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THE DECLINE OF THE HERO

To say that we belong to a generation that has no heroes to look up to—and that our children, feeling this lack, can do no better than Elvis Presley, or, at another level, than the quietly bewildered James Dean or Paul Newman—is not to suggest that we must busy ourselves to find new ones. It is true, we have to fill that abyss or perish, for men cannot live without a splendid dream; but the question is whether there is any use in trying to fill it with images borrowed from yesterday's idealism.

Rebels without causes are not very good rebels; they are often only delinquents, as Kenneth Rexroth noted a while ago. There is a terrible hunger among both young and old to find something that will take us out of ourselves, or that will rehabilitate our battered sense of selfhood. We find this hunger producing strange contortions in the arts, dithyrambic formlessness in literature, and unimaginative dissipations among the masses, and throughout it all a dull pain which ought to touch the very heart of compassion in men who have some command of their own lives, and does, in some cases.

We need something to look up to, someone to be like, and then, in time, a cause that will claim our energies. But if there are dreams going begging, or visions we have missed, they must not exist in the contemporary idiom. This seems to be a time of waiting, but while we wait, alas, we waste as well.

What are the available plans, projects, ideologies? There is, first, and perhaps most promising of all, the large socio-philosophical thinking of Jayaprakash Narayan, with his rich sympathy for the voiceless individual, and his almost anarchistic politics of the future. But to devise applications of his ideas for a country dominated by the patterns and structures typified by General Motors—where do you begin?

In such circumstances, the reformer—any kind of reformer—is in the position of a gardener who lives among people who have read the label on a package of seed and have planted a variety of giant squash. The squash grew all right, and they turned out to be giants. In fact, this brand of squash used up nearly all the soil, so that if the people want to eat, they must eat giant squash, which is rather tasteless at that. Next year, they will have a chance to make another planting, but there is of course the danger that the squash will seed themselves and fill up the garden again; and there are a number of professional gardeners who are spreading the word that any other kind of squash will ruin the soil and bring on a famine.

All the reformer-gardener can hope to do is find a plot of less desirable soil that nobody who is giant-squash-minded wants, and plant his own kind of crop, hoping to prove, in time, that we never needed those monstrous gourds that cost so much and take away our appetite. The only *social* force on the reformer's side is the possibility that people, generally, will begin to get sick of giant squash.

But you don't get sick of what you have until you see something that you think you'll like better. Until then, that is, you may *feel* sick, but you won't know why. In our society—where we have thought we have had the best of everything for a long time it is difficult to imagine what would be better. Today, perhaps, we are at a point where people are beginning to say, somewhat petulantly, that there *must* be something better, even if they can't imagine what.

So it is time to look around.

Passing by the thought of Narayan, who is stimulating but for the time being unassimilable by

most Americans, we may turn to what is left of radical thinking in the United States. There is still vigorous thinking among the socialists, but, so far as we can see, it is not *socialist* thinking, but thinking done by men who call themselves socialists. The socialists do not seem to have made much progress with the problem of power—and, unlike Narayan, they evade this question as a profitless undertaking. The vigor of their thought is in criticism—criticism of popular culture, of the marketing techniques of industry, and of the capitulation of the intellectuals to the conformism required by the Power Elite. It is all good criticism—sometimes brilliant—but it is not particularly socialist. We have the impression that if these writers could find a more effectual channel for their energies, they would use it. They, too, are lacking in heroes; or, to be more accurate, their heroes are all suffering martyrdom, these days.

As an example of a socialist's thinking, we have a paragraph from an article by Bernard Rosenberg, in the Spring 1958 number of *Dissent*, possibly the best independent socialist magazine now being published. Mr. Rosenberg's title is "Rebellious Orgmen and Tame Intellectuals," his point that the widely read attacks on our age of conformity never go to the root of the matter, and sometimes have an influence the reverse of what was intended. Speaking of William Whyte's *The Organization Man* and Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders*, Rosenberg says:

> Whyte expresses polite disgust on nearly every line of his book. He is revolted—but within circumspect limits. His rebellion, though real, is like most other forms of contemporary insurgency: it is for a variety of reasons hopelessly abortive. This corporate Jeremiah who flails us for allowing ourselves to be robbed by The Organization of our autonomy and humanity must also deflate his argument by saying, lest we misunderstand, that, "I write with the optimistic premise that individualism is as possible in our times as in others . . ." and adds in case he hasn't made himself clear enough, "I speak of individualism *within* organization life."
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> Packard is quite good as an exemplar of abortive rebellion. He points out:
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> ". . . a great many advertising men, publicists, fund raisers, personnel experts, and political leaders, in fact numerically a majority, still do a straightforward job. . . . Advertising, for example, not only plays a vital role in promoting our economic growth but is a colorful, diverting aspect of American life; and many of the creations of admen are tasteful, honest works of artistry."
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> No more than the juvenile delinquent, the hophead, the cat, the hipster, can this kind of unfocussed rebel stop swatting flies and drain swamps. It is beyond the apprehension of such men that a few hundred motivation researchers are simply a small saprophyte on the body of American advertising and that American advertising, while senseless, is merely a small and necessary part of the American economy. Does Packard care to criticize that economy? Such *lèse majesté* would be unthinkable. His is criticism within the system and not of the system—on a par with a worker's letter to *Pravda* complaining about his plant manager. Niccolo Tucci captured the whole point long ago when he imagined a Soviet worker going to Stalin and saying, "I want you to remove my chains." Stalin replies, "Gladly, comrade. I will have a new set forged immediately." "But," says the worker, "I don't want any chains at all." At which Stalin exclaims, "You wrecker. You decadent hyena. You Western counter-revolutionary swine!"

We are fortunate that someone is saying these things, showing why criticism from within the system does not get very far. The socialist writer, of course, objects to criticism from within the capitalist system. It is the *value* system that we object to. The value system of our culture is sterile, an inheritance from past generations, from the days when there was at least an element of adventurousness in what we call "free enterprise."

It takes some kind of a dream to hold a society together. Even a vulgar dream of acquisition will hold a society together, although a vulgar dream makes a vulgar society—our kind of society. Along with the dream, work is needed. The kind of work a man does modifies his dream and gives it a practical content. Even a vulgar dream may undergo a kind of refinement by some

basic sort of work. The enormous popularity, these days, of stories of the pioneering Americans who settled the West is no doubt evidence of the empty hearts and meaningless work of modern man. The conquest of nature was a better kind of work than having to cope with the artificial wilderness of our technological society, with its gross tastelessness unalleviated by a snowstorm or rising waters in the Red River. We are surrounded and invaded by ugliness on every hand. Compare with Vance Packard's view that the majority of advertising men are doing their jobs "honestly," the following from John Maas, an architect whose field is the appearance of cities (in *Landscape*, Winter, 1958-59):

> The printed poster with its brilliant tradition of striking visual communication has sunk to an all-time low in the U. S. today. American posters are not only banal and ugly, they are ineffective. The outdoor poster does not lend itself too well to the scrutiny of the readership surveys which has been applied to other media of mass communication, but its impact is obviously weak. All along the highways, side by side and row upon row, smiling girls lift boxes of crackers or toilet paper, bronzed men are hoisting glasses of beer or pop. Cover the brand name and it is impossible to tell the competitors apart. One billboard shouts "GLUTZ, THE DRY BEER!", the next "POTZ, THE WET BEER!". "SUPERIOR, THE GASOLINE WITH MORE LEAD THAN ANY OTHER!" is followed by "ACME, THE ONLY GASOLINE WHICH CONTAINS NO LEAD!". All art is communication and when the words are without meaning the design will also be meaningless and trite.

Mr. Maas is not against advertising on cultural grounds. He just thinks the poster advertising we have is bad.

It should be obvious that people who make a trade of imposing all that ugliness on other people cannot have respect for the people they are trying to communicate to, nor can they have any feeling of dignity or respect for their work, their employers, or the product they are trying to sell. No wonder "sincerity" is the magic word in advertising. It is something that cannot exist in an advertising atmosphere.

The pity of it all is that the people involved in marketing and the people involved in industry—and that means very nearly all of us—are obliged to find some kind of jerry-built dream to support their lives, and they take what the culture offers, which isn't much. Alienated from nature by technology, by a prefabricated diet, by the rape of the wilderness by the lumber companies and the "improvers" of the wild places of the earth, what chance have we got to find a dream worth dreaming?

The trouble with the idea of another "revolution" is that all that the revolutionary leaders can promise is another set of managers to run this horrible mess. We do not need new managers; we need to get rid of the mess. If you say that the right kind of managers would change things, there are two answers: (1) How do you know they know how to change things? (2) If we need "managers" to change our bad taste, our eagerness to be exploited by the purveyors of vulgarity, then that's just another version of all-knowing paternalism, isn't it?

We don't need any more revolutions by people who promise to do right by us. We need only the determination to do right by ourselves. This is impossible without some kind of dream of the good life, some ideal to live up to.

We keep on saying the same things in these pages because they seem so plainly true. The issue is a philosophical issue. If a man wants a good life, he needs a theory of the good that actually produces good. It has to be a theory of the good which produces good without requiring a national election. That can come later, after he is *sure* what he says is good is really good. How do you determine what is good? The good makes you free, eager to get at your work when you wake up in the morning. It makes you able to live without hate and suspicion and fear. There have been men in every country and in all ages who have found this kind of good. They have found it under diverse conditions. The conditions don't make the good, although they sometimes

contribute to it. But in this case the good for some men arises in their capacity to create the conditions that allow more good to come to people who are helpless, not yet able to make their own—children, for instance.

On the whole, however, men who promise good to others through conditions are either charlatans or fools. The good comes from an attitude of mind toward one's life and one's work, and it cannot come from anything else.

Meanwhile, it may be necessary to give some hostages to the system. People seldom use the freedom the system now affords. Back in those pioneer days we read about nobody had a seven-and-a-half-hour day with Saturdays and Sundays off. Farmers worked the clock around. The labor movement, alas, while it has done a kind of good, has done it "within the system." It has corrupted the idea of work. It has made men feel that work is something the "company" extracts from you, like blood from your veins. Maybe so, but a man ought to want to work, for his own sake. A man who doesn't respect his own work is a mutilated man, and labor and capital often collaborate in this mutilation. The categories of good and evil in the labor-capital relation are for the lovers and dependents of the system. They are not for men who want to be free.

It is impossible to change the system by force—impossible, that is, without a lot of hate and destruction, and it's probably impossible that way, too. Further, no one knows what is going to happen in the next twenty-five years. People are getting sicker and sicker of their lives. Inevitably, they are going to revolt, and since no one has any over-all plan that makes sense, the revolts are going to be homegrown and various. People are going to break out in thousands of ways, trying to find a new basis for their lives. It seems likely that they'll be able to do it without hating anybody or blaming anybody. Who is there to blame?

We've tried all the theories based upon hate and blame. We don't have to try them again.

Actually, the Enemy has gone away, along with the Hero, and we are left with ourselves. This seems to be the revolutionary meaning of our time, that we are left with ourselves. The toughest assignment in all our existence may be that we now have to discover both the Hero and the Enemy *in* ourselves.

If we are able to do this, then we might be able to go back over the ground of Western history, and to do right all the things that turned out so abortively. If we can find good and evil and wholeness in ourselves, then we can have a social revolution without placing ourselves in the hands of benevolent despots, and we can have free enterprise without falling on our knees before Madison Avenue. We can find the balance, the residue of value, in all the theories we have ever had, and which have been so at war with one another.

It is a question of developing a basis for faith in one another that is so luminous, so compelling in its mandate of mutual respect that even the contemptible man is left to be free, allowed to live in no other contempt but his own. We have no idea how much freedom men can learn to use without excess or aimlessness, until they actually try. The idea of limit can be worked out later, as a practical problem. Today, we think of the limits before we think of the freedom; we plan for the abuses instead of for the freedom.

A system of freedom is nothing in itself. A system of freedom is a pattern of rules which has to be shaped around the already existing activities of free men. If the men fear to act in freedom, they cannot be made free. Freedom, therefore, is inseparable from imagination and courage. There is no sort of freedom of which we lack numerous examples, right in our own time. The trouble is, we think of freedom in an abstract way, mistaking some utopian set of circumstances where freedom is supposed to exist, for the freedom itself. The freedom is not in the circumstances. In our time, freedom has been born in the most confining of circumstances. It was fathered by Gandhi in

South Africa. Think of the freedom exercised by Albert Schweitzer, a man who broke every mold of expected behavior from a youth of the closing years of the nineteenth century. In impoverished Italy, Danilo Dolci has violated all the conventions and begun a movement filled with moral genius and beneficence to his fellows. In America, Scott Nearing broke with the rigidities of academic life and wrested happiness and freedom of expression from a stony Vermont hillside. Artists, poets, painters, all find some way to work. Freedom means to choose for yourself the raw materials you are going to work with, and then to learn their nature by working with them.

Opportunity for freedom has never been so abundant, in all of man's history. The opportunity comes from the extraordinary self-consciousness of human beings in this epoch, and not from the circumstances of the epoch.

It is a question of the discovery of ends and of finding the ardor to pursue them. Socially and culturally, it is a question of producing a new tradition of the chivalry of the human spirit, of making and animating new images of the hero. We need and are bound to get a new conception of the twice-born man. It will take time, of course, but there is nothing else to do.

The difference between the past and the present is this: In the past, we were able to work on such projects collectively; that is, we could accept inspiration from the solitary grandeur of individual achievement; the idea of heroism could be kept alive by the image of a single man's daring, transmitted from generation to generation by the myth, the epic, the saga. The symbols of human greatness gave structure to society and supplied a graded order to the aspiration of youth. This arrangement worked so long as external symbols of identity and role and fulfillment were adequate as instruments of education and cultural development. But today, we have rung all the changes on the external symbols of identity and role and fulfillment—all the way from the extreme of hierarchial difference to the extreme of absolute equality. We have exhausted those symbols, can no longer use them, and when we try, we only revive some horrible tyranny out of the past—the kind the Nazi revolution brought about.

This is the real key to our time—it is a time when the symbols of role, identity, and fulfillment must be subjective; when, in fact, they need to be transformed from symbols into an awareness of the actual stuff of our being and purpose. It is a time when a man has to look inside himself to find an answer to the question, "What am I?", instead of looking outside for the marks of status and meaning.

REVIEW
THIRD EAST-WEST CONFERENCE

THE last issue of *Philosophy East and West* to reach the MANAS review desk announces in some detail the program for a third East-West Conference of Philosophers at the University of Hawaii. MANAS has reported on the previous two conferences—the first being in 1950, after which the *quarterly Philosophy East and West* was begun—chiefly by quotation from those who participated in the discussions. The quarterly has maintained a generally high standard since its inception, drawing upon such contributors as Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, F. S. Northrop, and Edwin A. Burtt. The first conference expressed the realization that the last best hope of the world lies in the mutual understanding of differing cultures. Since the most clearly marked contrast of all is revealed by comparing Eastern and Western ideas, no better point of departure could be chosen, and it is perhaps not too optimistic to feel that when Eastern and Western devotees of philosophy understand and respect one another, the resolution of political differences will be that much easier.

In a summarizing sentence on Zen Buddhism in the January *Encounter,* Richard Rumbold remarks that "in the West, where thought tends to be either Marxist-materialistic or Christian-supernatural or somewhere between the two, it is difficult to envisage a religion not based on transcendental hopes and promises," a characteristic leading toward jealous partisanship and away from philosophy. The philosophers of the East-West Conference are not concerned with arguing the respective merits of personal religious or ideological traditions, nor with "promises," but, instead, with identifying a religion of Humanity which can be expressed in philosophical terms. As Prof. Huston Smith of MIT puts it in the same issue of *East and West,* "the primary problem world-encounter poses for philosophy is that of synthesis, for philosophy is never happy about unintegrated perspectives." To this end, as the prospectus of the 1959 conference phrases it, "the practical and social aspects of East-West philosophy must now be examined thoroughly and in detail, not only as the natural continuation of the work of the two preceding conferences, but also in the hope of reaching greater reciprocal understanding and cooperation among the peoples of the world." Further:

> The University of Hawaii will hold a third conference in 1959 to consider particularly the problem of greater mutual understanding of East and West at the level of social philosophy—in such areas as law, economics and business, politics, international relations, ethics, aesthetics, and religion—by working out the practical implications of the metaphysical, methodological, and ethical conclusions reached at the previous conferences. In each of these fields a study will be made of the relation between philosophical beliefs and practical ways and institutions in East and West, with special reference to today's world. The conference will seek understanding of the basic ideas and ideals that underlie, motivate, and determine attitudes and actions in these fields of practice and will examine contemporary attitudes and actions in terms of these ideas and ideals.
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> The unique significance of the conference lies in the belief that real understanding can be achieved only through knowledge of the fundamental convictions of the peoples of East and West, in the effort to explore this philosophical basis of world understanding comprehensively and intensively, and in the attempt to promote more comprehensive perspective in the field of social philosophy as well as in the more technical areas of metaphysics and methodology.
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> The work of the conference will be divided into six one-week sections, each being devoted to a special aspect of the over-all problem of the conference.
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> The divisions of the program are as follows:
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> 1. The Relation of Philosophical Theories to Practical Affairs.
> 2. Natural Science and Technology in Relation to Cultural Institutions and Social Practice.
> 3. Religion and Spiritual Values.
> 4. Ethics and Social Practice.
> 5. Political, Legal, and Economic Philosophy.
> 6. Conspectus and Practical Implications for World Understanding and Co-operation.

The conference will be held at the University of Hawaii from June 22 to June 30. The announcement continues:

> Some forty major thinkers from Asia (China, India, Islamic countries, Japan, and Southeast Asia) and the West (Europe, Latin America, and the United States), specialists in the several fields of social thought and action mentioned above, philosophers and non-philosophers, as Program Members will prepare and present papers and will lead the discussions.
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> Among the Members will be included specialists in the broad field of the conference who will attend on invitation or "on their own" and take some part in the discussions. According to present plans, some twenty-five to fifty younger teachers of philosophy, the humanities, and philosophical social sciences will be invited as Associate Members. The purpose of this feature of the Conference is to acquaint these younger teachers with the rich possibilities of study, research, and teaching in the field of Asian and comparative thought.

In order to make available maximum time for free discussion, the papers by the various contributors will be prepared and distributed before the event, "with only brief summaries to be presented in person." Although the resources of the East-West enterprise are limited, the Conference will also present a few grants-in-aid to applicants who are unable to obtain another sponsorship—provided, we assume, that such an applicant is able to demonstrate the value of. the contribution he would like to make. Further information on the conference may be obtained from Charles A. Moore, Director, University of Hawaii, Honolulu 14, Hawaii.

The same issue of *Philosophy East and West* announces publication of *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy* (684 pages), edited by Dr. Moore and Dr. Radhakrishnan. Daniel Ingalls, of Harvard, in reviewing this work, might be said to be restating some of the aims of the quarterly as well as of the Conference. He writes:

> A great many people, it seems to me, profess an interest in Indian philosophy—so many that one would expect the remarks one hears and reads on the subject in this country to show more knowledge than they usually do. Even in otherwise learned journals one will find generalizations about Indian philosophy which are based on second- and third-hand sources and others which would make the attitude of a few Indian authors into that of a whole tradition of more than two thousand years. Such misunderstandings are due to ignorance rather than antipathy. And ignorance in the face of professed interest can be due only to a lack of good books and teachers. The source book compiled by Radhakrishnan and Moore should do much to remedy this lack.

One might add that the Hawaii conferences, far more than most academic gatherings, represent a natural expression of the minds of such men as Radhakrishnan—who, as professor of Eastern philosophy at Oxford for many years, generated a strongly sympathetic response for Eastern thought. As Alex Wayman puts it in *Philosophy East and West* in a discussion of the Sanskrit term, "Avidya," a great deal can be learned from pondering "the meaning of the word 'unwisdom'." The Eastern mind sets the educational goal as the conquest of "unwisdom," rather than the substitution of "correct" doctrines or information for "ignorance." Avidya or "unwisdom" has many dimensions and cannot be corrected by either theology or science.

The general tone of the conferences and of *East and West* is reminiscent of the attitude associated with the best of Eastern philosophy; the participants seem singularly free of the desire to do battle in behalf of some particular doctrine, religious or philosophical, with which their names have come to be associated. The effort, ideally, is to search out "unwisdom" in one's self, to recognize the inadequacy of one's previous viewpoint. In the final analysis there is no doubt but that it will take nothing less than this attitude to solve the problems of international crisis.

COMMENTARY
WHEN YOU REFLECT

IT will be interesting to hear what the participants in the third East-West Conference of Philosophers will have to say about the relation of philosophical theories to practical affairs (see Review). On the whole, Westerners have been contemptuous of the influence of "philosophy."

The fault, no doubt, lies largely with Western philosophers, who have allowed their discipline to degenerate into an intellectual game they play with one another, within the limits set by the agnostic temper and under rules borrowed from the sciences. Meanwhile, men make decisions on their own. One could argue, of course, that undeliberated decision cannot be called a philosophical decision, so that philosophy seldom has a role in modern life. But the fact is that the attitudes which shape decision represent inclinations and judgments about what is good to do, and therefore implement some kind of "philosophy," however contradictory or immature.

While there is ample explanation for the average Westerner's indifference to philosophy, men who desire to be free from historical conditionings ought to review their habits in this respect. Such self-examination is especially necessary to people who make large claim to being "free," since freedom means freedom from prejudice as well as from less subtle compulsions.

Actually, the man who is contemptuous of philosophy is a man who asserts that the impulsive act or the partisan decision will bring him closer to ideal behavior than a more reflectively chosen course. This may be true, on occasion, since spontaneous judgments are sometimes more accurate than tortured "reasoning" about what to do; but what such a conclusion overlooks is the fact that it is reached by a reflective review of the values served by such decisions. Philosophy, in short, has a part in all conscious judgments of the good.

There is a manifest drive in human beings to be able to show that what they do "makes sense." They want to show this to themselves and others. This, we may say, is evidence that philosophizing is an expression of the primary nature of man. In relation to what scheme of meaning should we try to make sense? The answer to this question is the content of philosophy.

If human beings were uncomplex creatures like wolves or tigers or butterflies, philosophy would present no problems. But people, unlike animals, are known to move from one system of values to another, and to respond to the mandates of conflicting systems of value at the same time. This makes philosophy difficult, since it becomes necessary to arrive at some paramount system which is supposed to integrate all the others. To do this, we have to decide what man is, so that we can determine priorities in value judgment. Philosophy is the tool for this decision.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SO BIG—TOO BIG?

As everyone who lives outside the United States seems to know, Americans have a predilection for size and quantity in all things. Possessed of no clear popular tradition, without much schooling in any of the arts, and possessed of no clear definition of hereditary religion, we are inclined to gravitate toward the quantitative standards suggested by scientific productivity. Our political commitments abroad, it now seems certain, have been too large and far too extensive, our expectation of the "spiritual" benefits flowing from the practice of numerical democracy has not been fulfilled—and now, many Americans themselves recognize that even their automobiles are far too large.

Geneticists and dieticians have for some years been exploring another unfortunate result of our naive dedication to Bigness. Statistics reveal that the children of Americans come to physical maturity sooner with each passing year, and the thesis is now advanced that this potentially dangerous situation is fostered by conscientious overeating. Parents and school authorities have long regarded the attainment of physical size in boys or the signs of approaching puberty in girls as marks of accomplishment. Thanks to the advance of dietetics, even the average person knows a good deal about "body-building" foods, and is apt to stuff his young ones with "vitamins," as one clear way of getting a child off to a fine start. That this can often be too much of a good thing is indicated by the fact that our culture has not kept pace with the physical transition, and that twelve-year-old minds are not capable of knowing what to do with sixteen-year-old bodies. The boy or girl who looks and therefore feels adult is a thousand times more likely to experiment precociously with the prerogatives of adult decision, and if parental or school authority attempts to enforce the rules which physically younger children might accept, rebellion is in order.

Many observations may lead one to question the soundness of conventional devotion to size and quantity—size of children and quantity of food ingested—and we have often wondered if some children have not found themselves haunted by nightmares of mountains of food they are supposed to eat because it will "make them strong." In frontier days or in rural areas no one has to tell the ever-active child that he should "eat more." He eats to replace energy he has used up. But the average young television-watcher of today is both less energetic and bigger than ever. He tends to move into physical maturity without endurance, which means a capacity to handle one's natural bulk in strenuous endeavor without fatigue, nor has he those psychological qualities of endurance which come with physical stamina.

We recall here something said in the opening chapter of Harry Overstreet's *The Mature Mind.* Though not specifically concerned with the outstripping of the youthful mind by the youthful body, Overstreet points out that the imbalance of maturity is one of the central problems of our society. "Childish minds," he writes, "are dangerous, but particularly when those minds are housed in adult bodies; for then they have the power to put their immaturities fully and disastrously into effect." Overstreet continues:

> The forms that adult childishness can take are almost infinite in number. They exist not merely in those unfortunates who have to be confined to institutions, but in countless thousands of men and women who look adult, are taken to be adult, and are granted the full prerogatives of adulthood.
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> In these grown-up child-minds, the immaturities are almost invariably disguised from the individuals themselves. Also they are usually disguised from those who share their life—largely because these others display similar immaturities themselves. The immaturities, moreover, are disguised from society at large, since that society has as yet developed no constant habit of appraising adult behaviors as immature or mature.

The disproportion between age and size is not peculiarly an American phenomenon, though it is reasonable to expect that the norms provided by a British Health authority would be exceeded by figures obtained in America. Geoffrey Whitehouse, in *Here's Health* for December, comments on a recent report issued by the Chief Medical Officer in London County Council, indicating that the average age at which London girls now reach physical maturity (or puberty), is 12 years, 9 months, whereas investigations in 1933 in a similar survey had fixed the age at 15 years. The report also stated that the average height of London school children had increased by half an inch in five years. Mr. Whitehouse comments:

> As a general rule no corresponding rapid development and maturation of the mental capacity of children can be found and so we are faced with the alarming probability that we are bringing up young people who in their earliest teens have the bodies of men and women and the minds of children.
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> It seems likely this phenomenon explains, at least partly, why there is now so much difficulty in maintaining discipline in children in the home and in schools and why there is such an alarming increase in juvenile delinquency in both sexes.
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> It is not easy for parents to exercise the control they consider desirable over a daughter of 14 who, in her party dress, looks and perhaps feels, like a young woman several years older. Nor is it easy in schools to decide how best to handle boys and girls who reach physical adulthood long before their basic education is satisfactorily completed.
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> So far, it has been shown that the phenomenon of our children reaching physical maturity some two years earlier than they did twenty years ago without any corresponding change in progress towards mental maturity is bound to create many problems in training children to become good citizens in the sense we ourselves have been taught to recognize.
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> If we look further ahead I very much doubt if these quick-maturing children will turn out to have strong constitutions resistant to disease, capable of endurance and capable of achieving a satisfactory adjustment to their environment both mentally and physically.

Only during recent years, apparently, have nutritionists begun to suspect that precocious physical maturity may be the result of overfeeding. Dr. H. M. Sinclair of the University of Oxford, according to Mr. Whitehouse, has carried on an almost singlehanded campaign against the doctrine that the most and richest food is the best. He has contended that overfeeding during the period of growth and development may actually shorten the life span, since adult size is reached earlier. The "feed-them-lots-of-milk" theory can be proved to be conducive to chronic catarrhal colds and general fleshiness, insists Dr. Sinclair. One cannot, it appears, judge from obesity whether overeating is taking place. Apparently solid, well-muscled children are often cases in point, for neither their strength nor stamina measures up to their appearance. This is not, however, an argument for keeping children "small," nor for slowing down a natural healthy appetite. Each child is an individual and, moreover, during different periods, according to metabolic change, will require entirely different varieties and quantities of food. The research of Dr. Sinclair suggests that once again we may have fallen victim to the rule-of-thumb approach in child-rearing.

There is no doubt about the fact that the last several generations have grown larger bodies than their parents, and that dietetic knowledge is one of the factors responsible. In general, dietetic knowledge means better health and physical happiness and less disease, but as with medicines, it is simply not true that quantity means benefit.

FRONTIERS

The Twilight Area

THE critical investigation of religion continues. One reader has sent a contribution on this subject in the form of a letter, making brief comparison of the influence of science with the influence of religion. The writer suggests that science has effected far-reaching changes in religious attitudes:

> During the middle ages witches were burned, trial by ordeal existed, and heretics were condemned without the right of defense. Christianity was consistent, for Exodus, 22:18 enjoins, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."
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> What brought about the change? Surely not a change of heart on the part of the inquisitors. Galileo was rightly persecuted for he and other scientists were raising doubts in many minds about the literal rightness of the Bible. It was science, not Christ's teaching, that caused the churches to modify their position, quite illogically, by an eclectic process of selection of tenets to be held necessary (like the resurrection of the body), and those that need not be enforced (like burning witches).
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> The best scientists are, on the average, more humane than other men, or equal to those of equal intelligence. The church has Torquemada; philosophy, Hegel, who was an apologist for the German political system.
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> Why is Billy Graham inconsistent? He believes literally, yet I'm sure he has no desire to burn a witch. He cannot be aware of the answer: that even he no longer believes in witches, because of the findings of his arch-enemy, science.

What seems important to ask, after reading the above, is the question: Does a comparison of institutions such as "science" and "religion" really dispose of this problem? Is the solution simply a matter of science, and more science, to civilize the barbarous impulses which religion permits, and sometimes encourages? Then there is the further question of whether the potentialities of religion are exhausted by the sort of examples this reader provides?

It is true enough that we don't burn witches any more, in the name of the "true faith," but we do deprive people of employment by reason of their political ideas, or by reason of mere suspicion that they hold heretical political opinions. And in other countries, in particular those which claim to have a government founded on "scientific" socialism, the liquidation of recalcitrant unbelievers has until recently been a standard practice.

Of course, it would be misleading to suggest that "science" is properly represented by the political "liquidators," but the important factor, here, is that they do what they do in the name of social science, just as the medieval executioners sacrificed their victims to an allegedly religious cause.

What is the real issue, then? It is a question of the Good, and the nature of man.

Is it Science which accomplishes the reforms in religion, or is it the moral attitudes which may at one time be associated with scientific enterprise, and at another with religion or philosophy?

The cycle of scientific discovery and the ascending influence of scientific thought has from its beginning in European history been characterized by certain moral qualities which are not themselves essentially "scientific," although authentic science could hardly do without them. First, perhaps, is an impersonal love of truth. From this grows a restive insistence on freedom of thought and inquiry. Less marked, perhaps, but often present, as our correspondent suggests, is a humanitarian regard for the general welfare.

Now why should we suppose that these human traits, obviously admirable, are peculiarly the endowment of scientists? One reason, intimated by our correspondent, is that they often go with acute intelligence. A more important reason, however, would be that science rose to eminence in conflict with the declining institutions of religion, and declining institutions seldom have

champions who win admiration for their impartiality.

Perhaps we should say that the virtues commonly associated with science are really the virtues which belong naturally with the human longing for growth and the spirit of search. When a movement, like the scientific movement, becomes institutionalized, its concern slowly changes and it becomes devoted to fixed conclusions rather than to the urge to discovery. This, of course, is a contradiction of the spirit of science, but what assurance have we that all the attitudes or beliefs said to be "scientific" are so in fact? The same judgment may be made of religion. One could argue that the temper of dogmatic certainty so often typical of religion is for educated Westerners the prototypal example of a closed mind. Indeed, by implication, this is the characterization given by our correspondent to the entirety of religion.

It might be replied that the truths of religion are not "public" truths, so that dogmas easily corrupt the searching of religion, while, on the other hand, science—even institutional science—is protected from this misfortune by the fact that all scientific theories have to submit to public verification by the competent scientific workers in the field the theories deal with.

This is true, but science does not, need not, become dogmatic concerning simple matters of scientific fact. The dogmas—or something resembling dogmas—arise in the area of *philosophy*, while it is pretended that the conclusions offered are "scientific." Take for example the claim that a human being is wholly the product of his heredity and his environment. While no serious scientist, if challenged, would make this claim so baldly, the bulk of scientific writings concerned with improving man's estate assume it without noticeable qualification. This is a working, if tacit, dogma, and it remains tacit only for the reason that dogmatic statements are bad taste in scientific expression.

Quite possibly, the spirit of discovery may move out of the area of scientific inquiry and into some other region of human enterprise. There will still be truth-loving scientists, of course, just as there were truth-loving religionists and philosophers during the centuries of the rise of science to its present dominant position. It is in terms of the *age* that the spirit of discovery may find more liberated and fruitful fields of activity.

Now, as to the role of science in contributing to the free spirit of modern culture—or what used to be known as its free spirit!—it is possible that the scientists have been given more credit than they deserve. This, at any rate, seems to have been the opinion of Dr. Edwin Grant Conklin, the eminent biologist. As retiring president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Dr. Conklin said in 1937:

> In spite of a few notable exceptions it must be confessed that scientists did not win the freedom they have generally enjoyed, and they have not been conspicuous in defending this freedom when it has been threatened. Perhaps they have lacked that confidence in absolute truth and that emotional exaltation that have led martyrs and heroes to welcome persecution and death in defense of their faith. Today as in former times it is the religious leaders who are most courageous in resisting tyranny. It was not science but religion and ethics that led Socrates to say to his accusers, "I will obey the god, rather than you." It was not science but religious conviction that led Milton to utter his noble defense of intellectual liberty, "Whoever knew truth put to the worst in a free and open encounter. . . ?" The spirit of science does not cultivate such heroism in the maintenance of freedom. . . .

It depends, of course, on what you mean by "science." We suspect that many admirers of science mean by it precisely that love of truth which animated Milton—as well as the sort of heroic determination to speak his mind which led Giordano Bruno to the stake. But this is not the sort of science which would ever be a confining influence upon philosophy.

This is really an argument about what is science, what is religion, and what is philosophy.

A strong case, for example, could be made for the fact that many of the great scientific discoveries began as philosophic assumptions, or rather metaphysical assumptions. It seems clear enough that the heliocentric system of astronomy owes its beginnings to Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy. Copernicus admitted that he had been moved to consider this explanation of celestial motion by a study of the ancients; Kepler was notoriously a metaphysician and a mystic; and Isaac Newton is acknowledged by historians of science to have found the principles for his idea of gravitation from the several influences of Jacob Boehme, Apollonius of Perga, and Plotinus. We have the word of Friedrich Lange, the historian of Materialism, to confirm this general view, as applied to antiquity. After reviewing the researches and scientific discoveries of the ancients, he wrote:

> When we behold knowledge thus accumulating from all sides—knowledge which strikes deep into the heart, and already presupposes the axiom of the uniformity of events—we must ask the question, How far did ancient Materialism contribute to the attainment of this knowledge and these views?
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> And the answer to this question will at first sight appear very curious. For not only does scarcely a single one of the great discoverers—with the solitary exception of Demokritos—distinctly belong to the Materialistic school, but we find among the most honourable names a long series of names of men belonging to an utterly opposite, idealistic, formalistic, and even enthusiastic tendency.

Well, what are we about, here? Why does it seem important to question the idea that science has been the mainspring of enlightenment for some two or three hundred years past, since its influence has obviously been beneficent in many ways?

The answer is that it is all too easy to identify a quality of the human spirit with a powerful institution. These habits of mind grow out of broad historical trends. Because religious institutions have for the most part been reactionary, resistant to change, and antagonistic to discovery, we assume that religious inquiry is a waste of time. Since the ranks of science have been filled with men of daring and inventive minds, we begin to suppose that some kind of infallibility attaches to any pronouncement which can boast a scientific label.

The constructive side of the scientific movement is a fairly simple matter—it was and is the birth of a determination to know for oneself, to see for oneself. When what is seen and known is replaced by what is supposed to be seen, or imagined to be known, there is no science, any more. It is here, in this twilight area of human experience, that we get into trouble. Some champions of science believe that science has eliminated the twilight area. Our contention is simply that this is not so.