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BOOKS FOR OUR TIME: V

WE choose Robert Maynard Hutchins' *The Higher Learning in America* as a volume for this series because, while it was first published in 1936, we know of no other book which so succinctly puts the basic problems of education before thinking man. Comprising a mere 119 pages, *The Higher Learning* nevertheless seems to explain, clearly and simply, the ideological confusions of our universities, and explains, too, why a culture sporting confused universities is bound to produce a confused civilization.

Though Hutchins has retired from the field of teaching and educational administration, at least for the present, he leaves behind him, in the form of this brief volume, a convincing demonstration that there is no beauty which surpasses clarity of thinking, no goodness higher than one's own reasoned convictions, and no truth more important than the perception that, while wisdom is always discoverable, it cannot be institutionalized.

The Higher Learning, too, stands as symbol for Robert Hutchins' perennial declaration that there really *is* a learning higher than that which our universities now offer. It should not be too difficult to see, moreover, how this view fits in with those affirmations in respect to human nature and destiny implied by Macneile Dixon's *Human Situation* and Erich Fromm's *Psychoanalysis and Religion. A* "higher learning" suggests, in effect, a "higher self" in each man, to which such learning is significant—and the proposition that there is indeed a "higher self" in man is one which seems to us of transcendent importance.

Discussing the life of Michelet, the great French historian, Edmund Wilson remarked that the latter's volume on education, written after a period in which Michelet's political hopes had been severely dashed, represented, in this "return to education, the last hope of the liberal in all periods." Wilson's statement is historically justifiable, but philosophically it seems a little odd. One of the meanings of the adjective "liberal" is "not contracted in *mind."* Why, then, should "liberals" first embrace theories of political and economic change, and, when such hopes seem unrealizable, then focus their attention upon education? Perhaps we shall have to conclude that there are many kinds of liberals, and that we are at present acquainted mostly with "political" liberals—men who believe in direct, and, if necessary, drastic, social action, men who feel impelled to assert that the world we live in must be changed before our minds can be improved.

This view is open to criticism. Hutchins criticizes it by pointing out that doctrines of "liberal" political action are usually based on the premise that "present conditions" make it impossible for men to discover the truth for themselves—that political change is a prerequisite to education. Yet if this is actually the case, why bother with such phrases as "free inquiry"? If people have to be "shown" the truth by a revolutionary elite—if it has to be accepted before it can be discovered—we should throw the whole conception of liberalism out the window and embrace either Communism or Catholicism.

Hutchins brought to university teaching and administration a sort of fervor we usually associate with political or religious advocacy, although he was himself neither political nor religious in a conventional way. As a philosopher with convictions—we have seen very few of these in recent years—he seemed an anomaly. He was brash enough, moreover, to assert that no other sort of man should be president of a great university; his argument, like Plato's, was that *ideas,* not politics nor economics, rule the world. Therefore, he argued, a college of liberal arts must

be dedicated to the study and assessment of ideas, with educational success measured only in terms of the intellectual fervor for disciplined "knowing" that is aroused.

Dr. Hutchins has been, then, an unusual kind of "liberal," but, to our way of thinking, one of the few genuine liberals of our time. The central theme in his version of the relationship between liberalism and education is that education should be the *first* "hope of the liberal in all periods," and it is this reversal of the prevailing outlook which, since his assumption of the presidency at the University of Chicago, has made Hutchins such a controversial figure. (Most readers know that Hutchins recently traded his job at Chicago—by then a chancellorship—for a policy-making post with the Ford Foundation. With this aspect of the Hutchins story, however, we are not presently concerned.)

When anyone asserts, as Dr. Hutchins has asserted, that the higher education is the first and best hope for a revolutionized society, he is apt to be suspected by traditional radicals of indulging in rhetoric. His contemporaries in education are likely to say with a knowing air: "Aha! This man has doctrines he wishes to inculcate. Therefore he is really a man of theological temperament with some new proselytizing designs upon the minds of college students, who is seeking to establish agreement upon his own particular set of values."

Hutchins has answered such academic charges without equivocation:

> I am not here arguing for any specific theological or metaphysical system. I am insisting that consciously or unconsciously we are always trying to get one. I suggest that we shall get a better one if we recognize explicitly the need for one and try to get the most rational one we can. We are, as a matter of fact, living today by the haphazard, accidental, shifting shreds of a theology and metaphysics to which we cling because we must cling to something. If we can revitalize metaphysics and restore it to its place in the higher learning, we may be able to establish rational order in the modern world as well as in the universities. We may get order in the higher learning by removing from it the elements which disorder it today, and these are vocationalism and unqualified empiricism. If when these elements are removed we pursue the truth for its own sake in the light of some principle of order, such as metaphysics, we shall have a rational plan for a university. We shall be able to make a university a true center of learning; we shall be able to make it the home of creative thought.

A university, Hutchins says, should not proceed on the assumption that it knows what men need to be taught. It should rather dedicate inquiry into what is important for man—and thus encourage comparative studies of the values men presently serve or are likely to serve in the future. While this may sound a little abstract to some, it has not been abstract to Hutchins. He let it be known that the discussion of Communism was to be encouraged at Chicago—even by men of Communist persuasion—so that students would have a chance to make up their own minds about a controversial subject. This got Hutchins into trouble, but since he had publicly stated that a good administrator should be a troublemaker, whenever the price of stimulating free inquiry was trouble, the criticisms which followed his announcement bothered him not at all. Nor did another consequence perturb him—that some students of Communist leanings turned up at Chicago. He is a liberal who really works at his liberalism; whether or not he would be allowed to continue as President was a secondary consideration, and he kept himself, wisely, "in a perpetual mood of resignation."

George Sampson once remarked that he had "never been very tolerant of the claims made for high subjects as 'the best' means of education in training the young.... If a pupil wants to learn, he is already halfway to learning before he is taught. If he does not want to learn, he cannot be taught, however many years you add to his school life." These are points obviously well taken, but Hutchins would argue, and we, also, that an innate and abstract desire to learn does exist, and that it exists in all men, everywhere. This is not a claim that all youths should go to college, nor need it imply neglect of the tremendous differences in

desire and capacity for philosophy. But it does imply that unless the universities stand clearly for the philosophic quest, we shall never know just how much capacity for truth any youth has.

A young person may go to the university prompted strongly by custom, and feel only vaguely a "desire to learn in the abstract," but the degree to which his interest in the discovery of truth is aroused during college years will depend in large part on what sort of help and instruction he receives. According to Hutchins, all the disciplines of "the higher learning" are ways of learning how to think. Since every man thinks, his growth toward happiness and maturity will result from improvement in the quality of his thinking. If he sets his sights on any other goal, he is a target for easy panaceas and authorities. He may call himself a communist or a democrat, but he will, in either case, incline toward faith in institutions rather than toward faith in the integrity of individual man. His views become fractional and factional; he has lost "liberalism" before finding it, and, whether he knows it or not, he, and not Dr. Hutchins, is the theologian.

The theological approach to learning is not so much concerned with the process of thinking as with conditioning agreement on the *ends* of thought. It is here, although most of his detractors seem entirely unaware of the fact, that Hutchins parts company with the churchmen. In *The Higher Learning* he speaks of the distinctions he has always borne in mind between theology and philosophy. Hutchins is an unashamed metaphysician, not because he feels he possesses absolute truth with a divine commission to convert others to its acceptance, but because he is convinced that a great many men and women are not using their minds to think in terms of principles and causes. "We are trying," he writes, "to discover a rational and practical order for the higher learning of today." He continues:

> Theology is banned by law from some universities. It might as well be from the rest. Theology is based on revealed truth and on articles of faith. We are a faithless generation and take no stock in revelation. Theology implies orthodoxy and an orthodox church. We have neither. To look to theology to unify the modern university is futile and vain.
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> If we omit from theology faith and revelation, we are substantially in the position of the Greeks, who are thus, oddly enough, closer to us that are the Middle Ages. Now Greek thought was unified. It was unified by the study of first principles. Plato had a dialectic which was a method of exploring first principles. Aristotle made the knowledge of them into the science of metaphysics. Among the Greeks, then, metaphysics, rather than theology, is the ordering and proportioning discipline. It is in the light of metaphysics that the social sciences, dealing with man and man, and the physical sciences dealing with man and nature, take shape and illuminate one another. In metaphysics we are seeking the causes of the things that are. It is the highest science, the first science, and as first, universal. It considers being as being, both what it is and the attributes which belong to it as being.
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> The aim of higher education is wisdom. Wisdom is knowledge of principles and causes. Metaphysics deals with the highest principles and causes. Therefore metaphysics is the highest wisdom.
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> Metaphysics, then, as the highest science, ordered the thought of the Greek world as theology ordered that of the Middle Ages. One or the other must be called upon to order the thought of modern times. If we cannot appeal to theology, we must turn to metaphysics. Without theology or metaphysics a unified university cannot exist.

This, we think, is the most important distinction illuminated by Hutchins' work in the field of education—a distinction made nowhere else with similar clarity. It is simply not true that a philosopher is the same thing as a theologian, as Erich Fromm and Karen Horney discovered while extending the dominions of psychological probing into philosophical fields. Theology is not Platonism, but Platonism inverted. And what is important about liberalism, in the final analysis, is not its political optimism, but its faith that men must arrive at important truths by self-induced and self-devised efforts, and by a series of progressive awakenings.

Dr. Hutchins has been the wildest of radicals when it comes to assessment of traditional American education. The inspiration for the title of another of his volumes, *No Friendly Voice,* was supplied by the cries of protest and anguish launched at him from every comer of the academic world while he was attempting to revolutionize the University of Chicago. Denounced as a "scholastic" desirous of reviving the perspectives of medieval times, Hutchins was actually conducting a vigorous campaign against the notion of authority itself. And he has never been simply a theoretical man. He confounded his colleagues and the trustees of Chicago University with a number of startling proposals, though all were founded on the same basic contention. He claimed that the business of the university is to further a mental and moral and spiritual revolution—a continuing, self-perpetuating revolution.

His colleagues nodded their heads sagely, and self-righteously, for they liked to think of themselves as Men with a Mission. "But then," purred Hutchins, on one of his eves of battle, "if we are indeed concerned with such a revolution, we shall certainly have demonstrated our sincerity by instituting it here at Chicago. I propose that, in order to clarify our objectives, we immediately discard medieval notions about Authority. I should like to hire men to instruct our students who can truly demonstrate a capacity to stimulate thought, and I should like to discard the notion that the men who have written the most books or possess the most degrees are the best teachers. I propose also that we should forget rank among ourselves, and, even in the matter of salary, pay men according to their needs rather than according to their seniority or academic reputations." And so the faculty howled and stormed and Hutchins almost lost his job. But not quite. Even the men who didn't like what Hutchins was saying and didn't like the moral spots he was always placing them on, could not quite get around the embarrassing logic of his position. They temporized, of course, and the faculty of Chicago never adopted this proposal in full. But somehow its memory lingered on, and professors and trustees found these and other words of Hutchins peering at them every now and again, whenever they tended to become too settled with their particular institutionalizations of learning, or with their own eminence as "authorities."

Thus Hutchins has always seemed to be much more like Socrates than like St. Thomas Aquinas. He has never claimed to know the answers, but he has claimed to be able to see that most of the answers dispensed by the universities are inadequate and pompous. This worried him, and for good reason: whenever pomposity abounds, a large amount of confusion is due to follow, because the pompous man no longer has an inquiring mind, and only the inquiring mind can be on the lookout for confusion and prepare himself to do something about it.

Hutchins provides some excellent descriptions of university travail. The modern college of liberal arts, he says, is "partly high school, partly university, partly general, partly special." He continues:

> Frequently it looks like a teacher-training institution. Frequently it looks like nothing at all. The degree it offers seems to certify that the student has passed an uneventful period without violating any local, state, or federal law, and that he has a fair, if temporary, recollection of what his teachers have said to him. As I shall show later, little pretense is made that many of the things said to him are of much importance.
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> The university is distinguished from the college by two things: professional schools and the Ph.D. degree. At present we do not know why the university should have professional. schools or what they should be like. We do not even know what the professions are. Professional education consists either of going through motions that we have inherited or of making gestures of varying degrees of wildness that we hope may be more effectual. The Ph.D. degree, because it has become a necessary part of the insignia of the college or university teacher, has lost any other meaning. But universities also do research and hope to train research men. The same

> degree is awarded in recognition of research. The students who are going to be teachers are put through a procedure which was designed to produce investigators. The classes, the courses, the content, and the aims of graduate work are as confused as those of the high school.
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> For the sake of abbreviation I have of course exaggerated the plight of the higher learning. It has, in fact, many admirable qualities, not the least of which is its friendly reception of anybody who would like to avail himself of it. But we who are devoting our lives to it should learn something from the experience of recent years. Up to the onset of the depression it was fashionable to call for more and more education. Anything that went by the name of education was a good thing just because it went by that name. I believe that the magic of the name is gone and that we must now present a defensible program if we wish to preserve whatever we have that is of value. Our people, as the last few years have shown, will strike out blindly under economic pressure; they will destroy the best and preserve the worst unless we make the distinction between the two somewhat clearer to them. If then the problem is to clarify the higher learning, let us examine the causes of its confusion.

The Higher Learning, published nearly twenty years ago by the Yale University Press, has gone through seven printings so far, and we can only wish that each printing had been larger and that popular demand had made the repetition seven times seven. It still seems to us an unsurpassed point of departure for reading in the educational field.

While Hutchins has often been set off against the great pragmatic educator, John Dewey, *The Higher Learning* can very easily supply background for deeply appreciating Dewey's greatness. If we turn to a recent volume on educational revaluation, Gordon Keith Chalmers' *The Republic and The Person*, we find both corroboration and extension of many of Hutchins' contentions. Chalmers suggests that one of the best things that could happen in modern universities would be for the philosophy department to close up shop entirely—so that the genuine philosophers among its professors might be encouraged to take up the teaching of entirely different subjects in the curriculum. This, Chalmers feels, might produce the realization that "philosophy" is the dispassionate, evaluative way of looking at anything: it is a dedicated search for truth and values, and should never be confused with established categories of thought, nor with veneration of particular authorities.

Perhaps because we have formed such a low opinion of philosophy, forgetting that Plato and the medievalists were neither about the same thing nor talking in the same terms, we have developed the peculiar cult of "anti-intellectualism." Most of us are anti-intellectuals because we have never known any intellectuals in the Socratic sense. We seem to have inherited not the philosophical, but the theological point of view. And thus we pay lip-service to authoritarian categories, while claiming to resent authoritarianism in fact.

Hutchins concludes *The Higher Learning* with this note:

> Anti-intellectualism is so much a part of the temper of the times that it will be difficult to meet this dilemma squarely or satisfactorily. The university that I have been describing is intellectual. It is wholly and completely so. As such, it is the only kind of university worth having. I believe that it will accomplish greater political and professional results than one that is devoted to current events or vocational training.
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> If the country is not prepared to believe these things, it can get what it wants through the technical and research institutes I have proposed. They are so planned as to draw off the empiricism and vocationalism that have been strangling the universities and to leave them free to do their intellectual job. If we can secure a real university in this country and a real program of general education upon which its work can rest, it may be that the character of our civilization may slowly change. It may be that we can outgrow the love of money, that we can get a saner conception of democracy, and that we can even understand the purposes of education.

REVIEW
NEWS ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA

AMERICANS are notoriously ignorant about the rest of the world—a fact which is not so remarkable, since there is so much of their own country to know about. They seem to gain what little international education they have from the urgency of world events. India, for example, is now a part of the consciousness of Americans, as a result of the Indian struggle for freedom during World War II, and as a result of the colorful story of M. K. Gandhi, which reached a climax in the tragic death of the great Indian leader in 1948.

Today, world attention is focussed upon Africa. The Egyptians have revolted against British influence; in South Africa, the repressive policies of the Malan Government have aroused the non-European population to revolt; and in the British Protectorate of Kenya, the African people have resorted to the terrorist tactics of the Mau Mau in the hope of obtaining concessions which will permit them a self-respecting way of life.

On the encouraging side, from South Africa comes word of the formation of a new political group—the Liberal Party, which stands for equal rights for all South Africans, white, black and brown. No other party in South Africa has ever proposed equal rights for all races. *Time (*June 15) reports that the new party held its first meeting last month in an underground hall beneath St. Mary's Anglican Cathedral in Johannesburg. Twelve hundred strong, these resisters of the *apartheid* policy of the Union Government—white teachers, lawyers, clergymen and office workers, together with Indians and Africans—crowded into the hall to listen to Alan Paton (author of *Cry, the Beloved Country),* one of the founders of the Liberal Party, say:

> For the first time we openly proclaim the things we believe ... In Africa the imperative need is to create some kind of common society for white and black.... Color bars imposed by the whites have produced only misery for white and black alike.... Take a step toward the future; don't wait for it to overwhelm and crush you.

When the South African press accused the Liberal Party of moving too rapidly in the direction of reform, Paton retorted: "He who waits until the time is ripe often waits until it is rotten."

Most MANAS readers have heard or read something of the South African Non-Violent Resistance Campaign, by means of which the native Africans living under Union rule are attempting to win juster treatment from the government. The Spring 1953 issue of the *War Resister* (published in England) has an excellent summary of the progress of this campaign, with details of what the Africans are doing. According to the writer, John P. Fletcher, the campaign was decided upon in December, 1951, at the thirty-ninth annual conference of the African National Congress. The South African Indian Congress joined in the protest, which was named "Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign." The chairman of the African Congress, Dr. Moroka, wrote to Dr. Malan, protesting laws which, he said, were "undemocratic, unjust, racially discriminatory and repugnant to the natural rights of man." The African leader told Dr. Malan, head of the Union Government, that if these laws were not repealed by Feb. 29**,** 1952, they would be resisted non-violently by the supporters of the Campaign. Malan replied at the end of January, saying that the Union would not repeal "the long-existing laws differentiating between Europeans and Africans." Addressing Dr. Moroka, Malan said:

> You will realize, I think, that these differences [between the Bantu, or Africans, and the Europeans] are permanent and not man-made.
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> You demand that the Union should no longer remain a State controlled by Europeans.... Racial harmony cannot be attained in that manner. Compliance with such demands inevitably leads to disaster for all population groups.
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> Your third point is that the differentiating laws are of an oppressive and degrading nature. This again is a totally incorrect statement.

Moroka replied:

> The question at issue is not one of biological differences, but one of citizenship rights which are granted in full measure to one section of the population and completely denied to the other by means of man-made laws artificially imposed, not to preserve the identity of Europeans as a separate community, but to perpetuate the systematic exploitation of the African people....
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> With reference to the campaign of mass action which the African National Congress intends to launch, we would point out that as a defenseless and voteless people, we have explored other channels without success.
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> The African people are left with no alternative but to embark upon the Campaign. We desire to state that it is our intention to conduct this Campaign in a peaceful manner, and that any disturbances, if they should occur, will not be of our making. In reiterating our claim for direct representation, we desire to place on record our firm determination to redouble our efforts for the attainment of full citizenship rights.

The campaign began on June 26, 1952. At first, only non-Europeans were invited to participate. The campaign strategy laid down the rule that there was to be no "general strike," and that only volunteers for the campaign who had been trained in non-violent discipline were to violate the laws. The defiance began with a few trained and selected individuals who entered public buildings—railway stations, post offices, etc.—through entrances marked "For Europeans only." Other offenses included failing to produce the passes required by the South African Pass Laws, breaking curfew regulations, and entering "forbidden areas."

This, as planned, was the first stage of the Defiance Campaign. The second stage brought violations on a larger scale, by groups. According to reports, after six months of the first and second stages of the campaign, more than eight thousand men and women had been arrested. Punishments ranged from a fine of 2 pounds with twenty days in jail, to three months in jail. Some of the younger resisters have been "caned."

A little less than a year ago, in August, 1952, the Union Government charged Dr. Moroka and Dr. Dadoo and eighteen members of the executive council of the Campaign under the Suppression of Communism Act—a handy bit of legislation by means of which the Union Government is able to convict as a communist practically anyone who makes any sort of problem or trouble for the authorities. The African leaders were found guilty of "statutory communism" and sentenced to nine months in prison. The trial judge said that the accused, in his opinion, were guilty of "encouraging a scheme which aimed at bringing about a political, industrial, social or economic change within the meaning of the Act, by means that included unlawful acts or omissions—contravening certain Union laws and municipal regulations." However, sentence was suspended for two years on condition that the accused were not found guilty of further offenses against the Act.

Last November, the Union Government issued an order making it an offense to incite Africans to break the law and to hold meetings of more than ten Africans. This order led to the first European participation in the Defiance. On Dec. 8 a group led by Patrick Duncan entered the Germiston (African) area of Johannesburg and held a meeting of Africans there. The seven Europeans in this group were the first whites to be arrested in the Defiance Campaign. Also arrested on this occasion were fourteen Africans and eighteen Indians, among the latter, Manilal Gandhi, the son of M. K. Gandhi.

On the question of the "success" of the campaign, Mr. Fletcher describes three incidents which indicate a degree of progress:

> 1. An incident told to Agatha Harrison (an English Quaker) by Z. K. Matthews, involving two bridges across a river, one for whites, one for blacks. "A group defied the law (having given notice of what they were going to do) and of course were arrested. Others took their place and eventually the prohibition was removed."

2. On August 28th, a Cape Town Magistrate declared a Native "defier of unjust laws" not guilty of a charge of sitting in a European waiting-room at a Cape Town station on August 3rd. The Magistrate said that there was no waiting-room provision for First and Second Class male non-European passengers. The equipment in non-European waiting-rooms was also judged "greatly inferior" to that provided for Europeans.

3. The most important report, however, was in *The Times* (London) Of 5th November, from its Pretoria correspondent:

"Police in Natal are adopting a new method of dealing with breaches of such laws as the curfew regulations by native resisters. The policy is to ignore such demonstrators as long as they remain peaceful.

"The Defiance Campaign has given the South African police much extra work, and the authorities appear to be taking the view that they cannot afford to waste so much time on passive resisters, but must concentrate on preventing crime and violence."

This action of magistrates and judges of South Africa is a significant factor in the present history of South Africa, and is shown in the moderate sentences in these passive resistance cases, and in the struggle between the present Government and the Courts over the constitutional question.

Mr. Fletcher concludes his article:

The resisters' relations with the police are friendly, the police are informed when the acts of resistance are planned, and have responded in a friendly way. Magistrates and judges have been "friendly" in the mildness of the sentences imposed, and by a surprising number of "discharges."

I believe that, now that prominent white South Africans have joined the Campaign, the Campaign Committee will be more determined than ever to go forward, and that the Malan Government will be more hesitant to break it. The new President of the African National Congress, Chief Albert Luthuli, said at the fortieth conference held in December 1952 in Johannesburg, his policy would be never to resort to force, to invite more Europeans to volunteer, and to allow nothing to stand in the way of his people's freedom.

COMMENTARY
ABOUT "BOOKS FOR OUR TIME"

THOSE who have followed thus far the "Books for Our Time" articles (fifth installment in this issue) may sometimes wonder why we selected this series as a MANAS feature. What, for example, is especially important about contemporary books, as distinguished from the "great books" which are the particular interest of Dr. Hutchins?

Are books, themselves, so terribly important, after all?

We think they are. They are the fruit of the mind, and may express the quintessence of human achievement. And it seems to us that the several books we have gathered under one heading, to be discussed in this series, are even more important as a group than they would be, taken one by one.

Taken together, these books "for our time" reflect, it seems to us, a coverage of the problems of human beings that is found in almost no other age. Further, these problems are approached in behalf of all men, and not for the sake of an elite of distinguished individuals.

Dr. Hutchins, for example, his critics to the contrary, is concerned with the future of young Americans and old Americans—all Americans. His life has been a project in the education of a nation, and he has worked at it wherever channels of communication have been available, and in some cases he has created his own channels.

What is the role of the mind? Dr. Hutchins has a clear and decisive answer to this question. How do we know, some may ask, that Dr. Hutchins is "right"? Perhaps we don't know, or can't until we have undertaken something of the discipline of the mind which Dr. Hutchins so strongly recommends. But this is the point. Dr. Hutchins proposes that there is a kind of discipline by means of which men may have greater certainty in matters of intellectual decision. It is the discipline of metaphysics. The example of Dr. Hutchins' own mental processes has done much to restore confidence in this sort of inquiry.

Meanwhile, other "books for our time" have fulfilled other vital functions. The workers in psychological fields have brought to birth a new understanding of the mind and the feelings, reviving faith in an inner moral being in man, just as Hutchins has contended for the "moral being" in rational investigation. Moreover, a book like *Richer by Asia* (by Edmond Taylor) exhibits a man in whom convictions of this sort operate both naturally and effectively.

Briefly, the works we have selected as "books for our time" seem to us to lay the foundation for a new faith in man which is successfully grounded upon both ancient and modern knowledge—on both the principles of philosophical religion and the findings of modern scientific research.

It is our hope that out of this series may emerge at least the outline of an unorganized but nonetheless *organic* synthesis for the philosophy of tomorrow—an affirmative yet alertly critical philosophy; a warmly sympathetic yet unsentimental philosophy—a philosophy for mature human beings and those who hold before them the ideal of maturity as the inward goal which must precede, or at least parallel, the fulfillment of wider social dreams of progress.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

ALL those interested in the philosophy of education should at least take note of the periodic conflicts which occur between extraordinarily independent parents and compulsory state education legislation.

Last Jan. 30 the parents of seven children went to court in Los Angeles to fight charges of violating the California Education Code. They were prosecuted for refusing to send their three oldest children to school. Both parents had had college training, and felt that they could do a better job of teaching their own youngsters than the schools—at least during the early years—since they were intimately aware of individual peculiarities and aptitudes in their children, and would have to teach only three, instead of a comparatively large classroom. The young matron expressed herself as being disinclined to turn over her children's training to "schools, baby-sitters and television sets." She said:

> I don't want to be deprived of the fun of bringing up my children. If I subject them to the regimentation of the school system, I have only the drudgery of their rearing and not the pleasure of watching their minds and personalities develop.

The mother had had previous experience with courts. In Buffalo, New York, in 1950, she was upheld in her determination to educate her children at home. The court ruled that "the child is not the creature of the state." The Los Angeles judge, Roger A. Pfaff, however, took a less lenient view, finding the home-educators guilty and giving them an alternative of paying a thirty-dollar fine or spending six days in jail. The judge remarked, "To let each parent determine what his child should study or not study, as contended by defendants, would result in educational anarchy."

The case is now on appeal, with the parents showing a strong disposition to question the municipal court's claim that "the State has a vital interest in the welfare of its youth," so long as this "State" is unwilling to consider carefully a thought-out pedagogical program provided by qualified parents. While there is much to be said, pro and con, on the subject of obliging all children to attend schools, bringing them together with other children of diverse temperaments and backgrounds, it seems to us that parents who insist upon deviating from the norm, and who present their case intelligently, are extremely useful citizens. There is an inevitable regimentation in public schools, no matter how benevolently administered, and it is well for us to be reminded of this. America's claim to "individualism" can hardly be justified unless we at least give serious attention to the views of such parents.

The Indian magazine, *Harijan*, founded by Gandhi and now edited by Maganbhai Desai, recently unearthed a thought-provoking passage from Gandhi on the subject of compulsory education. Since Gandhi has been quoted as supporting compulsory education in India it seems particularly worthwhile to recognize that Gandhi's view on this matter was far from being without qualification. We have ourselves represented Gandhi as "favoring" compulsory education, and feel, therefore, a responsibility to notice his extended thoughts on the subject. The conviction of two intelligent parents for resisting a law of this sort makes a good occasion for quoting what Gandhi said. He did not, it appears, regard compulsion in education as anything more than a temporary method of meeting an emergency. "I am not quite sure," he wrote, "that I would not oppose compulsory education at all times. All compulsion is hateful to me." He continues:

> I would no more have the nation become educated by compulsion than I would have it become sober by such questionable means. But just as I would discourage drink by refusing to open drink shops and closing existing ones, so would I discourage illiteracy by removing obstacles in the path and opening free schools and making them responsive to the people's needs. But at the present moment we have not even tried on any large scale the experiment of free education. We have offered the

> parents no inducements. We have not even sufficiently or at all advertised the value of literacy. We have not the proper school-masters for the training. In my opinion therefore it is altogether too early to think of compulsion. I am not even sure that the experiment in compulsory education has been uniformly successful wherever it has been tried. If the majority wants education, compulsion is wholly unnecessary. If it does not, compulsion would be most harmful. Only a despotic government passes laws in the teeth of the opposition of a majority. Has the Government afforded full facilities for education to the children of the majority? We have been compulsion-ridden for the past hundred years or more. The State rules our life in its manifold details without our previous sanction. It is time to use the nation to voluntary methods even though for the time being there may be no response to prayers, petitions and advice addressed to the nation. It has had little response to its prayers. Nothing is more detrimental to the true growth of society than for it to be habituated to the belief that no reform can be achieved by voluntary effort. A people so trained become wholly unfit for Swaraj.
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> It follows from what I have said above that if we get Swaraj today I should resist compulsory education at least till every effort at voluntary primary education has been honestly made and failed. Let the reader not forget that there is more illiteracy in India today than there was fifty years ago, not because the parents are less willing but because the facilities they had before have disappeared under a system so foreign and unnatural for the country.
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> It is not reasonable to assume that the majority of parents are so foolish or heartless as to neglect the education of their children even when it is brought to their doors free of charge.

Perhaps the parents now appealing their conviction by the Los Angeles court may make use of Gandhi's argument. So far as we can see, a far saner and more rewarding course than prosecution would be for concerned officials to confer periodically with such parents, concerning the value of wider group experience during childhood years. If dissenters were treated less belligerently, it is quite possible that both they and school officials could learn something from each other.

Perhaps the important question, here, is in determining whether the sort of education we have, compulsory or not, is really effective. The real issue is whether, given conformity, or success in "compulsion," we are getting the kind of education that is worth having. If we are not, then the conformity is worse than useless, for we may suppose that, having obliged a few million youngsters to attend school regularly, we have no further responsibility.

FRONTIERS

"They'll Always Believe You"

AN interesting theory proposed at a recent meeting of the American Medical Association was that *approximately one-fourth of all persons disabled by crippling heart afflictions have acquired the disability from their physicians. (New York Times,* June 3.) This sort of heart disease has been named "iatrogenic," meaning "physician-caused." While Dr. Richard A. Mills, chairman of the section on general practice, "reported that there were few *figures* on the incidence of iatrogenic heart disease," he also said that, according to an estimate, "patients literally scared to death by their doctors might account for 60 per cent of all those who see a heart specialist." Dr. Mills continued:

> It is amazing that out of 631 individuals who were adequately studied, 175 (or 28 per cent) were found to have no heart disease at all. The authors [of the New York report] point out that iatrogenicity was a major factor in the disease of a substantial number of these patients.
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> The pathogenesis [origin] of iatrogenic heart disease is quite clear. By definition, the etiologic [causative] agent is the physician. From him the patient receives the impression that he has heart disease.

"Iatrogenic" is a nice esoteric term for the heart diseases which seem to be indisputably caused by physician-induced worry. Here, however, we are not so much interested in criticizing the bedside manners of the medical fraternity as in calling attention to the fact that the power of suggestion is a far more weighty lever in our lives than we are usually prepared to admit. Whether we turn to familiar forms of religious fanaticism, to the equally rigid psychological conditionings of totalitarian governments, or to the fact that even salesmen easily succumb to brash advertising propaganda, the evidence is that some startling future developments are in store for the field of "social psychiatry." In the Spring, 1953, *Antioch Review,* for example, a sociologist, Prof. R. A. Schermerhorn, gives a very simple example of the power of social suggestion. "Dr. Jurgen Ruesch and Professor Gregory Bateson," he writes, in a new interdisciplinary study, declare that American patients are typically anxious about being *different* from others, while European patients worry because they are too much *like* other people. Hence a therapist will encourage his American patient to work through and accept his difference; when it no longer threatens him, he can then assume his place in the group. In Europe, however, the therapist will help the patient accept his similarities with others and only after this acceptance can he work out his own unique style of life." Prof. Schermerhorn continues:

> Whether this is an absolute difference in the two cultures may be doubtful; but the example shows clearly that different societies have unique conflict situations so that the conditions for neurosis and psychosis are functions of social patterns. Anthropology, social psychology, and sociology are becoming increasingly contextual in their analysis, *i.e.,* they explore the meaning of behavior in the context of social expectations to which the person responds. In like vein psychiatry is enlarging its task to include the social atmosphere of the patient, his relations with family, neighborhood, friends, occupational conditions, institutions, social controls or ideologies—in fact anything which may have played a vital role in his socialization.

A British psychiatrist has lately determined that, in Kenya Colony, those who were taken from their traditional "pre-literate" culture to become laborers in cities and on the plantations owned by Europeans, account for nine-tenths of the neuroses and psychoses among their people. Half the early admissions to the mental hospital at Nairobi, it is reported, "come from the detribalized one-tenth of the population, while the other half are from the other nine-tenths who live at home." Further: "The incidence of mental illness for males is nearly twice that for females, since it is the men who form the bulk of the laborers. While schizophrenia in Kenya shows a rate comparable to that of Europe and America, Carothers asserts that there are no cases of cerebral arteriosclerosis at Nairobi." This British

psychiatrist, Prof. Schermerhorn relates, "believes that this is a disease of civilization connected with competitive struggle; in general, he says, arteriosclerotics do not play, pursue their ends doggedly, and are always living under pressure. This is foreign to the African mode of life. Other psychoses show a much lower rate in Kenya than in Euroamerica."

Drawing upon the researches of Karen Horney and Read Bain, Schermerhorn concludes with evidence that many physical and mental ailments are due simply to lack of resistance to suggestion. Dr. Horney, for instance, pointed out that whenever we have two contradictory traditions—such as that of religious benevolence or altruism versus hard competitiveness in all worldly affairs—we generate the conditions out of which anxiety neuroses grow. *Yet these inconsistencies may not at first be directly experienced, as such, within the personality of the succumbing neurotic.* What actually happens is that he is made to feel, by indirect means of social suggestion, that he *should* have certain basic conflicts, and the more frequent the suggestion, the sicker he gets.

If we wish to give the pessimists their due, we should also note that, according to many sociologists, a marked psychological deterioration has paralleled the increase of literacy in all the countries of the world. Most children are today disciplined, not by the tribally organic forms of compulsion and punishment common among primitive societies, but by a more subtle and insidious means. A child in the "literate" home feels keenly the pressure of cultural disturbances affecting his parents, and may suffer repression from numerous causes which do not obtain among the young of simple agrarian background. Here, again, is the “power of suggestion." As early as 1939, in a paper on "Mental Disorders in Urban Areas," Drs. Faris and Dunham demonstrated that the incidence of schizophrenia in the Chicago area was highest *near the center* of the city, declining in proportion in the outlying districts, while a greater number of manic depressives came from the high I.Q. and *more literate areas.*

This is perhaps a way of again summing up the argument for the simpler life—which becomes a little tiresome without some suggestion of what to do about the vast trend toward increased population and increased specialization. Must we conclude that the price of literacy and increased leisure is more personal helplessness, or must we revise entirely our conception of what desirable "literacy" really is? Erudition, it would appear, has little or no human value, unless the learning is the sort which also gives light on adequate goals for human striving. At this point the religionists enter the field, claiming that they have *always* had the solution, that the Church predicted disaster from unguided secular learning, and that only a return to God and the Scriptures will bring about social salvation. But this approach only returns us to our original problem—the problem of morbid anticipations. Dr. Mills' point concerning "iatrogenic" heart disease was that the susceptibility to suggestion is *itself* a cause of man's incapacity to weather emotional storms. The traditional religions, themselves dependent upon suggestion or "social hypnosis," therefore, can never be adequate fingers in the dike. A recent report released by psychiatrists, in analysis of possible correlations between specific religious faiths and specific psychic disorders, indicated that each religion generates its own peculiar sort of disturbance. Catholics, for instance, presumably controlled by only *one* type and source of suggestion, seem especially vulnerable to alcoholism and drug addiction.