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KEEPING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

FOR some time, now, we've had in mind an article that seems doomed in advance to unpopularity—in fact, we don't think such an article can be written without producing a bit of discomfort for both writer and reader. A special appreciation, therefore, goes to the subscriber who starts us off with some letters which place the issue more clearly than anything we had thought of to say. The first letter sets the stage and establishes good humor:

> Being a vicious reactionary, I do not always agree with your liberal-minded articles. Fundamentalism and monarchies warm my heart, although I will grant you that some Fundamentalists may just conceivably be in error once in a great while, and supporters of old and effete monarchies may be a trifle ridiculous.
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> Nevertheless, after what has happened in the twentieth century—such enlightenment and progress!—Dachau and the atom bomb—I suspect strongly that Hell is a democracy, and thank God for an enlightened autocracy in the Kingdom of Heaven. . . .

In his second letter, our correspondent warms to the theme:

> I have just returned from the Drones Club where an old friend, Colonel Ramsbottom, was seriously excited. Not even the Jan. 28 MANAS with its talk about an Inner Life—which I thrust into his hand—would placate my favorite reactionary. The Colonel's inner life, I soon found out, was "outraged" by the latest insult to his beloved Military Caste. Depositing MANAS on the floor, he roared at me—"*AWOL's to be sent to Korea!"* He pointed to a headline which declared the offending fact.
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> "In my time," he continued, recovering speech, "to face the enemies of one's country in uniform on the battlefield was an honor!" His grey mustache quivered—"But now these criminal deserters are to be sent to face the enemy as a *punishment* . . . do you *hear!"* (I *did* hear: he fairly bellowed.) "The final, supreme insult by these civilians to us soldiers. I tell you—only in a democracy could the swine get away with it!"
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> Well, I'm very much afraid that the Colonel is one of those élite for whom MANAS is printed. He certainly seems to have a sense of inner values. I can find no fault with his reasoning. I thought you would like to know that there are still Americans like him around. I tried to console the old chap by pointing out that we now have a professional army man in the White House, instead of a professional politician. . . .
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> I know that it will be only a question of time until MANAS gives up hope of man's perfectibility, and returns to Fundamentalism; unless, of course, these dreadful civilians make a "gentlemen's war" (Ramsbottom's phrase) forever a thing of the past, and, as Bertrand Russell fears, wipe out the human race. I always anticipated that entrusting war to "civilian soldiers" (as they so quaintly call themselves) would get us all in trouble. . . .

This amiable communication raises more ghosts than we feel able to lay in one short essay. For example, these terrible "civilian soldiers" were the idea of a first-class military man, one Napoleon Bonaparte, who introduced conscription to European history. Then, we are reminded that German militarists of the same period, annoyed by the defeats administered by the French revolutionary armies, decided that Germany must adopt social reforms far-reaching enough to make the German people willing to fight for their country! As Alfred Vagts points out in his *History of Militarism*, "It was a strange liberation, a Prussian liberation, coming from above, a passing liberalism for military purposes, . . ."

The Colonel with the Inner Life, we suspect, would not appreciate the German military reformers of the early nineteenth century, yet it must be acknowledged that, today, no battles are won without mass civilian armies. If you want to win a war, you must expect the military tradition to suffer as a result.

Conscript civilian armies produce other embarrassments to which the Colonel did not refer. One recalls, for instance, the three hundred sailors who were killed in an explosion at Mare Island (California naval base) during the summer of 1944. On the day after the accident the admiral in charge issued an Order of the Day paying tribute to the "heroism" and "self-sacrifice" of the dead. But the dead, mostly Negroes who probably did not care for the work they were ordered to do, were hardly "heroes" by choice. And a year later some fifty Negro survivors of the disaster mutinied against unloading munitions at the same base and were sentenced to long prison terms. Commenting upon these incidents in *Politics*, Dwight Macdonald remarked:

> The Admiral's Order of the Day was thus a fantastic distortion of reality. Yet the administrative reflex which prompted him to issue it was sound. Instinctively, he felt it necessary to give to something which was non-purposive and impersonal a *human* meaning, to maintain the fiction that men who die in modern war do so not as chance victims, but as active "patriots," who heroically *choose* to sacrifice their lives for their countries. It was his misfortune that the Mare Island explosion did not even superficially lend itself to this purpose. It is the good fortune of our war correspondents that battle deaths can be given at least a superficial plausibility along these lines.

One must assume that the policy-makers who decided to discipline AWOL's by sending them to Korean battlefronts—or who gave publicity to the decision—do not even feel the proper "administrative reflexes." To redefine the opportunity to be "heroes" as a form of punishment belongs in the same category of abysmal psychological blunders as the "game program" devised by some other branch of the war publicity service to whip up lagging *esprit de corps* on the home front.

We conclude—not mournfully at all—that democracies have no real instinct for war, and, as the Colonel with the Inner Life laments, they almost always make a mess of its finer aspects.

But what is a lion-hearted liberal to do, these days? How can he be against the minor and major hypocrisies of democratic war-making and still advocate the preservation of the values of the democratic way of life, by cruel war, if need be?

A liberal, unless he turn pacifist—and this, according to some definitions, would make him objectively fascist—is obliged to favor a growing collection of oddities. First, he must support the idea of centralized State power, for only the impersonal authority of a central government can hope to overcome regional selfishness. Moreover, a powerful central government is needed to engineer a total war effort. And readiness for a total war effort involves eternal mobilization of material resources—meaning, in practical terms, an almost "socialist" control of the means of production by the government. So the liberal ends by believing in a combination welfare and warfare State—an association of ideas which is painful enough in itself, and which he can justify only by maintaining an almost fanatical resolve that the welfare shall be Significant, and that the warfare shall be in behalf of only the Worthiest Causes.

The fact that liberals are, for the most part, sensible and sensitive men makes this situation very nearly intolerable to them. And this, we think, helps to explain the *Götterdämmerung* psychology which liberals exhibit, once they get behind a war effort. They have to try to believe that it is *really* the last war, after which everything will be different. And since, being sensible, they can't really believe this—and since, being sensitive, they suffer from their lack of faith—they tend to drive more furiously in the direction of "victory" and Purity of Purpose, until, finally, they are no longer liberals at all.

It is perhaps natural, then, when we come across an unreconstructed Reactionary who still has an Inner Life—the blessed integrity of a simple man who does not itch to change the world into a better place all at once—to find ourselves charmed and delighted by his uncomplicated virtue. So with our correspondent's Colonel. All

we can say, here, in extenuation of the liberal's dilemma, is that the Colonel never even got his feet wet in the stormy sea of liberal reform. He stayed around the smaller puddles and remained an unblemished knight.

The liberal may trouble the mind in other ways. A little reading in Herbert Spencer makes plain that the liberal movement, in its nineteenth-century phase in England, was at first devoted to removing the legalized privileges of the landed nobility. Eventually, however, the movement changed from an effort to eliminate special privilege into a determination to guarantee equality, which meant, in terms of legislation, to move from the known into the unknown. The motives behind this determination were doubtless of the best. Conceivably, the swing of political change could be in no other direction. Moreover, the abuses of the new aristocracy of finance were animated by a devastating dynamism not typical of the older abuses practiced by the blooded gentry. And yet, one is bound to wonder if, somewhere along the way, the liberal movement did not get far ahead of itself, in terms of expecting to usher in a golden age of happiness and plenty by means of social and equalitarian legislation.

This is not to be interpreted as a kind word for the irresponsibility of economic overlordship. No one who remembers the dark days of 1930-34—remembers the men who sold apples on city street-corners, remembers the bread-lines, remembers the slow, heart-breaking erosion of hope, of self-respect, and the final collapse into despair of men who loved their families, yet could not find jobs—will ever echo any of the slogans of economic individualism. Our complaint is of another sort. It is simply that the hope of a great legislative "fix" to end such miseries is as great an illusion as the dream of a perfect *laissez faire* economy.

Having these views, it is easy for us to share our correspondent's fondness for the Fundamentalist who, because of his own eccentric dreams, has taken little part in the popular delusions of our time. Even the monarchist may gain a share of admiration, since, as the Great Books point out, a king is a ruler, and a good king is a man trained in the problems and skills of ruling; and since, in a democracy, every man is a ruler, a good democrat can learn a great deal from the study of a good king. In fact, if every citizen of a democracy would take his rulership to heart, our society might soon develop the qualities which the monarchist rightly longs for, sentimental as his actual political notions may be.

Our correspondent is right. The "civilian soldiers" have got us all into trouble, deep trouble. But is there anyone besides the civilian soldiers who can get us out again? Civilians, that is, who decide to stop being soldiers?

Letter from **JORDAN**

RAMALLAH.—A recent letter from a colleague in India stressed what she called "Problems of Petty Honesty." "Wherever you go in Asia," she writes, "people are criticizing the U.S. for what they think is our discriminatory racial policy and for the public corruption so featured by the American press. It occurs to very few to look at themselves in the light of our errors."

Last week, an Amman grocer managed by some unexplained sleight of hand to get me to pay for six eggs and go off with a bag containing only five. Since I discovered this at home, after a two-mile walk, I was in no position to do anything about it. Later in the day I described the incident to a Point-IV wife, and released a startling flood. "Let me tell you," she began, "Point-IV women in this town are not going to stand for this sort of thing very much longer. Why, it costs more to live here than it did at home! And none of the conveniences, either." Then, with a good deal of bitterness: "If anybody were to ask me, now, about this overseas duty, I'd sure tell them not to take it. Why, these people over here just don't appreciate what we're doing for them at all!"

It is conceivable, however, that the egg was more important to the grocer than to me, even though I am not on a Point-IV salary. Estimating, I would say that the income of the ordinary Point-lV "expert," including the State Department's famous list of perquisites, is about $11,000 a year, while a State Department report lists the gross national income for Jordan at $98 annum. How dishonest is the grocer?

Or take my friend Jack, born of Latin Christian parentage in Nazareth, Palestine, on March 6, 1928. In 1945 Jack obtained a Palestine passport from the then British Mandate Government, setting forth the above true facts. In 1946, at the age of 18, he was registered as an adult, being paid full adult wages. His employer, hearing that Jack was a minor and being anxious to recover the difference in wages, confronted him with the facts. Jack pleaded an error in the passport, claimed his true birthdate to be March 6, 1926, which would have made him an "adult." Taking a day's leave, he went to Nazareth (whose records had been destroyed in the riots of 1936) and obtained a "birth certificate" for March 6, 1926. Asked whether he had had to bribe someone to get it, he said, "No. They just did it for Jesus Christ."

In 1949, having become a refugee in Gaza, Jack wanted to go to the Trucial Coast (Red Sea area), but found his Palestine passport invalid following the demise of the Mandate Government. He went to Cairo, declared his intention of becoming a citizen of Trans-Jordan, and was given a Jordanian passport by the Consul. According to this document, Jack was born March 6, 1926. Upon returning from the Trucial Coast with this document he would have had to live in Jordan, but this did not suit his plans, there being no prospects of employment there. So he came on to Lebanon, using his old Palestine passport and posing (correctly) as a refugee.

Shortly thereafter, wishing to go to Saudi Arabia, Jack needed a Lebanese travel document. Upon applying for it, he found he needed a certificate of identity as a Lebanese. This he obtained from the Arab Higher Committee at the cost of one Lebanese pound (worth about 28 cents)—"against a receipt," he informed us, which proved it was not a bribe—because the Secretary of the Committee knew his uncle. Again he was "born" in 1926, and the *laissez-passer* then issued was so recorded. Returning to Lebanon from Saudi Arabia, he was asked to pay 7 pounds at the border for an emergency entry visa. This he did not have, so he went to get it in the city, and conveniently "forgot" to return to the immigration people, leaving the now-useless *laissez-passer* with them.

Jack worked in Lebanon for a United Nations agency until early in 1952, when an opportunity appeared to get a good and permanent job in a

large institution, if he could produce a Lebanese work permit. This is not legally available either to a refugee or to a Jordanian citizen, so he needed a Lebanese identity card to "prove" Lebanese citizenship. The current "quick" price for such a document is 1000 pounds, which Jack didn't have, so he was forced to hire a lawyer to obtain more circuitously a court order from a Judge at a total cost of 400 pounds. In the process it was necessary to prove his birth in Lebanon, not later than 1924. After some consultation it was decided to obtain for Jack a baptismal certificate in a certain mountain village where a family of the same name lived. Jack and the lawyer went to the Maronite priest there, and for 5 pounds obtained certification that Jack had been baptized by him, and in the Maronite church by his parents' request, on March 12, 1924. An extra 2 pounds was paid to the church caretaker as witness to the swearing of the document.

So now Jack, born, optionally, in 1928, 1926, or 1924, in Palestine or Lebanon, of Latin Christian or Maronite parentage, has his Lebanese job, identity card, work permit, three separate passports, and documents to prove almost anything.

In my opinion, Jack is an honest man. During his term of agency employment in Lebanon he was responsible for the expenditure of substantial sums of public money, and it is known that he successfully resisted the ever-present blandishments of the "fixer." I would personally trust Jack, even though, because of the pressures under which he has lived, he has committed breach after breach of simple truth-telling. In no case, however, did these breaches injure anyone else in any direct way. Nor, so far as a friend can see, has there been a serious injury to Jack's personality.

Changing the focus of inquiry: How honest was Harry Truman when, on May 15, 1948, he recognized the State of Israel? This is a question of absorbing interest to several hundred thousand Palestinian Arabs, refugees from that new State. Anyone who has read *The Forrestal Diaries* will not puzzle too long over this question. The references therein to various major contributions from Zionist sources to the national Democratic Party campaign fund of 1948 reveal a side of American political life and morality which we seem to be entirely too casual about. (See the convenient index of the *Diaries* and read no more than the six or eight pages necessary to get this specific information.)

Where are we, then, with regard to "honesty"? Our complicated machine-age civilization obviously demands a standard reaction from its participants which, on grounds of efficiency alone, leaves no room for the 5-egg grocer. He would mix everybody up. His methods, extended to generality, would bring the whole economic machine to a shuddering, gear-stripped halt. But we tolerate a different sort of 5-egg man, even as President, whose actions seem expedient to achieve immediate political ends, even though they may bring distant and smaller social machines to the point of stopping.

From trying simply to understand another and very different culture, I now perceive the necessity of understanding my own. Now, you tell me: What makes an honest man, anyway?

CORRESPONDENT IN JORDAN

REVIEW
MORE ON "GREAT BOOKS"

OUR review for Jan. 7 considered certain complications surrounding "Great Books" education, by means of a discussion of Dwight Macdonald's *New Yorker* critique of the Encyclopædia Britannica's offering of 100 pounds of Great Books. We return to the subject to attempt further clarification, and to acknowledge comments from two subscribers who feel our piece to have been at best a rather "lame" effort. "You took Macdonald to task for things he didn't say," writes one annoyed reader, "and agreed with him on the criticisms he did make." Another, after reading our article twice, felt that we were "largely attacking a straw man" by assuming that Macdonald's criticism would do disservice to the Great Books Adult Education idea. After all, this reader contended, Macdonald attacks only the "fetish of the great" when exploited by a huge commercial enterprise, and not Great Books adult education itself.

First, to get necessary apologies out of the way: several of our sentences now seem either unjustified or poorly written. Perhaps the worst instance of both occurred when we disposed of the *New Yorker* audience as chiefly "hungry for clever words and negative criticisms," and then suggested that "heretofore Macdonald has always seemed to regard ideative and ethical tastes as more important than æsthetic ones." (He still does, we are sure.) Feeling a bit bloody and bowed, we nevertheless find that our desire to cast slurs upon a portion of the *New Yorker* audience remains unabated. Even though this magazine is irreplaceable and one of the few bright spots in contemporary culture, we have never been able to enjoy people whose major staple of intellectual diet is clever, negative criticism. We can like the *New Yorker* and still like some of the people who read nothing else much less than the magazine itself. While Macdonald complains about the "fetish of the great" in discussing the mammoth selling job undertaken by the Britannica, we complain about the "fetish of negative criticism," maintaining that, just as no one can become an understanding man simply by reading seventy-six authors of "great books," so also does an over-heavy diet of "take it apart and leave it there" lead to a false feeling of superiority.

To come to our main point: It seems so easy to punch any huge institutional effort full of holes that the Britannica's GB's, complete with Mortimer Adler's syntopicon, was a sitting duck, especially for someone like Macdonald. But the trouble is, in our opinion, that *New Yorker* readers were not going to go for the Britannica's GB's anyway, and didn't need to be warned. If basically uncultured, yet devotees of cleverness, they will read little more than the *New Yorker*. If people who have read long and wisely, they have years ago made their own selections of "great books" and don't need a ponderous mechanism to wake them up to the fact that this really is, after all, a world of ideas. The theme in respect to GB programs we like to see receiving attention here finds entrance, and might be expressed in this way: "Admitting that Adler and the Britannica are clumsy and often misleading, the work of indicating that ideas rule the world is a work that must be gotten on with." (If we seem to be saying that the *New Yorker* should devote itself to Uplift, our defense is that while Uplift is often boring and dangerously *un*critical, we greatly miss an underlying affirmative tone whenever we encounter a piece of writing in which Uplift is almost altogether absent.)

One of the morals in this story is the old one about the temptation to carry a good thing to extremes. The moral may be held to apply both to the Britannica edition of the Great Books and to the intellectual atmosphere generated by the *New Yorker*. It seems true enough that the original intent of the Great Books movement has somehow been eclipsed by high pressure advertising and salesmanship in behalf of Adler's syntopicon. In the case of the *New Yorker*, we have noted again and again that the delightful, brilliant, and illuminating criticism of which its select group of writers is capable can lead to poking holes through any work which is technically vulnerable. We are sure, for instance, that any *New Yorker* review of Willard Motley's *We Fished All Night* would be rather devastating, because this was, in many ways, a poorly written book. But what Motley was trying to

do was important, and we would rather read a book which inadequately attempts something important than another book which brilliantly serves up a completely trivial dish.

When one gets swinging along with brilliance of criticism, it is hard to know where to stop. An illustration may be furnished from Macdonald's "Book of the Millennium Club." After noting that the Great Books are presented in a way that tells the reader nothing of how theories therein advanced have fared lately, and taking issue with Hutchins' disavowal of the need for introductions, Macdonald remarks: "There is a difference between informing the reader and telling him what to think that seems to escape Dr. Hutchins, possibly because in his case there isn't any difference." This makes a nice-sounding sentence, but it is also guilty of a cavalier disregard of Hutchins' record. So far as we know, Hutchins has always been notably clear on this particular distinction. We recall his recommendation, made years ago, that Communism should be investigated in our universities, so that students will be able to make *intelligent* decisions as to why they should not become Communists. At the University of California, where the present writer then resided, such a position was unthinkable, and Hutchins was warmly disapproved for voicing his opinion. Then, as many professional educators recognize, Hutchins established an impressive record at Chicago for offering sanctuary and employment to those whose independence of opinion had caused them to receive the boot in other institutions. When the University of California fired all professors who refused to sign the Loyalty Oath, Hutchins immediately offered to hire. These are not the actions of a man who (even "possibly") cannot tell the difference between "informing" and "telling a man what to think." Further, Hutchins shows no sign of abating this type of concern. The Ford Foundation recently announced the establishment of the Fund for the Republic, an organization formed to give succor to the victims of "witch-hunts."

With the mention of the Ford Foundation, we enter another dimension of discussion. Hutchins' acceptance of a high-ranking Ford Foundation post may have been a deliberate experiment in seeing just how much educational benefit can be gained by the judicious expenditure of Big Money. Now, there is the fetish of the Big, but there is also the fetish of the Anti-Big. Having all our life (by virtue of what we thought preference, but which may have been necessity) belonged with the Anti-Big fetishists, we are fully aware of the arguments against huge institutions and believe most of them. Yet we are far from really sure that the Ford Foundation will not in the end turn out to be a benefactor to the cause of education and the cause of civil liberties. And we are far from sure that the Britannica's Great Books will not turn out to have been a good thing for their time and place in history. It seems to us a bit snobbish not to recognize these possibilities, especially when they are on so large a scale.

Of course, if we are to deprecate intellectual snobbishness, we must take note of reports that this commodity often finds a place in Great Books circles. But while our own experience may be atypical, we at least know a number of men and women have been encouraged by Great Books Groups to discuss, in their leisure time, subjects more significant than what their neighbors are doing. And such adults, when parents, we think, are better prepared to deal appreciatively and helpfully with the awakening intellectual curiosities of their children.

Paradoxically, and in conclusion, we once again repeat our recommendation that all friends of the Great Books idea read in the Nov. 29 *New Yorker* Macdonald's "Book of the Millennium Club," containing so much which needs to be said and thought about.

COMMENTARY
WHAT SORT OF " ÉLITE "?

SINCE Frontiers for this week discusses the troubling notion of the "élite," proposing that even a democracy cannot get along without an élite group of some sort, comprised of individuals who are devoted to making self-government work, we are led to reflect upon the means offered by past social thinkers to control the members of the élite—to prevent them from misusing their prestige and power.

Oddly enough, the most impressive past attempt to control the élite that we can think of is the device of the caste system as practiced by the ancient Hindus. According to the definitions of the theocratic Brahminical system, the Brahmin—representative of the highest caste, and therefore of the élite —must regard himself as the servant of all the other castes. Having, traditionally, the highest wisdom, the Brahmin's responsibilities are greatest of all. In fact, according to the theory, as we understand it, the Brahmin is supposed to possess *nothing but* responsibilities. Upon his initiation, he receives a beggar's bowl, with which he begs his food.

These conventions of ancient Hindu religion, it seems to us, had the intensely practical objective of reducing egotism and special privilege among the Brahmins to a minimum. They were institutional checks designed to preserve in those who became Brahmins a high sense of responsibility, and to surround them with a tradition of self-control. A certain wisdom seems quite apparent, here—the wisdom which declares that, in any sort of society, *the élite must control themselves.* In fact, the entire Brahminical system, considered ideally, apart from the corruptions which it finally suffered, might be regarded as a vast, institutional drive to indoctrinate the members of the society it governed with graded conceptions of responsibility, placing the highest responsibility, that of self-regulation, on the shoulders of the Brahmins—the élite.

The social philosophy of Plato, as found in the *Republic,* drops the supernatural basis for the responsibility of the élite, providing, instead, a rational basis in the idea of the "guardians." Functionally, however, the role of the Guardians is the same as that of the Brahmins—they are the élite who must be without acquisitiveness, without egotism, and without ambition, and *who must control themselves.*

This, then, is the central problem of any and all social morality. How shall the élite learn to resist corruption, to despise vanity, and to reject power?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

FOR the past several years, newspaper columns have been liberally sprinkled with "interviews" designed to ease the introduction of religious instruction to the public schools. While there has been some objection to *sub rosa* attempts of this nature by classroom teachers, and occasionally militant agnostics find reporters willing to lend ear, the great mass of published material seems to lean in the "pro-religion" direction. An article in the Los Angeles *Times* for Jan. 1 is typical, describing in some detail the recommendations of "five prominent Southland religious leaders" to a session of the State Board of Education. This delegation "included the members of several Christian denominations." According to the *Times* story, "A tentative schedule of Bible readings for several grades has been prepared by this committee and will be offered to the board." Dr. Frank Dyer, the Congregationalist who heads the committee, refers to the "short selections of from three to twenty verses" from the Bible which are offered "as an aid to moral instruction," commenting:

> They should be read with reverence and responsibility. The list has been drawn up by a committee which included both modernist and fundamentalist churchmen and we believe that no persuasion could object to any of the selections.

Dr. Dyer is mistaken. There are those who consider even the assumption that the United States is a "Christian nation" an expression of the sectarian spirit. There are other religions in the world besides Christianity, and if it is the intention of men of good will to work for universal human fraternity, our children need to be introduced to universal fraternity in religion from the very earliest ages. A country like America, which takes particular pride in representing the "liberal" tradition, appears in a strange light when singling out for reverent attention only one historical scripture—the Bible. The most literate Hindus and Buddhists have been more liberal in this regard, since the reading and comparing of many scriptures is often for them a discipline in philosophy as well as a focus for religious understanding.

This basic point is frequently missed in discussion of "religion in the schools." It is not the typical argument of the atheist nor even, necessarily, the argument of the agnostic, against Bible reading. The idea of universality in religion is a humanitarian theme that is to be found in Buddhist, Islamic, Hindu, and other scriptures as well as in the Bible: the central *ethical* message of the great religious teachers is clearly that of universalism, and constitutes a plea to disentangle oneself from the petty limitations of personal and "in-group" viewpoints, so that all men may be seen as one's brothers—brothers to whom each should show sympathy and the will to understand. What better way is there for implementing this central purpose than by inviting the young to consider that all of the great religions have brought the same ethical message, whatever their differences of specific creed or dogma?

Nothing less than the broadest and most humanitarian perspective on the *world* meaning of religion will, we think, suffice for our children. This breadth of concern, which is a part of humanitarian religion, is a heritage which all may come to hold in common, even though each will, rather inevitably, develop his own "personal religion" as time goes on. Thus we must disagree with all arguments maintaining that morality can only be discovered or recovered by indoctrination in a single faith.

One such argument is found in Allan Heely's *Why the Private School.?* This book by a successful headmaster of the Lawrenceville School for Boys defends *Christian* instruction:

> All teaching is conversion. Education implies and intends conversion. The private school's entire offering, not merely the forms and instruments of its religious training, is its answer to the root question that it must perennially ask itself: To what shall our students be converted? If it asks the question with humility and executes the answer it receives with

> energy and intelligence and faith, the American democracy will heed it and uphold it and thank God for it.

Mr. Heely speaks of Lawrenceville and of Exeter Academy as examples of the "Christian non-sectarian school," but, so far as we know, there is no such thing. These schools are simply "Christian inter-denominational" or "non-sectarian Christian," and when Mr. Heely says that "preaching. . . can teach what faith is and urges hearers to develop it," and that the school "may do these things with propriety and fervor," he opens himself to the charge of sectarianism from all those whose faith is wider than Christian belief.

A broader light is thrown on these questions by Oliver Carmichael, whose statements as President of the Carnegie Foundation were recently quoted on the education page of *Time* (Dec. 1, 1952). This former Chancellor of Vanderbilt University declares that the ultimate purpose of a university is to serve in the "search for reality, for meaning, for ultimate answers." If words such as "ultimate answers" are unwelcome in the university, its teachers have probably become "irresponsible intellectuals, men without convictions." Dr. Carmichael's central point is this: "Commitment to certain basic assumptions is a necessary starting point in the quest for truth . . ." We may note that, whether Dr. Carmichael favors Christian education or not, he here makes distinction between *conversion* to an institutionalized conception of reality and a devotion to the *search* for reality.

Further distinctions of this nature are found in Gordon Keith Chalmers' *The Republic and the Person.* Dr. Chalmers, president of Kenyon College, reiterates the points made by Carmichael and states several reasons why the public educational system is rightfully barred from dealing with denominational religious instruction. Chalmers then continues:

> It is especially necessary to bear this in mind because certain Roman Catholic leaders have recently demanded that public moneys be spent in schools controlled by them. American experience and old American wisdom are against this. Religious education is important to young Americans, but the dangers of paying for this by tax money or even of confusing the public mind by dispensing tax money in schools under religious control are evident.

If the "convictions" and "commitments" which Dr. Carmichael feels necessary are presently lacking, and if they may not legitimately be encouraged by doctrinal affirmation, where are they to be sought? In a chapter entitled "Belief," Dr. Chalmers uses the example of Socrates to illustrate how a man may have a faith he can try to further without reference to any orthodox religious assumptions—a faith in the values of reflection and of inquiry, and also faith in certain basic assumptions or propositions which one inwardly affirms. It is never really necessary to claim that any particular set of assumptions reveals absolute truth in order to have serious convictions. As Chalmers puts it:

> The thoughtful man must often deal with propositions of which he is not altogether confident. That is, he does not have final faith in them, yet these tentative opinions, these hypotheses, these essays into understanding which we know to be mere tries, not absolutes—all these ideas of which we are not altogether confident are involved in a real and reliable faith, the faith of a student.
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> The knowledge most important to a man, the knowledge of himself, is none of it absolute; of much we are not even confident. The worth of inquiry, however, is a very different matter. Socrates follows up his confession of uncertainty of fixed statements with an avowal of faith in search and in its outcome, a faith so strong that it was to lead him willingly to his death. He continues: 'But that we shall be better and braver and less helpless if we think that we ought to inquire, than we should have been if we indulged in the idle fancy that there was no knowing and no use in seeking to know what we do not know;—that is a theme upon which I am ready to fight, in word and deed, to the utmost of my power.'

FRONTIERS

Unavoidable Dilemma

Is it possible to overcome a dilemma by ignoring it altogether?

This question comes from a rather careful reading of H. Stuart Hughes' *An Essay for Our Times* (Knopf, 1950), a book called to our attention by a friend just returned from France. Hughes, our friend suggested, comes as close as anyone to explaining the feeling of the intelligent Frenchman in respect to the great power struggle between Soviet Russia and the United States. Hughes quotes Jean-Paul Sartre as starkly representative of a typically French intellectual outlook:

> Since our historical perspective is war, since we are asked to choose between the Anglo-Saxon and the Soviet blocs, and since we refuse to prepare for war with either one or the other, we have fallen outside of history and are speaking in the desert.

But is the desert the wrong place to be in a time like this? Mr. Hughes' book seems a useful one in pursuing this inquiry, for he is able to discuss the issues of Western civilization with a surprising lack of emotion. The outcome of the book, so far as we are concerned, is depressing in the extreme, for an honest man like Mr. Hughes can hardly find very much to be encouraged about. And he never decides, as Sartre has apparently decided, to pitch his tent in the desert.

Yet there are in *An Essay for Our Times* certain passages which mark off areas of practical work which may be pursued—which must be pursued—regardless of whether or not one decides that the political struggle is all-important. The first passage we are interested in concerns the source of sovereignty in a liberal-democratic society. After pointing out the vital connection of free speech and a free press with the conviction that "the people" will find their way to wise self-rule, Hughes says:

> Yet behind the liberal credo there has lurked a half-explicit concept of an *élite.* Present-day democrats who attack the new twentieth-century doctrines as élitist heresies frequently reason either naively or in bad faith. We can venture to state that some sort of élite concept alone made liberal democracy work and continues to make it work. In its theoretical formulation the liberal concept of the people was essentially mystic. It had broadened out from the medieval notion of a body of privileged individuals alone competent to advise the secular ruler, to include eventually the whole adult population. But it was something more (or less) than the dead-level sum of all the men and women in a certain geographical area. It carried over from the medieval tradition connotations of guidance by the educated, the public-spirited, the *best* in the population.

Whether this function of the élite is a carry-over from the Middle Ages, or whether it derives from the Platonic idea of "guardians," it seems clear that the élite cannot be office-seekers. They must be men who feel that the dignity of human beings is most fully realized through democratic self-determination, and who labor without expectation of reward to help their fellows toward this end. This is quite different from placing one's technical know-how at the disposal of government, as in the case of an atomic physicist, or in the case of a competent businessman who undertakes to bring administrative efficiency to a department of public service. A man need not enter government service at all to be useful in this way. It is rather a matter of spreading the habit of thinking in terms of the general good.

Thinking in behalf of the community can begin in the kindergarten. Children can easily be led to regard all their decisions with the idea of the welfare of others weighing in the scale. Then, as adulthood is approached, the *philosophical* notion that only the freely given good, only generous and unrequired service to the community by its members can establish and maintain the easy freedom we long for. We see no reason why so obvious a fact cannot actually be taught in the schools as a sociological law.

While there is need for many such "guardians" of freedom and the public welfare

who labor as private citizens, the role of the public servant also needs revitalization. Here, biography and autobiography should be enormously useful. We have no "list," but one book, certainly, that should be read for this purpose is Gifford Pinchot's *Breaking New Ground* (Harcourt, Brace & Co.). This life-story of the men who rooted the "conservation" idea in American life, who shaped the original policies of the U.S. Forest Service and did more than anyone else to give this service a sense of great tradition and high opportunity—this dramatic account of the struggle of Gifford Pinchot to preserve the forest wealth and beauty of the United States for the people of the United States—makes plain the absolute necessity for men in public life who are willing to fight for the public good. The reader of Gifford Pinchot's autobiography will understand and wholeheartedly approve Mr. Hughes' statement that "some sort of élite concept alone made liberal democracy work and continues to make it work." The frightening thing about public life today is that there are so few men of this character to be found engaged in it. Who, in these terms, are the élite? They are men who undertake the public good as a labor of love.

We turn now to Mr. Hughes' notes on popular culture and education in the United States:

> Among the usual impressions of a stranger visiting these shores, or of a native American returning after a long absence, is a sense of pervading mediocrity. His revulsion from the conventional cheapness of the country's offerings in the field of mass entertainment or enlightenment—the radio, the moving pictures, the popular novels, the advertisements in the magazines—is familiar and understandable. Ninety per cent of what passes for culture in the United States we may dismiss as what the Germans call *Kitsch* sentimental trash. Less familiar, however, and less obvious to the stranger is the shaky foundation of serious intellectual effort that underlies this gaudy superstructure. . . . American education has raised generation after generation of literates without producing a population that can think. Through a literal-minded interpretation of the nature of democracy it has established the level of classroom instruction to suit the average or sub-average rather than the gifted pupil. The result is a citizenry of whom many have college degrees but few have attained to intellectual distinction, except in technical fields. And of the intellectually distinguished, a mere handful ever reach positions of public responsibility. Historians have frequently expressed the opinion that the first four decades of the Republic's existence produced a level of statesmanship that succeeding generations have been unable to equal—although the potential supply of educated individuals in that era was only a minute fraction of what it is today.
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> Nor does this situation show any clear signs of improving. We can argue that the years since the war have seen the publication of fewer good books, the production of fewer good moving pictures, than the decade of the thirties. The colleges and universities have been crammed to bursting, yet the education offered there has not risen in standard—perhaps the contrary. The postwar projects for federal aid to education have all been couched in terms of expansion rather than quality. Interest has focused on giving college degrees rather than of inquiring what the present college actually represents.
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> We are back to an élite concept—and advisedly so. Surely a nation that is to take the lead—that is to be a kind of élite nation among its fellows—requires an élite of its own. This dilemma Americans have only recently begun to face with realism and frankness.

Here, to our way of thinking, is the dilemma we dare not ignore. We are glad to join Sartre and his friends in the desert, outside the political alignments of the present struggle for power, but this other dilemma—the dilemma of wanting leadership and lacking leaders, of needing distinction without being able to say in what distinction consists—this, we think, goes to the heart of America's unhappiness and her many insecurities. Perhaps we must learn to be utterly contemptuous of conventional educational objectives. Perhaps we should give our greatest allegiance to schools which make no presence at awarding "degrees," or conveying anything at all which is calculated to help the student "get on" in the world. Perhaps an education squarely founded on the ideal of "getting on" has wholly corrupted education in the United States. We heard recently

of a teacher who told his students that what America needs most is a brood of fighting poets. We are not much on poetry, but we think that we might get to like the verse written by such young men.

Returning to Mr. Hughes, it is natural to wonder a bit about the quality of the men who reached positions of public responsibility during the first four decades of the life of the United States. What made such men arise? Was it, as Albert Jay Nock might argue, the classical education they had had? No doubt the old-time discipline in the Humanities played a part, but we prefer to leave this problem unsolved—to admit, quite candidly, that the genius which presides over the beginnings of a great nation is not something to be explained by the college curricula of the day. We take the view that a historical mystery or two is a tonic for the soul, and that too many neat explanations of our betters never does more than enshrine mediocrity in wreaths of complacency.

But one thing is certain: the great men of the past found their own way to dreams of greatness. Their education, whatever it was, did not become a barrier to high intentions. And insofar as they took part in the struggle for power in their time, they were able to do so without personal corruption, for they had first won out in the struggle toward human excellence. It is this latter struggle that we dare not neglect.