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THE MECHANISM OF MORALITY

MUS1NG on the differences between ethical humanism and conventional orthodoxy in the field of religion, we have worked out a few generalizations which seem to have at least the merit of clarifying the issue somewhat. We offer them for comment or criticism.

We take for granted certain things as facts. First, that man is an ideal-seeking and sometimes an ideal-realizing being. Second, that there are other motives in human beings which lead them away from ideals, producing conduct which is variously labelled "selfish" or "evil" or "antisocial." Third, that in all normal people there is a *range* of freedom of choice; although that freedom may differ for every human being, and be practically incapable of measurement or precise specification, its reality must be postulated as essential to the definition of Man.

Religion and philosophy have *ethics* in common. Both offer high counsels relating to what is good and ought to be pursued by human beings. The fact that these counsels may differ is a detail, since the principal value, here, has to do with the ideal of striving after the good.

How, then, are religion and philosophy different? Religion claims that men live in a morally ordered universe. On this point Humanism—naturalistic humanism, that is—has practically nothing to say, unless it be to offer pointed and pertinent criticism of the orthodox notion of "moral order." The source of the moral order in Christianity, for example, is God, and the order is represented in His commandments. The Christian scheme of order is supported by the doctrine that those who obey are rewarded for their goodness, and those who break the commands are punished. This, in broad outline, completes the system. The rest of Christian doctrine relates to the means by which human beings may hope to overcome their sinful propensities and win the everlasting happiness which obedience to God is said to provide.

By comparison with the Christian scheme, Humanism is iconoclastic and revolutionary. Its ethical universe is man-centered rather than God-centered. In Humanism, man becomes his own moral authority. He seeks to define the good by whatever criteria seem best to him, and then to pursue it as well as he can. Humanism, then, counsels an obedience to the ethical element in human beings—to the principle of Good, itself—rather than to the orders of a creator or supernatural authority. So far as the direction of human conduct is concerned, the Humanists transfer the dignity of God to Man, arguing that the account of God and his behavior provided by religious tradition is less inspiring to Good than the dictates of self-reliant ethical philosophy. They quote history in defense of their position, and we think they have won the argument, hands down.

But from a "pragmatic" point of view, what do the religionists have that the humanists don't have?

They have a theory of the *mechanism* of morality—a system, that is, of reward and punishment—whereby the man who does what is "right" receives the benefit willed to him by God for his righteousness.

Actually, the Humanists don't want a theory of the mechanism of morality very much, mostly because they don't see how it can be had without relapsing into some sort of supernaturalism. They don't see much evidence of the good being rewarded and the evil being punished, and in consequence they argue that a really good man won't care whether he is rewarded or not—that he will do good because it is in him to do it.

We cannot argue with this view. First of all, it happens to be true. Second, it allows a greater stature to human beings than any system which turns morality into some kind of barter system, in which you avoid evil from fear of punishment and count your virtues as if they were money in the bank.

There is, however, a longing for logical completion in all men. If Dr. Einstein is spending the last half of his life formulating and trying to get verified a "unified field theory" for modern physics, he is not doing it in order to win some cosmic reward. He is doing it because there is a drive in all human beings to fill in the gaps in understanding. The assumption of physics—Dr. Einstein's physics, anyway—is that the universe is fundamentally rational and can be understood.

A thoughtful man, it seems to us, could have the same kind of longing to understand the mechanisms of moral law.

As we have tried to suggest, the idea of moral mechanisms has been extremely unpopular among the educated members of Western society. This ought to be qualified. There is a deep-rooted urge—what seems an ineradicable urge—in people to believe that what happens to them and to others is right and just; but the attempt to work out this urge on a rational basis gets frustrated by the memory of the moral mechanisms of religion. Let a man toy in his imagination with the idea of moral justice as operative in the natural grain of experience, and he soon gets to the problem of the *mechanics* of justice: then God, as the familiar Engineer of old systems of morality, pops up, and the man withdraws hastily, saying to himself, "That way lies madness."

So a *worked-out* system of moral mechanisms is what is unpopular—not the undeveloped idea of justice or moral law.

The real question is this: Is it possible to have a theory of moral mechanics without reducing the dignity of man from its high position in Humanist ethics? Could there be a distribution of moral effects from moral causes without the agency of a supernatural engineer?

The only Western philosopher of eminence who gave attention to this problem was Hegel, whose system is essentially pantheist. But Hegel got the West into deep ideological trouble by ignoring the importance of the individual. He was concerned with the dramatic sweep of national and racial development—which in practice turned the race or the nation into God.

It is time, we think, for the rationalists and the humanists to have another try at formulating rational mechanisms for universal or natural moral law. Emerson may have pointed the way in his essay on "Compensation."

There are at least three insistent arguments for such an effort. First, every great culture has produced some doctrine or theory of the mechanisms of morality, so that if the Humanists neglect the project, they may lose by default to some new species of dogmatism. This is the argument from expediency.

Second, there is no reason to suppose that a theory of moral mechanisms must involve a personal God or arbiter of rewards and punishments. The supposition that "God" must dispense justice has been the chief barrier to metaphysical speculation by Western ethicists. The supposition need not be made.

Third, the whole movement of modern thought is toward an increasing recognition of psychological reality. Psychology is the science of mind and soul. Since morality and ethics represent the realm of values for human beings as minds and souls, the compulsion of history is now added to the inner longings of men for a view of the world in which good and evil may be scientifically considered.

LETTER FROM A FRIEND

"A SHARE OF THE RESPONSIBILITY"

SEVERAL WEEKS ago, the editors of MANAS wrote on the editorial page of the visit of a friendly reader who offered them some suggestions. I'm the fellow they were talking about. I was glad to see the suggestions passed on to other readers, but they were not presented quite as I would have presented them. After some persuasion the editors have agreed to let me try to do it in terms of my own feelings and experiences. I'm going to make the historical approach.

I happened across MANAS in April, 1954. After reading one issue I took a three-year subscription. After reading perhaps a dozen, I purchased a complete back file and started reading methodically, at the rate of one or two a day, through all the issues, beginning with the first one of Jan. 7, 1948. At the same time, I have been reading a number of the books to which the articles in MANAS have introduced me.

Some time last July I struck a snag—an article with which I flatly disagreed. After some hesitation, and somewhat self-consciously, I wrote the editors a questioning letter. To my surprise, it was answered by a Frontiers article which forced me to make some rather extensive modifications in my thinking. It wasn't pleasant, but it was invigorating. Other questions, other answers in the form of full-length articles, and other re-orientations on my part followed. By November I realized that this process, together with the general reading and the reflection it induced, was guiding me in the direction of a liberal education—something I had not obtained, or even learned that I lacked, in six years of undergraduate and graduate college work.

I began to wonder about the editors of MANAS. Who were these anonymous sages?

When I paused to wonder about this I found that I had subconsciously formulated some quite definite ideas. MANAS, I thought, must be produced by a small colony of philosophers—a group of perhaps eight or nine men. I felt that there would have to be that many in order to account for the range of specialized knowledge, the breadth and depth of thought and outlook, and the massive reading background which are brought to bear on the questions discussed in the magazine. I pictured these men spending their days in booklined studies, smoking scholarly pipes, reading, reflecting, carrying on verbal cogitations among themselves, and writing. I imagined that each one of them might produce one, or at the most two, articles per month. I didn't wonder about the circulation of the magazine at that time; if I had, I think I would have guessed it to be between 25,000 and 50,000.

When I finally visited the editors I received, as they have told you, some surprises. There weren't eight or nine of them—only two. I was not received in a spacious study for a leisurely talk in front of a fireplace, but in a tiny office adjoining a printing shop. I arrived at seven o'clock in the evening and was expected, but the editors had not had time to finish their evening meals or their day's work. The printer kept running in with successive versions of the next issue of the paper which had to be corrected at once; we carried on snatches of conversation between these trips. A printing press broke down and caused delay and a change of plans. The two editors were quite obviously tired at the end of the day, and it was clear to me that they actually didn't have much time to converse with a visitor. After learning that their subscriptions were not 50,000 but less than 1,000, along with some other things that I didn't like, I cut my visit short in order to get out of their way, and left with a great deal of material for reflection.

After doing the reflecting, I made a very brief second visit for the purpose of asking some questions which, though pointed and perhaps impertinent, and even possibly somewhat nosey, were nevertheless most graciously answered. I learned that the editors write, edit, and publish

MANAS with only volunteer help on the more mechanical aspects of publishing, wrapping issues for mailing, etc. They spend the greater part of their time pursuing other necessary activities, and in effect produce MANAS during what most of us would call our leisure or "spare" time—evenings and weekends. Since the production of MANAS alone might reasonably be expected to require the full-time efforts of a larger number of men, how do they do it? I have no explanation to offer, but I do have the very strong impression that they are operating on dangerously low reserves of material resources and physical energy.

Well, it is their enterprise and therefore their problem, isn't it? To date it has been, and they still regard it in this way. They are making no complaints. A perusal of the back issues will show that they had made no effort to acquaint subscribers with their "facts of life" before I induced them into what they called, in the issue of March 16, "A Modest Proposal." I have no doubt that they will continue to work along just as they have for the past seven years. And who knows—maybe they can keep this up for another seven years, or longer than that.

But I am concerned about the slenderness of the thread upon which the life of MANAS hangs: what if MANAS should suddenly stop arriving in the mail? I am also concerned about the limitation of its influence: for more than seven years there has been produced in it some of the finest serious writing to be found anywhere, but a great number of people who might have used it and enjoyed it haven't known of its existence. For these reasons I have decided to take over as much as I can of the responsibility for the success of the enterprise. This is not the sort of responsibility that has to be delegated—it can be assumed. I think other subscribers may wish to do the same thing. I believe this is necessary. I think the circulation of the paper will have to be built *by subscribers* up to some critical point, beyond which I think there will be a slow, spontaneous growth.

In their "Modest Proposal" the editors mentioned my suggestion that each subscriber might try to get three new ones. I would revise this upward now—I would double it to begin with, and after a period of time would suggest that the new subscribers kind still newer ones. I see no reason why the figure of 50,000 should not ultimately be reached.

I believe I have a right to make this suggestion to other subscribers because I'm doing everything I can to build up the circulation. As it happens, I work in an industrial organization, and none of my friends or associates has a developed interest in philosophy. I found it impossible to "sell" any of them on MANAS, and it became necessary to use a method which, for me, is somewhat drastic. I have presented one-year subscriptions to seven of these people and to two libraries. I feel sure this will lead a few people to a permanent interest in the magazine. I doubt that many other subscribers would find it necessary to give subscriptions to their friends: probably most of you associate with people whose interests are similar to your own, and who can, therefore, perhaps with some effort, be "sold."

If the circulation were sufficiently increased, it could support a bit more staff, allowing the magazine to be produced by people who work something like the usual number of hours a day. This might result in a further deepening of their wisdom and a resulting improvement in MANAS, though it is hard for me to see just how it might be made better. Personally, I'll settle for its increased security.

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REVIEW
AN "ELEMENT OF RISK"

THE "practical men" of *U.S. News & World Report* have set out to convince their readers that there "isn't a word of truth in scare stories about this country's atomic tests that are getting the nation and the world in a dither." An article in this weekly for March 25 gathers information from "official sources," coming up with the conclusion that to the general population outside Nevada, radiation from A-bomb fall-outs to date has been no more dangerous than a luminous watch dial. The article has the appearance of a thorough job of "debunking."

Certain comments, however, may be made. First, the article starts by asserting that "an intensive campaign to generate fear among Americans is under way," with similar campaigns being carried on "in nations abroad." While the communists are certainly doing what they can to arouse people against U.S. nuclear tests, it is also obvious that there is a not unnatural groundswell of spontaneous revulsion against the development of these unspeakably destructive weapons. To intimate that those who dislike or object to the tests are participants in, or influenced by, a "campaign" is surely as much of a distortion of fact as any such campaign itself.

Further, it is to be especially noted that the *U.S. News* writers got all their information from "official sources"—the spokesmen for the Atomic Energy Commission. One would hardly expect to have searching criticism of the tests from officials and employees of the agency which is carrying them out. It seems to be quite true that AEC researchers are pursuing intensive studies of the effects of radiation, both in the United States and in Japan. But why not talk to a few people who don't work for the AEC? Plenty of independent scientists—some of them eminent—have made warning statements, and no warning that we have read is anywhere near as dogmatic as the AEC insistence that there's practically no danger at all, under current restrictions.

This, however, is an argument for the experts to pursue. Our own view is that, on a subject so filled with uncertainty, the cautious warning makes more sense than the brash denial.

But reading the *U.S. News* review of the statistics carefully compiled by the AEC recalled to mind an entirely different reaction to such experiments—the response of people in India to the atom bomb tests at Bikini several years ago. In *Richer by Asia* (1947), Edmond Taylor wrote at some length on the "folk" attitude of the Indian people toward atomic bombing and experimental blasts:

> If India had been in a position to speak with authority—as I believe that she will be able to do before long—at the time of the American atomic warfare tests at Bikini atoll, we would have heard, not only through the Indian press but from the official diplomatic sounding boards of the world, a message of great importance to us. We would have learned that without quite committing a social crime, we were following in the pattern of crime, and were guilty of national blasphemy, not of a grave offense against Russia or even against peace, but against the dignity of man and the harmony of nature. . . . The Indians would have told us that our blasphemy, like the Nazi ones, arose from an idolatrous worship of the techniques of science divorced from any ethical goals, that the man-made cataclysm of Bikini was a black mass of physics as the German experiments were a black mass of medicine, that it was a mob-insurrection against the pantheist sense of citizenship in nature, which we share with the Hindus in our hearts, but consider a childish foible. . . .
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> It seems to me that this is a good example of the service which Asia can and will render us through the mechanism of cultural opposition. If we admit these services are valuable, then we must also admit that we owe them to Asiatic backwardness as well as Asiatic enlightenment. Only a culture which has despised technology and given highest place to soul-values can produce in its members the awareness of blasphemy needed to shock us into a realization of what is happening to us because of our failure to develop our soul-values as fast as we have developed our technology. Only a culture which has such a horror of taking life that its members will die in a diabetic

coma rather than use the pancreas of slaughtered animals to save their own lives can develop the protests necessary to awaken us to the impiety of atomic warfare.

Specialization is required to develop any talent or capability and it is impossible to specialize in certain ones without neglecting others. . . . The same men who discovered the law of karma could not be expected to discover how the atom can be split, or *vice versa.* The backwardness of any people is merely the field of activity in which it has not specialized. The strength of one cultural group is always the weakness of another. . . .

There is a rhetorical brilliance in Taylor's sharpening of the moral issue of atomic weapons and experiments against the cultural background of India's pantheist traditions. On the other hand, we wonder if the truths illuminated in this way will not gain their greatest acceptance in the West when expressed, finally, in a wholly American idiom? Joseph Wood Krutch, for example, without invoking any ancient grandeurs of philosophy or impressive religious symbolisms, arrives at much the same conclusion in his pamphlet (reviewed two weeks ago in Children . . . and Ourselves), *Conservation Is Not Enough:*

Might it not be that man's success as an organism is genuinely successful so long, but only so long, as it does not threaten the extinction of everything not useful to and absolutely controlled by him, so long as that success is not incompatible with the success of nature as the varied and free thing which she is, so long as, to some extent, man is prepared to share the earth with others?

And if by any chance that criterion is valid, then either one of two things is likely to happen. Either outraged nature will violently reassert herself and some catastrophe, perhaps the catastrophe brought about when more men are trying to live in our limited space than even their most advanced technology can make possible, will demonstrate the hollowness of man's supposed success; or man himself will learn in time to set a reasonable limit to his ambitions and accept the necessity of recognizing his position as that of the most highly evolved of living creatures, but not one which entitles him to assume that no others have a right to live unless they contribute directly to his material welfare?

Krutch, however, is doubtful that modern Western man will come to accept this situation easily, since "the whole tendency of his thought carries him in a contrary direction." Further: "How can he learn to value and delight in a natural order larger than his own order? How can he come to accept, not sullenly but gladly, the necessity of sharing the earth?"

How, indeed. The long and painful lesson of respect for nature seems to have been but recently begun in the West, and largely as a result of misfortunes which have overtaken Western culture through extravagant waste and arrogant misuse of natural resources. The dust-bowls of the plains country are perhaps a part of this instruction, the new knowledge of nutrition and the slow but growing revolution against artificial and adulterated foods another installment of the process. Americans have for generations been poisoning themselves with unbalanced diet and food products from which vital elements have been removed; and they are now learning that their ceaseless and technically efficient war against insect pests makes their fruits and vegetables toxic, sometimes to the point of actually lethal doses. The food processing industries were called to Washington several years ago to answer to serious charges in this regard. In response to such discoveries, the organic gardening movement, representing a conscious and deliberate return to more natural methods of agriculture—a movement, by the way, which originated in the studies and experiments of an Englishman, Sir Albert Howard, stationed in India—is spreading rapidly, and many housewives when they go to market conventionally ask, "Is it organically grown?"

A kind of earth-born pantheism easily comes to permeate people with such interests and concerns. It takes no great intuition to feel that some sort of unnatural excess is involved in the progressive destruction of great forests to provide the pulp for newsprint and cheap paper for comic books; meanwhile the tastelessness and ugliness of

modern life, its multiple insecurities and fears, and the simple accumulations of filth and abandoned materials wherever there is a modern city are enough to make the only slightly sensitive begin to question their "way of life."

For Westerners, perhaps, and for Americans in particular, the discovery of their mistakes and slowly eroding disasters will have to come this way—by simple, pragmatic realization of what is happening to them. They made this world they live in by themselves, on their own initiative, almost by rule of thumb, and the decision to unmake it and to start out anew must grow from the immediacies of experience, rather than from the warnings of moralists. The change may not have gone very far, but at least it is on the way.

For a conclusion, we cannot resist quoting from a report in the *Hindu Weekly Review* (Feb. 21) of a recent speech by C. Rajagopalachari, former Governor General of India. This eminent man, known familiarly to the Indian people as "C. R.," spoke at Madras concerning a statement by Admiral Strauss on the radioactive effects of atomic and hydrogen weapons. This is not too far removed from the sort of thing which in 1947 Edmond Taylor predicted would be heard from India "before long," and a further pertinence lies in the apparent admission by Mr. Strauss that the dangers of pollution from nuclear fall-out are at least a little more threatening than the *U.S. News* writers, who got their information from Strauss's subordinates, cared to reveal. Mr. Rajagopalachari said:

> Mr. Strauss has given facts and figures explaining that a single hydrogen weapon test explosion last year in the Pacific could contaminate 7,000 square miles, the lowest fatal casualty estimate being five to ten per cent at the edge and 100 per cent for the 2,800 square miles in the center. Yet, Mr. Lewis Strauss says that "despite certain risks involved, the United States will continue the test until an effective international plan to eliminate the threat of atomic war is drawn up."
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> It is a terrible kitten chasing its own tail. The nuclear weapon will now be used as a sanction against the world as a whole instead of against the Communists. "Come to an agreement or I shall go on exploding," says Mr. Strauss, on behalf of the nuclear weapons.
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> We are told by Mr. Strauss that test of nuclear weapons inevitably involves certain "elements of risk," but that it must be balanced against the great importance of the test programme to the security of the nation. One wonders where is the free world whose interests do not count or are weighed in the balance by the U.S. and found wanting. It seems that the right of contamination of international water and atmosphere is to be added to the other liberties for which America has been so loudly standing. The guardians of world interests who spend so much money on international delegations up and down seem to have accepted America's right to "contaminate the world in the interest of the security of the nation."
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> A news item of Feb. 15 says that rising winds threatened to carry atomic clouds to populated areas today and forced American atomic specialists to postpone until tomorrow the first of a new series of explosions.
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> All this is sorry reading. . . . The atomic power of America is rising fast and as Mr. Charles Wilson, Secretary of Defense, claims, U.S.A. is far ahead of the Soviet Union. But alas, her moral power is, as a result, going down much faster, and "in the balance" with all respect and friendly concern, I must point out that the latter is more important, being kinetic every minute, while the atomic power is only "potential" and, God helping, will never take kinetic shape. It is an illusory power that is disastrously misleading America.
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> Whatever the politics of the issue of nuclear weapons may be, the world has surely some right of protection against the proved and admitted consequences of these tests that America is conducting for her own misconceived security. Her claims that these tests help the security of the free world depends upon the correctness of her foreign policy, which is far from proved.

Well, we have been "telling the world" for quite a while, and now the world has started to "tell" us. Whether we shall be able to listen is another question.

COMMENTARY
RELIGION WITHOUT GOD?

PERHAPS it is only a matter of "association," but the fact is that most Westerners assume that the idea of "moral law," or religion, and also the immortality of the soul, cannot be accepted without also accepting the existence of God—typically the monotheistic God of orthodox Christian belief. It is something of a relief, therefore, to find a distinguished professor of philosophy, Dr. C. J. Ducasse of Brown University, challenging this assumption, and presenting views which bear directly on the content of this week's lead article.

In his recent book, A *Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion*, he contends at some length that the idea of survival of the soul after the death of the body is logically quite independent of the God-idea; and, more recently, in an article in the *Review of Metaphysics* (December, 1953), he points out that while many people may embrace the somewhat fatherly conception of God as a comforter, this is actually at logical odds with the evil in the world, whatever the superficial feeling of security derived from the belief.

In short, belief in a personal God enormously complicates the idea of moral law. Replying to a critic of an earlier volume, Dr. Ducasse writes:

> Mr. Demos further says that "the theist holds that the nature of the universe is 'really' moral." Yes indeed; but so does the non-theistic Buddhist. Hence, this question too is independent of the God of Monotheism.

Ducasse remarks that the polytheist is a more logical sort of believer than the monotheist, for the existence of evil is not inconsistent with polytheism.

We have always felt that, among religions, the polytheistic systems lend themselves to philosophical interpretation more easily than monotheism does. The trouble with monotheism lies in the *omnipotence* of the deity, for why should a world created by an all-powerful being have so many things wrong with it? Many gods, on the other hand, without any pretensions to "infinity," do not have to shoulder the blame for all creation, but may be regarded as working intelligences who have a part in the drama of evolution. In these terms, human beings may themselves be regarded as at least "half-gods," as, indeed, some of the ancient theologies suggest.

Further, there is nothing in polytheism to oppose the idea of an underlying spiritual reality—the universal Self or *Sat* of Eastern thought, or the Absolute of Western metaphysics—as the impersonal ground of all Being, yet not a being. Dynamically considered, this spiritual ground could be the source of all-pervasive moral law.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

SOME readers may have already noted an unusual article in *Harper's* for March—"Bell Telephone's Experiment in Education," by Digby Baltzell. Our interest in the story lies in its emphasis on the need for more "classical" training in the preparation of teachers. A few weeks ago we quoted a *Commonwealth* review of both classical and modern approaches to education. Mr. Baltzell's article is a sort of laboratory substantiation of some of the claims of the classicists, who hold that the man who does not know great literature and philosophy is a much less valuable citizen than he might be.

This is the background of Bell Telephone's philanthropic endeavor in education:

> W. D. Gillen, President of the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania and a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania, determined several years ago to find some way of broadening the educational background and expanding the point of view of Bell's most promising young men. In 1952 he discussed with the representatives of the University of Pennsylvania a new kind of education for executive leadership—together they decided that in contrast to the usual executive training program, young executives needed a really firm grounding in the humanities or liberal arts. A well-trained man knows *how* to answer questions, they reasoned; an educated man knows *what* questions are worth asking. At the policy level, Bell wants more of the latter.
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> In the spring of 1953, the Institute of Humanistic Studies for Executives, sponsored by Pennsylvania Bell, came into existence on the campus of the University. Classrooms and administrative space were assigned, and Dr. Morse Peckham, an associate professor of English who had outlined a liberal-arts course for businessmen the previous autumn, took on the job of director. The first group of Bell executives arrived the following September and, as a member of the faculty assigned to keep close tabs on the experiment, I got to know them and their problems well. There were seventeen of them, a carefully chosen lot from various sections of the country. But they were all from the middle levels of management. Eleven were between thirty-five and forty years of age, three were in their early thirties, and one was forty-eight; their average length of service with the Bell system was thirteen years; all were married and all, save one, were fathers; fifteen were college graduates, nine had B.S. degrees, and six had B,A.'s.
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> Each of them was granted a ten-months' leave of absence with full salary from his regular job in order to devote his full time to the Institute. The first nine months of the program included 550 hours of lectures, discussions and seminars. The final four weeks of the program were set aside for a reading period during which the men were entirely on their own.

It is interesting, to say the very least, to find a company with 700,000 employees—the biggest industrial organization in America—adopting a "high level policy" designed "to jar businessmen out of the job atmosphere." Generally speaking, one assumes that the bigger the organization, the greater will be the demand for convenient conformities of opinion and behavior, but the Bell experiment again proves that men of conscience and vision can turn even the largest institution to the service of some educative ends. *(Cf.* the Ford Foundation, another phenomenon difficult to explain on the basis of the "all-capitalists-are-no-damn-good" ideology.) Mr. Baltzell explains that the courses presented to the "businessmen-students were deliberately arranged so as to proceed from unfamiliar ideas and material to those closer to their own lives and experience. In the early months of the program the men received a highly concentrated dose of systematic logic, the study of Oriental history and art, and the reading of such works as the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Monkey*, and *The Tale of Genji*—a far cry from the American suburban groove and business routine. By December many of the students were depressed—the 'Bagdad Geisha,' they felt, was a waste of time." Mr. Baltzell concludes, however, with a summation of positive results, from which we select the following:

> As the end of the program approached, the men were prepared to bring a wide-ranging intellectual experience to bear on problems much closer to home. In the final and most popular course, American

Civilization, they spent twelve weeks discussing such problems as: the making of the Constitution; the Haymarket Riot and the industrialization of America; *Sister Carrie* and the revolution in American sex mores; *Main Street* and the disillusionment of the 1920's; and *The Lonely Crowd* and American character structure. The course was organized on the theory that one approaches Carol Kennicott's struggles with Main Street from a broader point of view for having known something about Prince Genji in tenth-century Japan.

The Institute of Humanistic Studies for Executives, introduced seventeen men of affairs to a new world of ideas, new values, new interests, and to a new type of personality, the intellectual; and the men of affairs changed considerably. They have taken to buying books and building their own libraries.

In Utopia, perhaps, men will be "trained" in their teens and "educated" in their thirties. While twenty may be the best age for learning mathematics, chemistry, or engineering, maybe *Hamlet* or *Faust* are better understood in maturity. To these students, a discussion of pragmatism was naturally related to their own anxieties about permissive education (one father, trained in a teachers college, disciplined his child without feeling guilty about it for the first time during this period); *Babbitt* or C. Wright Mills' *White Collar* suggested disturbing insights into their own lives; and these men who had lived through the Depression knew what Walt Whitman was giving up when he left a well-paying editorship to devote his life to poetry, even if they could not quite understand his motives.

Returning to consideration of teacher-training for our elementary and secondary schools—which is the subject we had in mind in the first place—we should say that Bell has done a better job than many of our teachers' colleges in providing material which will stretch the mind. The young men and women who lead our children in the classroom need a broad, evaluative background in terms of philosophy and culture, and need it just as much as instruction in the psychological methods which help children to feel happy in class; to put the matter in another way, the psychology of education is part, not all, of the picture. We need periodic excursions, too, into the philosophy of those who have left us the most inspiring formulations of principle in all fields. This department has more than once reported with enthusiasm on a small faculty group at the University of California at Santa Barbara, made up of men who conceived the first step in preparing a tutorial program for undergraduates to be the revitalization of *their own* thinking. A great deal of vehement discussion and argumentation took place at their preliminary meetings, opening up new horizons; sometimes strange and unwelcome ideas, for some, intruded, but nevertheless ideas that could not in conscience be ignored.

It may be significant that men who had proceeded as far as these professors up the educational ladder should so easily see the need for philosophy and dialectics; apparently the more education one gets, the more he is apt to realize how much is involved before he can be an adequate teacher. And if both college professors and Bell Telephone employees can benefit from, let us say, the *Bhagavad-Gita*—which happens to have been a common denominator for both experiments—we argue that the teachers of elementary and secondary schools can similarly benefit, even if this must be accomplished at the cost of less attention to classroom psychology and methodology. It is not, certainly, that the latter are not important, nor is it that in making this suggestion one aligns himself with the many criticisms of the public schools which take no account of the noteworthy improvement of grade school method accomplished during the past twenty years. It is simply that good teachers have active and growing minds; they have to have, as did the employees of the Bell Telephone Company, reasons for acquiring and constantly adding to worth-while personal libraries. They need, in short, inspiration. Inspiration and the disciplines of methodology are both necessary, but very different things.

FRONTIERS

About Little Issues

ONE of our subscribers, somewhat apologetically, has presented us with a long letter—it really amounts to a full-scale article—devoted to his lack of appreciation for double-feature cinemas. The author's apologies were occasioned by the fact that this seemed a trivial discussion, and, upon the first reading, we regretfully agreed with him. But after a little reflection we began to wonder about two things: first, why had he written this piece with so much enthusiasm, and second—perhaps more important, since even if we were editors, we were also readers—why did we follow his arguments with more interest than we accord some articles on "bigger" subjects? Perhaps, we thought, Dwight Macdonald was right in suggesting (in the conclusion of his *Root Is Man*) that those who live in today's world would do well to cut down to size the issues they argue about—that is, discuss the things that are immediately within their sphere of control or decision. It is not that larger matters, affecting nations and society, are beyond thinking, but simply that people may need to acquire self-confidence, first, by evaluating "little things" in areas where everyone *can* exercise personal discrimination. Discrimination needs exercise through argument, and only a well developed discriminative faculty can tackle larger issues realistically.

This, we think, is enough defense for printing what follows.

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A while back I read some approving reviews of a picture called *On the Waterfront,* and made a mental note to see it if I could. One evening recently while reading the paper before dinner, I noticed that this picture was playing at the local theater. It was then 6:20 P.M. and the wife said dinner would be ready in fifteen minutes. Calling the theater, I found that *On the Waterfront* was due to start at 6:47 and that there would be a second showing at 10:22. The only way we could have made the first showing would have been to skip dinner and, while we'd like to have seen the picture, we didn't want to see it that much. We could, of course, have gone at 10:22, but that is about bedtime for a man who works for a living—for this one, at least. I didn't want to mess up the whole evening and make a major project of seeing a movie. That's what I mean by saying I can't see most pictures: I can't see them except by making a disproportionate effort and rearrangement of my life—by scheduling my leisure time just as I do my business hours, by giving up needed sleep, etc. I just won't do it.

Back in the 1930's when we attended a lot of movies, there was no such difficulty. Pictures were shown at standard times which never varied, and it was easy to see any of them. Weekend matinees started at 1:00 and 3:00 P.M., and the evening shows at 7:00 and 9:00 P.M. Occasionally, when a particularly good picture came to town, there were showings also at 5:00 and 11:00 P.M., but the standard times were never changed. Thus, when I used to notice by the evening paper that a good picture was in town, I didn't have to get on the phone to find out what time it started and then begin figuring whether or not we could make it. If dinner happened to be over early we went to the seven o'clock showing. If not, we caught the nine o'clock show and were home by bedtime or shortly thereafter. Often we attended Saturday or Sunday matinees.

In the early 1940's, when I first began to encounter this scheduling difficulty, I thought one partial solution might be to do all my theater-attending on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, when I would, I thought, have a better chance to get theater schedules straightened out and adapt my own activities to them. I found it was just as much trouble as the evening scheduling, however. The pictures I wanted to see usually started at fantastic hours such as 12:26 P.M. and 3:51 P.M. and, although I was free to arrange my week-end activities as I liked, I found I was unwilling to

make special plans and regiment myself to the necessary degree. In effect, it meant devoting a whole day to seeing a show, and the show never seemed important enough to justify that: there are other things that *can* be done with leisure time.

The cause of this scheduling difficulty is, of course, the double feature. At one time I decided that the healthy-minded thing to do would be just to go to the theater whenever I was ready and stay until I'd seen the picture I wanted to see, taking in whatever else was offered. This experiment was short-lived, however, because the results were ghastly. Sometimes I saw the last part of the main picture first, followed by the "second feature"—usually inferior—and finally the first part of the show. Once, after staying until past midnight, I saw only a part of the picture I came to see. And always, after seeing *two* pictures, fragmented or whole, I came out groggy and disgusted and fed up.

My difficulty is, of course, that I have a fairly definite idea what pictures I want to see. There would be no such difficulty for people who just want to spend some time in a theater—for escape, or whatnot. No doubt there are people who are sufficiently—shall we say open-minded?—to enjoy anything thrown on a screen and continue to enjoy it as long as it continues to be thrown. And no doubt I, in preferring to see only certain selected pictures, am somewhat dogmatic, but I don't seem to be able to help it. I think there must be other people who are dogmatic about this, too.

I understand that the movie makers consider television to be the cause of their slump. I think they're only partly right. People who used to attend the theater only to reach a state of temporary oblivion need no longer do so: they can narcotize themselves in their own living rooms. But television hasn't made any difference to people like me. We stopped going to pictures long before it appeared. We'd start right in again, however, if the double feature were abolished.

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The writer of the foregoing feels himself to be insulted—and with good reason—by the implicit assumption that four hours is a proper amount of time to spend sitting before a screen. Certainly one is out of step if he forswears double quantity for the price of a single. Come to think about it, it seems to us that the double feature is a neat example of what happens in a society corrupted by too much wealth. Wealth influences, certainly, the number of hours a man spends on entertainment. Then, too, when there is excessive wealth, competition passes beyond all reason, and we have competition of this sort among the nation's picture producers. Only in an industry and in a society where there is too much of everything, where the natural capacity to utilize products with benefit has been exceeded, would we find such examples of "surplus"—representing millions of dollars, offered in the form of inferior merchandise. We are here reminded of a remark made by the Indian land reformer, Vinoba Bhave. Vinoba has his prejudices against wealth, and pointed out that when a society becomes rich, two things happen: first, everyone develops a taste for luxury, as, for instance, a craving for sugar. But the observable result is an increase of liver trouble, achieved by those who indulge themselves on a diet heavy in sugar content. Sugar is undeniably sweet, people *do* like it, but look what happens when they have too much.

Before concluding discussion of our subscriber's letter, we should perhaps chide him a bit, experimentally, on the ground that planning one's leisure time is not really the most difficult task in the world. It is because we are so used to having entertainment come to us easily, and on schedule, that some efforts appear a little bit beyond what seems natural. Eventually, whatever a man does in regard to entertainment—such as the habits he develops in his additional leisure hours—is bound to have an effect upon the time he devotes to more important tasks—and vice versa. However, we should be ready to sympathize with our subscriber on the ground that entertainment and relaxation *should* not have to

be fought for quite so hard, as if one were caught in an endless guerilla war with the *status quo.*

Finally, while issues of this sort do not belong on every page of MANAS, nor even, perhaps, in every number, there is value in encouraging ourselves to write and discuss "little" issues of this kind. One of the things discovered in the course of developing what is known as "modern education" is that young people should begin with whatever touches them directly, learn to evaluate such matters, decide, and take appropriate action. This is, we are sure, often the most "realistic" approach to the larger issues. So why not welcome and encourage discussions such as the foregoing?

We just have space to squeeze in a short quotation from the aforementioned section of Macdonald's *Root Is Man*, pointing up what we have been talking about:

> The first step towards a new concept of political action (and political morality) is for each person to decide what he thinks is right, what satisfies *him*, what *he* wants. And then to examine with scientific method the environment to figure out how to get it—or, if he can't get it, to see how much he can get without compromising his personal values. Selfishness must be restored to respectability in our scheme of political values. We must emphasize the emotions, the imagination, the moral feelings, the primacy of the individual human being, must restore the balance that has been broken by the hypertrophy of science in the last two centuries. The root is man, here and not there, now and not then.