

## MEN WITH IDEAS: ROBERT MAYNARD HUTCHINS

IT is generally believed that Dr. Robert M. Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago, has been engaged in a great controversy about Education—what it is, and what it ought to be—ever since 1929 when he left his post of Dean of the Yale Law School to become President of the University of Chicago. Dr. Hutchins and his various supporters, and his various antagonists, it is true, speak and write a great deal about education, but it seems a good idea to propose, in the interest of clarity, that the real argument between them is not primarily about Education, but about the Nature of Man.

After all, what you think is the proper education for a human being ought to be determined by what you think a human being is. Conceivably, Dr. Hutchins will approve our effort to set the argument about education in a new context, in the interest of education itself, as well as in the interest of clarity. He might even prefer to argue about the nature of man with his intellectual and academic opposition, and would, perhaps, so argue, if he could get the opposition to enter the arena on this basis. The trouble with this, of course, is that Dr. Hutchins, along with Plato, is more or less alone in holding that the nature of man is something that can be discussed intelligibly. He believes that once a measure of working unity on this subject has been established, the discussion may go on to the "practical" problems of education, such as how to improve man's natural endowments, or, at least, how to provide the conditions for their optimum development and use. But unless there are others who think that the nature of man is a subject with sufficient unity to be discussed, how can you develop a useful argument about it?

This, really, is Dr. Hutchins' dilemma. He has had to argue about education as a kind of second-best topic for debate you can start an argument on

education with almost anybody—getting in a few licks on the nature of man whenever possible. And it is really his statements about the nature of man which get him into trouble with his colleagues in education.

Dr. Hutchins believes—along with Plato and Aristotle—that man is a rational animal. ("Animal," in this case, does not mean a Darwin-Huxley-and-Haeckel kind of animal, red in tooth and claw, and lately emerged from the primeval jungle, but a Greek kind of "animal." You could say that when Aristotle used the phrase, "rational animal," he meant a "soul-that-thinks," for the philosophers of the Greek tradition of metaphysics held that there are many kinds of souls—humans being *rational* souls.) Thus Dr. Hutchins, regarding the human essence as a reasoning essence, also believes that education is first of all an appeal to reason. Education may involve other things, but basically it is an appeal to reason, and there is no education without an appeal to reason.

It may be that one explanation of why Dr. Hutchins has been so bitterly attacked in some quarters is that he demands that people reason with him about education, and he is a pretty good reasoner. Reasoning, moreover, is difficult. It requires, as he so often tells us, discipline of the mind. A man who believes in reason and tries to practice the life of reason can never disregard the strenuous requirements of impartial thinking. But a man who does not believe in reason, or who believes in reason only some of the time, and when it is convenient to his argument, can always call the whole discussion off at any point by claiming that that "point" rests upon a higher authority than reason. Dr. Hutchins always replies that *every* point must make its peace with reason—that, whatever the facts are, we still have to live our lives as whole men, to reason our way through decisions as moral intelligences, and that

any "point" or "fact" which interferes with this task must either be abandoned or made amenable to reason. And this is the argument that the specialists of departmentalized learning resist and resent.

Dr. Hutchins made his first major declaration of faith in 1936, with publication of *The Higher Learning in America*, after he had been President of the University of Chicago for seven years. The following paragraph from this book reveals his central interest and purpose:

If we can secure a real university in this country and a real program of general education upon which its work can rest, it may be that the character of our civilization may slowly change. It may be that we can outgrow the love of money, that we can get a saner conception of democracy, and we can even understand the purposes of democracy. It may be that we can abandon our false notions of progress and utility and that we can come to prefer intelligible organization to the chaos we mistake for liberty. It is because these things may be that education is important. Upon education our country must pin its hopes of true progress, which involves scientific and technological advance, but under the direction of reason; of true prosperity, which includes external goods but does not overlook those of the soul; and of true liberty which can exist only in society, and in a society rationally ordered.

What will such an education be based upon? Dr Hutchins proposes that "a real program of general education" would start with

those books which have through the centuries attained to the dimensions of classics. Many such books, I am afraid are in the ancient and medieval period. But even these are contemporary. A classic is a book that is contemporary in every age. That is why it is a classic. The conversations of Socrates raise questions that are as urgent today as they were when Plato wrote. In fact they are more so, because the society in which Plato lived did not need to have them raised as much as we do.

This is what Dr. Hutchins believes, what he teaches and practices. We shall not say much more about *The Higher Learning in America*, except that it is at least a fourteen-year-old classic on education, for it is still very contemporary.

While it has not yet made the list of the Hundred Great Books, it perhaps ought to, for a book which can persuade thousands of people to begin to read the Hundred Great Books, and to meet with other people to discuss what they contain, comes very close to being a Great Book itself.

Dr. Hutchins is a man with ideas—the great ideas in the great books—and he is also a man with a program. Through his connection with the University of Chicago, and with the help of others, he started the Great Books Foundation, devoted to assisting local discussion groups that read and investigate the meaning of the Great Books. There are now some 35,000 active participants in Great Books Seminars throughout the United States. It is fashionable, in some educational circles, to exhibit a contemptuous or superior attitude toward the Great Books program, the reason given being that it is not a program for "the masses." There could be no greater mistake. It is true that the Great Books are not for people who are not hungry for knowledge, but it should be added that no one ever got any kind of an education without being hungry for knowledge.

Actually, Dr. Hutchins is the Nation's most vocal opponent of the division of students into the masses and the classes. Here is his comment on a prevalent view of the educational needs of American youth:

. . . in the report of the President's Commission on Higher Education, presented by men who have the deepest democratic convictions, we are urged in the name of democracy upon a course that divides the population into the mass and the elite. The mass, we are told, since they are not really capable of being educated, should not be allowed to clutter up existing educational institutions. Two-year community colleges will be established for them. They should go to these colleges because everybody should go to school as long as possible. But they should not be educated because they are not capable of it. The two-year community is therefore a kind of waiting room, or housing project, in which the young are to be kept out of worse places until we are ready to have them go to work. . . .

The doctrine that educational opportunity should be open to all is the great American contribution to the theory and practice of education. But you will notice that the opportunity that should be open is educational opportunity, not the opportunity to spend two years doing anything that occurs to you in a place erroneously denominated a college. The advocates of the two-year community college either keep silent altogether about what its curriculum is to be or say that it is to be whatever the students would like to have it. This is based on the hypothesis, which I regard as wholly undemocratic, that these students cannot be educated, and therefore they might as well do anything they care to. . . . The choice before us is clear: either we should abandon universal suffrage or we should give every citizen the education that is appropriate to free men. . . .

Liberal education is the education appropriate to free men. Since it originated at a time when only the few were rulers, it was originally an aristocratic education. Hence the deeply convinced democrats who wrote the report of the President's Commission assume that you cannot be a democrat and be for liberal education. They most undemocratically assume that the mass of people are incapable of achieving a liberal education—but they have no evidence for this, because the mass of people have never had an opportunity to achieve it. (*Measure*, Fall, 1950.)

And so on. The power in Dr. Hutchins' writing arises out of his convictions about the nature of man—the capacity of man, any man, to learn to use his mind as a free man should, and to order his decisions as a ruler (in a democracy, all men are rulers) ought.

Hutchins is for the discipline of the mind through the contemplation, discussion and application of great ideas. Which are the great ideas? They are the synthesizing judgments of great minds. Who were the great minds? Reading the great books helps a man to answer this question for himself. All that Dr. Hutchins really declares for is the sovereignty of reason, for through this sovereignty are all other sovereignties established. There is no "intellectual arrogance" in this position. The determination of what is "arrogant" and what is not is a function of reason. There is no neglect of "the facts" in this position.

The determination of which facts are of primary importance is a function of reason. Nor is there any reliance upon irrational authority. Authority which is arrived at by means of reason is the only authority which all men can learn to respect in common. As Dr. Hutchins wrote in *The Higher Learning*:

. . . we are trying to discover a rational and practical order. . . . To look to theology to unify the modern university is futile and vain. If we omit from theology faith and revelation, we are substantially in the position of the Greeks, who are thus, oddly enough, closer to us than are the Middle Ages. Now Greek thought was unified. Plato had a dialectic which was a method of exploring first principles. Aristotle made the knowledge of them into the science of metaphysics. Among the Greeks, then, metaphysics, rather than theology, is the ordering and proportioning discipline. It is in the light of metaphysics that the social sciences, dealing with man and man, take shape and illumine one another. In metaphysics we are seeking the causes of things that are. It is the highest science, the first science, and as first, universal. . . . The aim of higher education is wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge of principles and causes. Therefore metaphysics is the highest wisdom. . . .

Dr. Hutchins holds that a university in which respect for reason enjoys the highest authority will be a place where learned men can understand one another, and can together create a genuine *culture* which may become the shaping force of a new civilization. The lack of a common curriculum, he points out, has made the modern university into a Tower of Babel, where no specialist is able to communicate with any other. As he remarks in *Measure*, "An undergraduate of a great university wrote to the student newspaper not long ago and complained that the curriculum of the University had now reached such richness that one student could not talk to another unless they both happened to remember the score of last Saturday's game."

Following is his analysis of the result of specialization in research and in education:

The advance of specialization in the last seventy-five years has brought with it great gains and

great losses. The gains are more spectacular, but the losses are more important. The gains have come chiefly in our power over nature. The losses have come in our power to control ourselves and understand one another. Unfortunately we have recently discovered that we cannot be trusted to use our power over nature wisely unless we can control ourselves and understand one another. Specialized education has now reduced us all to the level of students who cannot talk unless they both happen to remember the score of last Saturday's game. The human community has been split into a billion fragments, which the cults of nationalism, racism, or regionalism are constantly reforming into more and more dangerous combinations.

But, as we suggested at the outset, the issues of a general education, of cultural unity, and of the authority of reason, all turn on the prior and larger issue of the nature of man. The educational system of a country always cultivates what is honored by the country. "There is never," Dr. Hutchins observes in *Education for Freedom*, "anything wrong with the educational system of a country. What is wrong is the country." Thus—

The moral, intellectual, and spiritual reformation for which the world waits depends, then, upon true and deeply held convictions about the nature of man, the ends of life, the purposes of the state, and the order of goods. One cannot take part in this revolution if one believes that men are no different from the brutes, that morals are another name for the mores, that freedom is doing what you please, that everything is a matter of opinion, and that the test of truth is immediate practical success. Precisely these notions lie at the bottom of the materialism that afflicts us; precisely these notions are used in the attempt to justify man's inhumanity to man. The revolution to which we are called must end in the destruction of these notions and their power over individual and political action.

The Great Books are good, but long. Dr. Hutchins' books are good, and short. Both should be read, but Dr. Hutchins' books might make starting on the Great Books a little easier.

## *Letter from* **JAPAN**

TOKYO.—One of the features of postwar Japan has been the tendency of the people to lean over backwards in trying to pick fault with themselves. Self-criticism and self-reflection are, to be sure, the indispensable stuff of which progress is made. But the constant bombardment of such criticisms from the newspapers, magazines, and radio is not helping the Japanese to retain whatever self-respect they had left after their crushing defeat.

It is considered fashionable among postwar writers, especially, to decry Japan and to set forth Japanese faults in bold relief against the virtues of the Western peoples. There are any number of subjects they could pick up from the daily Japanese life, which according to Western standards might be considered improper.

The bad manners of Japanese school children on a certain outing, for instance, would be taken up with righteous indignation, and their actions would be compared with the exemplary conduct of Western children. Writers would chide Japanese for excessive drinking at parties and point out that drunkenness at such affairs is unknown to the Occident.

It is only natural and desirable that the faults of the Japanese people should be aired in order to correct shortcomings; and it must be assumed that the critics are doubtless firm in the belief they are performing a patriotic duty in leading the nation to a better life. But there is a danger in overdoing even a good thing, and this is especially true when criticisms become absurd. They undermine self-respect and confidence and pride; they tend to make the Japanese into poor imitations of their Western models.

This may be a common trait among defeated and occupied peoples. I saw the same self-abasement among the Filipinos during the Japanese occupation. It is not a pleasant sight to see a people run themselves into the ground for no better reason than their defeat in war, for it would be madness to change every custom and habit to suit the Western way of doing things.

The postwar flood of self-vilification among the Japanese is especially noticeable because they were so

adverse to any criticism at all before their surrender. In the sense that they are no longer afraid of criticism, the Japanese may be said to have profited by their postwar experience. But what the Japanese have lost, the Occupation personnel seems to have picked up. The people in the Occupation are proving that they are deathly afraid of being criticized. The reason, of course, may lie simply in their being military personnel.

A "Letter to the Editor" column in the *Nippon Times*, English-language journal, recently had a communication from a Japanese complaining of Occupation children not only beating up his son but also breaking his eye glasses with stones thrown at him. Letters of righteous indignation were written to the newspaper from Occupation personnel—directed not at the erring children, but at the Japanese who had presumptuously dared to cast criticism upon Occupation children. One sneered at the Japanese and called him a "Stinker" for making a complaint to the newspaper because the Japanese policemen dared not reprimand the children of the Occupation. The letter from the Japanese might not have been in good taste; but the astounding thing is the indignant response of the Occupation people who have become afraid of even the slightest criticism. They remind the Japanese of their ruling class before the surrender.

Another example might be taken from the motorist-pedestrian controversy which raged for a while in the same newspaper. It was not exactly a controversy because so few pedestrians (Japanese) dared write; but of all the letters received on the subject from the motorists (Occupation personnel), not one urged more careful driving as one way of keeping down traffic accidents.

The apparent conclusion is that might makes right, while weakness often indulges in self-abasement.

JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### ON THE SIDE OF THE DEVIL

IT may be nothing more than perversity, or personal maladjustment to the mores of Our Society, which impels a reviewer to look for good things to say about Russia—or at least things which are less bad things than almost everything else we hear. Of course, one hopes the impulsion is something more praiseworthy, something like an urge to impartial search for the Constructive.

Being even partially, and momentarily, on the side of the Red Devil is apt to make one a little uneasy, however, and this no matter how many times one has disclaimed faith in both Marxism and Stalinism. But history tells us we may always be certain of one thing—that people of warring or potentially warring governments are always very much like one another, and even the governments themselves are more than a bit alike. That is, all history tells us this when it is written from a vantage point sufficiently removed in time and circumstance from nationalist emotions. The process of recording history objectively has just now feebly and inadequately begun in respect to the Japanese-American War of the Pacific, with the history of the rise and fall of Nazism lagging a little further behind.

A very few years ago it was fashionable to assume that we must "learn to get along with Russia" ergo, that we must propagandize to get all the American people to try to understand Russia's national and social outlook. It was in memory of this dated fashion, and consequently with a wry smile, that we recently purchased in a Thrifty Drug Store (for twenty-four cents) a 1946 Harper book by John Fischer, entitled *Why They Behave Like Russians*. The dust jacket informs the reader that the volume is "neither a defense nor an indictment of the Soviet system," but "a dispassionate effort to explain the motives and probable future course of a country and a people which we must understand in order to survive in an unstable world."

What made us smile was the fact that we now have an entirely different idea of what constitutes a "dispassionate effort to explain" Soviet motives. And that is probably why the book now sells for twenty-four cents.

*Why They Behave Like Russians* is quite a bargain for twenty-four cents. For instance, Fischer undertakes an interesting and plausible explanation of why the Russians are habitually apt to walk out of conferences and UN Councils after making peremptory demands. Since the Soviet representatives have convinced us that they have no regard for our ideas of politeness, and since we usually allow ourselves to form complete character judgments on the basis of their behavior, we really should stop and listen to Mr. Fischer about what *their* standards are, and how they have developed. He tells us that explosive haggling has been the traditional Russian way of doing political business for many generations, a classic example being the following incident in Russian history:

The czar's envoys were instructed, on pain of death, not to yield a single inch until the Polish ambassador broke off the conference and rode away in his sleigh. Then they were to gallop after him and offer a small concession to persuade him to return to the parley.

They simply can't understand our taking offense at such tactics, and they can't believe us when we say that we cannot recede from a position taken at the beginning of negotiations.

Mr. Fischer says most of the derogatory things currently being said about the Russians, too. But there is an almost equal proportion of reporting which reveals tremendous and understandable differences of psychological background. If this type of reporting had been further encouraged—and it would have had to be done in an almost consecrated way by Americans—it would have served as valuable counterbalance to the unqualified condemnations of the Russians that we now here on every hand. For example:

We should remember . . . that the Soviet Union is a young nation which has been through terrible

experiences during its short life. Moreover, every Russian abroad believes profoundly that he is dealing with the heathen. In his mind is a myth of The Evil Capitalist—a sly fellow his checkbook always primed for bribery, who breakfasts on children of the downtrodden worker and plots incessantly against the Soviet people. It is a picture not much further from reality than the image of the Bolshevik—a bearded madman with bombs in each hand—which is still cherished by some of our stuffer conservatives. The main difference is that the Russian's myth is ground into his head by all the pressure of official propaganda, and he has no chance to correct it by unbiased study. Consequently, he treats all foreigners as if they were about to pick his pocket or assault his virtue. . . . This invincible misunderstanding of the outside world is largely responsible for Russia's bad public relations.

At least one book of this sort is worth adding to our shelves, if only to remind us occasionally of how extensively attitudes and viewpoints are allowed to shift at the behest of national policy. In summing up the sound, good sense of 1946, Mr. Fischer says things which would get him derision, and even hatred, today:

I was raised as a Texas Democrat and expect to remain one. I have never been a Communist or a fellow-traveler and so have been spared the disillusionment which so often embitters disenchanted Marxists. I am convinced that the Communist political and economic system is completely unsuited indeed, hardly conceivable—for the United States. On the other hand, I believe that some such system was inevitable for the Russians, in the light of their peculiar history and institutions. In any case, they are stuck with it; there is no prospect, so far as I can see, for any other kind of government in Russia within the predictable future. We could do nothing effective to change it, certainly, even if it were any of our business. Consequently, it seems clear we will have to make the best of the Russians as they are, and to learn to get along with them, somehow, in a swiftly shrinking world; for all of our lives depend on it.

The September 15 issue of *US News and World Report* gave currency to the only recent moderation of a desire to misunderstand the Russians that we have seen, and it comes to us from the only source which could possibly make it acceptable. Two months ago, India's Prime

Minister Nehru granted a special interview in which the Pandit's views on Russia and Communism were guardedly questioned. The report of this interview forms, in our opinion, one of the remarkable documents of modern statesmanship.

Nehru is forthright in his refusal to place anything like exclusive responsibility for the present world crisis on Russia's shoulders. And as any student of political history must know, this does *not* prove that Nehru himself has Communist sympathies.

The crispest lines in Nehru's interview have to do with an explanation of his "unorthodox" stand in pressing for UN and US recognition of the revolutionary Chinese Government. What he says may strike many readers as revealing, and from what we know of Mr. Nehru, it is also very accurate. Following is his response to the question, "Do you think that Communism in China is independent of Moscow control?"

The Government of China is a national coalition with the Communist Party as a dominant partner. The coalition is composed of all sections of the nation, including some members of the Kuomintang pledged to work a common program of democratic advance.

Mao Tse-tung [head of the Chinese Communist Government] has openly declared that China at this stage is a new democratic state preparing itself for socialism. It has a mixed economy as its immediate objective and a coalition Government as its present machinery.

The Chinese Revolution appears to be following the law of its own development—influenced by others, but chiefly influenced by the conditions prevailing in China. In our view, the Government of China is entirely independent.

We recognized it for a variety of reasons, the main reason being the fact that a sound and stable Government existed over the whole continent of China.

It was none of our business to like or dislike it. In recognizing countries, normally one does not go by likes or dislikes, but by the fact that they do represent stable governments. It, therefore, seemed to us not

only illogical but exceedingly unreasonable not to accept the consequences of that recognition, which were that the new China should function in the United Nations.

The United Nations was never intended to be a group of nations thinking one way and excluding other nations. With new China and the U.S.S.R and some other nations out, the United Nations would assume a new shape. It will cease to be what it was meant to be, and if this state of affairs were allowed to persist the outcome would probably be a world war.

Nehru lost in Western popularity when he offered to mediate the Korean dispute and simultaneously revealed his own trend of thought by suggesting recognition of Communist China as a most logical first concession from the United Nations. Such interviews as the one from which we have quoted will undoubtedly make Nehru even more unpopular—for the time being. Yet we may guess that the verdict of history will reverse the estimate, as it always has about unpopular statesmen who maintain ideals of impartial justice.

Of course, as Chinese Communist forces press into Tibet, we may find Nehru determined to resist encroachment on India, militarily, at the slightest provocation. But we doubt that Nehru will ever need to disclaim the wisdom of his offer for Korean mediation, or the logic of the statements quoted above. The fact of further Communist aggressions will not make Nehru wrong, though many will so interpret developments of this sort. The "fact" will probably really mean that further aggression, either in spirit or in actuality, will have been encouraged by the rejection of negotiation measures such as those Nehru proposed.

## **COMMENTARY ON TAKING SIDES**

SHORTLY after this week's Review article, "On the Side of the Devil," had been put into type, we received a friendly letter from a reader whose previous correspondence had been pretty far on the caustic side. In this letter, however, he spoke appreciatively of several articles that have appeared, and then asked if we had not become slightly more "sympathetic" to the Soviet point of view.

This calls for a bit of public self-analysis. Our articles and reviews are not intended to "sympathize," one way or the other, in any of the great political controversies of the day. Writing on behalf of "sides" can only strengthen the partisanship of the day, and we have no particular interest in doing this. The only certain thing that can be said about partisanship is that they change with time. "On the side of the Devil" gives good evidence of this.

We have frequently had our say about the suppressions of intellectual freedom in the Soviet Union; we have reviewed books about the NKVD's enormous system of concentration camps; we have expressed ourselves, at least in passing, concerning the naked opportunism of the Moscow Trials. We have little admiration for the Soviet system of government, and still less for the Soviet system of propaganda and public relations.

But our feelings are exactly the same regarding parallel if not so well developed tendencies in other countries—including the United States. And we have expressed those feelings with both freedom and candor.

The real issue, as we see it, is a matter of allegiance to the human qualities in men, regardless of political and economic systems. In looking at any system, it is necessary to try to estimate what the best of men could do, were they placed in seats of authority. It then becomes a question of what the populace will *let* the best of

men do, for the good of the people and the good of the world. The answer to this question gives little inspiration to a political career.

This, or something like it, is the reason why MANAS contains virtually no political commentary. It is also the reason why we look for the human qualities behind the political controversies of the time. Whatever today's papers say, we can afford to lose in almost any merely political controversy, but if we should lose our human qualities, it will not matter at all what else we lose or win.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

IT might occasionally be suspected that this column holds religious education in hearty disfavor; this, actually, is not the case. We are much in favor of religious education—of a certain sort. It is just that the sort we favor is not compatible with any form of indoctrination, nor with any "orthodoxy" with which we are familiar. When we support Mrs. Vashti McCollum against the Champaign, Illinois, Board of Education's released-time "religious education" program, it is not because we are against all religion, but because the State is the last place from which to derive religious instruction. The next to the last place for genuine religion is the Church, in our opinion; and we might add the admission of a penchant for approving some of the religious lore of the East, for there, at least, some traditions live *within* the established order of Hinduism and Buddhism, which insist that real knowledge is attained only when one is able to pass "beyond the word of the Vedas," "and attain to high indifference to those doctrines which are presently taught or yet to be taught," as the *Bhagavad-Gita* has it. In literal Christianity, however, one is not supposed to "pass beyond the word" of the Bible, and an authoritarian psychology has been the result.

Probably the reason why Socrates is so often welcomed in MANAS is because he is the best of Western symbols for that unusual sort of religious education which does not believe in "the word" of the Vedas, "the word" of the Bible, or any other kind of "words" except those which form the natural language of the questing mind. Recalling a series of imaginary Socratic dialogues, composed for a historical novel (*Gorgo* by Charles Kelsey Gaines, Lothrop, Boston, 1903), we thought readers might appreciate these examples of a kind of religious instruction which may be unanimously approved. Professor Gaines, of course, would call this philosophical rather than religious instruction,

but since we now associate the word philosophy more with intellectual complications than with the "soul," we can also very legitimately call the dialogues "religious." (Of course, the argument here really is that one may legitimately approach the religious question *only through philosophy*; hence, Socrates, in leading the mind of a child, avoids the dubious technique of "Revelation.")

The following dialogue is recounted in retrospect, by the Greek who presumably tells the tale, looking back on his own childhood. He is walking with Socrates, puzzling about Beginnings, and the Source of things, and asking questions. Socrates, as always, has a series of questions to ask in return:

"Do you see the Long Walls?" he said. "They stretch far; but you saw that they had a beginning, and you know that they have an end. For all things that have a beginning have an end. Can you think otherwise?"

"But is there anything like that?" I cried.

"You know the meaning of what men call 'time'," he said. "Can you think that it had any beginning, or that it will ever have an end?"

"No; it goes on always. But time—it isn't anything at all," I persisted.

"Well," he said, "you, at least, are something; for you can think and know. But can you remember when first you began to be?"

"No; I cannot remember."

"Perhaps, then, there is something within you that had no beginning. And if that is so, it has had plenty of time to learn. Some think," he said, "that what we call learning is really only remembering. Already you have much to remember, little son of Hagnon."

"Yes," I cried, harking back, "and if it had no beginning it hasn't any end either; for you said so. My mother thought that; but she did not explain as you do."

"And if there is something within us that was not born and can never die, but is like time itself, can this be anything else than that part of us which thinks and knows, which men call the soul?"

"It must be that," I said; "for they put the rest in the ground or burn it up. I never understood about the soul before."

"And now," said he, "which part do you think is best worth caring for,—that part which we cast away like a useless garment when it is torn by violence or grows old and worn, or that part which lives always?"

"It is foolish to ask me that; of course it is the part that doesn't die," I answered.

"I am glad," said he, "that you think this a foolish question. Yet there are many who do not understand even this; for just as some care only for clothes, some care only for their bodies. And that, perhaps, is why people do not remember all at once, but slowly and not clearly, just as one would see things through a thick veil, such as the women sometimes wear before men. It is only when this veil, which is our flesh, is woven very light and fine, or when it has grown old and is worn very thin, that we can see anything through it plainly; and even then all that we see looks misty and does not seem real."

"Yes, but the women can peep over," I explained.

"And we, too, doubtless, can peep over sometimes," he answered, smiling. "It is better then, as you think, and I certainly think so, to seek the things that are good for the soul, which is your very self, than to seek what seems good to the body, which we keep only for a little while."

"And that is why you wear no shoes!" I cried.

"What need have I of shoes?" he said.

Again I pondered. "What are the things that are good for the soul?" I asked him.

"There is but one thing that is good for the soul," he said. "Men call it virtue. But it is only doing what is right."

There was a long silence after that. At last I spoke again. "But the gods," I said—"they do not die at all. And men die; at least, a part of them dies. And I do not understand about those things that have no beginning and do not come to any end. I never saw anything like that. Tell me more about that."

He set me down in the ruddy twilight and drew a little circle in the dust. "What is that?" he asked me.

"It is the letter the Syracusan called O," I said. "And it really has no beginning and no end," I cried, clapping my hands. "I remember now. And are our souls like that?"

"I sometimes think so," he said.

There may be some criticisms of Professor Gaines' technique; he was not an aspiring author, but simply a teacher of an ancient language who found a story forming within him—so good a story that it is a matter of genuine regret that *Gorgo* is no longer in print. But it seems to us that here is something of inspiration for the instructor, whether he be of the home or of the school.

The first secret of a great teaching, after all, is the asking of leading questions, and the second is to be able to include suggestive asides on profound matters of human destiny—or of religion. It is upon our fundamental beliefs that we build all the rest of learning, whether we realize it or not.

Incidentally, this is not necessarily the best, nor is it the lengthiest example of Professor Gaines' Socrates. If the present piece wins the interest of our readers, we shall certainly offer another.

## *FRONTIERS* The Use of Power

A CONTRIBUTOR to the "Correspondence" page of the *Scientific Monthly* for November gets around to the basic problem of modern society—that of the abuse of power—and discusses it with a candor seldom found in any current publication. A reviewer in an earlier *Scientific Monthly* had remarked, "Power has become a giant, but judgment of its use has remained a baby. . . . How is it that this same puny baby has been able to make such a mighty toy?" This question brought forth the following comment:

The puny baby never made the toy. It's a mistake to say that "man" has created this power, now "man" must learn to use it. Which men? The toy was developed by rare men of superior intelligence, but the judgment is wielded by common men of average intelligence. This, then, is the problem. . . . Science is developed by people of high IQ and used by people of low IQ. . . .

Rare men did the thinking that made the toy possible; others not so rare used this thinking to make the toy a reality, and it is handed to the baby—that is, given over to the judgment of poor, dull, mass man by others not rare at all: popularizers, advertisers, manufacturers, educators, do-gooders—in fact, anyone who can use a profit on the toy, or who mistakenly thinks mass man, with a little help, can understand it well enough to be responsible for its use.

Since we believe in rule by majority vote, then the use of the magnificent power of science will continue to rest on the judgment of those who cannot understand it. The most pertinent example is atomic energy. The scientists who thought out fission are not the ones who judged it best used in a destructive bomb.

There are no feasible answers—science for scientists is out of the question. And increasing the mass intelligence is also impossible, for intelligence can't be taught, like a trick, but must be inborn, like blue eyes. The most that can be done is to teach people to use what intelligence they have. . . .

Parts of this communication, at least, are quite accurate. It is certainly true that the "rare men" whose thinking made atomic energy possible had an

entirely different view of how their discovery ought to be used from the ideas of the men who ordered it dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is well known that even the "not so rare men" who made atomic energy "a reality" were very much opposed to the use of the bomb to destroy Japanese cities and made strenuous appeals to Washington to prevent any such disaster. Further, it ought not to be forgotten that Otto Hahn, the German professor who discovered "uranium fission," which is the basis of the bomb's reaction, was a staunch "passive resister" to the pressure of the Nazis, who wanted him to develop the military applications of his discovery. According to French scientists who followed his work, Prof. Hahn hit upon the principle of uranium fission in 1939, on the eve of World War II. He at once published his results, making them available to the scientists of all nations, but refused throughout the war to do anything but nonmilitary research. Except for the scruples of Otto Hahn, the explosion which obliterated Hiroshima might have occurred earlier and elsewhere—in London, perhaps, or even New York.

But regardless of the scruples or opinions of scientists, the *Scientific Monthly* correspondent thinks that the use of scientific discoveries rests with "the judgment of poor, dull, mass man." This, he suggests, is "democracy," or "rule by majority vote." He ends:

Since suppressing the printing press and practicing eugenics are not likely to come about, ordinary men will continue to direct extraordinary power, and all of us, ordinary and extraordinary alike, will continue to quake in our boots and write well-meaning books on "How is it that this . . . puny baby has been able to make such a mighty toy?" and "How may the baby be entrusted to play with the toy?"

Setting aside the question of whether "eugenics," even hypothetically, may be regarded as a means of producing intelligence, is the outlook as gloomy as this writer suggests ?

Suppose we accept as a fact the differences in intelligence which create the problem of the abuse of power by the "mass man"—are we then reduced to some theory of social control by an intellectual or even a "moral" elite, as the sole alternative to our

present anxieties? It is true that intelligence is more or less ineffectual, when expressed as a political force so few men, we say to ourselves, sadly, are really "intelligent," and their votes count hardly at all—but this leaves out of account the power of intelligence, when it is recognized and respected, as a *cultural* force.

This sets the problem at another level. There is nothing undemocratic about respect for moral and social intelligence. Great men who have been entirely devoid of a desire to constrain the behavior of others have often swayed the action of entire populations in a constructive direction, simply by the power of wise counsel and personal example. The right of the members of a democratic society to make uncoerced decisions is not diminished by their willingness to be influenced and persuaded by leaders whom they honor and respect.

There is, we are proposing, another sort of "organic society" than the totalitarian kind. Although the term "hierarchy" has become almost an epithet, through the abuse of sacerdotal authority, there is no reason to assume that there is not a natural and harmonious as well as *free* association of men possible according to the hierarchical principle. What we lack is a tradition and habit of *respect for intelligence*. It is this lack which creates the dilemma described in the *Scientific Monthly*.

To try to keep the differences among men a secret because we imagine that to acknowledge them will weaken our belief in democracy is to admit that the kind of democracy we believe in is in some measure a pious fraud. The differences do exist; the problems this correspondent describes are real; and to fail to acknowledge the differences is to exacerbate the problems which they create and to hasten the breakdown of democracy.

To admit the differences does not mean that we must explain them in terms of either heredity or environment, or by "divine election." To admit the differences is simply to face the facts of life. Actually, to deny the differences among men in the name of democracy is to set up a competitive justification for exploitation of the weak by the strong, of the ordinary by the clever and astute. On

the other hand, if we recognize that some men have more capacity, more judgment, more staying power, more imagination than others, and then affirm that the more abilities a man has, *the more responsible he becomes for the general welfare*, we are establishing the only firm cultural and moral foundation that exists for efficient and intelligent self-government.

The difficulty, of course, is that you cannot infuse this idea of responsibility into the social community as a political concept. It is not a political concept, but a moral concept. It deals with the transcendent functions of the human being, as contrasted with the contractual relationships defined by a constitution. The lesson we learn from reflecting upon the dilemma described by the *Scientific Monthly* correspondent is that no political system can for long survive the decline of the transcendent functions of men as more-than-political beings. Some members of the community have to do *more* than the social contract calls for, if other members of the community are merely to live up to the contract's requirements. Some members of the community have to be heroes, to assure the presence of those moral essences in the common life which hold the great majority to an appreciation, if not to a consistent practice, of the ideals which make harmonious community life possible.

This is our theory of the Good Community, based upon an acknowledgement of the differences among men.