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PERPLEXED PIONEERS

IT is no secret that the most enlightened of the men among us are wondering what should be the next step for the people of the United States. Not that there is any sense of new worlds to conquer. Instead, there is the feeling of being crowded on a small and perilous plateau of mechanical achievement, and of having somehow missed out on realizing the spacious dreams of our forefathers. We have gained, that is, the letter but not the spirit of their dreams, and there are some who are even horrified at the sour consequences of this "success."

The disillusionments are multiple. The train of progress has come to a jerky stop, and while the great mass of the people are only now beginning to look out of the window to see what has happened, or where they are, the post-war generation of writers has been turning out articulate diagnoses for at least ten years. It is generally conceded that, as Paul Sears says, the trouble is *cultural.* This is a sudden switch for a lot of people. Here we are, the graduates of numerous campaigns and crusades to make a better world, now being told that there is no program, no band-wagon, no party to join, only that our ideals have waned, our habits grown vulgar, our private lives become aimless and disorderly. We don't know what to do about such matters. The slogans that cheered us on our way thus far said nothing about "culture" or "morals," of which we were supposed to have the best, like everything else. But we begin to sense that the critics are right. Politics does not serve our hungers. We do politics because a person ought to be for the right, and politics is the traditional way of being for the right, but we're not true believers any more.

Then there is the guilt of having been "materialists." We got rich; at least, we got pretty comfortable. We did all the things we were supposed to do. "Now that we're happy, what shall we do?" Now that the romance of doing these things is fading, the fruits of our labors seem like wax imitations. So you have an analysis, start reading Gerald Heard, or take up Zen and modern art.

It is a long time since the gentleman farmer of New York State asked, "What then is the American, this new man?" Crevecoeur knew in his time. He called the American one in whom a resurrection of freedom had taken place. The European, when he first arrives on these shores, said Crevecoeur, "very suddenly alters his scale . . . he no sooner breathes our air than he forms new schemes, and embarks in designs he never would have thought of in his own country. . . . his heart involuntarily swells and grows; this first swell inspires him with those new thoughts which constitute an American. . . . He becomes an American by being received into the broad lap of our great *Alma Mater.* Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world."

Well, it has all come true, and by no means because of American "materialism." But other things have happened, too. The dream has grown but the men have shrivelled. And the dream, by becoming reality, ceased being a dream. What shall we dream about next? One dream worth our attention is recorded in Erich Fromm's *The Sane Society.* Another is in Lyman Bryson's *The Next America.* Books like these seem to be read and forgotten. Men write out the secret labors of their hearts, and the great "audience" looks at them briefly, or looks more briefly at reviews of such work, and then turns to what is "new." Fortunately, other men write similar books.

It is the thinking in these books which makes us hope that America may perhaps be able to do what no previous civilization has done—obtain a second chance. Gloomy historians compare the course of American history with the rise and fall of Rome. But who, during the decline of Rome, was setting down comparable visions of a better world? What other "decline" was filled with such a bubbling variety of resistance to the trend?

Here are some words by an American journalist, Thomas Griffith, one of the editors of *Time*, who displays so profound a grasp of American culture, what is good about it, and what is wrong with it, that you can't help but wish that *Time* would give him an editorial page in the magazine and turn him loose (the quotation is from the closing paragraphs of Mr. Griffith's book, *The Waist High Culture):*

> Americans are not the inventors of the modern world's disorder, which is a universal condition; but we have become pioneers in the exploration of change and are familiar with unsettled frontiers. We are best fitted to make order out of the prevailing chaos if anyone in this day and age is; we have strength and health, and are not hopelessly set apart by faction, are not beaten, decadent or corroded; we are not slaves of a system of equality by machine gun, and can make our wishes effectively known; we are old hands, with some knowledge of the terrain, and are quick to learn. The American Experiment is still relevant to the world.
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> The condition of our times is so overwhelming; our own awareness of what is going on elsewhere, beyond our control, is so insufficiently vivid to our minds; and our temptation to drift is so strong, that the practical journalist in me, leery of exhortations, suspects that we will go along much as we are, deceived by small victories, and will not perceive a decline, or will think it beyond our remedying. The American in me full of stubborn sentiment about his people, wants to believe them already astir, and conceives it always a mistake to project only the ebb and not the flow of American life, for if Americans are always slow to see danger, once they have seen it they are an awesome force to reckon With.
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> Sometimes I dream of a land where patriotism is not considered a superiority to others but a pride in being the hospitable center of the best from everywhere, where differences in color and race are not falsely denied but make a competition in being the best; where justice inhabits the courts, wisdom the legislatures and honor the markets, where duty is followed but in no dull way and pleasures are lighthearted; where the last is not the least and the highest is not proud; where grab is despised and giving prized; where trust is unfeigned, knowing it will not be disappointed; where tranquillity is to be found, but not torpor, and raucous variety also has its place; where weaknesses are not denied but excellences are exalted; where diversity roams free, and the unity of the dour and the carefree, the homely and the favored, the comfortable and the restless is in their unafraid belief in each other's freedom; where men are not angels but do not make a business of being devils, where nobility is not mere respectability and virtue does not produce a snigger; where the clang of work and the clamor of play attest to the common health; where enemies cannot reach us because our merit, and not our guns or our propaganda, has won the world to our side. . . . It is a very disturbing dream.

What shall we say about Mr. Griffith? Only that this sort of thinking constitutes the real initiative in the affairs of mankind, today. But what is he going to *do.* We don't know what Mr. Griffith will do, but we suspect that it will be something good.

It is time, in other words, to take a holiday from "doing," the kind of doing that makes us run furiously in circles executing programs, and have a try at being. It was said, earlier in this paper, that our problems are cultural. Culture has to do with the quality of being. It doesn't "go" any place. It is its own end. It is time to begin living with our ends, instead of chasing them.

Let us have done with programs, or at least of talk of programs, for a while.

It is a wry enough penalty to have to watch a half dozen or so new republics around the world start in imitating the Americans at precisely the time when many Americans would like to stop what they are doing and do something else, something better.

We have been telling ourselves what we ought to do in many ways. Paul Tillich spoke of

the need to discover the lost dimension of depth in our religion. Obviously, he meant inward religion, something almost entirely absent from our culture, although it is often encountered in individuals.

What is culture, in terms of this sort? It is the mood of life that hangs in the atmosphere, the intuitions of meaning that have become a kind of common property by being widely thought about by the best of men, and widely pondered by others who try to listen to the best of men. Is there anything wrong with seeking out and listening to the best of men?

Of course not. But you don't use the best thinkers the way you use the best technologists. You can hire a technologist. You can't hire a thinker. The thinker is distinguished by his absolute freedom of mind, which may acquire a similarity, but never a sameness, in comparison with other free minds. You obey a technologist. If it says on the box to tighten a screw, you tighten the screw. You never obey a thinker. You use him for primary ignition, but you build your own fire.

The best of men will never tell you what to think, what to believe. They don't operate in "teams." Teamwork is for certainties. Culture is not made of established certainties, but of high wonderings and deep longings. Culture is filled with those intimations of meaning, the promise of search, that blossom along the way of life that is deliberately but not always self-consciously useful. Culture is the air breathed by men who have forgotten the virtues by possessing them completely.

It is not that the sort of problems which give the reformer his driving energy and his uncompromising spirit are without importance. We need the reformer and his impatient determination. But the chief enemy of the reformer, these days, is not the intransigent self-interest of a powerful few, but the lethargy of the many. The reformer can go about his tasks in one of two ways. He can endeavor to tap the moral capital of his times by appealing to the sense of justice of the electorate at large, or he can fan the fires of partisanship by playing the demagogue's role. If he wants "results," he will generally choose the latter course. This course will in time stultify the moral perceptions of the people, to the point at which, finally, they are no longer susceptible at all to the argument founded on principle. When that time comes, a fateful moment has been reached; for now the reformer's choice is a choice between evils—between one totalitarian technique and another.

Pondering questions of this sort, Thomas Griffith turns to the *Federalist Papers* for relief, finding in the essays of Alexander Hamilton and John Jay both wise principles and political sagacity. The loss of this temper in the expressions of men in public life is not the least of the evidence of our decline. Griffith writes:

> When we seek to examine why we do not seem to have public discussion at this level of sanity and honesty now, we might conclude that the eighteenth-century times simply called such men forth, and that the United States at that crucial moment was singularly blessed. Or we might think that privileged position in the community gave them the opportunity to talk as they did, and we might be inclined to blame all subsequent decline on the extension of the franchise. But perhaps we might also recognize that what has gone wrong in America is an increase in a lazy tolerance of wrongdoing, because we find it easier and more agreeable to call things by their wrong names than to correct them.

It might be asked: Are there men in our nation today who are the equal of our constitutional forefathers? If so, politics does not often attract them. And if they exist, they certainly do not exert such a dominating influence on the community. It may be that we have simply become too big for any small group to preside over us. The work of our best people is dissipated, fragmentary and complex; except in their own fields, they tend not even to know one another. Sometimes a war will call them forth, but generally they have other pursuits besides politics and public affairs, for whose necessities they have a distaste.

Granted all these explanations, the fact is that quality no longer puts its stamp upon the image of America.

There is need, in other words, to restore the resources upon which public spirited leaders can draw for support. There is need for a renewal of moral awareness. This means a closer attention to the content of life than to standards of living. It means a greater regard for the values which are ends in themselves, and less anxiety and bother about getting the "conditions" which men pursue in the name of the Good Life.

REVIEW
SOME TOUGH MYSTICS

NEVER SO FEW, truly "a monumental novel of guerilla warfare" in Burma during World War II, has been widely reviewed since its publication by Scribner's in 1957. A Book-of-the-Month Club selection in its original edition, it is now available in a 550-page New American Library printing, and continues to receive critical attention.

The author, Tom T. Chamales, who shipped out to the Far East as a second lieutenant before he was old enough to vote, finally took command of the 3rd Battalion of American Kachin Rangers, fought behind the Japanese lines in Burma for a year and a half, and also took part in the invasion of Rangoon. So Chamales' war record was certainly impressive enough to accord sympathetic respect for a first major literary effort in the setting the author knew so well. But, in our opinion, no reviewer has yet undertaken to explain what this book is really about. To say only that *Never So Few* is a "tough novel of guerilla fighting" is misleading, for the fighting itself, however dramatic or chilling, is but the background for several moving Odysseys of the soul enacted by the leading characters.

Like James Jones of *From Here To Eternity*, who has become one of Chamales' friends, the author of *Never So Few* is striving for an extraordinary synthesis. Jones' people in *Eternity* were on voyages of self-discovery, and even though his characters, like those of Chamales, end in physical defeat or death, the *spirit* of self-discovery lives on in the mind of the reader. Both Jones and Chamales have sought to define a new kind of mysticism and a new kind of "holiness," which can grow and blossom in wartime as well as under any other conditions.

The experience of modern war as reflected in literature often leads to nihilism and personal despair, which is at least understandable. But when the inhumanities of war work their impact on a man of essential courage, it is possible that some of his inevitable human pettiness will be honed away. He will not find, in the setting of our time, much solace in the supposed Triumph of his Country, but he may find inspiration in triumph over himself. Chamales implies by his title that the world owes a great deal to those few who have found maturity in this way, but it also might be concluded by the reader that there *are* never so few of such men as we may sometimes despairingly think.

Con Reynolds, in the field, goes to school to Burmese mysticism. His self-appointed instructor, an aged Kachin warrior, plays something of the role of the sage Krishna in the *Bhagavad-Gita*—indicating that the good warrior and the mystic of extraordinary perceptive capacity can be one and the same man. In one early passage we see Con passing through his first reactions to severe battle fatigue and gaining entrance to a new area of reflection—inspired by Nautaung. Naturally enough, Con's first chance for rest brings a ravenous appetite, a restoration of his physical desires, but "after a while he was conscious of something else from above overshadowing all the naked things he yearned for":

> A new desire. A sweeter desire than he had ever known wrapping itself around him like a boa-constrictor slowly, deliberately, forcibly until the head of it stared him in the face. The desire to deny himself of his hungers, to feel the all overmastering power, the power of himself over himself. And in his mind he saw his being as a universe in itself, dividing him into hemispheres and continents and nations. He the master of it all. The administrator. The judge. The all powerful.
>
> The thought fascinated him completely and he lay perfectly still that he might not lose it, and in the strength of his new thinking his hungers had spiralled away, and he had a great longing to give of himself, to sacrifice himself utterly
>
> For the first time in his life he felt a sense of mass, a wholeness, as if all the loose and dangling ends of his living had been tied together and now the living itself made sense. His mind felt acutely, keenly knowing and he knew why as a small boy he had always wanted to climb trees, and why he had run alone on the beach when there was nowhere to run to.

> And why always a man must have time to be alone within himself.
>
> There was something in every man that was greater than the sum of his days and the totaling of his experiences, Con knew now. There was in man's accomplishments something richer than he could ever realize. He must believe that always. And trust in it. And trust in himself.

The true end and aim, for Con, becomes the attainment of a deeper self-knowledge. This cannot, of course, be won without a devotion to the duty in which one's *karma* has placed him, and it must be a selfless devotion. But the aim of unsettling experience, of all suffering, should be to enable a man to transcend that false sense of self which is forever demanding recognition by others. The Austrian girl whom Con loves perceives the same thing:

> "People will do anything for recognition, Con. Anything. To be recognized is the real devil in us, the Lucifer. And there will be war, and more war, and war until people see the fallacy of this warring as you have seen it. Until people find out that recognition by others has no value until you have recognized yourself."
>
> He smiled suddenly. "You talk like Nautaung," he said. "But I know what you mean. Nautaung says the flesh is the flesh is the flesh. And that's that. And when you know it is nothing more than the flesh, and can accept that, and go on to the other thing, then you don't need to fight for recognition. As Nautaung does not need to. Nautaung says that if people knew themselves, and leaders ordered them to war, they would laugh at the leaders. What he meant, I guess, is what you just said; if people recognized themselves instead of demanding recognition, they would not treat each other as they do. They would have too much respect for humanity because of their own humanity."

It is small wonder that Chamales shares with Jones an attraction to reincarnation, for the perspective intimated by reincarnation-philosophy proposes the greatest scope for growth of a "true Self." As in *Eternity*, the four most impressive characters of *Never So Few* discuss reincarnation together, finding there a means for explaining the sense of continuity which they feel welling up from their own intuitions. Danny, the intrepid Englishman who has learned the arts of meditation from the Burmese, is here matter-of-factly explaining the point of view:

> "You really shouldn't be astounded when you have a sudden spiritual knowledge that is so immense you fear to mention it; that is so all-knowing that it is actually what you might call spooky. Because you don't really know what spiritual heights you have attained previously. What should astound you, actually, is that your subconscious mind is that articulate."
>
> Carla was thinking of this morning .
>
> "And you have been spiritually astounded, haven't you, Carla?" Danny asked.
>
> She gave Con a quick impervious sidelong glance, then gradually her eyes settled on Danny: "You've made quite a study of it, haven't you?" And that ended that.
>
> Danny was grinning his silly pixieish grin. "I'm working on Con now. I haven't decided who he was yet. Alexander, Lord Byron, John the Baptist, or one of the sons of the Great Khan."

All of this provides background for reflections upon the condition of the average man, part of "the lonely crowd," somehow alienated, by his isolation in the crowd, from discovering the potential integrity of his own being. The following paragraph follows a rather brutal fight in a bar, during which Con's tensions momentarily explode. He is later apologetic, because, as his sense of balance returns, he knows why the two officers molested Carla, and why he was so violently angry at what they did:

> They were still sitting on the ledge of the veranda of the Galle Face. "And that's what I've hated," Con said, "the idea that men shouldn't stand for themselves. Bastards that won't think or do anything unless they have someone with them. Or behind them. Like those fellows today. If that major was alone he would have gotten out of there quickly. Probably politely. You know that. But it was the two of them. Two against one? No. Two proving to one. Two grown men trying to prove to each other, thus to themselves, their sainted manhood. They were more than likely together because neither one of them had the nerve to approach a woman alone. Like high school kids smoking. Kids don't smoke alone. They

> never start smoking out of their own thoughts. They never start drinking alone. They never destroy property alone. It would be undemocratic to do anything alone. You've got to have help to corrupt yourself. You've got to conform to group thought. They call it Community Spirit in America. You have to be like everyone else even if it makes you miserable being the way you are."

Never So Few is a far more comprehensive work than *From Here to Eternity*, affording a more complex panorama, even if it does not match, at all times, Jones' communication to the emotions. But apparently Chamales derived much from Jones which encouraged his attempt to complete synthesis in his characters. The language, occasionally, but only very occasionally, is as brutal as that of *Eternity*. In one of his passages, Chamales explains, by reference to Con's reflections concerning Danny, why "vulgarity" in expression is something which needs a good deal of understanding. Even when Danny used the worst words, Con reflected, "there wasn't a trace of vulgarity in it. It was an admirable quality, a quality Con had gone to school on. It helped him confirm a theory he had that there was no such thing as lewd, or vulgar, or obscene words; the lewdness, the vulgarity, the obscenity being only in the thought of the sayer or that of the listener."

COMMENTARY
ON "ROOTS OF HEAVEN"

A READER who feels that injustice was done in a recent MANAS lead article, writes as follows:

> I haven't finished "Quest for Identity" in your March II issue, and I'm not sure I'll be able to. The particular statement in this article which sets me to typing is: "So, in *The Roots of Heaven,* you have a hero who is against big-game hunting in Africa. What he is really against—or ought to be against, in this epoch, to have a real identity, is modern war and atom-bomb hunting, but this is too 'direct' for the mass market of Hollywood films, so instead of a lover of humans the hero is made into a lover of elephants."
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> . . . look, *Roots of Heaven* was a book before it was made into a movie. Some reader might not know that. But whether he does or not, why print an article which implies—"Ah yes! Hollywood has eviscerated another fine book into a limp vehicle acceptable to film distributors." Dammit! If anyone *chose* not to create a story which was a flat-footed, bald-screech against the atom bomb, it was Romain Gary, who wrote the book, not Darryl Zanuck, or Twentieth Century Fox. . . .
>
> If the writer wishes to clobber Gary with the charge of "throwing his story into a gear which would be undisturbing," by all means let him do so. That would be worth listening to, instead of observing someone aiming another kick at the calloused posterior of Hollywood, which usually deserves more blows than it gets, but NOT this time!

This letter has two parts. The first part, printed above, is mainly a scolding for what the writer takes to be careless misrepresentation of Romain Gary, author of the book on which *The Roots of Heaven* was based. (Gary, incidentally, is the French Consul General in Los Angeles—a fact which is of special interest in view of this story.)

We don't think what we did needs a great, long apology, but there is this to consider: (1) We were using the picture to illustrate a point, not attempting a careful evaluation, and we implied as much. We also said the picture was rather good, and that we were not "knocking" it. (2) Another notice of the picture appeared in Review, *in the same issue,* saying something like what this writer suggests in the second part of his letter. (3) Romain Gary may have written a splendid book—we suspect that he did, considering the eloquence of our critic—but it nevertheless could be used in the way we suggested—an "undisturbing" way. The fact of the matter is that a "direct" attack on the nuclear weapons program has been made, full of romance and rich with story potentialities—the voyage of the *Phoenix*—but we haven't heard of any bids for the motion picture rights.

We hasten to add, before any of the cognoscenti writes us a letter to point it out, that one would find it difficult to get a publisher or a producer for a story as close to horror, heartbreak, and anarchy as that story would be. There needs to be an audience with a ready appreciation of the moral leverage it would represent. Or a story could be built around Albert Schweitzer's neglected appeals. No one will do it, of course—not for a while. You couldn't sell it. Producing such movies, now, would be like getting someone to make *The Male Animal* two weeks after the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. Real identities are usually pretty lonely. They don't have much mass appeal.

There are other things to be said, however, and our correspondent says them very well. His point is that the indirect approach is better than the direct approach—as our Review suggested. Anyhow, here is the rest of the letter:

> The fact that mankind has at last worked its cheerful way up to a toy whose scale is adequate to eliminate us all, appalls almost any thinking idiot. And almost any of us is also appalled by the fact that almost anyone who gets his hands on a loaded weapon, sooner or later, under one pretext or another invariably fails to put it away until it has been fired off.
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> The present predicament of man is about as comic, and as horrible as a man—does he have hopes? Is he a cynic? Does he know what to do? Has he even the vaguest idea of what to do? And if he did would he have time to do it?—about to be sent into oblivion by a heavily loaded garbage can one of

his temporarily deranged fellows is swinging down across the sun at him.

Surely you realize that people—which is all of us—have seen that dramatic spiral up in the air, noted the fall-out rate over Las Vegas or San Francisco so often, and for so long, now, they've gotten immune to it all. The radio announces the effect of one little success after another, set off under the earth, across the sky or beneath the ocean by us, or them, every few days or so. Man, it's commonplace. Like buttering your bread, only you can decide whether to do that or not, which is ALL the difference.

If you're still with me, please also hear this. Romain Gary did several things well, among them two especially worthy. He showed us this old horror in a new, reflected light, gotten past our tough and calloused hides to our consciousness in a new and different way . . . if we were awake and alert the night we read the book or saw the movie. And he showed us the real enemy, which *isn't* the bomb.

You know, the damned things get here by a slightly less than immaculate conception, and I really wonder whether they wouldn't lie on their fat sides and rot if we'd let them.

The cure isn't to be found in charging down *directly* on modern war and the atom bomb. The cure—if there is one—is beginning to feel, beginning to intuit, to *stop* making and leaving dirty messes all over the place, and to consider joining the whole human race. We've got the prehensile [opposable?] thumb, all right, but we might be able to do something besides suck it, or twist knobs or steering wheels with it, or turn it collectively downwards out of boredom, stupidity, or over-organization, in order to produce the biggest and perhaps last recorded "spectacle" ever put on in a "human arena" so far, IF we could get concerned about elephants, or anything besides our damned selves.

A man and an animal or a plant are not necessarily opposites. Nor one better or worse than the other. When you buy a war against the elephants you get a war against man entirely for free. Plan a future for the elephants, and you may be planning your own.

Cogitating on this could get us a good deal further than being against modern war and atom bombs per se. *You* ought to agree.

Space is really gone, this time. But we'll have to agree that a general awareness of the fraternity of life will get us a good deal further than any specific program of reform, for the obvious reason that such an awareness includes *all* reforms. The problem is to generate that awareness. *Any* way that helps in this is a good way.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
CORRESPONDENCE AND NOTES

SOME weeks ago we printed some unorthodox reflections on child nutrition, presumably based on a study undertaken by Dr. H. M. Sinclair at the University of Oxford. Dr. Sinclair, as doctors and most other people tend to do, has evolved a particular theory and sought to find evidence for it. In this case the theory is that the modern parents tend to "over-feed" their children—largely because popular interest in dietetics has made the fear of vitamin and mineral malnutrition a fairly common one. Our brief summary of Dr. Sinclair's conclusion, plus some related ideas quoted from Geoffrey Whitehouse in *Here's Health* for December, provoked the following criticism from an otherwise enthusiastic MANAS subscriber:

> I do wish you would keep to the realm of philosophy and human relations, with which you deal so competently. Your little dietetic forays are sometimes appalling.
>
> I dislike using such strong terms about a publication to which I'm so attached, but I was really shocked today by the irresponsible musings I read in the Feb. 18 "Children . . . and Ourselves." This sort of fuzzy-minded writing, based on such obvious ignorance of the field of nutrition, can brand an excellent magazine as hopelessly "crackpot" in the eyes of the new and interested reader.

Our critic, who probably knows a good deal more about nutrition than we do, proceeds to state her reasons for contending that if children are overfed the result will be an obvious obesity—as against the claim that children may grow too large too soon, and that precocious physical maturity can be a bad thing. It is not our purpose, here, to debate the point, but this rather indignant letter makes an occasion for a general statement of the policy followed in this column.

It is our belief that "the realm of philosophy and human relations" involves every department of physical as well as mental existence, and that the man who desires to develop a philosophical attitude will always be eager to examine unconventional theories—not because he wants to be classed as a "radical," but because he knows that all majority opinions are in need of constant re-examination. In this instance, it doesn't seem to matter so much whether Dr. Sinclair's theories extend beyond actual fact. What does matter is that we ponder, for a time, the question of whether there may not be *some* truth in the contention that the feeding of children, like the stockpiling of atomic explosives, may be overdone.

Our handling of Dr. Sinclair's material may have been inept, as also may, conceivably, have been the doctor's methods of research and manner of drawing conclusions, but it is something more than "fuzzy-minded" to suggest that the scientific approach to nutrition often tends to obscure the fact of intensely different constitutions and needs. Some adults, and some children, are bound to eat either too much or too little, according to the theories prevailing in their households. The children of fruitarians may occasionally suffer malnutrition, while the members of the family believing in "a thoroughly balanced meal" three times a day may get an oversupply of several elements needed hardly at all. So, all that we intend, in presenting the thinking of a man like Dr. Sinclair, is to invite some reflection.

We are, of course, committed to the view that frequent breaks with orthodoxy are necessary to keep us in mental motion. Few unorthodox opinions, save those which are no more than minority dogmas, are without stimulative value. So, to have a physician or a researcher suggest that the preoccupation with physical growth can produce school children with big bodies and little minds is usefully arresting.

* * *

The *Manchester Guardian* for Feb. 12 reports another interesting and successful experiment in modified "Progressivism." A state school in Longmoor County seems to be refuting the wide-spread opinion that educational experiments of this type inevitably lead to the disintegration of order and discipline. Roy Perrott, who visited the Longmoor Primary for the *Guardian*, tells how the children are allowed to "set the pace":

> The class doing arithmetic had its desks arranged in four circular groups so that—

significantly—the boys were facing each other rather than the teacher. Arithmetic is taught here with the barest minimum of blackboard work. In all but a few lessons the boys work on their own, learning the methods and doing the problems straight from the textbook. They work at the pace that suits them, so that you might find the boy who is strongest in the subject a whole textbook ahead of the boy who is weakest. The teacher keeps a weekly record of progress for each boy (how many pages of textbook worked through, how many sums right) so that special attention can be given to any boy who is not doing as well as he should. By "should" they mean his natural capacity and not some imposed "average" level of attainment. Mr. Webb explains: "We get to know all our children well enough to understand what we can expect from each one of them and what we can't. . ."

The school is also against cultivating artificial barriers between subjects, so history, geography, painting, handicrafts, and English are largely lumped together in one portmanteau subject called "research." The class decide on a subject, discuss it with the teacher, and then for some weeks they tackle it with ferocious dedication. They paint it, model it, look up facts about it in the school library, and write stories about it. The class follows its own nose largely and no teacher can say down what strange paths of scholarship the trail will lead. One class spent some time doing research on the Bible story. This led—naturally—to the Middle East oil wells, so that below the rows of paintings of the disciples on the classroom walls you find more paintings of oil derricks, Arab chieftains, palm trees and essays on the date trade, camels and the Suez Canal. The output of work—and the appetite for it—is striking. In the past six months, encouraged by their freedom of activity, the head said, the boys have used about ten thousand sheets of writing paper for their stories and research notes.

According to Mr. Perrott, community acceptance of the Longmoor approach came quite rapidly—largely because the children were eager to get to school each morning, some of them waiting a half hour or so for the building to open. Neither the teachers nor the now enthusiastic parents claim that the program will guarantee higher academic attainments for the age group 7-11 at Longmoor, but most are convinced, as Mr. Perrott puts it, that the Longmoor pupils "will show the greater learning power, general adjustment, and stamina when they get to the senior school—and after that."

* * *

Also from England comes report of a new way of dealing with psychotic children at Smiths Hospital. Physician-Superintendent Dr. Gerald O'Gorman last year came up with what he felt to be an "odd idea," but which nagged him until he was able to try it out. As reported in *Time* for Dec. 28: "To create human relationships for the children, he called on 20 of Borocourt's higher-grade mentally defective young women. He allowed each to act as a Big Sister to two Smiths children, told them to cuddle their charges (under nurses' supervision) as much as they wanted. They promptly worked wonders." The *Time* report continues with the example of a four-year-old child who had been so demoralized by her demanding parents that she slept only two hours in her first eight days at the hospital and required three people to undress her. Jane could not relax, and was headed for a physical breakdown on top of her psychological dislocation. The introduction of "Big Sister Maggie" secured a complete reversal in the pattern. *Time* says:

Jane went to bed with Maggie, curled up in her arms and finally fell asleep. Last week Jane's shrimpish little face, once twisted with rage, beamed mischievously as she and Maggie sat on the floor, playing a private game of their own. For the first time, Jane was chattering spontaneously: "Come here, Maggie. Sit down."

Jane's case is not at all unique. When Lucy, now ten, was a toddler, she resentfully poured what she thought was some hot water over her new baby sister. It was hot paraffin, and the baby died. Lucy's horrified parents eventually drove the "wicked" child into Smiths—and the loving arms of Big Sister Agatha, who has since restored the stunned mute to hesitant speech and a chance for recovery.

We are not quite sure what comment this discovery by Dr. O'Gorman calls for. All we can think of to say is that here we have a dramatic indication that every human being, no matter what his condition, can find a useful and fulfilling role, or can be helped to find it.

FRONTIERS

The Vulnerable and the Invulnerable

APROPOS the amount of space in MANAS devoted to the subject of war, a reader writes:

> . . . what I believe and plead for is that, terrible as war is, and rumors of wars, something there is that doesn't love a wall. There *is* something in life that goes right on *being, living, breathing*, surmounting the wall. (The hardy weed of life that Frost's New England farmer couldn't wall out.) There is something else besides, and in spite of war. It is hard to believe, but I think that something else will exist through and beyond the event of a dropped atom bomb.
>
> Don't you have a prescience, a seed of *knowing* or believing that makes you, in your best moments, invulnerable, indestructible? Something that *is* and lives on through everything? There is, should be, something too good for war. For war is only war no matter how harrowing and terrible it is. War is a thing. Things come and go, even big concrete war-things. But the mystery of life, the intrinsic miracle of life, survives and surmounts and lasts.

This is a confession of faith which we honor, admire—and, since it is put in the form of a question—share. It states, one may say, a primary truth. Well, if its truth is primary, what excuse is there for talking about anything else? Only the excuse that many people, including ourselves, are deeply involved in the areas covered by secondary truths. For many people, a certain exhaustion of the content of secondary truths is needed in order to clear the ground for the primary ones.

The primary truths are all intuitive and—one likes to think—axiomatic. "Reason" is not much good for demonstrating primary truth. But reason is good for showing that anything less than the primary truths are unsatisfying. Something like this comes out in Euclid. There is a proposition which cannot be proved directly—all you can do is show that *nothing else* is true, so that, by a process of elimination, you reach the conclusion that the truth of the proposition is inescapable. So with the use of reason in connection with primary truths. There is a value in using reason to wear out intuitively untenable views.

Great philosophical religion has the capacity to generate the atmosphere of validity for the primary truths. People gain their sustenance for this sort of conviction in different quarters. We, for example, are partial to the *BhagavadGita.* In the second chapter of the *Gita* is a perfect response to this reader's appeal:

> These finite bodies, which envelope the souls inhabiting them, are said to belong to the eternal, the indestructible, unprovable Spirit, who is in the body: . . . The man who believeth that it is this Spirit which killeth, and he who thinketh that it may be destroyed, are both alike deceived; for it neither killeth nor is it killed. It is not a thing of which a man may say, "It hath been, it is about to be, or is to be hereafter)"; for it is without birth and meeteth not death; it is ancient, constant, and eternal, and is not slain when this its mortal frame is destroyed. How can the man who believeth that it is incorruptible, eternal, inexhaustible, and without birth, think that it can either kill or cause to be killed? As a man throweth away old garments and putteth on new, even so the dweller in the body, having quitted its old mortal frames, entereth into others which are new.

The great issue, in the twentieth century, as we see it, is the question of whether forthright conviction of this sort is possible for modern man. Such conviction is the food of human greatness, the support of courage, and the inspiration of unfaltering faith in the potentialities of mankind. What stands in the way? Both our virtues and our faults. It is easy to see why our faults stand in the way. Faults always get in the way of a high calling—what other reason is there for speaking of them as faults? Understanding the working of our virtues is more difficult.

The *Bhagavad-Gita is* an expression of high religion. Its speech is the voice of Krishna, the manifestation of the Divine, we are told. Krishna, according to Indian religion, is an Avatar of Vishnu, the second person of the Hindu Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu, Siva. The *Gita* is *Sruti*, or Revelation.

That is what stops us. We don't want to believe in revelation, and it is a virtue not to want to believe in revelation. Modern man demands something better than revelation. He wants something better than revelation even though he suspects, or even realizes, that the absence of an authoritative morality in his life is responsible for much of the evil which afflicts himself and his fellows. So, in this sense, as well as in others, he is man against himself.

The modern devotee of the *Gita* is different from the ancient devotee, and he ought to be. There are still types of the ancient devotee, but they are not of the present or future. They take the *Gita* as revelation. Even when they say that they know perfectly well that the personifications of the Scripture are symbolic, and not to be read literally, they take it as revelation. They don't feel the necessity to fight their way through to a personal religion. If you send to India, you can get dozens of periodicals filled with quotations and translations of Indian scriptures. But for modern man who doesn't care for revelation, the voice of Krishna is not in those quotations and translations. Yet, at the same time, he can marvel at the *Gita*, feel rather than "believe in" its riches. It is a paradoxical situation.

You hear a lot of contempt, these days, for the behavior of modern man. No doubt he deserves some of it, perhaps most of it. But he doesn't deserve all of it. What the religious critics of modern man fail to see is that, in his "best moments," he is attempting to become an embodiment of Krishna. That is, he insists on a Godhood for himself. And this, assuredly, is what the *Bhagavad-Gita* is about—*knowing for oneself.*

You hear a lot of condemnation of "intellectuality," these days. No doubt much of it, perhaps most of it, is deserved. But not all of it. The intellect, in its best moments, remains suspicious of the short-circuits of faith. The mind is the organ which makes us know that *knowing* is not easy, that there is a great difference between knowing and believing, and which insists that anything less than knowing is a poor settlement for a human being—a poor *final* settlement, that is.

Thus the mind is the organ of self-respect. In effect, the mind tells us that anything less than Pantheism in religion means an abdication of human dignity. Pantheism is the only *catholic* religion, excluding nothing from its pantheon. Pantheism is also consistent with the idea that we must know for ourselves. It is the only religion, therefore, consistent with the spirit of modern man. It tends to be the religion of the artist, the poet, of any creative individual.

It is true, of course, that modern man has no real religion. He has only half-religions—things like the scientific method, humanism, democracy, psychotherapy, the arts and literature. But this, surely, is to be expected. True religion is *knowing*, and modern man does not know.

To his credit, he does not pretend to know. That is, in his best moments he does not pretend to know. For his honesty and for his half-knowledge, he suffers a Promethean agony. Yet we whisper to one another, wonderingly, "Don't you have a prescience, a seed of *knowing* or believing that makes you, in your best moments, invulnerable, indestructible?"

Indeed, we are invulnerable as well as vulnerable. Every day, somewhere in the world, are men who seem to choose death instead of life. But they don't think of it that way. They are cleaving to something—a principle, a value, a love—which reduces death to relative unimportance. Even men who don't believe it will say that there is something worse than death, so deeply is this verity ingrained in us.

No, the horror of war is not in what may happen to us. Men can always ready themselves to die for something they believe in. Or, what is less admirable, they can be "readied." The horror of war is in what we may make happen to others. This is our vulnerability. And it is not just that we

may "kill" somebody. Killing is bad, but killing for ignoble reasons is worse than death itself.

Somehow, we have to learn to see this. We have to learn to see that when men allow themselves to be organized for war, they may submit to the motives of other men—motives they don't really feel, themselves. This is the essential ignobility. They submit to manipulation in actions which become thereby categorically evil. They become categorically evil if the first principle of true religion is that a man ought to know for himself. For if he ought to know for himself, he must also act for himself. Not even generals can act for themselves in modern war.

War is all of the bad things its contemporary critics say it is, but it is also a complete betrayal of the *Zeitgeist, of* the unique genius of modern man. It is everything we are committed to be against.

How can we make our half-religions into wholes, if we continue to make war? How can we retain the sense of invulnerability, of indestructibility, when the main business of war is to seek out man's vulnerability and destroy him? How can a genius for total destruction survive the spiritual desolation of its own works? What is invulnerable in us, what is indestructible, is the motive for a higher life. This we, and only we, can kill.

The pure in heart will no doubt come out all right. But the great heart of mankind is not pure. It is like the heart of nature, compounded of shadow and light, anger and compassion, love and hate. Krishna, let us note, spoke to mankind on a battlefield.

Private, individual salvation is not the issue. Personal immunity is not what is at stake. Our common humanity is at stake. To be even in the neighborhood of the causes of modern war flaws a man, for are we not all part of one another? If it should happen again, then none of us is innocent, none of us invulnerable, since each of us has a part in what happens in the world. If there is a *Christos* in each one of us, then there is an appropriate burden of guilt for each to bear upon his shoulders. Who would long for innocence or invulnerability when the world is transfixed with pain? We are accountable to one another for one another, since, day in day out, we act for one another. This, surely, is the meaning of social religion.