VOLUME XIV, NO. 26
JUNE 28, 1961

THE DILEMMA AND THE COMING VACUUM

MANAS receives a certain amount of mail which presents a kind of dilemma to the editors. Sometimes issues are raised which cannot, in the nature of things, be dealt with directly. Sometimes they do not seem to be the issues that really count. Sometimes the issues as stated are so familiar that endless argument about them has already produced hardened stereotypes of opinion, which make useful discussion difficult, since most people have already made up their minds. But, on the assumption that material which creates problems for editors may be good to look at simply as "problem-creating" material, we decided to examine one of these letters in public.

First, then, there is a letter from a reader in West Berlin. This man has a lifelong record of struggle for peace and freedom. He is not a Communist. On the other hand, he has no particular attachments to the capitalist or free enterprise ideology. He is probably Gandhian, as much as anything else, in his general outlook.

His letter is a comment on the MANAS article ("A Question of Consequences," March 1) which made extensive use of W. H. Ferry's advocacy of unilateral disarmament. One reason we have not used this letter before is that it mistakes a portion of Mr. Ferry's argument—the part in which, for the purposes of discussion, he accepts "the most drastic consequences" of unilateral disarmament by the U.S.—as representing the personal expectation of Mr. Ferry. Mr. Ferry does not think that if the U.S. were to disarm, the country would be overrun by a ruthless occupation of "jackbooted soldiers with Red Stars on their shoulders," although he did discuss unilateral disarmament in the context of this possibility.

Speaking to this aspect of Mr. Ferry's argument, our German correspondent writes:

> There seems to be the idea that, in case of a victory of Communism, a regime such as Americans imagine the Communist regime to be would be introduced in the United States. Let me tell you that this is neither the object of the Communists, nor is it feasible.
>
> Let us look first upon what is feasible, apart from their aims or objects.
>
> The domination of other countries by the Russian Communists has never been effectuated by Russian soldiers on street corners, nor by Russians giving orders to others. They exercise their power only with the help of the native populace.
>
> East Germany is governed by East German Communists. The Russian forces are invisible, and, since 1949, to my knowledge, Russian forces have intervened only once. Hungary was governed and is being governed by Hungarian Communists. In the other satellite countries it is the same.
>
> The Communists, so far as I know, have never thought of achieving the military occupation of a country without at least a communist minority within that country, able and willing to cooperate. It must be sufficient to supply the civil servants necessary for the government of the country.
>
> The Communists do want revolution, i.e., the rise to power of suppressed or exploited minorities, by violent or other means, but they have never sought military conquest where no such minority exists.
>
> Spain, for example, is a country fit for Communist domination. After twenty-five years of Franco, Spain has a very strong minority, perhaps a majority, which is more than willing to serve any regime that will be different from the one they have; and, the people tell me, they want it to be as different as possible. These people are not Communists in the accepted sense of the term. They have little if any knowledge of Karl Marx and his ideas. But they would welcome a revolution and would collaborate with it.
>
> In the United States, Canada, and many other countries, there is no such minority, indispensable for Communist rule. Khrushchev seems to hope that one day economic difficulties in the U.S.A. will increase to the point that such a minority will come into being,

but he must know that there is no such minority today.

> The Communist goal must not be confounded with Hitler's dream of world domination. The Communists want the world to become really Communist; they want to win the people over to Communism. The Hitlerites believed themselves to belong to a superior race and that "Providence" (Hitler's term) had ordered them to become masters of the world, of the subdued peoples of the world. They never thought of winning over "inferior" peoples, but, as in the case of the Jews, of eliminating them.

On the whole, this seems a common-sense analysis of Communist intentions. But whether or not it is a worthwhile undertaking to persuade others of the accuracy of this analysis remains a question. To weigh the value of such an effort, it is necessary to consider two questions: (1) What are the psychological components of the West's distrust of Communism and Communist representations and commitments? and (2) what of importance will have been gained if a sizeable number of people do become convinced that the analysis is a good one?

Western distrust of Communism is a complex phenomenon. There is first, and obviously, the curtailment of free expression under a Communist government. Men for whom *no* political order can exhaust the potentialities of the good life are absolutely opposed to a system which does not permit questioning of its philosophical assumptions. In Communist thought, moreover, value is determined by the "objective" political consequences of what is believed or done. No other yardstick of value exists. It follows that there is only one morality—the morality dictated by the interests of Communist political power. Traditional Western conceptions of right and wrong, truth and falsehood, good and evil have no standing in Communist thought, except as instruments of propaganda to be used expediently with or against people for whom these conceptions still have validity. At this level, Communism is the equivalent of a theology as well as a political ideology.

Besides this intellectual analysis, there is the practical experience of those who have had to deal with Communist methods based upon loyalty only to the Communist drive for power. Americans in labor unions have first-hand knowledge of the deceit and betrayal which Communists use as a matter of course in attempting to control labor organizations. Communists do not believe in the democratic process, but they will use it, exploit its respect for individuals and twist its guarantees to minorities to suit purposes which are aimed at destroying, in the end, every vestige of individual and minority rights.

There is a historical relationship, of course, between Communism and the centuries-old drive of the revolutionary movement in behalf of humanist and humanitarian ideals of freedom, justice, equality, and self-determination, but today, after such horrifying events as the Moscow Trials, the Purges, and the suppression of the Hungarian revolt, the claim of these motives by the Communists seems ridiculous to all except those who are old enough to remember a mood which existed many years ago, or those who are willing to do the research that is needed to recapture something of that mood.

Then, in a very different segment of the population, there is determined resistance to any theory or system which enthrones bureaucratic authority and would take away the right of the individual to accumulate wealth and property by reason of his skill, thrift, and personal enterprise. While conditions in the United States have changed enormously since the nineteenth century, the myth of rugged individualism lingers on, giving a pseudo-heroic cast to the rhetoric of "free enterprise" philosophy. Private property, as an instrument of personal freedom, has for some people become a symbol of the very essence of freedom, which has the effect of adding an almost religious emotion of love of freedom to the idea of private ownership. One consequence of this identification is that it closes the mind to any of the values proposed for even a wholly visionary

and hypothetically ideal socialist society. Private ownership becomes the supreme dogma instead of simply an economic home base where a man has sufficient resources to wait, consider alternatives, and decide what he will do next, instead of being told what to do by the State.

Add to these considerations the anxieties produced by the recent scientific achievements of the Soviets, the slow but inexorable spread of Communist spheres of influence; and, last but by no means least, the fact that Communists are so few in the United States, and so unwilling to identify themselves, that almost no ordinary person in America actually *knows* a Communist, or has ever talked to one, and must therefore rely wholly on an abstract idea of what a Communist is like—and you see that there is little likelihood of the American people being able to deal with the Communists on a rational basis in the immediately foreseeable future. Some kind of basic change in the climate of opinion will have to take place. Conceivably, the Communists will themselves have to contribute to the reasons for that change, before people like our German correspondent can make much headway with what seems at root a sensible argument. It may be that some dramatic change in the relations among the powerful nation-states will shake up the stereotypes of thinking all around, making new attitudes possible, but a frontal attack on American distrust of Communist representations, today, would probably only excite further suspicions.

But supposing our German correspondent's argument were accepted, what then? We shall have to stipulate that before this sort of understanding could become possible, the people so persuaded would have to learn a great deal about the slow rise in influence of the radical movement and become somewhat familiar with the facts that led our correspondent to his present views.

But given the time such study and research would take, is there a better way to spend it? This is, we submit, a *real-politik* kind of investigation. It does not question Communist assumptions, or Capitalist assumptions, but simply tries to penetrate to the springs of Communist behavior. It is quite conceivable that, by the time we have acquired some sagacity concerning this complex historical situation, the central problems of our lives will have moved into another focus. A portion of an article in the *American Scholar*, (Summer, 1961) helps to illuminate this possibility. The writer, August Heckscher, is a member of the *Scholar's* editorial board. In this discussion he reports on a visit to the Soviet Union:

> The Soviet Union is still ostensibly fighting the long battle against insufficiencies; no small part of its capacity for single-minded efforts is derived from the fact that its needs in almost all fields of human progress are very great. Yet one has the feeling that the Soviet Union may be nearer than it quite realizes to the time when abundance and even surplusses begin to confuse its purposes and dull the edge of its national efforts. The foundation of a powerful industrial civilization has been laid amid the struggles of the past forty years. From our own experiences we know how rapidly the goods can pour out of the pipelines.
>
> I remember one conversation with the young guide who was showing me about the museum where the glories and horrors of the Russian Revolution are portrayed. He was obviously somewhat appalled when I suggested he must envy those who had lived through so great a historical epoch. The Revolution, he assured me, was over, and he expressed incredulity when I told him that Thomas Jefferson had thought that a little revolution in every generation would be a good thing. "Surely," said this young Soviet citizen, "Mr. Jefferson could not have been serious."
>
> If not revolution, I asked him, what was the goal of his generation? Without a moment's hesitation he said: "The achievement of abundance in a technological society." How simple and out of date, I thought to myself. If only the American people could hold up before themselves so uncomplicated a quest! Yet these Soviet citizens are themselves destined to know in due time how subtly complex and tormenting existence can become when the simple urgencies of life have been alleviated. Actually the Russians already see the first evidences of deviation from single-minded struggle and ascertainable ends. The work week is being significantly shortened. In the

evenings in the Moscow hotels the *stilyagi*—members of the young generation relieved by the success of their fathers from economic necessities—dance to Western jazz as their particular form of protest.

"You look forward to leisure," I remarked to another young Russian acquaintance, "but how can you be sure that the people will not spend their time foolishly, as they too often do in America—for example, watching bad movies?"

"In Russia," was the immediate reply, "we don't have bad movies.

There wasn't much he could say to that, so Mr. Heckscher stopped talking. But the time will come, no doubt, when the Russians get some *very* bad movies, and some very bad other things, and unless they're busy fighting a war or indulging in some other strenuous activity which draws out the energies of the population, they will finally admit that the "abundance" they got, like the "abundance" we've had for a generation or two, leaves something else to be desired. When this happens, a new kind of communication will be possible with the Soviets. When people finally admit that there are problems which are not solved by politics, they stop making politics the ultimate test of the good, and it is possible to have *human* relations with them.

So, when we get letters proposing that we hack away at the façades of political thinking in order to get at the "truth" of a given historical situation—say, the Cuban situation—our response has a certain ambivalence. Behind the political situation is the human situation, but if you accept the definitions and values of politics, you may never get through to the human situation. On the other hand, in some accounts of, say, the Cuban situation, the human element seems very close to the surface. That is, you are able to feel an immediate relation between political and human values. We have, for example, a letter by an American working man who visited Cuba recently. The letter is deeply moving and transparently honest, it seems to us. He visited factories and studied the relationships between management and the workers under the Castro regime. The question of "Communism" hardly comes up. If you forget the ideological question, the report is enormously encouraging, in human terms. It is absolutely idiotic that such reports cannot be widely read and taken seriously by Americans simply because someone will certainly say that to do so would be evidence of being "soft" on Communism. The Communists had almost nothing to do with winning the Castro Revolution. They got in on it afterward, as is generally admitted.

It is an immeasurable pity that all the turbulent change of the twentieth century is so shadowed by the ulterior political motives of the Communists and the corresponding counter-political attitudes of the West that practically nobody can tell what is really happening, mainly for the reason that events are reported in ritual slogans. You'd think there weren't any *people* involved, just Communist and anti-Communist units of political force.

So, because of the sheer confusion introduced to any discussion by acceptance of the familiar political vocabulary, we try to wait until it seems possible to dissociate the human values from the currency of political argument. This is what we meant, at the beginning, by "problem-creating" material. Ultimately, the political argument is an argument about human nature. Since there is still a great deal that we don't know about human nature, partisan politics tends to become heavily dogmatic to cover up all the things which remain obscure. You can't launch a revolution or even win an election if you go before the people saying, "There is much that we do not know, much that is not certain, and the best we can promise is to try not to make too many mistakes."

The only politics that could operate without needing to lie, or pretend to know a lot of things which are actually unknown, would be a politics which has no interest in power. There is no such politics. The worst politics of all is the politics which pretends to *total* knowledge. This sort of politics is obliged to claim to have the solution to

all human problems. The United States has never had this sort of politics, but in its contest with Soviet politics, a variety of total politics, American spokesmen have begun to hint at similar claims.

The Communists performed a shotgun wedding for politics and economics. The Americans have made the same alliance a marriage of convenience. Meanwhile the progress of technology in both countries has created an obvious similarity of material environment. Impersonal productive power and the blind necessities of its control and direction may eventually demonstrate that in all their "routine" operations, the two political economies have more in common than anyone has supposed. The thing to hope for, it seems to us, is not any sort of "conversion" for either side, but the dawning of a recognition that the ultimate questions and values of life lie beyond even the best fulfillments that politics and economics can provide. People who adopt this view will be disinclined to pursue to the bitter end of mutual destruction the contest between political systems. Meanwhile, the serious examination of non-political questions seems the best way to work for such a realization.

REVIEW
SPLENDORS AND MISERIES OF SHEN FU

"IF your everyday life seems poor to you," wrote Rilke in his *Letters to a Young Poet,* "do not accuse it; accuse yourself, tell yourself you are not poet enough to summon up its riches, since for the creator there is no poverty and no poor or unimportant place." Rilke's words were never more needed than now. We need to learn more thoroughly a truth so old it may soon become new again, a truth that makes Rilke's words applicable to poet and non-poet alike: *There is nothing despicable about the common life.* For the common life is that life we all have in common. It includes the pains of being born and growing up, the bittersweet disturbances of falling in (and out of) love, the wearing challenges of child-raising, and so much more, coming before and after, right up to the time of preparing to die. Banal as this may sound, it is a truth nonetheless. Why is it so easily forgotten? Perhaps because everyone thinks he knows it already, has learned it "once and for all," has no need to "go back" to it.

With no attempt, then, to justify complacency (for which, given the present state of the world, there is no justification) or to encourage mediocrity (which, not too surprisingly, seems to thrive not on encouragement but its opposite), we may advance one notion concerning the recovery of this common-life truth. Whenever an artist reaches into the resources of the common life, shapes them while remaining true to them, and presents the results to us, we are likely in the extremity of our astonishment to act in one of two ways. Either we herald him as a genius, granting his work the distinction of *classic,* or we hound him to death. Often, of course, we do both. In any case, we pay tribute in art for our forgetfulness in life. We had thought, mistakenly, that there *was* a poverty, a "poor or unimportant place"; but there, where we thought it was, the artist showed us it was not. He was right, we were wrong, so we pay to get off scot-free and begin forgetting again.

Such an artist of the common life was Shen Fu (1763-1809). Writer and painter, he gained no distinction as either during his lifetime and would have none now except for one small failing—a common one. Like most of us, Shen Fu felt he had one book "in" him: his own story. Unlike most of us, he actually wrote it. When the manuscript of his autobiography, *Chapters from a Floating Life,* turned up in a second-hand bookstore in Soochow in 1877, it was immediately published. Though it lacked two of the original six chapters, and still lacks them, it became acknowledged as a minor classic not only in China but throughout the world. Now we have it in a fresh translation by Shirley M. Black (Oxford University Press, $3.75), rivalling and in some respects surpassing Lin Yutang's—the best-known in English up to this time.

Chapters from a Floating Life takes its title from a poem by Li Po:

> In this dream-like, floating life
> how often are we happy?

These lines are especially apposite when we consider the life Shen Fu led. In many ways his was a miserable life. But it was also a life shot through with occasional bright moments: those slight, happy-sad transfigurations that all of us, like Shen, reflect on as "idle pastimes." Here are Shen's reports on two such moments in his boyhood:

> In summer when the mosquitoes were buzzing like thunder, I used to pretend they were a company of cranes dancing in the air. My imagination transformed them into real birds, into hundreds and thousands of actual cranes, and I would keep my eyes on them, entranced, until I had a crick in my neck from looking upwards so intently. Once I trapped some mosquitoes behind a thin white curtain and carefully blew smoke around them until their humming became the crying of the cranes and I could see the white birds flying through the azure clouds of highest heaven. . . .
>
> I often used to crouch in the yellow of a ruined wall or squat on my heels beside one of the raised flower terraces, my eyes on a level with the plants and grasses, and with rapt attention stare at some minute

> object until, in my mind, I had transformed the grass into a dense forest and the insects and ants into wild beasts. With my spirit wandering happily in this world of my imagination I would then see the small stones as towering mountains, the slight depressions in the earth as deep ravines.

If the central interest of *Chapters from a Floating Life* were the reporting of bright moments, however, it would not be the classic it assuredly is. Most of its interest derives from Shen's treatment of what he took to be the underlying significance of his life. Eldest son of "a full-dress family, one of scholars and gentle-people," he became apprenticed to his father's profession of secretary to magistrates. Thus he and his poet wife Ch'en Yun spent (or, as they felt, misspent) the greater part of their lives moving through the shifting circles of conservative Chinese officialdom. I say moving *through* rather than *in* because from the outset Shen and Ch'en Yun—one "a sensitive, romantic, impractical lover of beauty and laughter," the other "a literate individualist. . . talented and gay, too independent of mind to fit easily into the household of her young husband's family"—knew they did not and never would "belong." Partisan alliances, "prestige parties," salon receptions tense with envy and chauvinism—none of this was *their* way, but they saw no chance either to leave or change it. On the dessicating aspects of this bureaucratic side-stepping, Mrs. Black, in her introduction, comments:

> The two artists early found themselves as much out of place . . . as would a similar couple in the political or commercial environment of our twentieth century. The problems faced by Shen Fu and Yun, and the pressures which ultimately destroyed them, were essentially the same problems and pressures which have confronted and destroyed the gentle, beauty-loving non-conformists at almost all times and in almost all places. Man has seldom been tolerant of the eccentric in his midst. But Shen Fu—dogged by misfortune, harassed by creditors, existing in miserable poverty as he did—yet managed to leave in his memoirs one of the tenderest and happiest of all love stories.

And that is the other main source of interest in *Chapters from a Floating Life:* Shen's love for Ch'en Yun. It is not too much to say he worshipped her. Almost every page gives us some reflection, subtle or direct, of his pride in Ch'en as an artist, as a wife, or simply as a human being. Their marriage lasted twenty-three years and ended (if it can be said to have ended) with Ch'en's death in 1803. Soon after this the autobiography breaks off, as if from overwhelming grief, when Shen writes: "From that time on, my life has seemed unreal, an existence full of turmoil and trouble, a dream from which I don't know when I shall awaken."

Something should be said here on the quality of Mrs. Black's translation. Since this reviewer is no sinologist he is not, of course, qualified to judge the translation's accuracy. Of its *adequacy*, however, its ability to transmit the achieved excellence of the autobiography as a meaningful reading experience, he may be qualified to say a little; for he has known the work, through Lin Yutang's translation, in *The Wisdom of China and India,* for over a decade. In comparing Mrs. Black's rendering with Lin Yutang's, certain features stand out immediately. One is Mrs. Black's idiomatic crispness—her tone of quiet, casual excitement. Compare, for example, the openings:

> I was born in 1763, under the reign of Ch'ienlung, on the twenty-second day of November. The country was then in the heyday of peace and, moreover, I was born in a scholar's family, living by the side of Ts'ang-lang Pavilion in Soochow. So altogether I may say the gods have been unusually kind to me. Su Tungp'o said: "Life is like a spring dream which vanishes without a trace." I should be ungrateful to the gods if I did not try to put my life down on record. (*Lin Yutang*)

> I was born in 1763, at a time of peace and unusual prosperity, in the reign of the Emperor Ch'ien Lung, on the twenty-second day of the eleventh month, in the winter of the year of the sheep. Mine was a full-dress family, one of scholars and gentle-people, who lived near the gardens of the Ts'ang-lang Pavilion in the city of Soochow.

> The gods, I should say, have always been more than generous to me; but, as the poet Su Tungp'o wrote:
>
> Life is like a spring dream
> which ends—and leaves no traces.
>
> By setting down this story of my life, then, I hope to show my gratitude for Heaven's many favours. (*Black*)

Another striking feature of Mrs. Black's translation is a rearrangement of episodes into "a less confusing chronological order." Unfortunately, this was accomplished at the expense of omitting many episodes concerned with "visits to temples and scenic places . . . sections of literary criticism, gardening and botany." For *Chapters from a Floating Life*, a work already short and incomplete, such omissions seem needless. However, they are to some extent compensated for by Mrs. Black's inclusion of eight illustrations. These add a period charm to the autobiography; they are reproductions of paintings by "some of the best of the individualist painters of the Ch'ing dynasty (Hue Yen, Kung Hsien, Yun Shou-p'ing)—paintings which Shen Fu, Yun and their friends might well have chosen, and in styles in which they might well have painted."

For MANAS readers previously unacquainted with *Chapters from a Floating Life;* for those who know it only in another translation; and, most of all, for those who (whether they've heard of Shen Fu before now or not) enjoy witnessing the common life uncommonly revealed—this book is for you.

RALPH S. POMEROY

Davis, California

COMMENTARY
REFLECTIONS ON TECHNOLOGY

LATELY we have been reading and savoring an essay on Henry David Thoreau, written by a MANAS reader. The thought of Thoreau is very much alive these days and this essay seems to have made explicit a great deal of the pertinence of Thoreau for our times.

While MANAS is reluctant to print three- or four-part articles—since they make the casual or new reader feel that he has come in on the middle of things—we shall probably make an exception of this material on Thoreau, provided the author is willing, and print the essay in several installments. The idea is to combine what may be a special treat for many readers with a partial release from responsibility for the editors, amounting to a brief vacation.

But what prompts us to speak of this plan in advance is the strong feeling that material of this sort ought to find more permanent form in a pamphlet or booklet. It seems a pity that the conventions of publishing at the present time amount to a barrier to putting into print almost any sort of pamphlet, except those which serve the purposes of special interest or "cause" groups. As a rule, bookstores find it difficult to sell pamphlets and are seldom willing to buy them. The bookseller—a rare one, that is—might get personally interested in the pamphlet and recommend it to a few of his customers, but not many dealers will devote much time to a low profit item like a pamphlet.

We are now living in a wilderness of plenty, and this is a condition which affects the things of the mind as well as the goods and services which play so large a part in our "standard of living." The flooding supply of books from scores of publishers has a strong tendency to turn the successful bookseller into little more than a "merchant." If he is to stay in business, he must concentrate upon moving goods, and the quality of the books he sells—or, at any rate, his personal opinion of them—becomes a secondary consideration.

It might be possible to distribute a couple of hundred pamphlets on Thoreau through conventional channels, but it would be a lot easier to put together a mystery story or a passable Western and persuade a pocket book publisher to print fifty or a hundred thousand copies which would go out to paperback racks all over the country, selling profitably for everyone at 35 cents a copy.

It isn't that there are no readers for a fine pamphlet on Thoreau. The readers exist. The problem is to find them in the enormous mechanical wilderness created by technology. To do this, you have to set up a business and create a kind of nervous system of communications with synapses that welcome Thoreau and will transmit his impulses. Thoreau and some others like him. It would be good to have a nervous system of this sort. MANAS is an attempt in this direction, but there are other ways of doing it. Distribution of the essay on Thoreau would be an example.

The behavior of an organism is directed by its nervous system. Unless the cells are reached by motor nerves, there can be no action. Every great change in the order of human life has been preceded by a fresh penetration of the great, passive mass by new channels of communication. In the past, the role of the channels has been to facilitate the organization of human energies for power. Today, however, the need is different. Today we have too much power. We have all the means in the world, but no worthy ends that the means, as commonly used, will lead to. Today the need is for a quality of life, a realization, not a pursuit. Communication is still necessary, but for another purpose—not to enable men to organize one another but to help them to appreciate one another and to share in the quality of one another's lives. A text for this spirit comes at the end of "Reunion in Brooklyn," from Henry Miller's *Sunday After the War* (reprinted in New Directions' *Henry Miller Reader*):

> I believe that it is now possible for me to have my being anywhere on earth. I regard the entire world as my home. I inhabit the earth, not a particular portion of it labeled America, France, Germany or Russia. I owe allegiance to mankind, not to a particular country, race or people. I answer to God and not to the Chief Executive, whoever he may happen to be. I am here on earth to work out my own private destiny. My destiny is linked with that of every other living creature inhabiting this planet—perhaps with those on other planets too, who knows? I refuse to jeopardize my destiny by regarding life within the narrow rules which are now laid down to circumscribe it. I dissent from the current view of things as regards murder, as regards religion, as regards society, as regards our well-being. I will try to live my life in accordance with the vision I have of things eternal. I say "Peace to you all!" and if you don't find it, it's because you haven't looked for it.

Not very many moderns write in this way. Not many men could make a direct communication of this sort without self-consciousness and embarrassment. And it isn't only a lack of skill with words that keeps them from saying such things. They haven't got around to having *feelings* about the central realities of their lives. Thoreau had these feelings and thought great thoughts about them. We need a living currency of ideas of this sort to enrich our lives.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
DISCUSSION ON INTELLIGENCE TESTS

A RECENT reference to material critical of widespread reliance upon IQ and "personality" tests (MANAS, May 17) has brought some counter-criticism from one of the coauthors of *Critical Thinking Appraisal*, Dr. Edward M. Glaser. In this book, Dr. Banesh Hoffmann (whose March *Harper's* article we quoted) found what he considered to be a typical example of faulty logic in the assumptions of a multiple-choice test, and the MANAS piece supported Dr. Hoffmann.

Dr. Glaser is certainly within his rights in reminding MANAS and its readers that a skillfully prepared test, either for the armed forces or for personnel directors in corporate enterprise, brings mutual benefits both to management and to the man who is to be managed—for "test batteries" no doubt reduce the round pegs in square holes. One of Dr. Glazer's questions to MANAS is this:

> What do you mean by ". . . educators who accomplish work of real significance fail to place any important reliance upon 'tests' "? Are you saying that no educator who places important reliance upon tests has accomplished work of real significance? If so, do you really know that to be true? Do you really believe that? Do you know anything, for example, about the tremendous improvements made in pilot selection and training during World War II by developing tests wherein obtained scores correlated very clearly and significantly with ability to pass flying school training, and which reduced attrition and saved lives by selecting only those with cutting scores above a certain point? Do *you* know anything about studies of what happens to students below an I.Q. of 125 at a school like Cal Tech compared with those who scored higher?

Well, we shall have to admit that our phrasing was a fulsome generalization and in need of explanation. An explanation, however, is partially furnished by what Dr. Glaser says above, referring to "pilot selection and training during World War II." However necessary an air force may or may not be—and this depends upon how one views the institution of war—we would hardly consider pilot training in wartime to be an *educational* "work of real significance." Or, at least, the sort of education *we* consider of real significance must have to do with the enlargement of philosophical and psychological perspectives, with the development of a more subtle ethical sense. So a distinction can be claimed between education and training—a distinction which also holds for the young physicists who grace the halls of the California Institute of Technology. But to go on: Dr. Glaser submitted a rebuttal to the Banesh Hoffmann article to *Harper's*, and has sent us a copy for inspection. One paragraph seems to us to be of particular interest, for it shows that Dr. Glaser and his associates are well aware of these considerations. He writes:

> I am no general devotee of multiple-choice tests, and certainly not of their indiscriminate use, but they do have a valuable place among the tools available for mental measurement. In our certification examinations for psychologists in California (and I am a member of the State Psychology Examining Committee) we give 2/3 weight to essay questions, have just moved from multiple-choice to sentence completion for the remaining third, and in the future may move entirely to essay questions. This type of examination, however, is one where we have only 15-20 post-doctoral candidates at each administration of the test, and we want an intense testing of ability to apply basic knowledge and demonstrate sensitivity to ethical considerations, rather than a measure of academic or intellectual performance, which presumably was assessed by the universities which granted the doctorate degrees.

So it is here, perhaps, among the select few, that we find the kind of testing which is important for everyone—and for the reasons mentioned. Dr. Glaser is not arguing theory, however, but pointing to the fact that there is a practical need for tests of another sort in areas where sheer weight of numbers and pressure of time limit what may be done. In respect to the universities, Dr. Glaser has this to say about the practical problem:

> How shall we distinguish the worth of the 920th man who received a Merit Scholarship in 1959 from that of the 921st man? We will assume that such a

> distinction is worth making, even if very costly. If there are only 920 scholarships available, we might use objective tests to pick the top 870. It might then be desirable to take the next hundred and use more refined personal assessment devices to try to pick the most promising so from this borderline 100. The examiners could use biographical data, interview, essay subject-matter tests, psychometric tests, etc., to give the Banesh Hoffmanns (if they are in this group) every opportunity to demonstrate their exceptional atypical and unique abilities.
>
> The universities, faced with this problem, have admitted that all the extra devices they have added to judge the borderline cases leave them unsatisfied. By continual research on the forecasting efficacy of these assessment methods they can be refined and sharpened over a period of time. By such refinement perhaps we will enter more fully into the pericardium but as fallible humans, let us not be so immodest as to think we can ever arrive into the very heart of truth !

This seems to be evidence that the test manufacturers so strongly criticized by Dr. Hoffmann are not neglecting the obligation to re-examine and reappraise. As Dr. Glaser says, "many test authors and publishers make frequent or constant efforts to improve the validity and reliability of their instruments." Well, all right, but it is possible to develop a psychic claustrophobia when confronted with paraphernalia, no matter how much improved, for further "analytic understanding" of everybody. As for the relationship between the present younger generation and adult understanding of them on the basis of routine psychological criteria, we note the following short paragraph from Harold Taylor's piece for the May 29 *Saturday Review,* titled "The Understood Child":

> We have thought that relations between people must always be free of tension, that children and parents must always understand each other. . . . At every step members of the younger generation have been cautioned, watched and studied, treated as subjects for analysis. They are the children of understanding parents. They have learned to live with the handicap of being understood. . . .

We are chiefly interested in pointing up a distinction between the things a man can *do* (which may, on the basis of averages, be fairly closely predicted by tests) and what a man can *be* (which enters the realm of transcendental philosophy). We should not, of course, leave the impression that we somehow "disapprove" of the use of IQ and aptitude tests by government agencies and corporations. Such tests undeniably have a legitimate function—for government and industry. On the other hand, like Joseph Wood Krutch (see his *The Measure of Man),* we are appalled at the authoritarian role of psychological classification and manipulation as portrayed by B. F. Skinner in *Walden II.* The tendency to classify human beings always seems to us dangerous, whether by religion, ethnic background or by what Dwight Macdonald calls political group "animism."

So this is the origin of our feeling about testing. The educators who most inspired us are men like Homer Lane, A. S. Neill, and Bruno Bettelheim, whose rare capacity for educational "achievement" would, in their own opinion, have been blunted by much objective testing of their pupils.

FRONTIERS

Epic Struggles Through Privation

MAN'S battles against threatening forces of nature, unlike his warfare against those of his own kind, often bring a deepening of humanity instead of the primitive reactions of self-survival. Three books—amounting to a trilogy of almost incredible adventures of the sea and of frozen lands—are now available for those who are addicted, as we are, to pocket books. David Howarth's *Sledge Patrol* (Ballantine reprint of Macmillan's 1957 hard-cover edition), A1fred Lansing's *Endurance* (Avon reprint of McGraw-Hill's 1959 edition) and Farley Mowat's *The Grey Seas Under* (Ballantine reprint of Little, Brown & Co.'s 1958 edition) have a great deal in common. These are true stories, with settings in the icy vastnesses of Greenland, the Antarctic, and Nova Scotia.

In *Sledge Patrol,* incidentally, Howarth also gives us the "full" tale of World War II in Greenland—a war extremely difficult for the handful of men involved, since competitive struggle and the prospect of taking of human life are alien to the psychology which develops among men who find a brotherhood in combating the cold. Mr. Howarth writes of the attitudes which unite men in the Arctic:

> The fact is that in the Arctic men have a higher standard of morality than they have in civilised surroundings. Standards of morality are partly matters of custom and convention. In commerce, for example, one man expects another to bargain to his own advantage, in urban life, there are social ladders to be climbed; in employment, there is competition for promotion. All these aspects of civilisation are competitive and selfish, circumstances and conventions tempt every man to try to go one better than his neighbour, even though this may mean depriving his neighbour of whatever advancement both of them are seeking. Usually, this universal struggle and competition is silent and polite, and it is so wholly accepted that one forgets that it is selfish; but it has the seeds in it of jealousy and covetousness and greed, and thence of crime.
>
> Convention in the Arctic is different. There is nothing to struggle for there, except to keep alive in difficult surroundings, and in this all men are in co-operation, never in competition; and so mutual distrust has almost died away. There is no crime worth mentioning in the Arctic, except in the areas where civilisation has invaded it with air bases or mining camps or intensive trading in furs; and those places have ceased to be truly Arctic. Nobody in the real Arctic ever locks a door. It is taken for granted that any traveller will be welcomed wherever he may go: he may walk into anybody's house and stay there, whether the owner is at home or away. Even the poorest hut is left ready to be lived in, with a fire laid in the stove, in case somebody passes that way and suddenly needs refuge in a storm. It goes without saying that any man may look for help and kindness and generosity from any other. Political and social quarrels seem infinitely far away and quite absurd, and nobody takes much account of nationality.
>
> Besides this, the Arctic scene has qualities which bring out the best in every man. Nobody who has even lived there for long has remained unmoved by its harmony and beauty. Even the least sensitive of men, alone in the Arctic, feels nearer to whatever God he worships. Every man, within his limitations, becomes a philosopher. So the Arctic paradox arises: that though a man can only live there by ruthless hunting, and although he must be physically tough, his relations with other men are gentle and trustful and peculiarly innocent.

This was the psychological and physical environment of the fifteen men chosen by Governor Brun of Greenland to form a sledge patrol to guard against a German attempt to set up a weather station. The combined German army and navy forces for this project numbered nineteen. The Germans sailed to Greenland in the summer of 1942 from Kiel, under the command of a lieutenant in the German navy. Lt. Ritter was not a Nazi and he had long ago fallen in love with the Arctic, so that the men he might have to fight were men he respected and admired. (If fight he must, he would have preferred to clash with two heavily-indoctrinated Nazis in his own command.)

The adventures of these two "armies" are fascinating indeed, not only because of the physical details of feats accomplished during attempts to carry out their objectives, but also for

the psychological dimensions involved. Eventually Lt. Ritter was captured, and he developed a close bond with the Danish leader, Poulson. After the war was over, these two maintained a correspondence during which Poulson, hearing that Ritter had come on hard times back in his native Austria, offered to lend him the money for an emigration to Canada. Although this could not be accepted, the occasion of Howarth's writing *Sledge Patrol* brought the two men together in a friendly meeting. In referring to Ritter on a final page of "notes," Howarth concludes with this sentence: "His ex-enemies, among whom I include myself, all wish him well; we all recognize the old truth which was shown again in that Arctic spring of 1943: that it is proper for all true men of every nation to act together in opposition to evil and oppression, wherever and whenever they arise."

Alfred Lansing's *Endurance* is a much-talked-of volume, a Book of the Month selection in its original edition. It is the story of Sir Ernest Shackleton's trans-Antarctic expedition of 1914, Twenty-seven men were stranded on the ice of the Weddell Sea, near the South Pole, when their ship, *The Endurance,* was crushed by an ice pack. Between October 27, 1915, and May 10, 1916, Shackleton accomplished the unbelievable—preserving the life of every man through storms and blizzards, near-starvation, frostbite turned to gangrene, and an open-boat journey in the most dangerous seas known on the face of the globe. With two other men, Shackleton was finally forced to make an overland crossing of South Georgia Island, a feat previously regarded as impossible, and one never duplicated until 1955. A single passage from Mr. Lansing's epilogue suggests why Shackleton's courage and endurance has so often been called "incredible":

> The crossing of South Georgia has been accomplished only by one other party. That was almost forty years later, in 1955, by a British survey team under the able leadership of Duncan Carse. That party was made up of expert climbers and was well equipped with everything needed for the journey. Even so, they found it treacherous going.
>
> Writing from the scene in October, 1955, Carse explained that to make the crossing, two routes were available—the "high road" and the "low road."
>
> "In distance," Carse wrote, "they are nowhere more than 10 miles apart, in difficulty they are hardly comparable.
>
> "We to-day are travailing easily and unhurriedly. We are fit men, with our sledges and tents and ample food and time. We break new ground but with the leisure and opportunity to probe ahead. We pick and choose our hazards, accepting only the calculated risk. No lives depend upon our success—except our own. We take the high road.
>
> "They—Shackleton, Worsley and Crean . . . took the low road.
>
> "I do not know how they did it, except that they had to—three men of the heroic age of Antarctic exploration with 50 feet of rope between them—and a carpenter's adze."

The Grey Seas Under is the life story of an ocean-going tug, first built in 1918 and exhumed from Hamburg Harbor in 1930 for service in Nova Scotia. This may not sound like interesting reading, but Mr. Mowat makes it so. The reader becomes intimate with the men responsible for the extraordinary rescues accomplished by this unpretentious ship. Here, as in the case of *Endurance,* and so very largely in *Sledge Patrol,* the "enemy" consists of the turbulent forces of nature. In this setting we see the best of manhood created, rather than destroyed, courage and resourcefulness born in our day to match that of the adventure of ancient times. Nearly all the men written about in these three books had something in common with Ulysses.