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THE AIMLESS ONES

ONE is sometimes moved to wonder if many of the billions of dollars being poured out on research in medicine and "applied" psychology are not simply being dribbled down the drain. And as often as one is moved to wonder about the money, one is more disposed to marvel at the men engaged in this research. If even half the views attributed to them in the New York *Times* of January 6 ("Big Industries Expand Aid to Alcoholics in Their Plants") are widely held, then the hope for a solution to the manifold ills of our industrial society has an excessively shaky foundation.

Alcoholism is the latest of the host of problems to be afflicted with the "cure" of research, for it is, we are told, a disease, and nothing to be ashamed of. To this we are compelled to reply that it is *not* a disease, but a *symptom* of disease, one for which the whole of society, not alone the alcoholic, is responsible.

Most remarkable of all is the reticence—or blindness—which prevents the grave condition of our society from being openly diagnosed here in the United States, though three writers across the Atlantic have, to our knowledge, provided diagnostic clues.

The latest is a woman, Jaquetta Hawkes, an English archaeologist of note. To Number 37 of the Penguin *New Writing* series Mrs. Hawkes contributes the brilliant "Art in a Crystalline Society"; and though Art may seem unrelated to Alcoholism, it does not require much effort to see that some artists and most alcoholics are sufferers from the same chronic disorder.

Mrs. Hawkes begins with a breath-taking piece of social imagery:

> A tree is a society of specialized individual cells bound together for a common end. It cannot be divided and still retain the qualities of a tree. Nourishment sucked through the roots is carried to the leaves and blossoms, that absorbed through the leaf chlorophyll is necessary to the trunk and roots. Strip the leaves, ring the bark, cut the roots and the tree will die. From the lowest rootlet in perpetual darkness to the point of leaf or petal nearest to the sun, it is a society growing mysteriously towards its appropriate shape in the matrix of the world. It will propagate and die. A crystal also has its appropriate shape, a mathematically perfect one, but it does not attain it by the unified energy of many parts, each with its own character and function. A crystal is built from smaller particles that are identical with itself except in size, identical with one another, and without vital relationship between themselves. None, except the viruses, those forms on the frontier between life and inorganic matter, can reproduce itself or die. Divide a crystal and you obtain a number of crystals.

The crystallizing of society means, Mrs. Hawkes points out, "the isolation of the individual, not in the sense of giving him solitude—on the contrary, solitude is destroyed—but in the sense that one particle of the crystal is isolated in having no vital relationship with the next. It seems symptomatic of such a society that labour should be 'directed.' Although without locality the new individual lacks the unattached man's sense of holding his life as a growing thing between his hands; he stands always with his head turned over his shoulder listening to the words that ceaselessly invade the privacy of his mind as they pour from his state, his unknown boss, his entertainers, his newspapers. The words that have so largely taken the place of experience."

All that, in our own crystal-forming society, concerns the plant managers, economists, researchers and statisticians is that "employee alcoholism is conservatively estimated to reduce over-all productivity from 2 to 5 per cent, with 2.6 the most frequently quoted figure"; that "the economic loss directly attributed to alcoholism is authoritatively estimated to run over $1,000,000,000 annually"; that "other losses chargeable to alcoholism . . . include an estimated $188,000,000 for crime . . . around $35,000,000 for hospital care of alcoholics and $25,000,000 for maintenance of drunkards in

local jails." No mention of employer alcoholism, and nothing on the advertising appropriation of the liquor industry.

But what of the alcoholic as a human being? When the psychiatrist and the physician can do no more for him, the humane Consolidated Edison Company pensions him for "disability." Does anyone ever ask the question that common sense would dictate: "What is wrong with the nature of a society, that it drives increasing millions to drink?" The assumption accepted is that the wrong is something askew in the individual, and if not in him, then in his parents or his bosses or his aunts.

Fatuous is the only word to describe our insightless backing into the problem of alcoholism. What no one will say, though every one of us has the experience of it, is that life in the world's richest country is almost wholly devoid of satisfying purpose, and as empty of meaning as a sieve. And since office or factory employees, and artists, are all equally workers (though our society will probably die before recognizing this fact), the impact of emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual sterility on wage earners and artists is equally deadly.

To suppose that a human nervous system as highly developed as that of the trained American employee can forever withstand the killing effect of monotonously repetitive tasks—related to nothing—and not seek release for his untapped creativeness, is to be blind to the nature of human nature.

Only in societies as lacking in organic structure as the "advanced" countries could men be supposed to work happily at what no intelligent boy could be kept at for more than eight hours. If some compensation made up to him for the barrenness of his workaday life, a man might come through safely. But as Richard Tawney, in *The Sickness of an Acquisitive Society*, wrote of the English in 1920,

> They make industry itself what they make their cities, a desert of unnatural dreariness, which only forgetfulness can make endurable, and which only excitement can enable them to forget.

Alcohol combines excitement and forgetfulness and makes escape easy. From what? From the chill void of an existence in which human crystals are so detached from one another that they find their closest sense of communion when lined up shoulder to shoulder in a bar—and not only industrial employees. Office workers *and* employers are piled three deep in bars and cocktail lounges that line the side streets off Fifth Avenue. Before a man can take a train or subway home he must have "a quick one" or two in an atmosphere which, unique to him, appears to be warm with fellowship and the camaraderie so wanting to urban life.

The drinker in the street-floor bar is telling himself, "I can dream, can't I?" Or, as Elmer, in "Harvey" wistfully said, to explain why he and the rabbit spent so much time where they did, "Nobody ever brings anything small to a bar." When you think of all the dull jobs, and all the inducements to drink, the wonder is not that there are so many chronic alcoholics, but that there are not more!

Frustration is the name for what men feel, whether they are chained to a desk, condemned to do nothing but swivel from now to retirement day, or are doomed to feed a machine for the rest of their working lives. These are not *human* satisfactions. They are stultifying to any but dullards, and the human psyche rebels, revolts, flees them in what is now the socially acceptable way—in drinking.

These are men who, not too long ago, played in school bands and orchestras, sang in glee clubs, acted in plays, drew posters, painted scenery, spent absorbed hours in shop, tinkering at something of their own. What is there for them to do now? Solid-headed men frown on "non-productive" enterprises, wilfully slamming the door on the only forms of expression left to an adult. They will squander millions on "medical research aimed at discovering the still unknown causes underlying chronic alcoholism" but would never think to look under their noses for them. Psychiatrists set war-crazed pilots to painting as "therapy." They wouldn't, by any chance, let the men paint or put on plays *before* they are driven insane ?

Nearly any activity in which men engage *for no money* will help; anything they do together for sheer satisfaction; anything they can begin and finish, take part in, take pride in, show off, or take home. But

the root of the illness lies deeper. It lies in the fallacy that men are happier the faster they upgrade their incomes. The quantitative fallacy persists even in assessing the national toll taken by alcoholism. As if such a blight could be valued in statistical percentages, dollars and cents!

The fact is, and it is the tragedy of our crystalline age, that all we have been taught to ask for is money; that when we finally "arrive," we are at a dead end, belong nowhere, and believe in nothing. The men who laid stone on stone, carved cherubs and gargoyles, painted figures, wove tapestries, designed marvels in glass, were all workers. They were anonymous, their standard of living deplorable, and what they had in the end was a vast castle or cathedral not even their own; but it was an organic whole which, because they also were whole, satisfied not only their senses but their souls. In the process they created art in the only way great art is ever created, spontaneously, un-selfconsciously, as a natural outpouring of the creative energy which, if dammed up, will drive men to alcohol, insanity, or death.

The *Times* reporter was guilty of some inaccuracy, or incompleteness, when, in the story alluded to, he described Alcoholics Anonymous as "a world-wide lay organization which uses the power of suggestion upon its members." We happened to be at an Alcoholics Anonymous gathering in Harlem one night when the founder, Bill, told the story of his own degradation, his harrowing climb out of "hell." The first step on the road back is to rescue fellow AA's in torment, no matter at what hour the summons comes. Another is to call on God for help when self-denial seems humanly unendurable. A chain reaction is thus set up, using the centripetal force of human interdependence, buttressed by hard-won belief in an unseen power on which one may confidently rely. This is something else than "the power of suggestion."

The change-over, when it comes, is called "psychic." But the speaker's closing words were the ones we never could forget. "There are sixty thousand of us now," he said quietly, "and we know we are not alone any more."

Aloneness is the one most unbearable fact of human existence. Yet in what Mrs. Hawkes calls a crystalline society, human associations are pulverized as effectively as atoms are smashed in a cyclotron. When it is "Every man for himself and the Devil take the hindmost," the society breaks apart, as atoms under force divide, or crystals. It is, and we must face it, a disintegrating society, arid, without roots in any soil, with never a green leaf or a petal straining skyward. "As society disintegrates," noted a French sociologist in 1897, "the individuals in it become detached, and in the measure that they feel detached, their attachment to life is weakened."

Alcoholism and anomie art are only two symptoms of our society's grave disorder. A third, more terrible, is suicide. When Emile Durkheim found the highest incidence of suicide in the commercial and industrial sectors of French society, he traced its cause to "the feverish pursuit of goals which, when arrived at, leave men standing with empty hands." The same sense of futility is now *our* bitter portion.

American brains, hands, skills, and earnings have fashioned an industrial society like none the world has ever known. But it is not organic, as a tree is, and it is breaking up into many identical crystals. The synthesis achieved in putting the parts of a machine together has not been equalled in putting together the men who make the parts. The operational framework, keeping pace with men's ambitions, is now so vast no man can find his niche in it, or see the sense of what he does. Life in an industrial society has become a never-ending anxiety dream, a search for a room without a number, for a door that is not there.

Alcoholism is no more a disease than is inhaling marijuana. Drink and drugs give the trapped and prisoned psyche respite, for a while, from its nameless unutterable pain. The artist, unattached, in heart-breaking isolation, may transmute to stone and canvas *his* psychic pain, in works for which increasingly he cannot find a name, for they are nameless.

New York City — ISABEL CARY LUNDBERG

Letter from ENGLAND

A HISTORY of the modern world in ideological terms is a task awaiting some scholar in the future, though in some respects Lecky's *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe* (1865), and *History of Enuopean Morals* (1869) have pointed the way. The march of political and economic ideas has brought philosophy (little recognized though the fact may be) into the arena of public affairs in a way undreamed of in past ages; but historical processes have yet to be fully integrated with philosophical values. Who would have thought, before World War I, of such a term as "dialectical materialism" becoming the revolutionary profession of powerful nations? Yet today we see it taking its place on the banners of a missionary creed which aims to overthrow democratic regimes all over the world. Few attempts have been made to analyze the characteristics of the new type of totalitarian revolutionary. One publicist here has pointed out, for example, that in Czechoslovakia, hardly anyone noticed that a revolution had taken place until it was over in a last violent spasm, although it began months before.

Mr. C. M. Woodhouse has suggested some steps in the new technique, which delineate the type, and have historical significance (*The Listener*). They include "infiltration," a subtle process of inversion and confusion of meanings such as has overtaken the word "democracy"—which today has two diametrically opposite meanings in eastern and western Europe; a capacity for logical directed effort in which deceit is a natural function to which moral categories do not apply; and the deliberate training of adherents so as to produce the temperament illustrated by Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic,* who argued that there was no such thing as a crime except by convention. Taking a synoptic view of the progress being made by revolutionaries of this type all over the world, Mr. Woodhouse comes to the conclusion that, on balance, they are winning. And he adds that "the one thing that history has shown with comparative clarity in the past is this: whatever the right answer to revolution may be, it is not counter-revolution."

But while this revolutionary or counter-revolutionary may appear to be a new type on the political horizon, he is to be discovered in every age. Dostoevsky portrayed him in *The Possessed* (1871), and, in the history of Europe, his features are limned in the story of those theologians who have always identified themselves with the cause of despotism, fanaticism, and ignorance. "The tragedy of the west," says the *Times,* "is that . . . it has temporarily lost the power to inspire ordinary men and women with the same conscious sense of purpose" as is possessed by the Communists—what Mr. Churchill has called their "fundamental theme." The vacuum had to be filled—with a sterile sacerdotalism or a proletarian dictatorship imbued with a messianic promise. A recent Penguin special, *The Case for Communism,* by W. Gallacher, M.P., gives the story of one strand of this influence in British working-class politics since the Communist Party in England came into being on July 31, 1920. The slavish imitation of Soviet methods and policies is evident throughout the years covered by this narrative, and only the hardened convert could be surprised at the thrice repeated rejection by the Labour Party of the Communist Party's application for affiliation. There is no witch-hunting here; but only an inveterate dislike of the rigid doctrinaire.

At root, the problem is a spiritual one. The totalitarian revolutionary, adopting Jesuitical means, exploits man's insatiable desires as well as his instinctive inclination to force others to do his will. John Stuart Mill long ago (*On Liberty,* 1859) pointed to the dangers of absolutism in words which confirm the anxieties brought to our notice today by social scientists. "A State which dwarfs its men," he wrote, "in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficent purposes—will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished."

—ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
OBJECTION TO REALISM

IT is often convenient to begin a review by saying that the book under consideration is "very difficult to evaluate." Yet this beforehand apology sometimes constitutes more than an excuse for failure to reach sufficient clarity in analysis. *Modern Arms and Free Men*, by Vannevar Bush (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1949) is an especially puzzling volume for a MANAS reviewer, since its lucidity of expression, the completeness of the information it furnishes, and its atmosphere of impartiality all seem somewhat irrelevant to what we must regard as its basic impact upon the public mind. As we happen to believe in a certain amount of the dark lore associated with witchcraft, we are compelled to suggest that any book which has 264 pages mostly devoted to minute descriptions of the ingenious armaments which will be used in another war is apt to contribute still further to the already extensive psychological preparation of the general public for acceptance of a third world slaughter.

To make the witchcraft allusion a little clearer, it seems to us that men draw themselves toward whatever they concentrate upon. It is often an easy step from the study of the details of any alarming suggestion to acceptance of the necessity for experiencing the horrors involved. We doubt if men's minds can dwell on anything without generating a positive attraction. Thus it seems more than a slight contradiction that Dr. Bush's book, ostensibly designed to help America keep the world peace, talks only about war.

In these terms, of course, *Modern Arms and Free Men* is but one of many volumes bristling with insidiously dangerous psychological influences. And to do Dr. Bush full justice, it should be said that we would be letting critical enthusiasm carry us away if we were to accuse him of insincerity or evil intentions. His volunteer press agents, moreover, inform us that he is a great Idealist, and that the combination of his high purposes with his authoritative explanation of what science has in store for the next war makes *Modern Arms* a "must be read" item. There are ample grounds for defending his claim to "idealism" if you talk a certain language—the language of Harry L. Stimson, to whom the book is dedicated—the language of General Bradley and Bernard Baruch, who feel that this book is really the thing for everyone. These impressive personalities certainly temper all their judgments with what are usually called humanitarian expressions. Yet they all may equally be charged with a rather complacent acceptance of the international status quo—which means acceptance of man's inability to redirect the energies which have given past and present political history its character.

In the opening chapter, "Science, Democracy and War," Dr. Bush does say a very nice thing. In defining the essential wrongness of Russian hegemony, Dr. Bush thoughtfully admits that neither democracy nor communism is an undiluted representation of good or evil:

> Neither is absolute in its nature. Within the totalitarian regime there is still an aspiration for freedom; there is, moreover, in the great mass of those rigidly controllet from above an idealism, a neighborly helpfulness, a grasp of something higher than selfish ambition, which still persists in spite of regimentation, propaganda, and the evils of the secret police. Within the democracies there is still plenty of chicanery, a negation of principles in the treatment of minorities, abuse of the necessary police power.

But to Dr. Bush, the issue "is still clear": "On one side is a rigid totalitarian regime, ruled through fear by a tight oligarchy, which sees only two possibilities: it will conquer the world or succumb in a final struggle." And so we cannot agree when a New York *Times* reviewer calls Dr. Bush "a man of intense idealism." Perhaps Dr. Bush is idealistic. But *intense* idealists do not inform the public that a highly-advertised scapegoat is incapable, in the last analysis, of any objective except conquering the world or dying in the attempt.

In his chapter, "Between the Wars," we find an interesting sentence: "In spite of the presence of the elements for mechanization of war, the first war was little mechanized, and when it ended progress along those lines nearly ceased." Granting that this use of the word "progress" may be purely technical, we doubt if it would be permitted by anyone not convinced, however unconsciously, that it is force of arms which must in the end prevail. Again, on the same page, writing about the unimaginative character of military men with regard to developments in "military" science, Dr. Bush says that, during the interval of peace between the two

wars, "almost no progress on military devices emanated solely from military laboratories or military men."

Much of a man's fundamental point of view emerges in his use of words. All important words, as the semanticists tell us, are "value-charged." Thus, in his chapter, "Surface of the Sea," Dr. Bush begins with a description of "the *evolution* of sea warfare in World War II." (Our italics.) The feeling-tone of words like "progress" and "evolution" has a definite upward-and-onward psychology, whereas their meaning when applied to the technics of war has a specifically reverse significance, so far as basic human welfare is concerned. The reader has to apply a conversion formula to such terms, whenever they are used in such connections, in order to prevent himself from adopting the writer's happy enthusiasm for "progress" in the theory and practice of mass destruction. Concluding his theme on what we may expect from naval prowess, Dr. Bush writes:

> Yet the days of the Navy are not over, nor are its missions less essential. We are a power in the world, and we intend to exert that power, if need be, far from our shores, thoughtfully admits that neither democracy to support our friends and strike an enemy where it is most vulnerable. It will involve new techniques, a new type of thought, new traditions.

Finally, Dr. Bush furnishes us with a clincher to our argument as to the fundamental orientation of his thinking by sounding like a *"The U.S. Army Means Opportunity for You"* billboard advertisement:

> During the second war, one radio "ham," whose formal education hat been limited to grammar school, helped fight from a laboratory. He was a mechanic; before that he had worked in a spool mill; his father had been killed in a sawmill accident when the boy was four years old. He had picked up his knowledge of radio while he made his living, just as millions of other American boys still do. He became the principal designer in this country of magnetrons. A magnetron is a type of thermionic tube in which part of the control is magnetic, and it is the very heart of radar. He can talk today with Nobel Prize physicists, and can understand them and tell them things they want to know.

What hope does the "great idealist" really offer us? He is very happy to point out that since modern methods of air-raid interception are now almost perfect, we need not fear mass-bombing on the scale associated with World War II. Here is something to be really cheered up about, for, he says, "the days of mass-bombing may be approaching their end. If so, it is a good thing for the world."

Our millions for armament experimentation have not been wasted! Of course, there are other matters like atom bombs and ram-jet, remotely-controlled, high-speed missiles, but *probably* there will be little mass-bombing in the future.

There are still other tremendous questions which Dr. Bush would have "the public" appreciate along with the men who are answering them. Dr. Bush deplores the fact that we give so much attention to deciding the amount of effort "to be placed in strategic air facilities, or whether an outsize aircraft carrier is now worth its great cost, by arguments of these highly technical matters in public, in the press, in magazine articles, some of them vitriolic and most of them superficial." The Men *who Know* must do our planning for us, else things will go all awry, and our military may not evolve rapidly enough to assure us of world control. And that is apparently what Dr. Bush is telling us we must have. But his greatest, or, at least, most amazing service is in proving to us that we may withal retain the nobility of our humanitarian impulses, and that all of our advances toward world control can be accompanied by convictions of the sanctity of human personality. In short, we can dominate the world and still be Christian. What more could any man, or any country, want?

Ordinarily, it would be a bit unfair to single Dr. Bush's book out of a host of technical reports for technical people as the target of these derogatory observations. But *Modern Arms and Free Men* is the highly-publicized December Book-of-the-Month selection. Our complaint is not so much directed at Dr. Bush as at the attitude of mind which accepts and promotes writing of this sort in the guise of aid to the survival of democracy. The only kind of democracy we know is the sort that is convinced it can maintain its essential elements *in the face of totalitarian pressures without resorting to the well-armed truculence which leads to mechanized militarism.*

COMMENTARY
ABOUT CIRCUMSTANCES

FROM our pioneer past we have inherited the idea that "adversity" has its uses, although the popularity of traditional sagacity of this sort has waned considerably in recent years, it being assumed that any doctrine of adjustment to "hard times" is somehow a defense of economic inequalities and propaganda against higher wages and shorter hours. But now that higher wages and the eight-hour-day are part of the status quo, adversity, we find, is still with us. Perhaps we shall eventually come around to the view that there is no getting rid of adversity until we have learned to get along with it. At any rate, our methods of getting rid of it have been unsuccessful, thus far.

This is not, of course, a "progressive" view. But what does a person with progressive ideas, but no hope of realizing them for many years—not even, perhaps, during his life—do in the meantime? Such a person, if faced with prolonged adversity, may make some profound discoveries of a psychological nature, and move on to a way of life in which "adversity," although omnipresent, plays only a minor role. There is, for example, the person who wrote this letter:

> You expressed the hope that my present circumstances would be comfortable. Do you know that circumstances are not essential things to decide whether one is happy or unhappy? Though yearning for my lost dear ones, I have known many moments of great happiness with my children, my work, and even in the camps. Amidst filth, noise, cruelty and despair, one can suddenly experience a moment of contact with a fellow sufferer, witness a case of simple and supreme heroism, feel the purity of a child's thoughts, undisturbed by what is going on around it. . . .
>
> I am living in a communal settlement of the type you have probably heard of: the members work together, sharing hard times and prosperity, without private earnings; what they earn with their work is the settlement's development and everything they need personally: food, a roof, medical care, and their children's education, and, when the strained hours of work are over, some entertainment. . . . My grandchildren are being born here, in the only country where they will never be fugitives. . . . the tendency of construction in our young State of Israel makes one feel happy and proud. . . .

A letter like this one does not make living in a place like the Belsen concentration camp a "good" experience; but it may alter our ideas about escape from adversity. It is even possible that the *ruthless* determination to wipe out adversity creates the Belsens of this world.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

ONE of the commonest of criticisms of modern schooling, from grammar school to college, is that little or no inspiration to learn is forthcoming. Otherwise intelligent children and youths seem apathetic to their studies, resistant to efforts of teachers to convince them that the studies are important. One reader has asked whether or not *all* schools are failures in this regard, except the Gandhian schools in India, which have been praised before in this column. There have been some other shining examples, though they are, to the best of our knowledge, very few.

One of the most inspiring educational ventures we know of is that of Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and the story of Black Mountain's unusual origin needs to be more widely known. Apparently, the students and faculty of this cooperative college either stumbled upon or created many of the teaching and learning dynamics which troubled parents miss in most of our better known schools. And these "learning dynamics" ought to be applicable, in part, at all age levels.

Black Mountain was begun by a group of Rollins College students and faculty members who rebelled at administrative interference with academic freedom. The rebels had no money, but they did have some convictions and principles. Black Mountain College came about because a Rhodes Scholar professor at Rollins, John Rice, insisted upon criticizing the control of educational policies by a President who seemed to Rice to be but a rubber stamp for the Board of Trustees. (This, it might be remarked, would hardly have been an unusual situation.) John Rice contended then, as he had many times before during other fleeting professorial engagements, that the policies of a college should be determined by the teachers, and not by business executives. After a series of controversies with the Powers behind Rollins, Rice succeeded in securing an abrupt dismissal. Several instructors and professors stood with him and resigned immediately. But something more happened: fifteen boys and girls, among them the president of the student body and the editor of the campus paper, "quit their old college and joined the rebel professors in the seemingly impossible enterprise of starting a new college at a time when neither Rice nor any of his discharged colleagues had the least notion of where they were to start it or what they were to use for money." We quote from *My America* by Louis Adamic, who continues the story in this fashion:

> Unlike the dismissed teachers, these fifteen students were not compelled to leave their comfortable dormitories at Winter Park and go looking for a spot on which to pitch their tents. Indeed, in one or two cases, the rebel students forfeited Rollins scholarships; in several others they risked the displeasure of their parents; and in all cases they risked the probability of wasting at least a year in an undertaking nearly everyone said would fail. Without them, Rice and his associates could not have thought of starting a new school. And after the new college was announced, the students helped the teachers to raise the minimum sum necessary to rent the hotel-like building they chanced to find at Black Mountain and buy the essential equipment for classes and the food needed by the group for a few months, and to get four more students and three additional instructors; so that when the college opened in September, 1933, the teaching staff numbered nine and the student body nineteen.

All we know, ourselves, of the Black Mountain experiment is what is contained in Adamic's book. The present condition of the institution—and we hope that it has not become too much of an Institution—is unknown to us. But we are sure that Adamic's account, written by a man who was profoundly inspired by the almost impossible achievements of Black Mountain, would be inspiring reading for every student and every teacher. Here was an opportunity for real courage, real creativity, real loyalty—in short, real adventuring. We reproduce more of Adamic's story:

> Students and teachers pooled their personal book collections and called the result the college library, and agreed to contribute manual labor

voluntarily according to ability. That first year, the teachers drew out of the treasury only what they needed for clothes and incidentals, which averaged $7.27 per month per person. But even so, the college nearly collapsed twice for lack of money, and was saved only by the joint resourcefulness and self-denial of both the faculty and the students.

The second year the number of teachers rose to eighteen, of students to thirty-two. In 1935, when I first visited the college, there were seventeen teachers and forty-eight students. As I write, the number is about the same. Such education as Black Mountain College holds up as desirable is possible only in a very small school. If all goes well, eventually the student body will number about one hundred and twenty-five and the faculty about thirty.

The Rollins rebels, when they decided to start a new college, were against many things in the prevalent system of education, but were unanimous on one objection—that college and university trustees or regents, presidents, and deans, most of whom were not teachers or scholars, but executives and disciplinarians, and sluices for influence from various non-educational sources, had the power to interfere with the teachers' function. The little group was determined to get back to the old American idea of "Mark Hopkins on one end of the log and the student on the other." And so Black Mountain College has no trustees, no president, no dean. There is but one person in the office, a typist, who is not also a teacher. As rector, Rice is the head of the college; his job, however, is not office work, but teaching. What office work there is is done by the registrar and the treasurer, who are also teachers before they are anything else. There is a so-called advisory council, which consists of friends of the college, including John Dewey, but has no legal authority. All important decisions are made by the board of fellows elected by the faculty which includes six teachers and the president of the student body, and is continually influenced by both the teaching staff and the student body as a whole. There is a real student government, whose officers meet periodically as equals with the whole faculty and the rector. Once a month or so the teachers and students gather in general meeting and air their problems. This setup has brought out unsuspected executive abilities. One teacher has turned out to be a competent treasurer, another an able registrar and office-manager.

It would take a great deal of space to summarize the extent of education at Black Mountain, as Adamic describes it. Actually, Adamic's book should be read carefully for a full appreciation of what happened at Black Mountain, as well as for its discussion of other phases of the American scene. But since many will realize from even these few passages that the founding of Black Mountain was both inspiring and extraordinary for education, and will wonder what was the real secret of this event, we offer one suggestion. From among the many condensations of Rice's thoughts supplied by Adamic, this one stands out as the key to Rice's philosophy—and also, possibly, to his success: *"He [Rice] thinks that only a great teacher, but not necessarily one teaching in school, can be a truly great man."* Rice, it seems to us, tapped the same secret of educational success as that which served Gandhi so well. The business of living and the business of teaching were seen by him to be inextricably interwoven, neither one having any true significance or value without the other. Black Mountain, at least during the period of its formation, inspired teachers to want to *live* and inspired students to wish to *learn* and *teach* and *live*, all at the same time, amidst a community of eager minds.

FRONTIERS

They Know the Answers

THERE is a curious correspondence between a dogmatic religious dispensation like the one, for example, that the Ten Commandments provides, and a strictly "scientific" treatment of sociology. Neither one of these sources offers any *reasoning* at all on the problems of good and evil. The Ten Commandments simply assert definitions of good and evil actions, while scientific sociology assumes that moral categories have no real existence and ought not to be mentioned except as part of the history of human prejudice. If a man could—and we don't suppose for a moment that it would really be possible—follow with complete mechanical obedience either the dictation of the Ten Commandments or the counsels of sociology, his conscience would never receive exercise. What is there in the Ten Commandments to suggest that a man *has* a conscience? Their plain implication is that human beings are unable to know right from wrong for themselves.

An experimental comparison of the Ten Commandments with some passages chosen, almost at random, from Marcus Aurelius is of interest:

> He who acts unjustly acts impiously. For since the universal nature has made rational animals for the sake of one another to help one another according to their deserts, but in no way to injure one another, he who transgresses her will is clearly guilty of impiety toward the highest divinity. And he too who lies is guilty of impiety to the same divinity; for the universal nature is the nature of things as they are; and things that are have a relation to all things that come into existence. And further, this universal nature is named truth, and is the prime cause of all things that are true. He then who lies intentionally is guilty of impiety inasmuch as he acts unjustly by deceiving; and he also who lies unintentionally, inasmuch as he is at variance with universal nature, and inasmuch as he disturbs the order by fighting against the nature of the world; for he fights against it, who is moved of himself to that which is contrary to truth, for he had received powers from nature through the neglect of which he is not now able to distinguish falsehood from truth. . . .
>
> Hasten to examine thy own ruling faculty and that of the universe and that of thy neighbor; thy own that thou mayest make it just; and that of the universe; that thou mayest remember of what thou art a part; and that of thy neighbor, that thou mayest know whether he has acted ignorantly or with knowledge, and that thou mayest also consider that his ruling faculty is akin to thine. . . .

In these paragraphs by Marcus, as in most of his writings, there is hardly a hint of direction in regard to particular actions. Marcus gives no *codified* morality in which the forms of "good" action are set against "bad" actions. He is concerned with the way in which a man decides for himself what is good and what is bad.

There are large assumptions, of course, in both the Ten Commandments and in Marcus Aurelius, but with this distinction between them: the assumptions in the Ten Commandments relate almost exclusively to the conclusions of morality, while Marcus supplies only the premises. One could say, too, that the *fundamental* assumption made by Marcus is that if a man's thought is to have genuine moral content, he must arrive at his own conclusions as to what is right and what is wrong. A similar quality pervades the Sermon on the Mount, which deals more with psychological attitudes than with overt behavior. It seems just to say that a work on morals must of necessity present basic principles of conduct and then consider undogmatically their possible implications for human beings—for beings, that is, who have the capacity to reason about right and wrong.

The fact that a leading American sociologist, Robert S. Lynd, was able to write an indignant book, *Science for What?* (Princeton, 1939), is fairly good evidence that, to date, modern sociology has not offered very much toward the solution of moral problems, or—to use the "scientific" term—social problems. The difficulty, of course, is that the current use of the scientific method takes no cognizance of what might be called the moral intelligence of human beings. If there should be some inner or intuitive standard of judgment which may be applied by individuals to practical situations, science can have nothing to say about it. The only criterion of "morality" that science can recognize is the utilitarian measure of the-greatest-good-for-the-greatest-number. And in order to reach a firm position on what is good for the most people, social science must conduct endless surveys and send out numberless questionnaires. Obviously, utilitarian sociology and morality involve extensive use of statistics to arrive at even tentative objectives.

But what if the highest good for human beings is inaccessible to statistical treatment? The statistical method produced the conclusion that Socrates ought to be given the hemlock. The statistical method legalized Hitler's seizure of power in Germany. A majority of the Athenian jury of five hundred voted that it was better for Socrates to die than to live, and how would a utilitarian sociologist who happened to think otherwise prove that the questionings of this ragged iconoclast were more valuable to the Athenian community than the preservation of orthodox opinions? How many of the sociologists who urged that the Nazi infamy must be erased reached this fiery opinion by "inductive research"?

It seems that scientific writers on human behavior, whenever they leave the region of simple description and pass judgments about what *ought* to be, are perpetrating an enormous hoax on their readers. Either they are smuggling in conceptions of right and wrong which enjoy no scientific standing at all, or they are resting their arguments on fairly obvious considerations, such as the importance of adequate housing, diet, and like matters which are as easily established by common sense as by laborious scientific demonstrations.

There is the further problem of how to tell just what will really contribute to the greatest good for the greatest number. Is the good of 150,000,000 people necessarily different from the good of a single individual? Is it better for a man to be well fed than for him to try to be another Socrates? Should this decision ever be made by one man for another man? By a legislature for a great number?

The social scientist might argue that such questions have nothing to do with the problem. He might say that nothing he will propose for better feeding and housing of the population can possibly interfere with anyone trying to be another Socrates, should he want to. But suppose better feeding and housing are made to seem dependent upon the biggest army in the world, the most destructive armament in the world, the conscription of labor and a "scientific frontier" which includes not only Formosa, but a number of other distant outposts as well? A scientific sociologist with a program of this sort might find himself interfering quite extensively with any number of junior Socrateses, should he seek to enforce conformity by law. And why shouldn't he seek conformity through law? Science is truth, and the truth will make us free, so that anyone who opposes the dictates of science is an enemy of truth and freedom and the greatest good for the greatest number. For people like that, we have prisons and asylums, and maybe hemlock, too.

Books, scientific or otherwise, which ignore the reality of independent moral decision are books which give the reader a sense of emptiness, of dissatisfaction, unless, of course, they are purely technical treatises making no pretense of dealing with basic human problems. Such books have no higher regard for the dignity of man than the revelations which declare "the truth" in dogmatic terms, as though humans had no other way of finding it out.

This brings us, by a somewhat roundabout path, to a definition of a "great" book: it is a book which strengthens the reader's capacity to think through to his own moral decisions and extends the range and meaning of the alternatives of choice. Possibly Dr. Hutchins, who more than anyone else is responsible for the growing interest in the Great Books of the Western cultural tradition, would accept this definition, which seems also to approximate his own evident purposes as an educator.

The Ten Commandments, we hardly need emphasize, do not rank very high as literature, according to this definition. Marcus Aurelius seems to have been a far more important author than Moses, if we assume that the purpose of moral communications is to stimulate reflection rather than to demand obedience. And here, perhaps, is a partial explanation for the fact that Western civilization, brought up on Moses, rapidly turned "disobedient" and "secular" as soon as it gained any sort of maturity. One wonders whether a society brought up on the philosophy of Marcus Aurelius would have grown so desperately fanatical in its religion, while it believed, and so zealously materialistic in its skepticism, once the faith of its childhood had died away.