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THE ESTATE OF MAN

IT was a contention of Leo Tolstoy, set out at length in his *Confession,* that the way a man looks at himself, his sense of the meaning of his life, affects profoundly his judgment of the world. An embittered man, surely, is no one to turn to for an estimate of human possibility. An angry man jaundices all his communications with the rancor that is his constant companion. Men who are essentially timid will never construct systems in which daring plays a major role. Philosophers without an ear for music or a love of the dance have no business designing for us arid utopias with no room for midsummer night's dreams.

One wonders, sometimes, if anyone who has not yet made some kind of psychological settlement with the universe, consciously, deliberately, should be permitted to write at all. A rule such as this would of course be a piece of intolerable arrogance, for who could define the proper settlement? Yet the *idea* of a measure of the competence of a man to write seriously about the meanings of things is a good one to consider. Henry Beston, a contemporary writer of fairy tales and of exquisite nature narratives, has an expression, "on the side of life." A man who writes ought to be on the side of life. He ought to be some kind of optimist, without being a sentimentalist.

There is a terrible hunger, these days, for thinking which reflects man's sense of identity and his relation to the world about him. It is a pity that the scientific method, with all its practical achievements, should have brought discouragement to writing of this sort.

A certain desperation, it seems, must attend the modern thinker who permits himself the latitude to engage his mind with ultimate questions, with primary values, without benefit of the scientific method. Only the existentialists have had the courage to do this; and it is their courage, as much or more than their desperation, one may suppose, which gives them their wide influence, these days.

A little less than ninety years ago—in 1874—Edward Bellamy, who was then twenty-four, set down his views of himself and the world in the form of a brief statement of philosophy. Bellamy is known to most as an American socialist and author of the famous utopian romance, *Looking Backward.* But Bellamy began life as a philosopher—a natural philosopher, one might say—a man for whom thought about primary values was inescapable. In this paper, which would make about sixteen pages of a good-sized book, he begins by recording the feeling of rapport with the wide world—or with something universal within the wide world—expressing the view that this is, or ought to be, the common experience of man. He speaks of "the brooding warmth and stillness of summer nights," when the human being may be visited by a sense of almost infinite extension of being. Other men have written of this feeling, of being overtaken by the very tempo of universal life, of experiencing the gentle waves of existence pass through one's being, as if the body, or rather its tenant, the *psyche,* had for that moment found an omnipresent medium, a continuous sea, in which to live. Bellamy writes:

> Thus continually does the spirit in man betray affinity with nature by vague and seemingly purposeless longings to attain a more perfect sympathy with it. So far as this universal and strongly marked instinct can be distinctly interpreted, it indicates in human nature some element common with external nature, toward which it is attracted, as with the attraction of a part toward a whole, and with a violence that ofttimes renders us painfully conscious of the rigorous confines of our organism. This restless and discontented element is not at home in the personality, its union with it seems mechanical rather than chemical, rather of position than of essence. It is homesick for a vaster mansion than the personality affords with an unconquerable yearning, a divine discontent tending else-whither.

You could say, perhaps, that this is a "mystical" point of view, but for Bellamy it was the plain currency of psychological experience. What a

pleasure it would be to live amongst people who all expected to enjoy such experience, as the common endowment of human life!

Bellamy was a distinguished man—a great man, if you will—but he was not so far removed from the rest of us to be unique in this respect. The difference, perhaps, is that Bellamy had the good sense to honor such experience, to take it seriously. Such were the primary realities in his life, and of them he made his philosophy.

As he put it:

> Now who can doubt that the human soul has more in common with that life of all time and all things toward which it so eagerly goes out, than with that narrow, isolated, incommodious individuality, the thrall of time and space, to which it so reluctantly, and with such a sense of belittlement and degradation, perforce returns?
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> Very often must it happen to everyone when wandering abroad at night, to feel the eyes drawn upward as by a sense of the majestic, overshadowing presence. . . . The soul of the gazer, drawn on and on, from star to star, still travels toward infinity. He is strange to the limitations of terrestrial things; he is out of the body. He is oppressed with the grandeur of the universal frame; its weight seems momentarily to rest upon his shoulders. But with a start and a wrench as of life from soul the personality reasserts itself, and with a temporary sense of strangeness he fits himself once again to the pigmy standards about him. The experiences which have been mentioned are but examples of the sublime, ecstatic, impersonal emotions, transcending the scope of personality or individuality, manifested by human nature, and of which the daily life of every person affords abundant instances.

Generous Bellamy! Yet he must be more right than wrong. This is the sort of thinking which gives depth and a variety of riches to the conventional vocabulary of Value. We talk of "individuality" in a cant sort of way, pressing the importance of freedom and originality. We speak of "human dignity" and the precious privacy of the individual, until these ideas wither into slogans. But for a man like Bellamy, each of these elements of thought must have been filled with vaulting dimensions of meaning. At any rate, he spent almost the whole of his short life of forty-nine years in incessant labor to reduce human pain and in a war against injustice and poverty. His biographer, Arthur E. Morgan, has made this plain. Such thinking made Bellamy capable of a love of his fellows that many of us would like to feel. It gave him, also, a simple but coherent metaphysic:

> What, then, is the view of human nature thus suggested? On the one hand is the personal life, the atom, a grain of sand on a boundless shore, a bubble on a foam-flecked ocean, a life bearing a proportion to the mass of the past, present, and future life, so infinitesimal as to defy the imagination. Such is the importance of the person. On the other hand is a certain other life, as it were a spark of the universal life, insatiable in aspiration, greedy of infinity, asserting a solidarity of all things, all existence, even while subject to the limitations of space and time and all other of the restricting conditions of the personality. On the one hand is a little group of faculties of the individual, unable even to cope with the few and simple conditions of material life, wretchedly failing, for the most part, to secure tolerable satisfaction for the physical needs of the race, and at best making slow and painful progression. On the other hand, in the soul, is a depth of divine despair over the insufficiency of this existence, already seemingly too large, and a passionate dream of immortality, the vision of a starving man whose fancy revels in full tables.
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> Such is the estate of man, and such his dual life. . . . This dual life, personal and impersonal, as individual and as universal, goes far to explain the riddle of human nature and of human destiny.

Not science, not international disaster or political preoccupations, but a shriveling of mind has made such independent thinking almost non-existent in our time. Yet a walk by the sea can bring a man to such thoughts. We talk of empiricism. What is more empirical than the impact of the world upon the sensitive consciousness of a human being who is reaching out to feel the radiance of the stars, to pierce the mystery of the depths of space? This there was before there were telescopes. Because of this, telescopes were invented. This longing, this will-to-know, this immediate response of the heart to some greater, though intangible, organ of life—we know no more substantial reality within or without our being.

The brooding of the mind and the invitation of the feelings make the beginning of every creative act. They are the essence of being human. The intimations which we have at such times are the very fabric of our existence. The rest is elaboration and rationalization. The rest is all a finite monument to the spirit which endlessly continues within.

There is a sense in which it is perfectly incredible that such a point of view should need argument, assertion, or defense. For that is what men are, what they always have been, and what they always will be. It is the substance and the sum.

When the malignant radioactive dust of the last atomic bomb has settled, human beings will still be of this order and quality and promise. Nothing will have been changed. So far as the human essence is concerned, we do not move toward some Never-Never land of the scientific millennium. No secret awaits in the Greek Kalends to be discovered. We are all that, now. Every true artist knows this. Every man who is twice-born from Promethean agony knows it, wherever he sought his pain, and wherever he encountered it. Bellamy could not mistake the revelation of his own humanity:

> In the universal instincts within us we are given sure and certain lodestones that we must interpret by meditation and follow with enthusiasm and faith, whereof the steadily increasing force and clearness of our intuitions will afford constant justification. Surely a more engaging mode of life than its own infinite enlargement we could not set before us. What respect can be claimed for aspirations after other forms and higher grades of life by those who are too dull to imagine the present infinite potentialities of their souls? When will men learn to interpret their intuitions of heaven and infinite things in the present, instead of forever in the future?

We say we want peace. There are many plans and projects, but little attention to the question of whether we are capable of peace. We shall never, quite possibly, get peace by pursuing it. Peace, as Roy Kepler said some weeks ago, is not a "thing." It is not to be had, any more than love and happiness are to be had, from pursuing them as "worthy objectives." Peace is for those to whom it belongs by reason of the consistency with peace of what they are and what they do and care about doing.

Is it, then, an imitation of Bellamy, or an imitation of Christ, that should be undertaken? No! All our failures in ethics and moral striving lie in the direction of imitation. An imitation of anything is the mind's first and last defeat. The mind is always displaced by imitation. What truth is ours is not gained by imitation. It would do no good to make Bellamy's philosophy into a manual of devotion, although worse manuals might be chosen. If Bellamy can help us to discover something of the quality of manhood that is required for original thinking, well and good, but it is the original thinking that is required.

It is time for a little savagery toward this doctrine of imitation. If we do not become savagely opposed to the endless forms of imitation which are pressed upon us, we shall end by becoming savage toward one another—more savage, that is, than we already are. The mob spirit is generated by the hope of salvation through imitation. Imitation is a habit in which we are daily indoctrinated by the hidden persuaders. Imitation makes us the slave to fashions, fads, clichés, slogans, and empty, inane repetition of emptier claims, fears, suspicions, and assertions concerning what we have to do to "survive." It were better, to quote one of the non-imitators of the past, that a millstone were hung about our necks and we were cast into the sea. No obsessively imitative people deserves to be preserved. Why should Nature break her authentic laws of human survival in our behalf? To continue to live as human beings, men must think for themselves.

Bellamy made his own credo. He made it out of the stuff of his inner life. He mined it like a precious metal from the same terrain on which all stand. He refined it from the ore possessed by every man. It is good to read Bellamy. It is good to read the *Bhagavad-Gita,* the *Upanishads,* the discourses of the Buddha, the writings of Plato and Plotinus, the reverent reflections of Amiel, the wondering vision of Emerson, the unequivocal announcements of Thoreau. It is good to read Tolstoy and other men who wrestled with themselves and who ordered their minds by the best light the world of sapience and learning could give them. To know the past will keep us humble, although it will never make us

original. We shall not, of course, discover anything really "new." But originality is not novelty. Originality is wherever a new fire is lighted. It is the same fire; the newness is in the place where it is lighted. It is the same and not the same. It is like a new-born baby, infinite in potentiality, while no different, in its coming, than the countless billions of other babies which have preceded it. Yet it is itself, sacred, individual, blessed by the fact of being—an individual with the consciousness of worlds to be realized. The voice of a man who is thinking for himself, truly, is always heard across the centuries, because it has a light which belongs to the central fire.

There is no soporific "agreement" among those who think for themselves. If there were, we should have a dogma to end all dogmas and a system that would make the Nazis look like beginners in organizing the world for evil purposes. There is, however, a similarity of mood, a consanguinity of ends, and a community of value. And there is a mode, a principle of action, which might be expressed in the rule that a man must begin to think as though he were the first ever to think at all.

No great sacrifice is entailed in pursuit of this ideal. We need turn our back upon nothing that has worth or has proved its usefulness. All that is wanted is recovery of respect for the strength of man's mind and its capacity to determine value by independent reflection. Men with strength of mind can make peace. They can do anything that is worth doing in the world. But to have strength of mind, it is necessary to use the mind and to honor its judgments in conduct.

This is the reform the world needs above all. This is the reform the world needs above all because it is the only reform which can make all the other reforms *work.* The mind is the common instrument of understanding. Whatever is in the heart, has to be given a form by the mind before it can have its effect. A great love can never be contained in a mean embodiment. You can't love your fellow men while showing disrespect for the thing that makes them human—their capacity to think. That is why the dogmatic religions can never have their way with the world. Love and faith are fine things—sometimes—but love and faith which neglect the high passion for intellectual impartiality are tainted by either fear or laziness or conceit, or a combination of all three. In the dogmatic religions, love and faith are undermined by the weakness of imitation, by unreasoning devotion to the props and scenery of time, place, and personality.

Sometime, somewhere, we shall begin to get the makings of a society of men who think for themselves. It will grow from essential self-respect. That is all we have, really, to make the good society out of—our self-respect and the quality and experiences in our lives which establish self-respect as the mark of sanity and intelligence. Edward Bellamy is a good illustration of a man who found reason for self-respect, and his life is a good illustration of how genuine self-respect puts a man to work. His essay, *The Religion of Solidarity,* is contained in a small book by Arthur E. Morgan, entitled *The Philosophy of Edward Bellamy,* published in 1945 by the King's Crown Press (a division of Columbia University Press). There may be a few copies of this book still available.

REVIEW
NOTES ON NOVELS

JOHN D. MacDONALD, best known for his tales of suspense (*Murder in the Wind* was quite a story, and except for the lurid, pocket-book cover its emphasis was on the "wind" of a wild hurricane, rather than on murder), will now be suspected of also being something of a moralist. His latest, entitled *The Deceivers,* seems something of a companion volume to *Moon on Fire,* for it concerns the disruption of the home from a similar vantage point—all the characters are worthwhile, even though erring or confused. While dramatizing an adulterous affair, MacDonald does not capitalize upon the sensual appeal usual in such tales, but makes adultery just as complicated and potentially destroying as it often is.

The Deceivers also brings forth MacDonald's talent for social and cultural criticism, and two of his passages are hard hitting enough to be memorable. Toward the close of the book the leading character, in plenty of trouble and saddled to a job he dislikes, encounters an Armenian doctor named Kacharian. Kacharian is a happy man who enjoys his work. In the following conversation he tries to explain why Western culture is producing so many jaded men and women:

> "Something has happened to satisfactions. People don't seem to be getting as much as they deserve out of this fuller, richer life. I like what I'm doing so damn much that I often feel guilty when I treat people for physical ailments that are purely and simply the result of the emotional strain of working year after year at pointless, empty jobs. I beg your pardon. Speechmaking is one of my social afflictions. Bonny's endured this opus many times."
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> "If there's more, I'd like to hear it."
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> "Is your job a challenge to you, Mr. Garrett, Carl? Call me Kach, by the way."
>
> "It's all right, I guess. No. I'll do better than that. It's pretty damn dull. And there's a lot of years of it left. And I've even been making it duller than it should be. Masochism, I guess."
>
> "Okay. So how does modern man arrange to rebel against a barren use of his years and his life, rebel against all the wastage of the big dreams he had about himself when he was young? Our civilization is so compartmentalized that the little guy can't see the relationship of his efforts to the whole. So his work is unreal to him, and hence meaningless. The artisan is pretty damn rare. So we get into psychosomatics. A woman spends four years soldering wire A to terminals B and C, and gets an arthritic condition of the hands that gets her out of the trap. Safety engineers put every known safety device on a punch press, but a man will work on it for five years and then manage to get his hand into it, even if he has to push the release with his nose. A meat cutter in a packing house will become an alcoholic. A truck driver will acquire a classic ulcer. But some of them will react in other ways. After eight years of running the same piece of IBM office equipment, the once decent girl will become an after hours pushover. Or the lathe operator will take to beating his wife up. Or killing his entire family and himself. People with the dull little jobs become maniacs on the highway, or turn accident prone in all manner of ways, or just get sick. Or a man like you expresses his rebellion by indulging himself in an affair. I tell you, Carl, nobody will ever be able to measure all the human misery that is the indirect result of the inescapable boredom and sense of purposelessness that derives from a civilization so mechanized and complicated that a man can no longer take pride and satisfaction in the one little fragment that is his part of the whole ball of wax."

Mr. MacDonald turns to the other side of the picture, showing that the problem involves much more than a case of "moral man and immoral society." At least, when a man's life is basically awry, when his chief aim in life is to be amused, he compounds the difficulty. MacDonald moves from the description of a town to the description of many a Babbitt of the 1950's:

> There were a lot for words for Hillton. Industrial complex. Lunch-bucket town. A forward-looking American city making a wise and valiant effort to solve its problems of traffic congestion, slum clearance, high taxes and high crime rate. Or, a vital clog in the industrial might of America. Or, a rather inviting target for an atomic warhead. Or, a foul and

grubby place to live and try to bring up kids, for God's sake, and keep them from running wild.

It was, he suspected, like all of the other cities in the heartland of America. Or maybe all the cities of all time. Dedication mated to venality. Energy and progress linked to idleness and sin. But in this time, louder than ever before, rang out the plea that was more than half command—AMUSE ME. Fill these sour hours of this, my own and only life, with the gut-buster joke, the rancid ranch-hand laments about love, the flounderings and hootings and vomitings of the big bender. By God, I want the girlie shows and the sex books, and a big cigar as a sign of masculinity and success. I want to be slim without dieting, smart without half trying, rich without working. And I want to read all about it, read all about hell for the other guy—with pics of him strewn on the highway, or cleaved with an axe, or being carried out of the mine. So I can hug old precious, invaluable, unique and irreplaceable me. Amuse me. That keeps me rolling along, boy. So I can live without dying, and right at the end of my world, die without thinking. Then all the rest of you can go to hell because I won't be there, and by God, when I was here, I had it good. I had it sweet and hot and often.

This sort of talk may be a little rough to take, but can it be attributed solely to vitriol thrown at "the system," or to cynicism? The failure of the average modern to make proper use of his freedom from toil has produced a culture easy to control, but extremely difficult to inspire. This, we recall, was the central theme of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World.* In a science-fiction novel, *The City and the Stars,* Arthur C. Clark describes a social system entirely run by machinery, so that no one had to engage in productive labor. The city found itself starved for originality. Khedron, the Jester, explains why the city fathers decided that his office was necessary. The city of Diaspar was in the doldrums, and something had to be done:

"Diaspar has survived and come safely down the ages, like a great ship carrying as its cargo all that is left of the human race. It is a tremendous achievement in social engineering, though whether it is worth doing is quite another matter.

"Stability, however, is not enough. It leads too easily to stagnation, and thence to decadence. The designers of the city took elaborate steps to avoid this, though these deserted buildings suggest that they did not entirely succeed. I, Khedron the Jester, am part of that plan. A very small part, perhaps; I like to think otherwise, but I can never be sure."

"And just what is that part?" asked Alvin, still very much in the dark, and becoming a little exasperated.

"Let us say that I introduced calculated amounts of disorder into the city. To explain my operations would be to destroy their effectiveness."

One can, if one wishes—although few do—carry the theme of destruction of individuality in the over-privileged society to a sometimes unfavorable comparison with Communism. In Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* we find some passages wherein the Good American type is reminded that the meaning of "individuality," like that of "freedom," changes around considerably according to circumstances. The Englishman is explaining the Far East to the American:

"So you think we've lost?"

"That's not the point," I said. "I've no particular desire to see you win. I'd like those two poor buggers there to be happy—that's all. I wish they didn't have to sit in the dark at night, scared."

"You have to fight for liberty."

"I haven't seen any American fighting around here. And as for liberty, I don't know what it means. Ask them." I called across the floor in French to them. *"La liberté—qu'est-ce que c'est la liberté?"* They sucked in the rice and started back and said nothing.

Pyle said, "Do you want everybody to be made in the same mould? You're arguing for the sake of arguing. You're an intellectual. You stand for the importance of the individual as much as I do—or York."

"Why have we only just discovered it?" I said. "Forty years ago no one talked that way."

"It wasn't threatened then."

Ours wasn't threatened, oh no, but who cared about the individuality of the man in the paddy field—and who does now? The only man to treat him as a man is the political commissar. He'll sit in his hut and ask his name and listen to his complaints;

> he'll give up an hour a day to teaching him—it doesn't matter what, he's being treated like a man, like someone of value. Don't go on in the East with that parrot cry about a threat to the individual soul. Here you'd find yourself on the wrong side—it's they who stand for the individual and we just stand for Private 23987, unit in the global strategy."
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> "You don't mean half what you are saying," Pyle said uneasily.
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> "Probably three-quarters. I've been here a long time."

Well, it does no harm, once in a while, to take a long look at the more unfavorable aspects of some typical American attitudes. Maybe not even three-quarters of what *The Quiet American* had to listen to, here, is true, but *some* of it is true. We ought to think about how much of it is true.

COMMENTARY
MAN AS GIVEN

A READER writes to ask for further explanation of the idea of "taking man as given." This phrase was used at the close of a lead article in a recent MANAS (July 2):

> To take man as given means to combine an extraordinary confidence with a deep humility. It means that you don't explain away any human quality in the terms of some kind of superhuman or inhuman causation. Neither a theory of God nor a theory of objective nature is allowed to invade the region of human autonomy. Only the religion and the science which can enter that region without any subversive, imperialistic designs, are welcome.

Taking man "as given" is of course not easy. Man is given in great variety. The quotations from Robert M. Hutchins and from the Rockefeller Report (See "Children") are good illustrations of the diversity of man's nature, yet these quotations also show some success in taking man as given.

Fundamentally, the issue is one of *intent*. We are not called upon to make final definitions of man as given, but mostly to avoid them. Take the problem of crime. What shall we do about the propensity for evil?

One explanation of crime is that man is sinful and prone to evil unless changed by a spiritual transformation effected by the Deity. Another explanation—now unpopular—is that there is a criminal "type," more or less produced by heredity. Then there are the racist theories of the good and the bad people, and the slightly less offensive nationalist theories, and the class theories.

The trouble with all these doctrines—apart from the fact that they are insanely arrogant—is that those who maintain them always feel quite justified in completing the arrangements overlooked by either the Deity or Nature. Sinners must be punished. The curiously spotless administrators of societies dominated by the theory of the sinfulness of man had no reluctance in making sure that men who broke the law were cruelly punished for their offenses. And the champions of some version of social Darwinism have never been especially disturbed by the liquidation of inferior breeds.

People with partisan theories of human behavior are all too willing to condemn others. But if you take man as given—as a being, that is, of unknown and unpredictable potentialities—you will not judge another human being. You may find it necessary to restrain him—but this is different from judging and condemning him. For worse than the restraint visited upon violators of the law is the contempt which makes them feel that their society regards them as worthless and dispensable. This is a perfect formula for turning them into moral nihilists.

Another phase of this question involves the textbook accounts of man, which celebrate the need for food, clothing, shelter, various emotional satisfactions, and the drive for self-preservation, declaring that these are the fundamental attributes of the human being. The books studied by the young in school go on saying this, despite the fact that no really distinguished human being has ever paid much special attention to these requirements.

One thing we should have learned from the centuries of educational experience since the Greeks is that human beings are vulnerable to being taught trivialities. This, too, is a part of man as given. We talk a lot about the Socratic method, but we say much less about the Socratic conviction and inspiration. In too many ways, our education is "an invitation to share a common mediocrity." To take man as given would be to assume that every man and every child, whatever the evidence, has in him the highest potentialities, and to fix things such that if any door is closed before him, he has to close it himself.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

CRITICISM ON THE RUSSIAN STORY—I

OUR comment on current reports regarding education in Russia (MANAS, June 18 and 25) seems not to have been calculated to increase the circulation of this journal. One subscriber, who has attained some eminence as an educational supervisor in a public school system, remarks that it is "a disheartening and discouraging experience" to encounter in MANAS what seems a repetition of many of the criticisms levied at contemporary educators in the public press. And, she feels, to admire the Russian system of intense study-discipline implies that the Russian child is more fortunate than the American child so far as his contact with state schooling is concerned. We did not, however, intend this suggestion; in fact we disclaimed it. Our point, possibly not crystal clear, was that searching self-criticism is a sign of health in a working democracy, and that such self-criticism may include a reasonable appreciation of the strong points in the system or practices of those with whom we ideologically disagree.

The same correspondent continues:

> May I plead with you, Mr. Editor, not to accept the pseudo-statistics with regard to education which you find in the public press and magazines. Truly I am surprised that a writer for MANAS would stoop to using such literary debris for his material, when there is so much worth-while authentic material available—including much just and sane criticism. May I suggest that you become familiar with the thinking of the truly sincere, sound-thinking, creative, and hard-working educators, who see the difficulties and are working heroically against a flood of public hysteria and misunderstanding.
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> The gist of my concern over the constant controversy about our schools is that the critics simply content themselves with being critics, and always write about what is wrong with "education" rather than writing about the "problems of education." The particular group of critics beginning with Bestor, and including Flesch, Hutchins and the like, are those professors of history, math, law, economics, whose experience in the classroom with children is nil, and whose attitude is that of "What's wrong with Education?" There is no spirit of "may we help?" in this. On the other hand, the Rockefeller Report (enclosed herewith), approaches the problem with the attitude "What are the problems of our schools?" This Report is excellent.

Our correspondent supplies us with two quotations which, she feels, will illustrate her point. The first is from Robert M. Hutchins' *Education, Freedom, and the Fund:*

> There is no doubt that men are different. But they are also the same. One trouble with education in the West is that it has emphasized those respects in which men are different, this is what excessive specialization means. The purpose of basic education is to bring out our common humanity, a consummation more urgently needed today than at any time in the last five hundred years. To confuse at every point, as the Commission does, the education of our common humanity, which is primary and indispensable, with the education of our individual differences, which is secondary and in many unnecessary, is to get bad education at every point. What we have here is the prescription for the disintegration of society through the disintegration of the educational system. This process is now going on in the United States.

The second quotation is from the Rockefeller report:

> But men *are* unequal in their native capacities and therefore in their attainments. In elaborating our national views of equality, the most widely accepted means of dealing with this problem has been to emphasize *equality of opportunity.* The great advantage of the conception of equality of opportunity is that it candidly recognizes differences in endowment and accepts the certainty of differences in achievement. By allowing free play to these differences it preserves the freedom to excel, which counts for so much in terms of individual aspiration, and has produced so much of mankind's greatness. . . . If we recognize the necessity of diverse educational paths it may then be easier to accept the fact that education in a four-year college is not the only road to a full and useful life. . . . We will do well to stress the many kinds of achievement of which the human being is capable. The sort of capacity measured by the conventional scholastic-aptitude test is very important. But we should encourage all kinds of

> individuals to run on all kinds of tracks. In this way we can distribute very widely the rewards of self-esteem and self-respect. Only in this manner can we dedicate ourselves to the cultivation of distinction and a sense of quality. We can then demand the best of our most gifted, most talented, most spirited youngsters. We can insist, as we must, that democracy is not to be conceived of as an invitation to share a common mediocrity, but a system that allows each to express and live up to the special excellence that is in him.

We find no serious inconsistency in these statements, which are rather complementary. Judgment of their respective merits is left to the reader. We think they are both very good.

The same correspondent suggests that we read an article by Earl C. Kelley, author of *Education for What is Real* and *Education for the Nature of Man.* In *Educational Leadership,* an NEA journal, Dr. Kelley discusses human "uniqueness" with these paragraphs:

> Many things follow from the fact of uniqueness. The individual has his own set of experiences, unlike any other. His purposes are his alone. These are built into structure, and he can learn only in relation to them. His learning, then, is different from that of any other. The set lesson, with the predetermined outcome, is thus seen to be an impossibility. Whatever he learns, it will not be the same learning as that of his seat-mate, but something distinctly his own. How much of our teaching energy has gone into trying the impossible, to get all our learners to learn the same thing!
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> Since each learner is unique and learns in relation to his uniqueness, we will need to change our schools in the next decade so that they will be human-centered instead of "lesson"-centered. This constitutes a complete change of direction. The individual human being, his growth and adequacy will become the goal of the teaching-learning process. We will think of adequacy in terms of his concept of self and his capacity to relate to others, rather than his ability to give back the lessons we have tried to teach. This constitutes a revolution in our affairs.
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> Critics of human-centered education often accuse us of having no standards. This is equivalent to saying that we do not care about anything. Everybody has standards, and these standards are in terms of values held. If we care most about people, we evaluate in terms of people. What the critics should accuse us of is not having *their* standards. While they want us to value items of subject matter, we must care about human growth, development, an improved self-concept and the courage this gives, adequacy in human relations, skill in giving to others toward commonly accepted goals. This is the new track in values, standards, and evaluation.

We are naturally in accord with our critic's suggestion that educational discussion should focus on the *problems* of education rather than on what may be "wrong" with current practices. However, it also seems inevitable that enthusiasts of any particular view will carry the swing of the pendulum pretty far in their own direction. Dr. Kelley's paragraphs, excellent as they may be in some respects, help to explain the concern which others feel about the fulsomeness of some modern educators' expressed aims. More than a few parents are not so sure that they wish their children's teachers to feel qualified as judges of "the learner's development as a human," or of his "concept of self." Also, we cannot fail to agree with Hutchins when he says that "the purpose of basic education is to bring out our common humanity." Diverse propensities and talents will inevitably show themselves, but it takes teaching out of profound personal conviction to inspire a realization of a oneness of humankind—a perception that all are on the same pilgrimage, seeking and needing a common language in philosophy.

But let us continue this discussion.

FRONTIERS

Fallacies of Ethical Nihilism

Is the philosophy of scientific materialism vulnerable to assault by fact and logic rather than by mere sentiment? "Is there," the editors of MANAS ask, "any ground in Reality and Nature for ethical first principles?" This is the gist of the challenge they throw out to the Idealists in their discourse on Hans Reichenbach's *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (issue of December 11, 1957).

I think an affirmative answer, in the scientific sense, can be given to both these questions. Let us first take a hard look at the logical foundations of Reichenbach's philosophy, which is a modern authoritative version of the materialist credo. Of special interest are three of his basic assumptions: (1) there is no scientific way to determine whether the satisfaction of a human need is a good; (2) ethical decisions express mere wishes and opinions, and have no cognitive *(i.e.* factually knowable) grounds; (3) the universe is purposeless, being governed solely by physical laws.

I wish to show that the first of these propositions is self-contradictory, that the second is highly superficial, and that the third is completely out of bounds of Reichenbach's own definition of the powers and scope of science.

Obviously, logical nonsense lurks somewhere in the remarkable conclusion that there is no scientific way to determine whether the satisfaction of human needs is a good. For the very definition of the good is that which satisfies a human need. How did Reichenbach fall into this fallacy? The answer, I think, is that he has switched from the logic of relativity in physics to an absolutist logic in ethics. As a highly competent interpreter of Einstein, he knew that in the realm of physics there is no way to determine absolute motion, that there is no "hitching-post" somewhere in the universe against which to clock the motion of the heavenly bodies, that motions can be studied only relatively to each other.

But in ethics Reichenbach is implicitly demanding the absolute. He is saying, in effect, that since we know of no "divine, far-off event" against which to measure human life, we don't know whether it is good or bad, and consequently we can not affirm that satisfying human needs is a good. The same logic applied to physics would hold that, since there is no absolute standard of motion, there is no way to determine relative motion.

We do not need a divine, far-off event as a warrant to study ethics. We must deduce the nature of ethics from the life-system itself, as we know it here on earth. And any valid system of ethics will have to take its start from the axiom that the good is that which favors fulness of life. The essence of relativity is not that it abolishes ultimate standards: it demands that you deduce these standards from the behavior of the particular system you are dealing with.

Now, the main business of human life through the ages has been, not the mere getting of food and shelter, but of finding tolerable modes of group living. Is this vast experiment, in all its bewildering variety, a field for cognitive knowledge, or scientific testing, or is it all just a matter of opinion?

To state the case nakedly, the materialist view means that there is no scientific way to tell whether a Nazi gas chamber is better or worse than a maternity hospital. This odd conclusion is even advocated by some of the modern sociologists. If it is true, it means that science has at best only a remote and secondary usefulness and at worst offers a destructive moral nihilism.

But this odd doctrine testifies more to the naivete of scientific materialism and to the immaturity of science than to the nature of life, ethics, and nature. It is quite true that the consequences of human behavior and its ethical validity can not be measured against a cosmic

standard. But they can be measured here and now, and have been measured, however imperfectly, through the ages of man's experimentation in group living, in all the crucial matters of birth, growth, marriage, and death, of livelihood, group cooperation, social organization, and creative expression. To claim that the consequences of human behavior are not subject to cognition and valuation would trivialize the whole vast human experiment in education, law, government, religion, social amelioration,—and science itself! and would brand with futility the immense labors, pains, and sacrifices that men and women have devoted through the ages to the rearing of the ever new generations.

Out of this colossal experiment, let us select one very modern test case. If ethics is not a matter of cognition and valuation, the new art of psychiatry is a foolish waste of time. For psychiatry deals with a basic ethical problem, namely, the adequacy of the patient's mode of living with his group, including himself, and, of late, with the adequacy of the group constitution itself for the health of its members. It takes its start from the axiom that fulness of life is a good and frustration an evil. Young as it is, psychiatry can even now delineate with some accuracy the stages of personal disintegration induced by various personal inadequacies. And psychiatry is only one of the disciplines that more and more show that the basic human psychic needs—of growth, love, acceptance, security, creativeness, self-fulfilment—are as urgent and "real" as the basic physical needs. Their denial may, in fact, produce a more complete wreckage of the organism than hunger or disease. It is becoming clear that ethical imperatives are grounded in the biological structure of man as fully as are sight and hearing, nerve and muscle, hunger and thirst. As time goes on, psychiatry, along with other social sciences, will be able to clarify good and bad institutions and societies, putting their fingers on life-promoting and life-negating forces.

If Reichenbach's first and second propositions fall before logic and empirical fact, what about his third proposition, that the universe is purposeless and meaningless? One trouble is, regardless of the merits of the assertion, Reichenbach has no right, within his own terms of reference, to make it. Purpose is the mode by which values are realized. Now if, as Reichenbach holds, science has no way of recognizing values, how, in the name of common sense, can it affirm or deny the existence of purpose as a mode of achieving values, any more than a blind and deaf man can affirm or deny the existence of color and sound? In denying purpose to the universe, Reichenbach is violating his own ground-rules: he is merely expressing an opinion that has no cognitive value.

I come, then, to the MANAS editors' main challenge, "Is there any ground in Reality or Nature for ethical first principles?" No one knows—or probably ever will know—whether or not the universe as a whole has a purpose. It is, I think, a species of intellectual arrogance to pretend to know. But that subordinate systems within the universe have purposes can, I think, be established, scientifically and logically. But to find them we have to escape from the thin, attenuated realm of "vacuous actuality" in which the logical positivists dwell, into the rich realm of life and evolution where myriad creatures seek and find the truth by living it.

We can begin with the fact that men have purposes and ideals; and that, since man has mysteriously emerged from the universe and is immersed in it by millions of strands—physical, chemical, and psychical—then, at the very least, there exists in the "physical" world the *potential* for the emergence and the *power* for the attainment of purpose and ideal. To deny this is to split nature right down the middle, making man a pure epiphenomenon—surely an unscientific and illogical procedure.

But we can go further. The vast upsurge of life's evolution, extending over some two billion years, has been an immense experiment in

valuation. It is a valuational scheme *par excellence,* ranging in its outcome from virus to Parthenon. It has, to be sure, been marked by many imperfections and failures. Nevertheless, in its main trend, it has been an ascent into mind, freedom, and social cooperation. Now, these "intangible" qualities thrown up by evolution are not mere matters of "opinion" without "cognitive value." They are hard-boiled realities, as much so as horns and hoofs, fingers and skulls. The proof? These "abstract" qualities of living beings have been rigorously "selected" and built upon through the ages for their "survival" value. The forces of evolution do not "select" mere matters of opinion without cognitive value.

Moreover, evolution, through the ages, has provided a remarkably successful system of inter-adjustment which is essentially ethical in its nature. For it has meant that an ever-increasing array of species has been able to fit into the life community without crowding and without impairing the basic food resource. The Darwinian "struggle for existence" is a myth. For the scheme of evolution through the ages (with the exception of mismanaged human "civilizations") has provided the conditions for fulness of life to an ever-increasing variety of creatures. The Darwinian teleology of mere "survival" also foreshortens the facts. It can explain neither the complex, subtle organization of the whole life-community as an always prospering concern, nor the universal orientation of living creatures toward the future, as shown, for example, by their selfless devotion to their young. I am not suggesting that evolution is moving to some far-off divine event; rather, it seems to illustrate Whitehead's definition of cosmic teleology as aiming at intensity and beauty.

Science at its present stage is not a search for truth, as many of its protagonists claim, but a search for fragments of truth. For one thing, it excludes the whole realm of value, so crucial in evolution and human life. For another, it denies that there is any organizing principle in nature—it is all mere chance or "statistical probability." In view of these sharp limitations, the logical positivist is devoid of credentials that would authorize him, *in the name of science,* to make any statements about the ultimate nature of life and the universe. It follows that the term "philosophy of science" is a misnomer. We had better, then, stick to the poets, artists, philosophers, and great religious teachers for our insights into man and his ideals and purposes.

Oakton, Virignia WARD SHEPARD