. . . . Deals with states of *finis* and of *telos;* i.e., of completion, finality, ending, totality consummation,

> finish (states in which nothing is lacking, nothing more is needed or wanted, no improvement is possible). States of pure happiness, joy, bliss, rapture, ecstasy, fulfillment, realization, states of hopes fulfilled, of problems solved of wishes granted, of needs gratified, of goals attained, of dreams realized. Already being there; having arrived rather than striving to get there. Peak experiences. States of pure success (transient disappearance of all negation). . . . Transcending time and space. States in which they are forgotten. . . . The sacred; sublime, ontic, spiritual, transcendent, eternal infinite, holy, absolute states of awe; of worship, oblation etc. "Religious" states insofar as they are naturalistic. Everyday world, objects, people seen under the aspect of eternity. Unitive Life. Unitive Consciousness. States of fusion of temporal and eternal, of local and universal, of relative and absolute.

Here, surely, are the elements of "mystery," abstracted and generalized in the vocabulary of psychology. They represent, in modern terms, the qualities of experience which were once identified with eschatological doctrines of religion. How does, or did, the Christian reach to this experience? Setting aside all the questions of the Higher Criticism, there can be no doubt of the uplifting and even transfiguring effect of devotional identification with the meaning of the life-story of Jesus Christ. He is both the mediating principle between the finite and the infinite, the heavenly and the earthly, and an intensely appealing human figure. His story has the rich color of time and place, yet with a meaning which breaks out of time and place. He is humble, yet infinitely great; He endures forever, yet He suffered bitterly; He was only one, yet He is also the many in his rebirth in human hearts. The levels of the experience of this story are multiple. The possibility that it may justly be called a "myth" is felt to be totally irrelevant by persons who find in the forms it presents the substance of profound human truth, and what they believe to be trans-human truth. Then there are those who, in another sense, couldn't care less about the scholarly conclusions of Bible archaeology and historical criticism. They live by the feeling the story gives them, and are upheld in constancy through the trials of life, which may be heavy. MANAS recently had a letter from one such person who, after friendly expression about the Magazine, expressed hope that the editors would find New Life and hope in Jesus Christ.

Well, we have known people who have lived by this faith, and have nothing but respect for some of its fruits in human behavior. It stands indeed in striking contrast, throughout the courses of daily life, to the barren sophistication of many who, unwilling for perhaps good reasons to adopt this simple faith, have for bad reasons adopted no faith at all.

Criticism in relation to religious ideas is usually made on the institutional level, where intellectual impartiality has legitimate sway and where the broad social and psychological consequences of religious belief have some hope of just appraisal. This kind of criticism is necessary and should be pursued, and for those who, like Tolstoy, are unable to believe in the trappings and transitory symbolism of local religion, it should serve as the tool of refinement and individual discovery.

But what our friend—spoken of at the beginning—was talking about, it seems to us, is of the essence of understanding the human situation. His comment was in effect a judgment that the undogmatic, socially conscious versions of the Western religious tradition tend to drop out the eschatological elements of belief—since these elements are precisely the ingredients of religion which have no place in the scientific or "modern" notion of reality, and therefore cannot be assimilated by the rationalist, progressive spirit—yet there is no discernible attempt to restore to wholeness what remains by adding some more acceptable form of the "mystery" experience. It would of course be a vast presumption to do this, in most cases. "Mystery" is not something you can formulate with deliberation, like a dietary supplement. For this you would need, say, at least a William Blake, or another George Fox, and such men are in short supply these days. But a notice of the need is surely desirable, and quite possible.

The addition of poetry, art, and even drama to the religious "curriculum" seems a groping admission of the lack in all the Humanist religions, and it might as well be an overt admission as well as implied.

There is some kind of "lost chord" that seems missing in all the modern forms of religion. It is the failure to offer deep and feeling assurance that there is some window into the infinite, some as yet unburnished facet of the human psyche which has the possibility of capturing a measure— if only a spark—of the light of the world. The ancient mystery religions all held out this promise. There were Egyptian and Greek as well as Christian mysteries. One can well imagine that the story of Osiris moved the hearts of the men of the ancient world just as Gethsemane and Calvary touched Western man for long ages. The God, the Savior, the Hero, has a thousand faces, but none as yet, or none that we can easily see, for our time.

It may be that the rediscovery of this ancient communion with inward universal life will be withheld from modern man until he learns to seek with a mind open to his heart, and a heart which now longs for the measure of a new kind of rational intelligence—an intelligence unbiased by the bitter memory of sacerdotal repressions and centuries-old wrongs. The thing that makes this hope not seem vain is the simple fact that, for all our psychological problems and feelings of inadequacy—spiritual inadequacy, some might say—we are still men, and what other men have done, we can do. Not the least ground of hope is the widespread searching in this direction. Day by day, you see signs of the release from ancient prejudices, timidities and anxieties. From all the talk of the importance of individuality, perhaps, is coming the dawning recognition that individuality, for man, is nothing unless it is secretly or inwardly joined with universality, so that the person is enriched from a source which is beyond personality, gains a security and a serenity that owe no debts to politics, and an identity which need not be shored up by the particulars of race and nation.

REVIEW

THE POWER OF SPEECH

[Very nearly everyone has heard of the work of Vinoba Bhave, the Indian leader who has continued the labors of Gandhi by carrying to the people of India's villages the Gandhian conception of *Sarvodaya*—implying "a civilized society bound together by mutual trust and affection, working for the common good and devoted to the ideal of peaceful progress." For twelve years, Vinoba Bhave has pursued socio-economic reforms in India through the Bhoodan-Grarndan movement, involving, basically, redistribution of land by gift from those who have to those without. What is probably unfamiliar to readers in other parts of the world is Vinoba's *thought*, apart from the generalities of Gandhian principles. Here we present a portion of a recent address made by Vinoba in Assam. The free translation from the Hindi is by Noshir Bilpodiwala. We have taken certain liberties to help convey the meanings intended, and have eliminated obscure passages or allusions likely to be confusing to Western readers.—Editors, MANAS.]

SPEECH is a god-given gift. Literature is connected with speech. A man's life develops as his speech develops. The entire basis of life is speech. This is the reason why devotees have sung of the greatness of *Japa* (telling the beads). As Tulsidas writes, "Ram's name is greater than Ram himself."

We are very proud of the mother tongue. But man has been endowed with Speech, not language. The very fact that man can forget languages shows that not language, but *speech* is a god-given gift. Progress will be made by speech, faith in Man. If speech is truthful and restrained, it acquires power. Today, in India, we have lost the power of words. When we lose the power of words, there is no alternative but the power of weapons.

Before Gandhiji, many leaders directed the attention of the masses toward Freedom. But people thought that the leaders *said* one thing and meant quite another: the masses did not lay full trust in these leaders. Gandhiji started a new mode. He meant what he said. He held up the ideal of non-violence. In 1918, when riots broke out in the Punjab, the whole of India was aflame with anger. Incendiaries set fire to a few houses in Ahmedabad. In those days I was at Sabarmati, and was twenty-three years old. Some of us went to the city and explained to the people that firing homes was not to the liking of Gandhi. "He is hurt by this," we said. "He does not tell you to do such things." But the people were unresponsive. "What do you know?" they said to us. "You are still children!" They seemed to argue that while Gandhi talked of *Ahimsa* (harmlessness), in his heart there was something else.

A few days later Gandhi reached Sabarmati and fasted because of these incidents. It was thus that the people learned that Gandhi meant what he said. Gandhiji's penance for the violence gave strength to his words.

Today, in politics, it is supposed to be foolishness to speak and mean the same thing. One must know the art of camouflaging with words. Hence politics is a game of Devils.

When the power of words is lost their utility is also lost. This leaves the alternative of weapon-force. We must understand that as word-power weakens, brute force gains and the sword becomes mightier than the pen. The quality of true literature is such that each *word* is a life-force. Shankaracharya tells us that he who is truthful and silent wields power with words. When it is not necessary to speak, there needs be silence. When there is irritation, when the mind is not calm, words are like bubbles. Speech falters.

Words should be like the arrows of Ram, who aims only once. A literateur wields power through truth, balance of mind, and peacefulness, but his efficacy lies in his art of entering the hearts of men. *This* is non-violence. The literateur stirs the emotions of men indirectly. He does not preach, give orders, or presume to advise. Sermonizing begets no result. Direct advice yields no fruit.

An example of this is the *Ramayana,* par excellence a work of art. This epic poem does not preach, but indirectly suggests a number of things. The plot so develops that it creates compassion in the mind of the reader, who effortlessly feels its impact. Just as a well-designed mountain road takes you to the summit with the least exhaustion, so good literature generates compassion in you without aggressive devices. In the *Mahabharata,* it is difficult to say who is the chief hero. In ordinary dramas one easily makes out the hero, but in the *Mahabharata* you recognize the genius of Vyasa, who set it down. At times Krishna is the hero, at times Draupadi. At one time, Yudhisthira, at another, Karna. Bhima strikes at Duryodhana, and the mortally wounded Duryodhana says to him "Not in all my life have I bowed down to you. Blessed is my life." Then he dies. Yudhisthira and Arjuna are present on the scene. Vyasa makes no moralizing comment, but writes simply that at this moment the Heavens rained flowers. So, your sympathy goes to Duryodhana.

Vyasa makes of the *Mahabharata* a huge assembly of attributes. There is advice and counsel everywhere, but it is all indirect. Nowhere do we find a direct suggestion or injunction. Just as getting something done at the point of a gun constitutes violence, so also to issue an "order" constitutes violence. A person who holds power orders, a sage preaches, but a mother skillfully explains. This word of the mother goes straight to the heart. In literature, nonviolence consists in a non-aggressive arrangement of words. The indirect force of literature should enter the heart of the reader by its art, whereas the direct force lies in Truth. Speech loses its power when it lacks truth and non-violence.

The literateur should not be passionate. The passionate writer will not be able to witness situations impartially. A thermometer cannot report on a patient's fever if its own temperature is high. It measures only when it is "normal." If the literateur is not detached, he will not be able to measure the world. Hence he must look at the world and society dispassionately. At the same time he must be engaged in interest and concern. He must be *for* the world as well as detached from it.

In the age of science, the tendency toward Truth is increasing day by day, and this is not surprising. For fiction, we need moonlight, not sunlight. In sunlight all becomes clear. By moonlight things are not clear. Shadows stimulate the imagination and trees appear as ghosts. Hence poetry is best written with a light which permits illusion. Since the advent of the scientific age has reduced the field of illusions, some are of the opinion that the art of poetry must now diminish, but I think the contrary. I am of the opinion that in the scientific age, literateurs will excel Dante, Shakespeare, or Kalidasa, because science is adding a dimension to literature.

Another thing to be noted is that there are two forces which may be expected to acquire supreme importance, today. These are (*a*) science and (*b*) self-knowledge. Other cultural forces have weakened and are bound to die out sooner or later. Religion, caste, creed, politics—all these are now out of date. It may be said that these forces seem extremely powerful, today, but the flame is often largest when it is about to be extinguished. I think these seemingly powerful forces are about to be extinguished. Take it as a confident prophecy that science and self-knowledge are the two forces which will predominate over all others in the long run. The most important task of the literateur is to bridge these two mighty forces. This is an enormous task and will have to be achieved by meditation and genius, resulting in a unique power of words.

It is foolishness to *tell* a writer what or how to write. His genius is uncontrolled. I would ask only that you watch as a spectator this creation and its development. You will see that two ideologies attract the world—the one, Communism, the other, Sarvodaya. I am not

forecasting the future, but I can see the writing on the wall.

All the great thinkers of the world have talked of peace. Now both Communism and Sarvodaya have their foundation in compassion. But the compassion inherent in Sarvodaya is based upon truth, whereas in Communism it is a reaction. In Europe there was Capitalism, and Communism came as a counter-blow. Sarvodaya is not a reaction to any "ism." It is a synthesis, *sui generic*. Yet both these ideologies deserve close study, for they are not enemies of each other. They are contemporaries in the flow of time.

I talk not only of Love and Compassion, but of Truth, Love and Compassion. The difference between the two ideologies is now implicit. The compassion in Communism is without any realization or experiencing of Truth. Hence Communism rests upon a one-sided premise.

What I say here is only a thinking out loud. I do not wish to press my thoughts upon the reader, but urge you to think independently. "Behold! A vast field is about to open unto you."

VINOBA BHAVE

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COMMENTARY
TOWARD SELF-KNOWLEDGE

MANAS: TO your critique, "Socrates Rides Again" (Jan. 2, 1963), I would say, in the same spirit as Galileo, "Nevertheless it moves"—that nevertheless some way must be found for the training toward self-knowledge suggested. But the intent is not to reform the schools. It is, rather, merely to install in the existing set-up courses developed for each grade—just as with mathematics—in logic and reason, access to these roots being at present apparently unavailable in our whole educational structure, except possibly at the very top. It is notable that while education is to train the mind, the development of the very tool of the mind, necessary for its own training—that is, clear thought and clear feeling—is itself left to chance. This is like expecting a piano student to become a pianist by giving him training in everything about the piano except the use of the instrument.

The passage you quote from Dr. Henry A. Murray, of Harvard, seems to strengthen rather than demolish the ground for the study courses proposed. For instance, Socrates says (italics mine):

> "In short, immortal judges, would you, or would you not declare that quite a few psychologists—with no terminology at all to represent better-than-average personalities—added what influence they had to the *general trend of denigration which reduced man's image of himself to the point of no revival, stripping it of genuine potentiality for creative chance, the only ground there was for hope that people could do anything but what they actually did do?"* . . . [*i*.e., started "a biological, chemical and nuclear war . . . inadvertently . . . by the push of a button during a small group's momentary panic . . . .and irresponsibility"] . . . ..

Dr. Murray points exactly the same critical finger at exactly the same critical problem—the failure of individual responsibility—that these proposed studies are calculated to overcome. Unless, perhaps, we prefer a *rationalizing* society or culture to a *reasoning* one—one in which citizens are not apt through "panic" or "irresponsibility" (or for any other reason) to push the Final Blast Button.

In short, the study proposed is the study of oneself, specifically of one's own thoughts and feelings (Dr. Murray's "mind and heart"), each student to learn from his own direct experiences, and the teacher to help only as an educator in his true role—to encourage, or guide, *never* to impose arbitrarily.

Such courses should mean that intellectual and emotional forces comprising a particular life-experience at any given time are simultaneously brought into (inter) play and (inter) balance, just as is natural to a healthy non-split ego—call it mind, soul, psyche, or however one may wish to term a Human-Being in his acting or experiencing capacity. These courses would be developed as a day-to-day living study (understanding) of the operation of impartial (objective) logic-and-reason-thought-and-feeling, which, by the very nature of the study, become exercises in clear self-knowing and clear self-responding-to.

Properly worked-out courses will naturally require wholesome insight on the part of those who do the planning. But the idea itself is basically *not* complex. Nor are we without sufficient milieu already in our culture to do this. Similar techniques, at least in end-result, already exist in the more fluid and healing schools of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, known to aim at helping the individual to guide himself back to himself, to self-understanding and balance. Psychoanalysts, logicians,—whatever personnel are needed, might combine in seminar to determine means and techniques. No cut and dried formulas will serve—no courses for the sheer consigning to memory of facts or supposed facts—but geared, instead, *to eliciting the interrogation and review by the student of his own data toward the full assimilation of his own experiences.* The simpler the formula the better. It must not and need not be difficult or complicated, while yet taking all into account.

Nor would it necessitate the use by the student of data embarrassing to himself. It has to be presumed that a good grounding in the techniques of self-experience-evaluation will afford the individual a permanent tool for his aid in all types of experience, even if only privately expressed. We want no scapegoats or guinea-pigs.

Failure to see as potential from such courses the chance of the regeneration of the individual mind-heart, and of the cultural mind-heart, at whatever level of intelligence it may find itself in, and failure to develop the appropriate means to effect such training and guidance, could only signify a desperate and massive failure of the faculty of creative imagination, on the part of those intellectuals whose duty it is to be responsive to cultural necessity. It is time for us to leave the Cult of the Question and go on to include some Answers. It is also time to stop being hypnotized by mere description, however brilliant the analysis of our cultural ills. While keeping clearly aware of our ills, we must keep sensitively alert and seek the needed answers, and learn, in dignity and human-self-respect, to forge the new ways.

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CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
A POET'S VISION ON EDUCATION

THIS seems to be a time when unlikely associations are no longer surprising. Last December's *Esquire*, for example, has some searching remarks on the relationship between philosophy and education by the distinguished poet, W. H. Auden. From this article, "Do You Know Too Much?", it seems to us that "the poet's vision" is worth a good deal. At the outset, Auden sets the stage with some well-phrased mundane observations:

> So long as any society remains static, so long, that is, as the problems it has to master remain the same, its young are always "well" educated. On the other hand, whenever a society and its circumstances are changing, its educational system is apt to be defective; and what, based on past experience, parents and teachers regard as essential and unessential knowledge no longer coincides with what, if they are to function as adults in the world as it is, the new generation must know.

The crux of the educational problem is, of course, the student himself. If he is not encouraged to determine *what* he wants to know, and has no personal passion to acquire that knowledge, his sojourn in the "system" will result in a loose assemblage of passively absorbed information. The detailed, factual knowledge which our schools still strive to impart becomes important only when specialization begins—and interest in specialization depends upon the personal involvement of the student. Auden links the child's and the adult's approach to knowledge in this manner:

> The question "What do I want to know?" can only be answered by myself and never conclusively. I shall continue to ask it and modify my answer until the day I die, for it is a byproduct of more important and insoluble questions: "Who am I? Whom do I want to become?"

But we have acquired the habit of storing up information, so that "even when college is behind us and we become solely responsible for what we learn or fail to learn, we are apt to clutter up our minds with knowledge which is irrelevant to our lives, and our motive for doing so is usually a desire for social conformity."

We follow false lights because, as Auden puts it: "We keep imagining we ought to know this or that because those about us know it. Sometimes, it is true, there can be a conflict between duty and interest. I may be bored to tears by political problems but, if I am to do my duty as a citizen, I must learn enough about them to make a rational choice when I vote. But unless conscience can give me unanswerable reasons for learning what bores me, the chances are that it is not my conscience that is speaking." The possibility that we, along with all our vehicles of knowledge, may be vaporized without warning must lead us, in Auden's view, to some important philosophical revaluations. We need to probe "certain presuppositions about the nature and purpose of knowledge which for the past three centuries we have taken for granted and which have brought us to this pass." Auden continues:

> We cannot help seeing, for instance, a problem to which this period was blind, the problem of the relation between knowledge, truth and time. Instead of asking, "What can I discover?", man should always ask, "What ought I to discover next?" We should, that is to say, have devoted our will and intellect to the political problem of international anarchy first and then turned our attention to atomic physics. Nor can we help seeing that the phrase "knowledge for knowledge's sake" is meaningless; man always desires knowledge for a purpose and the kinds of knowledge an individual or a culture seeks, the ways in which they seek it, betray that purpose.

Now come those passages which, in our opinion, give Auden's article its special value:

> We know that most of the universe is composed of things about which we can acquire knowledge but which cannot know us, and that this one-sided relation enables us to manipulate them as we wish, but collectively, we have not yet drawn the obvious moral, namely, that if nothing in creation is responsible for our existence then we are responsible for all created things. Most individual scientists,

certainly all the best ones, have been and still are contemplatives who rejoice in their discoveries, not for the practical value they may have, but because it is a joy and wonder to know that things are as they are. Unfortunately their innocent indifference to practical values has made them the slaves of that faceless fabulously wealthy Leviathan called Science which has no concern whatever for the right of anything or anyone to exist except its anonymous power that acknowledges no limits, and that has a scarcely disguised contempt for those whom it employs.

Either we shall commit suicide, by bombs or by exhausting essential natural resources, or we shall change our conception of science.

I know it is presumptuous for someone who is not a scientist to suggest what that conception should be, but I shall do so anyway.

I would like to see all scientists accept three presuppositions.

(1) Not only everything that "lives" is holy, but everything that exists, from human beings to electrons. An electron has as much right to exist as we have.

(2) Though it is good that everything exists, the way in which a particular thing exists may be evil or, at least, not as good as it could be.

(3) So far as we know, we are the only created beings who, by their own conscious efforts, can make themselves better or worse, or ask questions about the nature of other beings.

If these presuppositions are accepted, then teleology, which has for a long time been a dirty word, will find its place again in scientific thinking. Is it too fanciful to suppose that it is up to man to enable other created beings to realize goals which are proper to them but which they can only realize with his help, that his authority over nature should be that of a father, not an irresponsible despot?

As our knowledge increases, may we not find that our power and, hence, our duty to educate will extend much further than at present we dream of? What, unknown to itself, does an electron want to become? We don't know and perhaps never shall, but to know that should be the ultimate aim of science.

This is a vision of education which combines, one might say, some of the essences of philosophy, religion and psychology. Here is Schweitzer's "reverence for life," and here is a description of the educational setting of the "autonomous man"—autonomous because he feels at home in the universe, not simply in a group, a country or a hemisphere. Auden exemplifies what W. Macneile Dixon had in mind when, after a survey of science and religion, he remarked, "I prefer to put my trust in the larger vision of the poets." Concluding *The Human Situation*, Dixon added:

> It is in exalted thoughts that the poets find the revelation of the vital truth. They issue no commandments, they censure not, they upbraid not. In the fierce turmoil they are not utterly discouraged. They sympathise with every creature. They know, and yet, *mirabile dicta*, love the world. Theirs is a postulate, if you like, yet a postulate we must all make, if we are to enter the region of meanings at all, that our natural capacities, our natural instincts are not the casual spindrift of time, but of an earlier birth and longer lineage. As in the darkness, in the organism not yet born, the eye is formed to correspond to things invisible, and thus with confidence anticipates a world to come, so the soul's faculties, for love, for joy, for admiration, for achievement, correspond to a reality which exists, and is by them foretold.

FRONTIERS

Toward "Emancipation"

THE December, 1962, *Progressive*, devoted to the liberation of the Negro, has a fitting title: "A Century of Struggle, 1863-1963," and MANAS readers will feel indebted to the *Progressive* editors for printing documents of permanent value concerning the transitions which followed the Emancipation Proclamation. Contributors include Archibald Macleish, Adlai Stevenson, A. Philip Randolph, Martin Luther King, and other writers of significance. To our way of thinking, the most arresting paragraphs occur in Lillian Smith's article, "The Mob and the Ghost," which we quote as setting the key of the predominantly philosophical tone of this issue. Mrs. Smith writes:

> I have never been sure that racial segregation has hurt the Negro more than the white. I am not certain that physical lynching of the few is worse than the spiritual lynching of many white children by their own parents and school and church. There is a spiritual lynching of black children, too, different, but perhaps no more terrible that that of the white children. What segregation has actually done is to destroy spiritually and mentally millions of its children of both races. Arrogance, or shame—which do you prefer that your child feel? A mind deadened to knowledge, or a body shut out of a decent school? An indifference to the suffering of others, or suffering itself? The choice is hard to make for all these things will dehumanize the child.
>
> Neither Negroes nor whites have fully realized that segregation is a two-edged sword, that it cuts both ways and cuts to kill. If this could once be seen clearly, if white people could for one hour stare at the faces around them, could peer even for one minute into the hollow souls they work with and play with, they could not say, "It must come slowly; a little token sanity, yes, but not too much sanity, not too much compassion, not too much fairness—just a moderate amount." To hear thoughtful men speak of postponing decency, postponing excellence, postponing the return of rights they have stolen from Negroes and from their own children, leaves me gasping in astonishment. How can our people be so blind?

James Baldwin appears with "A Letter to my Nephew" —a citizen of Harlem. Mr. Baldwin, who is a Negro, and Lillian Smith, who is not, converge on the same psychological point, as this paragraph from the novelist's "Letter" illustrates:

> Please try to be clear, dear James, through the storm which rages about your youthful head today, about the reality which lies behind the words "acceptance" and "integration." There is no reason for you to try to become like white men and there is no basis whatever for their impertinent assumption that they must accept you. The really terrible thing, old buddy, is that you must accept them, and I mean that very seriously. You must accept them and accept them with love, for these innocent people have no other hope. They are in effect still trapped in a history which they do not understand and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men.

The editorial introduction to the *Progressive* colloquium on "A Century of Struggle" speaks of the profound significance of the employment of "non-violent resistance" in the struggle towards equality. Here again, the Afro-American may enjoy advantages over Americans of other color shades: he had to find a better way to climb over the walls of frustration, because the ways of violence would not work. A key figure, of course, in this Gandhianism of the West is the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., who, as the editors of *Progressive* put it, "recently summed up both the practical and moral power of this new instrument in the struggle for equality of opportunity." The editorial continues:

> Legislation and court orders, he said, tend only to declare rights; they can never thoroughly deliver them. "Only when people themselves begin to act are rights on paper given life blood," Dr. King emphasized.
>
> Non-violent resistance, he said, is effective in that "it has a way of disarming the opponent; it exposes his moral defenses it weakens his morale; and at the same time it works on his conscience.
>
> "Non-violent resistance also makes it possible for the individual to struggle to secure moral ends

through moral means. The doctrine that the end justifies the means has been one of the greatest tragedies of Communism. Read Lenin as he says, 'lying, deceit, and violence are justifiable means to bring about the end of a classless society.' This is where non-violence breaks with Communism and any other method which contends that the end justifies the means."

In no other area of American life does this profoundly ethical outlook prevail so deeply as in the Negro's struggle for equality. And yet he might not have found his way to Gandhian non-violence if litigation and legislation and executive leadership had not failed him so repeatedly in his long and painful quest for equality under the law.

While one may feel, with Lillian Smith, that the most tragic consequence of injustice to the Negro—economic, legal, and educational injustice is the corruption of the souls of his exploiters, it is also inevitable that many Negroes have developed violent antipathies in reflex. For this reason, the *Progressive* article by C. Eric Lincoln seems to us particularly instructive. Dr. Lincoln is professor of social relations at Clark College, Atlanta, and writes on the basis of research and study for a book soon to appear—*The Black Muslims in America.* Dr. Lincoln says:

The Muslims have abandoned the fundamental principles of the American creed as having no practical relevance to them or their conditions of existence. . . . By the nature of certain of their goals and requirements, the Black Muslims have exempted themselves from the aegis of the American creed. In their ardent racism and their insistence upon physical and political separation in a black nation of their own, in their repudiation of American citizenship, they exclude themselves from principles and values which have not functioned to secure to them the rights and privileges they feel to be consistent with human dignity.

Other groups advocate *white* supremacy, resist the assimilation of Negroes and others, and practice hatred rather than love. Yet they remain "loyal" to the American creed. Why single out the Muslims as beyond the pale? The point is that although the creed is violated constantly in practice, it remains an *ideal* to which most other organizations of questionable dedication—not excluding the Klan, the White Citizens Councils, and the John Birch Society—give their assent; an ideal in which they allegedly derive their interpretations of moral values and social justice.

Black Muslims do not "just happen." They are symbols of our failure to meet effectively the minimum needs of large numbers of human beings, who, deprived of traditional incentives and realistic participation in the common values of our society, are looking for a cause and a leader. They are the victims of neurotic social anxiety, people who are repeatedly frustrated in their attempts to make adjustments in a society which is unaware of their existence except as the faceless subjects of statistical data. The future of the Black Muslim movement is hard to predict. But whatever that future may be, we shall all be in part responsible.

Dr. Lincoln can in no way be described as a defender of the Black Muslim movement, but he does indicate, with considerable lucidity, why it is inevitable for psychological violence to bring consequences of a similar nature. We conclude with another brief passage from Lillian Smith's "The Mob and the Ghost":

Things are changing, but much too slowly, the "old forms are breaking," and we are beginning to "feel the new things" —but much too slowly. Our leaders have not yet faced the truth that we, too, must hurt, we must suffer with the poor white and the Negro, not only to be redeemed from our past but to find the wisdom to create our future.

We must say with Æschylus: "Cry sorrow—and let the good prevail."