

# Ideas and Men

Continued from page 17

form a seventeenth-century translation which served the scholar's needs but not the layman's. Furthermore, his superbly organized and written historical introduction reveals the full significance of the "Dialogue" in speaking out against the blind acceptance of authority with evidence based upon observations and experiments. At the age of seventy Galileo was forced to recant, repeat the seven penitential Psalms once a week for three years, and keep quiet for the rest of his life. The sentencing of Galileo, in all its indignity and injustice (it hinged upon the "evidence" of a forged document), marked "the end of the whole scientific movement in Italy." The civilization "which had carried the world since the thirteenth century vanished from history." But modern science itself was launched, as investigators in England, Germany, and other countries began building on Galileo's results.

—JOHN PFEIFFER.

**RUSSIAN THOUGHT:** The Western mind, even one trained in philosophy, ordinarily owns a vast ignorance of Russian thought. Apart from the Marxist thinkers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most of us know almost nothing of the history of philosophy in Russia. While this situation itself is worth a comment, it is even more surprising to learn that an identical state of affairs obtains in Russia. Indeed, until the publication of V. V. Zenkovsky's "A History of Russian Thought" (translated by George L. Kline, Columbia University Press, 2 vols., \$15) in Paris in 1948 there was no full-scale history of Russian philosophy in the Russian language. We are especially fortunate to have these two volumes also in English.

The author, who is a professor at the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Paris and a priest in the Russian Church, explains at the outset that independent creative activity in philosophy did not begin in Russia until the middle of the eighteenth century. By independence he means freedom from both political and theological domination, a freedom won in the West as early as Descartes. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, Western systems were in full flower and the emphasis in them upon the theory of knowledge had somehow to be assimilated to Russian interests which were directed rather to such problems as anthropology (in its philosophic sense, the nature of man) and historiosophy (sociological the-

ory). He tells the story of subsequent developments in terms of individual thinkers and in voluminous detail. Although his survey is necessarily encyclopedic rather than critical in character, it is an immensely valuable addition to the library of philosophy.

—ROBERT BIERSTEDT.

## MATHEMATICS A LA TWENTIETH CENTURY:

Every once in a while something happens which emphasizes, with startling clarity, the fact that an enormous gap exists between the scientists and the layman. Pretentious works of pseudoscience make best-seller lists. Well-meaning citizens rush to the support of a doctor whose "cancer treatment" has been found worthless by his professional colleagues. A Federal official fires the head of a leading research laboratory because tests showed that an industrial product did not live up to its advertising notices. In these and similar cases it is not a matter of differences which can be settled simply by talking things over. The chief problem is a complete failure to understand even the elements of the scientific method.

Morris Kline's "Mathematics in Western Culture" (Oxford University Press, \$7.50) must be regarded as a particularly significant book in view of this state of affairs.

His book is concerned with the full meaning of mathematics, as the purest and most powerful expression of man's desire to prove the validity of his ideas. For centuries it was believed that Euclid's geometry, the subject we were exposed to in high school, was the only "true" geometry. If people had been content to take this belief on faith, and let it go at that, life might be simpler today. But they had to go and spoil things by trying to prove the belief to other people, and it couldn't be proved. Instead, the search for a proof yielded an entire galaxy of new geometries. Because the men who discovered them—Gauss, Lobachevsky, Bolyai, and Riemann—were the purest of pure mathematicians their works had a revolutionary impact.

Professor Kline traces the intellectual trail that leads from the new geometries to Einstein's theory of relativity and then, in more recent times, to the development of atomic energy. The very foundations of philosophy are affected, since Kant based his notions on the absolute truth of Euclid's theorems. Greek art reflects the spirit of men who lived in a world of calm, static Euclidean perfection; our art reflects a troubled "non-Euclidean" world of changing philosophies. "Mathematics in Western Culture" explores the implications of calculus, the laws of chance, and other fields as well as

geometry. It is recommended not only to laymen, but to teachers—especially to those teachers, the majority, who are using textbooks half a century or more out of date. Easily one of the season's most important popularizations of science.

—J. P.

**PSI UP-TO-DATE:** "Psi occurrences," or simply "psi," is a technical term invented to cover what are more popularly known as psychic experiences. Extrasensory perception (ESP), clairvoyance, and psychokinesis (the direct action of mind on matter) are all manifestations of psi, which is discussed in "New World of the Mind" (William Sloane Assoc., \$3.75). In his latest book Dr. J. B. Rhine, director of the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University and acknowledged leader of present-day psi-explorers, summarizes the status of his field to date. He describes studies to show that persons sympathetic to ESP do better in card-guessing tests than scoffers, that women and children are apt to score higher than adult males, and that cats probably have psi while pigeons may use ESP in homing.

Dr. Rhine's main emphasis, however, is on future developments. For one thing, research may throw important light on religious problems—and furnish evidence for life after death and the existence of a "universal mind or divine personality." Apparently the psychoanalysts are becoming more and more interested in psi. Dr. C. G. Jung, noted for his theories about racial memories, is cited as one who is "in the forefront of psychiatrists giving attention to parapsychology."

—J. P.

## INTERNATIONAL FILM GLASSICS

THE TITAN  
MAN OF ARAN  
LOUISIANA STORY

VOLPONE  
BLUE ANGEL  
LAST LAUGH

L'ATALANTE  
ZERO DE CONDUITE  
CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI

Available exclusively in 16mm from:

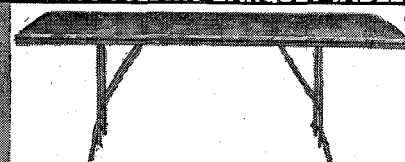
CONTEMPORARY FILMS, INC.

13 East 37th Street New York 16, N. Y.

Send for complete catalog

Dept. SR

## Monroe FOLDING BANQUET TABLES



If you are on the board of your school or church, or on the house or purchasing committee of your club or lodge, you will be interested in this modern, Folding Pedestal Banquet Table. Write for catalog & special discounts.

THE MONROE COMPANY 5K CHURCH ST. COLFAX, IOWA

# "If We Are to Act Like Free Men . . . "

Continued from page 10

means is another word for procedure.

You book publishers needn't object to legal censorship on grounds of principle. Long before that philosophical point is reached there is a closer difficulty. There is simply no meeting of the minds between you and the law. The judge's bench and the jury box are manned by average people, and the law is stabilized at the level of their average standards. You aim at the intelligence of the upper tenth of 1 per cent, unless you are in the comic-book business, which God forbid. The result is that when you get to court you feel the chill that blows between the planets. If the law were pitched at your level you would get not censorship but a critique. And you don't censor yourselves, except against libel, because the vast public, which is preoccupied with other things, doesn't catch up with your product—and the law is accordingly in a tolerant mood for the moment. But if I may venture a minor prophecy, it is that the courts will soon get the case of a crime comic book which will swing the spotlight

back to publishing and the First Amendment. I suspect that a bit of astute detective work could show a direct connection between reading the comic and juvenile delinquency. If so, it should be the end of that particular form of free speech.

I SAID a moment ago that I grasp eagerly at custom, for custom should be the evolution of the law. Nations with most customs have fewest laws, and their native procedures are instinctive and gracious. Lord Moulton has said that the measure of civilization is the extent of man's obedience to the unenforceable, and a nation whose precepts of conduct were obeyed without sanctions would be a wise and civilized nation indeed. The publishing business has its customs, if we take the self-censorship of the movies and of most magazines with wide circulation as an example. The wider the circulation the purer the product, and vice versa. The movies have perhaps overdone this virtue by censoring themselves into a state of chronic anemia, but pub-

lishers and distributors know in the seat of their pocketbooks that America is a very moral nation and will not stand for salacity in general doses. Our high divorce rate is no argument to the contrary, for a different impulse is involved. The cause of divorce is marriage, not immorality, and the divorce rate will not fall until people learn better how to marry.

So I welcome the growth of custom. With it will come an increase in the vitality of our national procedures and a decrease in our concern for naked legal rights, especially when they are a cover for poor quality.

Custom is more efficient than law because it patrols itself. The law isn't particularly efficient; it is generally behind in its work; it tends to staff its courts with political hacks; its filing and recording systems are for the most part archaic; and it can satisfy only half of its customers. The law is not a science: its ultimate terms are opinion and judgment, not proof and demonstration. It can prove nothing that it does, although it can enforce it, and it stands to the public in the relation of a parent whose orders are enforceable because they are based on an historical sense of what conduct is supposed to be good and what isn't. Hence the public has no great respect for the law but has an abiding respect for those who administer it. There is wisdom in the remark of the Lord Chancellor of England who said that when he appointed a judge he chose a gentleman, and if he knew a little law so much the better.

Greater efficiency in the law would only take us down Mr. Hitler's road. We could be more efficient; if we took more time and care than we do we could get more precise answers. But to do this would tempt us to eliminate the disagreeable facts and with them the disagreeable people as well. Our legal system, resting on the great but fluid civil liberties, stops short of the temptation to be efficient; depending upon common consent, it satisfies the public's desire for the decent solution of private warfare at a point well short of absolute justice. This makes the law sound slightly like the system of divine justice in Kafka's strange book "The Trial," but we are still on earth. Every terrestrial legal right has its remedy, but rights are free and remedies cost money, with the result that our remedies are what the community cares to afford. And all remedies are procedural. The end is our brand of justice, and if you want to know what that is go to the corridors of City Hall and watch the faces of people leaving the courtrooms. Justice may be good, bad, or indifferent: it is nothing but the

## SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

*The Saturday Review*

25 West 45th Street, New York 36, N. Y.



Please enter my subscription to SATURDAY REVIEW for the term indicated below:

- ☐ One year . . . . . \$ 7.00  
☐ Two years . . . . . 12.00  
☐ Three years . . . . . 16.00

Please note: The above rates apply to the United States and its possessions.

Canada: One year \$8, Two years \$14, Three years \$19.

Other Foreign: One year \$9, Two years \$16, Three years \$22.

Payment is enclosed ☐ Please send me a bill\* ☐

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

\* Payment is required with the order on subscriptions outside the continental limits of the United States.