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REDISCOVERY OF FREEDOM

IN the United States, there are probably five or six scientists whose personal achievements have been so notable as to entitle them to speak in behalf of "Science" generally. This does not mean that they would expect or desire precise assent to their opinions from other scientists, but that they feel able to sum up the broad perspective and temper of the scientific outlook.

One such man is Arthur Holly Compton, noted physicist connected with Washington University, and a leader in atomic research. Last December, speaking before the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Dr. Compton proposed that, during the past fifty years, Science has led modern thought to a new plateau of knowledge about human beings themselves. His address was an endeavor to set forth the implications and the challenge of this knowledge, and as the ideas that he stresses are ideas usually found in the declarations of other scientific thinkers who attempt to integrate science with the moral problems of society, there should be value in examining his major contentions.

Briefly, it is the conclusion of science, Dr. Compton says, that man is a *natural* being. But he is also a *free* being, not bound to the rigid destiny of a mechanical law of cause and effect. Finally, man's consciousness, according to Dr. Compton, represents a field of reality on which science has nothing to say. From these propositions about the nature of man and the human situation, he derives the ground for far-reaching hopes and an inspiration which is set free from older limiting conceptions of man. He begins by defining the present as quite literally a point of new departure for human achievement, based upon these several realizations:

> We have come to understand at long last our place in space and time. We have learned that we are an integral part of the great cosmic event which we call nature, but with certain remarkable distinctions: we are aware of our world, we are able within expanding limits to shape the world to our needs, and reaffirming that we are indeed our brothers' keepers, we find in this fact real meaning for the life of which we are a part. For the first time in man's history, the experience of the last fifty years has given us a sound basis for aspiring to a social order in which the great tragedies of destitution and premature death shall be the exception rather than the rule, in which education that brings understanding of truth and appreciation of beauty shall be generally available, in which the dominant social force will be the desire to aid one's fellows toward achieving a worthy life. . . .

Here is a splendid enthusiasm, surely. Even if it bears resemblance to the vision of earlier thinkers and scientists—men who, in their own day, felt that the movements of emancipation in which they participated had brought the promise of human enlightenment very near—this affirmation has the fresh optimism and courage without which nothing great is accomplished. It is this *sense* of limitless possibility, we think, which is really important, and not the particular reasons which Dr. Compton gives for feeling as he does.

But what are these reasons? The first idea to be explained is the idea of man as a part of nature. This, Dr. Compton implies, has come more as an acquired habit of mind than as the result of any single discovery. The ramifying applications of science have created an occupational feeling of "belonging" to the natural order. While old religious ideas were dying out, new forms of activity, based upon science, initiated men into new feelings of identity with nature. This change in psychological outlook has been fairly recent: "It was not until the present half century that informed men and women generally based their thinking on a recognition of themselves as products of nature working in its normal course."

The second idea of importance is that of man as a *free* being. Naturally, perhaps, as a physicist, Dr. Compton bases this idea upon developments in physical theory—developments in which he personally played a part. He summarizes this change in the scientific view of man:

> . . . while according to the accepted science of 1901 man's every act was completely determined in advance by the motions and forces of the elemental atoms, the science of 1951 recognizes that there is no complete predetermination of man's action by physical law. After taking into account all the physical factors introduced through the external world and the physiology of the nervous system, there still remains an area within which man's actions are in principle unpredictable. This means that in terms of physical science, while fifty years ago one saw no possible counterpart in man's actions to his feeling of free choice, now the physical possibility of such a counterpart must be recognized. That is, physics now admits the possibility of human freedom and thus his moral responsibility which fifty years ago it could not with consistency admit.

Dr. Compton remarks by the way that the Principle of Uncertainty (allowing "unpredictable events" in physics, and implying, therefore, free-will in man) is not permitted to be taught in Soviet Russia, supposedly because of its inconsistency with Marxian historical determinism, thus emphasizing, as he puts it, "the importance of science's carefully tested finding that the freedom of man is consistent with physical law." Physics, it seems, has agreed to become democratic during the half century in which politics decided to go authoritarian!

The third key-idea of Dr. Compton's address relates to the independence of consciousness from scientific judgments. Curiously enough, the work done in the field of Cybernetics ("thinking machines") causes him to urge that "science seems incapable of giving any clue as to how man's awareness is related to what happens in the world of matter." This follows from the fact that the "thinking machines" exhibit considered responses to stimuli without being in the least "aware" of the process. Thus:

> Awareness, or consciousness, is in a category distinct from our objective science. It is something each of us experiences subjectively, and hence knows more immediately than we do the external world. We can find by experiment how our own conscious life may be affected by internal and external physical conditions. But how this consciousness came to be, or how widespread awareness may occur throughout the universe, science gives us little guide.

Dr. Compton rejoices that the heavy hand of physical science is at last debarred from interfering in the realm of man's higher life. He writes on this point at some length:

> It is possible that science may in principle describe completely the structure and actions of man as a part of physical nature. It is clear, however, that man is not thus completely accounted for. Left wholly out of consideration is the realm of ideas and idealism, of understanding and emotion, that gives life its human significance. Just as these things reveal themselves in our own immediate consciousness, so we likewise recognize them as the factors that give inherent value to other persons. This value of our fellows is not proved by science, but the way is left open by science for such values to have meaning for us.
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> One must not look to science for evidence of conscious motivation, such as love or hate, in the great powers which govern our existence and our actions. It is not in the character of science that it should reveal anything about such matters. Yet precisely this aspect of the world is what gives us our ultimate sense of values. The understanding of truth, the appreciation of beauty, sympathy with those who suffer and aspire and love, such are the things that give life its meaning, and of these science knows nothing.
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> The last fifty years of science, by the very process of extending our knowledge of the physical world, have shown us more sharply what the limitations of science are. It is essentially incapable of opening to man a knowledge of his inmost soul.

Thus Dr. Compton, ardent scientist, but still more ardent humanist, and lover of the good, the beautiful, and the true, agrees to confine soulless science to the investigation of soulless matter, leaving the vaulting spirit of man forever beyond the mechanistic formulas of the physicists, the anatomizing techniques of the biologist, and the

statistical studies of the sociologist. His joy in this liberation is something like that of the early followers of Immanuel Kant, who learned from the sage of Koenigsberg that they could free themselves from the Cartesian dogma that man is a machine, from the Humean claim that the self is only a "bundle of perceptions," simply by recognizing that Time, Space, and Causality are the categories of our conscious existence—*we create* these forms of thinking and are under no necessity to bind ourselves to the finite images of the thoughts which then result.

So Dr. Compton: the electron moveth as it lists, and no man knoweth how or why, save that it moves with a wondrous freedom from mechanical law. Thus man, by a parity of reasoning, in the depths of his electronic soul, is free.

So La Mettrie, two hundred years ago, pointed to fresh-water polyps which could regenerate themselves into complete organisms from fragments left by a surgeon's knife, saying, What need have we of a tyrannous Jehovah to create the wonders of the world? Nature herself can perform all necessary miracles! And La Mettrie announced the good news of salvation from the Determinism of God's will to *his* generation.

The will to emancipation is wholly admirable. There is reason to believe that it is the one psychological force in man which can never be successfully suppressed. Thus Materialism, from which Dr. Compton would now release our straining altruism, was once no more than a weapon raised by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientists against the dogmas of irrational religion.

But these weapons that we wave in order to convince ourselves of our new freedom—should we not look at them a little more closely? The motives for waving them we can only admire, and be thankful that they eventually burst a way out of every rigid system of ideas; but is it, for example, entirely wise, in the case of Dr. Compton, to agree without question to his perhaps too eager dismissal of science in the matter of our "inmost soul" ?

What, precisely, has altered, in Dr. Compton's account of the scientific scheme of things, beyond the electronic definition of free will?

The dark, irrational mass, the shoreless continent of matter to which science *does* apply, remains to shadow our new-found freedom. Dr. Compton speaks of "great powers beyond our control, working not only in the outside world but also within ourselves, . . . shaping our destiny along lines that may be at sharp variance with our intentions." What, then, is the relation between this "outside world" and our "inmost soul"? If we are "natural" beings, which is the true "nature"—we, or those "great powers" which oppose us? Shall we reconcile this opposition by saying, after Thomas Huxley, that the task of human beings is to *reverse* the Cosmic Process? Is Nature then a vast Duality as the Manicheans maintained? Or is there simply a great and mysterious "Out There," of which no moral qualities may be predicated? If so, and if the "Out There" is truly Nature, then are *we* the intruders—a tribe of angels, perhaps, left here without instruction to play out a little drama of our own?

What we are asking, of course, is that Dr. Compton pay at least a little attention to the enormous metaphysical questions brought into the picture by his declarations about the nature of man. Our bodies exist in complex and dynamic relationships with the outside world. We know something of those relationships through what we call the laws of nature. Then what about the inner life and *its* complex and dynamic relationships? May there not be a universe of mind and heart, to match the universe of matter? May there not be laws, processes, dynamics, which apply to the motions which take place *in consciousness?* Surely, "the things that give life its meaning," to borrow Dr. Compton's words, do not occur solely within private solipsistic prisons, with no outgoing flow of feeling, no wide intercourse of mood?

We have an interesting letter from a scientist who offers as his private theory of life the following:

> . . . the most fruitful approach to personal matters that I have found is to assume that whatever happens to you, is your own fault. If this is made into a generality it is not only obviously untrue but will be condemned by pretty nearly everybody. Incidentally, this theory so far as I know contradicts only two religions: the belief in malefic spirits and Communism. That it is an independent discovery by me is, I presume, due to my monumental ignorance of philosophy.

This reader will not mind if we note, in passing, that his independent discovery was also made by Gautama Buddha and Ralph Waldo Emerson; however, the point of his initial comment seems of the greatest importance. He finds this view *the most fruitful approach.* This, it seems to us, is the part of any philosophical discovery which must be "independent" to be of any value, for all the rest is only hearsay.

But an idea of this sort clearly fills the void in Dr. Compton's account of the nature of things. If whatever happens to a man comes to him because it somehow "belongs" to him, then the moral world is as vast a system of causal relationships as the physical world. On this view, there is a sense in which the inner world and the outside world become one, with constant interplay of psycho-physical relationships between the two. The postulate is crucial and far-reaching. It unites man's psychic and moral life with a hidden psychic and moral substratum in the world around him. It makes of the universe something like a great Being, a living System which responds to human behavior at every level of existence, from insensate stone to the highest reaches of altruistic perception.

Why should this idea be "contradicted by pretty nearly everybody"? We, at any rate, do not contradict it. So far as we know, this was the view of Buddha, of Plato, and of countless other men who insisted upon a rational scheme of meaning in which to live their lives. It is the one moral theory which needs no Cosmic Policeman to enforce its order, and it rejects as useless the doctrines of special forgiveness, vicarious atonement, and any and all miraculous interventionism. Moreover it invites the scientific mind by suggesting that the moral life is pervaded by an order which is capable of study.

It is also, of course, an invitation to metaphysics. But after all, Dr. Compton evaded this invitation only by ignoring the unsolved problems which he spread before us in his brave declaration of freedom for the moral life of man. If physics must stop with matter, then metaphysics must begin with mind.

Letters from THE PAST

A THOUSAND years hence, perhaps in less, America may be what England now is! The innocence of her character that won the hearts of all nations in her favor may sound like a romance, and her inimitable virtue as if it had never been. The ruins of that liberty which thousands bled for, or suffered to obtain, may just furnish materials for a village tale or extort a sigh from rustic sensibility, while the fashionable of that day, enveloped in dissipation, shall deride the principle and deny the fact.

When we contemplate the fall of empires and the extinction of nations of the ancient world, we see but little to excite our regret than the smouldering ruins of pompous palaces, magnificent monuments, lofty pyramids, and walls and towers of the most costly workmanship. But when the empire of America shall fall, the subject for contemplative sorrow will be infinitely greater than crumbling brass or marble can inspire. It will not then be said, here stood a temple of vast antiquity—here rose a Babel of invisible height, or there a palace of sumptuous extravagance; but here, ah painful thought! the noblest work of human wisdom, the grandest scene of human glory, the fair cause of freedom rose and fell!

—THOMAS PAINE

Patriotism could be a virtue in the ancient world where it demanded of every man devotion to what was then the highest attainable ideal, that of the mother-country. But how can it be a virtue in our day when it demands what is contrary to the ideal both of our religion and morality,—the denial of the equality and the fraternity of man, and the acknowledgement of the supremacy of one State, of one people above all others? Furthermore, this sentiment not only is not a virtue now, but it is undeniably a vice. Patriotism in its true sense has neither material nor moral grounds for existence.

—LEO TOLSTOY

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new:

That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do:

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,

Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,

Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew

From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,

With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-storm;

Till the war-drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd

In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,

And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.

—ALFRED TENNYSON

REVIEW
UNYIELDING "GOOD SENSE`'

ONE gets the impression from Wyndham Lewis' *Rotting Hill* (Regnery, 1952, $3) that the civilized people left in the world are very few, and that Mr. Lewis' hopes for the future are even fewer. *Rotting Hill is* an odd book made up of reflections about the present—reflections which slide into the form of fiction, and as easily slide out again—cast in a series of stories which chronicle the author's disgust for our time. It is a disgust which seems largely merited, although the absence of much else leaves the reader with a tired tastelessness, to which may be added a reluctant admiration of the skill with which Mr. Lewis exhibits the "rot" of modern society. "Rot" is his theme, and "rot" his conclusion. He does not seem to despise his characters—the confused, bewildered, and often hypocritical people whom he describes—but he has no particular compassion for them, either.

Why review such a book? First of all, a certain interest resides in following up the work of a man who began, nearly forty years ago, by expressing his contempt for his contemporaries through the medium of a "little magazine" (*Blast*, of which two issues appeared in London, in 1914 and 1915), and who deliberately chose the acids of destructive criticism as his medium. Later, in 1927, he started another magazine, *The Enemy, so* named, he explained, to secure "for it this virtue: that it does not arrive under the misleading colours of friendship or of a universal benevolence." Revolt was the origin of the little magazines, and Lewis achieved more revolt against more things than almost any other editor. Now, two world wars and one depression after *Blast* burst into print, Mr. Lewis is still revolting.

A superficial judgment of *Rotting Hill* might suggest that he has joined the ranks of the noisy enemies of British socialism, but he is really too honest a writer and thinker—one who has been disgusted too long—to cheapen his criticism by mere political tracts. One of the "stories" in *Rotting Hill* reports a conversation with a fellow traveler on a train—one who happens also to be a fellow traveler of the communist movement. What Mr. Lewis says about communism, and what he says to the fellow traveler, make our second reason for reviewing this book. We have seldom found ideological issues so clearly stated as in these lucid paragraphs. Of communists in general, he writes:

> Like other classes of men, communists are not uniformly agreeable or disagreeable. But since the stalinist doctrine is absolutist, and has its roots sunk deep and fast in an ethic—an angry ethic—naturally in conversation stalinists are, on the whole, apt to be intolerant and tough. For communism a sensible man must have mixed feelings. He must feel respect. He can only abhor its brutality—but he must concede that a great deal that occurs in our Western societies is implicitly of great brutality too. He may regard its moral indignation as phoney; but he must recognize that horror at the wickedness of others is not a communist monopoly. He may ask "Are they such children as they act and talk?"—but he must allow that to see things with the eyes of a child is very popular, too, with us. And so on and so on. Such good sense may seem to lack force. But good sense has nothing to do with force or power. That is its beauty.

Not all of *Rotting Hill is* like this, but enough of it is like this to make the reader understand why Mr. Lewis has always had friends and admirers. There is a feeling for justice, here, which is becoming quite rare. Too many people, reading this passage, may say to themselves, "Why, he doesn't really *attack* Communism at all! Can he be *trusted ?"* Actually, Mr. Lewis makes the only attack upon Communism that can be successful—the attack of justice and reason. All the other kinds of "attacks" pay tribute under the table to Communism by borrowing its methods of abuse and invective.

Mr. Lewis—in the "story"—backs his fellow traveler into a corner and lectures him without stopping for breath and without permitting any interruptions (only a polite, *British* Communist, we are sure, would put up with this). He begins by distinguishing between two sorts of "rights"—

political rights and *economic and social* rights. The French Revolution was about political rights. Economic and social rights are sought through such measures as health insurance laws and other welfare legislation. Having laid this foundation, Mr. Lewis makes his speech:

> ". . . I am bound to disagree with the communist philosophy when it implies or contends that *economic and social rights* are all that is required. No 'rights' are worth having *without political rights.* There is no right you could give me I would exchange for the right to speak freely and to move about freely. Remove these rights from me, which are called *political,* and I certainly should not be consoled by being tucked up in bed every night by a state-nurse, given perpetual employment, being examined weekly free of charge by a state-doctor and a state-dentist, given state-pills and state-teeth, and finally by being buried in a state-grave. Those by *themselves* are slave-rights. The man who barters his liberty for a set of false-teeth and a pair of rimless spectacles is a fool. In the slave days of the southern states of the U.S. all sensible slave-owners took good care of the slaves—saw that they came into the world without mishap, did not die if possible when they got ill, and that finally they were decently buried. In antiquity the Romans and the Greeks did not find it necessary to draw up a Bill of Rights of *that* sort: they cared for their slaves as a matter of course.
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> "So that second class of rights *alone* I reject. And if these 'new rights' are to be regarded as *substitutes* for political rights, as apparently they are, let us not be taken in by the word 'new.' Of course it is a *new* thing to call the care one naturally bestows upon a slave, or upon a horse or a dog, a right!"

No need to say, of course, that the fellow traveler was not "converted" by Mr. Lewis' good sense, even though the latter is careful to explain "that political rights without economic and social rights are very imperfect." And although, in this imaginary dialogue, Mr. Lewis quotes approvingly from the *Unesco* symposium, *Human Rights,* a passage by John Somerville, expressing the hope that "Soviet society, as it grows, will extend its conception of human rights more and more to the political sphere, and that Western society will extend its conception of human rights more and more to the social sphere," it seems doubtful that very many communists will be able to like this story by Mr. Lewis. No dogmatist can afford to listen to reason, even if reason is on his side for some of the time, for once he admits the force of reason, he cannot stop its advance.

There are moments when, reading Mr. Lewis, one is reminded of Albert Jay Nock. The two certainly have one great virtue in common—a constitutional incapacity to be swayed by party appeals and cries of "Emergency"! They similarly have in common the feeling of a very great loneliness—both are alone with the freedom of their exceptional minds, their critical insight, their tired impatience with the vulgarity, insincerity and stupidity of the world around them. Mr. Nock died shortly after completing his last notable work, *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man.* Mr. Lewis, who is also a painter, is, we learn from the book-jacket, losing his sight. He continues to write, however, saying, "Milton had his daughters, I have my dictaphone."

Without offering any great praise of *Rotting Hill,* we should like to express respect for Mr. Lewis, for he is a man who thinks "otherwise," and has never hesitated for prudential reasons to speak his thoughts. Perhaps, in a world less ruled by timidity, the Lewises and Nocks would be less given to disdain. Our world is never kind to uncompromising intellectual integrity, which is one reason, no doubt, why there is so little of it to be found; and why, also, it is so often bad-tempered when it does survive the endless gauntlets of smug conventionality.

COMMENTARY
TOWARD SYNTHESIS

THIS week's lead article, together with the discussion of religion in Frontiers, illustrates a broad trend which has been gaining increasingly sharp definition for some twenty years. It is the trend toward synthesis of the scientific and the religious outlooks.

The thing to look for, however, it seems to us, in examining a transition of this sort, is evidence of *philosophical* thinking, as distinguished from special pleading and partisan arguments for any particular set of religious beliefs. There is a very great difference, for example, between the "religious" content of Dr. Einstein's reflections and Lecomte du Noüy's pretentious "scientific proofs" of Christianity in *Human Destiny*. And while Gustav Strömberg's *Soul of the Universe* collects a variety of impressive facts, the conclusions of this book, which seem friendly to metaphysical objectives, are reached by playing fast and loose with the scientific method.

It is apparent that the dangerously misleading factor in this trend is the motive of *anxiety*. The desire to "hurry on" the rediscovery of the truth in religion easily leads to an ardent opportunism in which conversion, and not impartiality, is the great thing. And, almost inevitably, the anxious advocate of the "new" scientific evidences for religion has only the mildest of quarrels to pick with institutional religion. He dare not look too critically at the churches and their dogmas without seeming to weaken his major argument, and where will he send his readers, if not to the churches?

The real synthesis between science and religion proceeds at a much slower pace. The men who represent this trend will never allow themselves to regard the treasury of scientific facts as merely an arsenal offering a choice of weapons to be used against modern skepticism. No "crisis" in the affairs of the world can make them into nervous partisans of formula-thinking in religion. They are looking for wider horizons, and want no pious compromises to hide the great moral issues of our time.

The real synthesis, we think, is represented by a *temper*, rather than by the championship of familiar religious conceptions. Its progress is marked by such books as Max Planck's *Where Is Science Going?*, Hermann Weyl's *The Open World*, Arthur Eddington's *The Nature of the Physical World*, Einstein's *Out of My Later Years*, and Julian Huxley's recent essay, "Knowledge, Morality, and Destiny" (May 1951 number of *Psychiatry*). Equivalent works from the religious point of view are to be found among the writings of John Haynes Holmes (*Affirmation of Immortality*), Harry Emerson Fosdick ("Tomorrow's Religion," *UN World*, December, 1951), and Floyd Ross (*Addressed to Christians*).

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

> It is an accepted fact that teen-age people must sooner or later "try their wings" at being self-sufficient and self-reliant. But when they want to do it in the home where they have grown up, the process can become quite upsetting for the rest of the family. Experiments at cooking their own meals, clothing improperly washed, study hours at odd times—making a minimum of noise necessary on the part of the rest of the family can be quite a trial. It seems to me that the family represents a certain pattern which the child is welcome to be a part of as long as he wishes. But doesn't it seem more natural and considerate for the young person to do his "radical" experimenting in self-reliance entirely "out on his own," and would a suggestion to this effect be justified?

0F course such a suggestion would be "justified," and we must also grant that upholding the "rights" of parents is a very important part of education. First, because the parent who feels that he is stoically sacrificing in all things at most times for the sake of his child usually harbors a subconscious attitude of continual criticism toward his offspring, which an open stating of the case can prevent; second, because the child needs assistance in learning to appraise his own "rights" by observing how his parents appraise theirs.

This sort of problem, though, should induce introspection. The parent's objection seems to turn upon the youth's desire to obtrude a whole new behavior pattern upon the family. The fact that this radical innovation is presented as a *full scale* pattern of its own has raised the question in the first place. But is not the parent in the same situation? The parent also has a "full scale pattern," the difference being that it is on the defensive rather than the offense. The routine of the household, like any routine of thought or behavior, resists innovation. But if we accept our children as genuine citizens in the home, we must give them their measure of "voting privileges." If they are really a *part* of the family, they must be not only allowed, but definitely encouraged, to contribute their suggestions and proposals—and to implement at least some of them with their own self-induced actions.

Every home needs occasional innovations in its routines or else, in various subtle ways, the parent comes to play the role of a reactionary and suffers the fate of all reactionaries—his receptivity to new ideas is lessened and part of the joy of living suppressed. As Marguerite Bro puts the matter, "It is vastly more effective . . . to be forever making over ourselves than to be remaking our children." Conversely, however, the young man or woman of immature, eager energy must learn to re-form whatever of his desires and impulses he can to blend least disturbingly with the common needs of the rest of the family. Never are *all* the "old ways" of doing things without value. The child needs to learn this, just as the parent needs to learn that no *status quo is* ever perfect.

The most constructive suggestion to make in answer to such a question, then, may be that each of the issues involved should be discussed apart from the others. Rather than judging the entire pattern which the youngster seeks to impose, and comparing it with the superior virtues supposedly inherent in the established way of doing things, let us take the matter of cooking meals, washing clothes and rearranging study hours—and bed times—each as a separate question. Both the youth and the parents have "rights" to their opinions on these matters, but the final choice of a course of action never springs full armed from the claimancy of a right. While the parent has not only the right but also the obligation of final decision, wholesale decisions on family matters, especially when based upon an unshakable assumption of superior knowledge and maturity, are risky things to undertake. As we have many times suggested, it is always more worth-while for the parent to conceive his obligation as educator as requiring *deliberation* on all controversial subjects. Here we have the best check on the unrestrained impulses of youth—the example of a

parent who comes to no hasty decisions, who does not seek to impose any plan or even request upon anyone at least until it has been thoroughly talked about.

It is something of a contradiction in terms to say that "the family represents a certain pattern in which the child is welcome," since the existence of every child will inevitably *change* any "pattern." As individuality unfolds, the behavior of the entire family group has to modify itself to fully "make welcome" the newest arrival in the field. Just as the rash attempt to impose an entirely new system of behavior on the part of a youth can "be quite a trial" to the parents, so can the inflexible routine previously established be "quite a trial" to the youth.

Even though this pattern be logically defensible as the best that could possibly be devised, the young person cannot recognize this until he has made his own tests and experiments. The urge for experimentation, certainly, needs to be encouraged, even though it may be pointed out that such experimentation ought to be carried on in a way that avoids definite disturbance of the lives of others.

The particular case at hand has one unique quality which might well be the saving grace of whatever innovations were proposed. As the parent puts it, this particular youth is interested in learning complete "self-reliance." This is a noble ambition, surely, in an age of over-specialization. All desires towards establishment of "self-reliance," we think, are reflections of a growing capacity for independence of thought—and, as we know, the root of democracy lies in the courage of dissenting opinion. Let us not, then, allow ourselves to be affronted by dissent or innovation, no matter how bizarre. And let us, for everyone's sake, learn to argue intelligently with our offspring. The reaching of any impasse in understanding might be taken as a mark of our own immaturity.

The closed pattern family, actually, is sensible only among doctrinaire people who have accepted an unalterable religious or political model. The crux of the problem for the parent, then, assuming that he or she does not belong in this category, is to help instruct youth in the truth that every "freedom" claimed brings its own host of complicated responsibilities, the first of which is the responsibility for discussion. This too, is supposed to be an essential part of the democratic tradition.

FRONTIERS

The Teaching of Religion

DEBATES on whether or not consideration of religion and religions has any place in university education will doubtless not diminish, but rather intensify, during the coming decade. William Buckley's *God and Man at Yale* may be regarded as symptomatic of a new aggressiveness on behalf of religion, and while Mr. Buckley's sometimes questionable polemics are essentially a Roman Catholic apologia, his attack on the "dogmatic atheism" of many Yale faculty members has sharpened the focus of several important problems.

The Teaching of Religion in American Higher Education (Ronald Press, 1951, $2.75), a symposium edited by Christian Gauss, Dean Emeritus of Princeton, helps to clarify many of the issues which Buckley debated *without* sufficient clarification. *The Teaching of Religion* is addressed primarily to teachers and administrators "who are interested in the place which religion should occupy and how it can be taught in American colleges today." The Preface, by Dean Gauss, clearly establishes the broad "religious problem," going on to provide a setting for the several essays which follow:

> Although the present volume deals with but one special aspect of the situation, namely, organized instruction in religion, the wider context of the program and life of the community should be kept in mind. No problem in learning or in life can be entirely isolated from all other problems. Every problem, every aspect of what we call reality, derives its significance from its relationship to other problems, to all other aspects of reality.
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> Every age must rewrite its history and reshape its educational systems in the light of its accumulated experience. In higher education particularly, the fact that the teaching of religion is regarded as a "controversial subject" is no reason for deferring discussion as to how it should be taught. In revolutionary eras like our own, every phase of knowledge and human experience tends to become the subject of controversy. That is because in revolutionary eras we can be sure of only one thing, that traditional aspects of our society or culture are bound to be reshaped. If we were to avoid all controversial subjects we should have to omit from the curriculum the teaching of art and literature, economics, politics, social institutions, history, and even science. Events of the twentieth century have thrown new light even upon classic documents as old as the *Republic* of Plato and may well bring again some of their conclusions within the realm of controversy. These events have already made it plain that we need a deeper, perhaps a different, understanding of the import of the teachings of Confucius, of the religion of Buddha, and possibly even of the implications of the religion of Jesus. To omit controversial subjects is merely to formalize and traditionalize education to the point where it can offer no assistance to the generation which must guide our society through an impending era of change.

Each contributor to this volume has, of course, something of a bias of his own. Dean Gauss is himself interested in defending the released-time religious programs in secondary schools. On the basis of his interpretation of the Constitution, he argues against denial of any relevance of religion to higher education, and he is critical of Supreme Court decisions with this tendency. He calls attention to the fact that many of the "Founding Fathers" of the United States—the men who passed on to future generations a burning faith in the "inalienable rights of the individual"—themselves attended or were influenced by colleges founded through the efforts of various religious groups. (William and Mary, Yale, Princeton, Brown, and Rutgers are cases in point, and certainly "religious orientation and interest" were in every American college established before 1776.)

We hope, however, that Dean Gauss does not mean to contend that the stature of Washington, Jefferson and Madison arose simply from some sort of superior religious conditioning—actually, the first seven Presidents of the United States were not professing Christians. Further, the role of Thomas Paine in phrasing the Declaration of Independence would belie any generalization to the effect that, in 1776, it was the *orthodox* believers who held the stoutest faith in "freedom

of conscience." But what Dean Gauss does demonstrate is that moral and metaphysical issues were very real to the men of the revolutionary period, and that the subtleties and concerns generated by these issues had much to do with the drafting of the American Constitution. While the Constitution embodied the idea of the "non-denominational" State, this did not mean an "atheist-materialist" State.

Paine, Jefferson, Washington, and Madison, it seems to us, are best regarded as philosophers—men who had made a transition from institutional religion to the more rewarding outlook of independent deliberation upon the matters of man's ultimate nature and destiny. From this it follows, first, that the "Founding Fathers" insisted on a non-denominational approach to matters of conscience in the Constitution, and opposed the theory of State support for denominational schools. Equal insistence, however, was laid upon the principles of "moral law," as the true governing force in a moral universe. There is a delicate balance, here, and Dean Gauss maintains that it is precisely this delicate balance which has served as a bulwark against that apotheosis of secularism we now know as totalitarian or authoritarian control. And since our expanding country has been governed by an ever increasing number of unphilosophical politicians who replaced the few "philosopher-guardians" of earlier days, a swing toward totalitarianism and its supposed justification as a "practical necessity" might have been expected. He adds the following notable observation:

> No religious sect in our Western World since the eighteenth century would have dreamed of claiming the degree of control over the life and liberty of religious heretics which in our century has been and is being exercised by the totalitarian states in the name of orthodoxy in scientific, political, and economic theory.
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> These developments would seem to raise anew the question whether religion, as a subject of study, is inherently more dangerous to democracy and to liberal education than subjects like politics, science, or economics. The answer would seem to be that it is not the subject of study itself that is dangerous, but the spirit in which that study is pursued. If a subject is studied in order to confirm any pre-established orthodoxy in any field, it is dangerous to liberal education. If it is pursued in the spirit of free inquiry, it is not.

An essay on "liberal education" by Robert Ulich contributes the only ground upon which Buckley and his supporters can legitimately stand:

> Those who feel that the hard pursuit of reason is not one of the important agents in their personal growth should not go to a university but directly into practical life where they might be much more useful.
>
> But however strong the emphasis on the intellect, our colleges and universities will fail to understand their role in civilization if they are unaware of their obligation to participate not only in the intellectual but also in the universal striving of mankind. Yet those who review critically the recent reports on collegiate education will probably agree that these reports are weakest exactly in the analysis of the philosophy which should underlie the final aims of higher education. The reason is that such analysis, like all thinking about ethical problems, would lead into metaphysics where the professors are generally not at home, or regarding which they have been told (by their own teachers) that they should not waste their time. Also, in this realm one has to profess convictions, and not all professors like to profess. This neglect of the basic problems of life by several academic generations has produced a degree of philosophical ignorance and even rudeness on the part of our typical college teachers which would make a man of erudition of earlier centuries shudder. It adds to the tragedy that many of our philosophy departments have maneuvered themselves into some technical corner at the outer fringe of the university and fail to convey to their students anything more than their own technical specialization, while the departments of education, and still more, our typical state teachers colleges, may not have one single man or woman on their staffs who has sufficient philosophical grounding to connect the great enterprise of education competently with another great enterprise of humankind, namely the attempt to arrive at some clarity about man and his role in the universe.

The only essay contributed to *The Teaching of Religion* by a university chaplain—the other contributors are university presidents or leading

professors—avoids the fallacy of assuming that the study of religion is indistinguishable from the study of Christianity. Kenneth Morgan of Colgate is emphatically non-sectarian:

> For a fuller understanding of non-Christian cultures, most colleges recognize the desirability of offering a course, or courses, in the non-Christian religions of the world, although their reasons may sometimes be based more on a desire for cultural breadth than for an understanding of the religious concerns which are common to men in all cultures. Such a course, when taught sympathetically, is an excellent discipline because it enables the student to study religion objectively and critically, and in the light of that technique to gain a new perspective on religion in his own culture and personal life.
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> In designing this course, the old concept of comparative religions, which usually meant a course demonstrating the inferiority of all faiths to Christianity, is fortunately disappearing from liberal arts education. The objective now is to present each religion as fairly and as fully as possible, seeking understanding both of the cultural factors involved and of the basic religious problems which are common to men in all times and all cultures.

Presentations such as Morgan's should do much to counteract the oversimplifications of the sort abounding in *God and Man at Yale.* The worst faults of "secularism," certainly, are the faults of a closed attitude of mind, which may occur either in or out of religion. Fred Rodell's comments on the oversimplifications of the Buckley book (in the February *Progressive*) reduce this issue to its proper terms:

> To Buckley, "the duel between Christianity and atheism is the most important in the world" and "the struggle between individualism and collectivism is the same struggle reproduced on another level." But there are those of us who see the crucial contemporary battle as between authoritarianism in whatever guise—be it Communist thought-control or religious dogmatism or college teaching at alumni command—and the untrammeled right of men to think and speak for themselves.

Let us be sure, however, that we really do encourage the young persons in our universities to "think and speak for themselves,"—and to think about *all* things, including "religious" and "moral" issues. Otherwise, the students may encounter no more than half the issues which have occupied the great minds of all time.