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IN HONOR OF WILLIAM JAMES

FOR some years now, MANAS writers have been making fairly skillful apologies for the materialism of modern thinkers who have come under the influence of the scientific movement. Materialism, it has been endlessly pointed out, was a natural reaction to the intellectual abuses of theology and the political abuses of organized religion. The West, it was urged, knew no other religious tradition than Christianity, and Christianity, except perhaps for Islam, is the least philosophical of all the world religions. So, scientific materialism seemed to have both freedom of the mind and an alert intellectuality on its side.

These excuses were doubtless properly made. But there comes a time when you can excuse too much; indeed, to carry this matter too far is tantamount to submitting to the determinist theory—itself an offspring of the materialistic doctrine. Moreover, not all modern thinkers were carried off to the materialist camp.

Having lately come across—much later than we should have—certain writings of William James, we now incline to the view that a vigorous open-mindedness on the part of men committed to the practice of science would have left the materialist outlook behind many years ago. The book which brings this conclusion is a Dover paperback ($1.65) entitled *The Will to Believe*. Included in this volume are other James essays, among them "Human Immortality," "The Sentiment of Rationality," and a pleasant examination of the question, "Is Life Worth Living?"

William James is a striking example of a man who bowed to no authority other than his own capacity for impartial thinking. It is this strength of mind which made him hospitable to every kind of thought and indifferent of intellectual fashions. In the preface to this volume, he advocated that people of religious convictions should be outspoken regarding their views. He thought it nonsense that "science" had put the quietus on the intellectual respectability of religious ideas. He wrote in 1896:

> . . . the scientist has nothing to fear for his own interests from the liveliest possible state of fermentation in the religious world of his time. Those faiths will best stand the test which adopt also his hypotheses, and make them integral elements of their own. He should welcome therefore every species of religious agitation and discussion, so long as he is willing to allow that some religious hypothesis may be true. Of course there are plenty of scientists who would deny that dogmatically, maintaining that science has already ruled all possible religious hypotheses out of court. Such scientists ought, I agree, to aim at imposing privacy on religious faiths, the public manifestation of which could only be a nuisance in their eyes. With all such scientists, as well as with their allies outside of science, my quarrel openly lies; and I hope that my book may do something to persuade the reader of their crudity, and range him on my side. Religious fermentation is always a symptom of the intellectual vigor of a society; and it is only when they forget that they are hypotheses and put on rationalistic and authoritative pretensions, that our faiths do harm. The most interesting and valuable things about a man are his ideals and his over-beliefs. The same is true of nations and historic epochs; and the excesses of which the particular individuals and epochs are guilty are compensated in the total, and become profitable to mankind in the long run.

The Will to Believe is not, as some might expect, a worldly-wise treatise on the susceptibility of human beings to believe without evidence in things that deserve no such devotion. Eric Hoffer's *The True Believers* is a weakling primer of cynicism by comparison with James, who is interested—and succeeds—in showing that a man without beliefs—without "faith"—is a man hardly alive at all. The view that we can live without faith is a specious importation into our

daily lives of a rule of scientific inquiry. The scientist marks off for investigation an area where he has some chance of reaching final conclusions. But human life in the round permits no such limitations. We have to act in dozens of ways for which science is no guide at all. The consequence of deciding to act only on "the facts" and *all* the facts either prevents us from acting, or lets us in for a very bad faith which has never been looked at closely. This, as James points out, leads to very careless attitudes:

> As a rule we disbelieve all facts and theories for which we have no use. Clifford's cosmic emotions find no use for Christian feelings. Huxley belabors the bishops because there is no use for sacerdotalism in his scheme of life. Newman, on the contrary, goes over to Romanism, and finds all sorts of reasons good for staying there, because a priestly system is for him an organic need and delight. Why do so few "scientists" even look at the evidence for telepathy, so called? Because they think, as a leading biologist, now dead, once said to me, that even if such a thing were true, scientists ought to band together to keep it suppressed and concealed. It would undo the uniformity of Nature and all sorts of other things without which scientists cannot carry on their pursuits. But if this very man had been shown something which as a scientist he might *do* with telepathy, he might not only have examined the evidence, but even have found it good enough. This very law which the logicians would impose upon us—if I may give the name of logicians to those who would rule out our willing nature here—is based on nothing but their own natural wish to exclude all elements for which they, in their professional quality of logicians, can find no use.

James is a virtual genius at taking popular attitudes of mind and exposing their superficiality. There is for example the notion that by being wholly "scientific," we shall avoid error, and that this is of the highest importance. But the idea of "avoiding error," he points out, is the negative form of the determination to know the truth. The positive form of this resolve is far more important, and actually very different, from its negative counterpart. What if we can never hope to find the truth, save by risking some error, or even a lot of error? James gives short shrift to the timidity which, fearing error, dares no faith at all:

> Biologically considered, our minds are as ready to grind out falsehood as veracity, and he who says, "Better go without belief forever than believe a lie!" merely shows his own preponderant horror of becoming a dupe. He may be critical of many of hisdesires and fears, but this fear he slavishly obeys. He cannot imagine anyone questioning its binding force. For my own part, I have also a horror of being duped, but I can believe that worse things than being duped may happen to a man in this world. . . . It is like a general informing his soldiers that it is better to keep out of battle forever than to risk a single wound. Not so are victories either over enemies or over nature gained. Our errors are surely not such awfully solemn things. In a world where we are so certain to incur them in spite of all our caution, a certain lightness of heart seems healthier than this excessive nervousness on their behalf.

Now comes a rather extraordinary argument. In scientific inquiry, James says, "we obviously are recorders, not makers, of the truth." In science the urgency of "taking a position" before all the facts are in, is not great. We have time to check and verify. The caution of the skeptic is wholly appropriate and necessary in science:

> The most useful investigator, because the most sensitive observer, is always he whose eager interest in one side of the question is balanced by an equally keen nervousness lest he become deceived. Science has organized this nervousness into a regular *technique*, her so-called method of verification, and she has fallen so deeply in love with the method that one may even say that she has ceased to care for truth by itself at all. It is only truth as technically verified that interests her. The truth of truths might come in merely affirmative form, and she would decline to touch it.

But what of this idea of "making" the truth? The point, here, is that some of the greatest things in life become true only through our faith in them. James discusses this proposition lucidly and at some length, beginning with the idea of the difference between the world known to a dog and that known to a human being:

> In the dog's life we see the world invisible to him because we live in both worlds [ours and his]. In

> human life, although we only see our world, and his within it, yet encompassing both these worlds a still wider world may be there, as unseen by us as our world is by him; and to believe in that world *may* be the most essential function that our lives in this world have to perform. But *"may* be! *may* be!" one now hears the positivist contemptuously exclaim; "what use can a scientific life have for maybes?" Well, I reply, the "scientific" life itself has much to do with maybes, and human life at large has everything to do with them. So far as man stands for anything, and is productive or originative at all, his entire vital function may be said to have to deal with maybes. Not a victory is gained, not a deed of faithfulness or courage is done, except upon a maybe; not a service, not a sally of generosity, not a scientific exploration or experiment or textbook, that may not be a mistake. It is only by risking our persons from one hour to another that we live at all. And often enough our faith beforehand in an uncertified result is *the only thing that makes the result come true.* Suppose for instance that you are climbing a mountain, and have worked yourself into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap. Have faith that you can successfully make it, and your feet are nerved to its accomplishment. But mistrust yourself, and think of all the sweet things you have heard the scientists say of *maybes,* and you will hesitate so long that, at last, all unstrung and trembling, and launching yourself in a moment of despair, you roll in the abyss. In such a case (and it belongs to an enormous class) the part of wisdom as well as of courage is to *believe what is in the line of your needs,* for only by such belief is the need fulfilled. Refuse to believe, and you shall indeed be right, for you shall irretrievably perish. But believe, and again you shall be right, for you shall save yourself. You make one or the other of two possible universes true by your trust or mistrust—both universes having been only *maybes,* in this particular, before you contributed your act.

James is so manifestly right in this argument that one hardly needs to protect him from attack in an obvious weakness. What does he prove, it will be asked, about the "nature of things"? Nothing, of course, unless by "nature of things" he meant the dynamics of an intelligent human life. The desperation of his illustration is both the strength and the weakness of the argument. But the weakness is not important, for any thoughtful reader can make other illustrations of his own. He may decide, for example, to adopt a hypothesis about the nature of man and determine to live by it; and if the hypothesis conforms with certain actual but unacknowledged laws of nature, he will gain a deepened and enriched life. And if, further, the making and testing of such determinations is itself a condition of the good life, as distinguished from the need to be absolutely "correct," he is again more successful by far—more conversant with "truth"—than the man who sits back and says, "But your theory has not been *proved!"*

It is impossible, we think, to refute James' proposition. He can of course be shouted down, but this is a poor defense against his logic.

James' essay on immortality, a lecture first delivered in 1893, is chiefly a refutation of the claim of the physiological psychologists that "Science has once for all attained to proving, beyond possibility of escape, that our inner life is a function of that famous material, the so-called 'gray matter' of our cerebral convolutions." Having stated the problem, James says: "It is now as a physiological psychologist that I ask you to look at the question with me a little more closely."

The assumption that physiological psychology has taken away the basis for belief in immortality, James proposes, is totally without scientific justification. It rests, he points out, on the view that the brain functions only in a *productive* capacity in relation to thought. The brain, however, could as easily *transmit* ideas which have an origin elsewhere. Why not regard the brain as such a transmitter of thought, and, on occasion, a barrier to transmission? As he puts it:

> According to the state in which the brain finds itself, the barrier of its obstructiveness may also be supposed to rise or fall. It sinks so low, when the brain is in full activity, that a comparative flood of spiritual energy pours over. At other times, only such occasional waves of thought as heavy sleep permits gets by. And when finally a brain stops acting altogether, or decays, that special stream of consciousness which it subserved will vanish entirely from this natural world. But the sphere of being that supplied the consciousness would still be intact; and in that more real world with which, even whilst here,

> it was continuous, the consciousness might, in ways unknown to us, continue still.

He concludes this portion of the argument:

> You see that, on all these suppositions, our soul's life, as we here know it, would none the less in literal strictness be the function of the brain. The brain would be the independent variable, the mind would vary dependently on it. But such dependence on the brain for this natural life would in no wise make immortal life impossible,—it might be quite compatible with supernatural life behind the veil hereafter.

The impressive thing about William James is his use of the imagination, and, at the same time, his demonstration of the necessity of the use of imagination in philosophic inquiry. It is not enough, in philosophy, to say, "What are the facts?" The question of what *might* be, is more important, for philosophy, than the establishment of what is. James never allows himself to lose sight of this reality.

Further, he never argues for a particular conclusion, but only for keeping the way open to it. He will not permit "science" to slam any doors on philosophy, simply because science has no use for what may go on behind the doors in question. He is really the champion of "method" in philosophy, and a jealous guardian of the right of impartial thought to go in any direction it chooses.

One may wonder why James has not been more popular among religious writers, since no one has defended the prerogatives of religious thought with greater energy and skill. The explanation is close at hand. James defended the *spirit* of religious inquiry, and not any of the popular formulations of religion. He was like the medieval doctor who, when called upon by the Church to refute an abominable heresy, ended by refuting sin and hell as well, to the great embarrassment of his orthodox contemporaries.

What was James' own position? He called it "radical empiricism"—again, a devotion to method. As for the assumptions he himself cherished, he reveals them only as inclinations, disclosed by the sort of questions he kept on asking. But for a man who, at the turn of the century, spoke as a scientist turned philosopher, William James was a veritable prophet, anticipating a tide of inquiry that would not rise in modern thought for all of fifty years.

REVIEW
"NEW BOTTLES FOR NEW WINE"

JULIAN HUXLEY'S *New Bottles for New Wine*, a collection of related essays written between 1952 and 1956 (Harpers, 1957) affords background for discussion of the philosophical relation between religion and science. Once designated as a "Humanist" in the conventional sense of that term, Mr. Huxley now prefers the term "Transhumanism," to suggest that the sense of the spiritual, the sense of the sacred, invites human beings to go beyond a well-ordered physical destiny, and that this invitation is as much a "natural" phenomenon as the desire to survive.

Dr. Huxley feels that the best thinkers of our day have passed through a transition similar to his own: The work of combating religious myths which tend to alienate man from a sense of individual destiny is no longer the work of the future. Instead, *behind* many of the great religious myths, psychologists and evolutionists alike are able to see shadowy intimations of a spiritual destiny. In a short introductory essay on the meaning of "Transhumanism," Huxley writes in the almost mystical tone of thinking which he feels must develop if man is to regain a sense of identity with the cosmos, a feeling of "wholeness" regarding his own life. "As a result of a thousand million years of evolution," he says, "the universe is becoming conscious of itself, able to understand something of its past history and its possible future. This cosmic self-awareness is being realized in one tiny fragment of the universe—in a few of us human beings. Perhaps it has been realized elsewhere too, through the evolution of conscious living creatures on the planets of other stars."

The "religion" of the future, if it is still pertinent to use that term, will undoubtedly contain many of the perspectives which permeated ancient civilizations, particularly those of the Orient. Huxley's view is that the religions of the West have been woefully fragmentary, so that in bringing our own tradition of religion and science to maturity "we very much need to take over the ideas of wholeness and harmony, largely from Oriental thought." The matter of creating a more desirable physical environment becomes linked to the problem of discovering an environment of *ideas* more condusive to faith in the tremendous spiritual resources of man as Man. Instead of pursuing the partisan approach which prevails in most of our social and political relationships, we must be willing to seek a radically different point of departure. In developing this thought, Huxley further illuminates "transhumanism":

> For instance, that beauty (something to enjoy and something to be proud of) is indispensable; that true understanding and enjoyment are ends in themselves, as well as tools for or relaxations from a job, and that therefore we must explore and make fully available the techniques of education and self-education; that the most ultimate satisfaction comes from a depth and wholeness of the inner life, and therefore that we must explore and make fully available the techniques of spiritual development; above all, that there are two complementary parts of our cosmic duty—one to ourselves, to be fulfilled in the realization and enjoyment of our capacities, the other to others, to be fulfilled in service to the community and in promoting the welfare of the generations to come and the advancement of our species as a whole.
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> The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself—not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps *transhumanism* will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature.
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> "I believe in transhumanism": once there are enough people who can truly say that, the human species will be on the threshold of a new kind of existence, as different from ours as ours is from that of Pekin man. It will at last be consciously fulfilling its real destiny.

Huxley's lecture, "Morality, and Destiny," occupies an important position in the total structure of *New Bottles for New Wine.* He here explains why the doctrine of inevitable physical

progress as the aim of evolution—like the doctrine of an anthropomorphic god as the greatest source of power—deflects attention from the need of inner sense of sacredness which should pervade our outlook on all subjects:

> Man inevitably discovers that existence involves mystery. Perhaps the latest revelation of inherent mystery is the discovery by science of the unexpected unity of all nature. All the realities which were taken out of nature and put together in the supernatural concept of God can now be put back into the natural process. And there, if their relation to the whole process is properly grasped, they can exert at least as much and perhaps more force than they did under the old dispensation.
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> The rejection of the idea of a personal God comes to involve the more or less complete rejection of what are generally termed spiritual values and realities, as in orthodox Marxism, or at least the rejection of their efficacy or relevance to practical affairs, as in *laissez-faire* economies and hard-shell rationalism. Often it has led to the radical separation, both in thought and practice, of the material and practical from the sacred and spiritual, of business and politics from religion and morality. This is the phase through which many people are now passing in the Western world, and which the representatives of established religious systems characterize as "irreligion" or "loss of faith.
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> However, with the development of a fully naturalistic outlook the transformation of thought is capable of passing from a negative to a positive phase. Men can cast off the blinkers of dualism. They find that, after all, spiritual experiences, including the sense of the sacred, are an important part of reality. They realize that it was merely the assumptions about the relations of spiritual experience with the rest of reality which they were unable to accept.

Once again, we are impressed by the curious collaboration, obviously unintentional, and from widely different backgrounds, by the brothers Huxley. Julian, too honest to cling to the sort of optimism which brings on a belief in "inevitable" progress, discovers the reality of spiritual man by degrees. Aldous, not caring for the destiny of man as revealed in history, turned from disgust to mysticism. Taking the two brothers together, much of "East" and "West" can be seen to meet in their work.

COMMENTARY
MAN AND NATURE

A SINGLE sentence in the first paragraph quoted from Julian Huxley's essay, "Morality and Destiny," seems to sum up all of Western history since the decline of the classical culture of antiquity. The sentence reads:

> All the realities which were taken out of nature and put together in the supernatural concept of God can now be put back into the natural process.

Although we have not "researched" the matter extensively, it seems fairly clear that the denaturing of Nature, of which Dr. Huxley speaks, began in earnest with St. Augustine, a neurotic if brilliant man who was intent upon the glorification of God at the cost of everything else. Certainly the most important natural "reality" in human life—the power of free decision—was subtracted from man by Augustine, and assigned to God, in his controversy with Pelagius. The hideous doctrine of Predestination has haunted Christian thought ever since, its most obvious form being the idea of infant damnation, only recently called into question by the Presbyterians.

Nature, by the time of Thomas Aquinas, was little more than a cipher, a kind of plastic inertness manipulated by the Deity. As Henry Adams puts it: "The only true cause is God. Creation is His sole act, in which no second cause can share." In Aquinas' words:

> Creation is more perfect and loftier than generation, because it aims at producing the whole substance of the being, though it starts from absolute nothing.

As though to confirm this Thomist notion, the verb "to create" could not until a few generations ago be used except in connection with an activity of God. To allow that anyone besides God was able to perform creative actions was held to be a blasphemous indifference to the prerogatives of the Deity.

There is no need to separate scientific materialism and religious dogma of this sort as different currents in Western thought. They are not two currents, but one, both equally materialistic. Both have an emasculating effect on man. Both place the decisive forces governing human life outside the human beings. The materialism of science came to it ready-made at the hands of religion, in the form of an idea of matter which was utterly devoid of independent life and intelligence. The "dead" matter of nineteenth-century science was the devitalized nature of scholastic speculation.

Probably the critical discovery of science which swung the pendulum in the other direction—toward the consummation reported by Mr. Huxley—was the discovery of the energic constitution of matter in the closing years of the nineteenth century, by Becquerel and others. The dissolution of the hard, discrete, billiard-ball atom into a tiny constellation of energy did not, of course, do away with materialism, but it was a long stride toward a new view of matter and life. The next step, obviously, is the discovery of independent intelligence in nature. Energy, in the present scientific view, is not "intelligent." For some odd reason, human energy seems to be excepted from the data which are allowable in considerations of this sort, and while the parapsychologists have been stirring things up since the early thirties, there are still those scientists around who, as James noted more than sixty years ago, would like to keep the evidence for telepathy "suppressed and concealed," even though they are not likely to be as candid about their intentions as the biologist quoted by James.

In good time, we suppose, man as an independent, creative being, of both moral and intellectual intelligence, will gain full respectability in the eyes of all scientists. At present, the scientists concerned with man and his behavior do not quite know how to *use* a man of this sort in their professional activities.

We note, however, that Dr. Huxley, along with a preponderance of Christian thinkers, feels that "dualism" in philosophy is a barrier to truly "spiritual" thinking. The true man, these Christians say, is the unity of body *and* soul in inseparable unity. We are not sure what this really means, unless it is intended to suggest that body and soul are foreign powers somehow fused to produce the unique being, man. More light is needed on the subject. How, for example, is a Christian notion of immortality to be sustained if the real man is a compound of this sort? By the resurrection of the flesh, perhaps?

What, indeed, is matter, or "body," that it should have so decisive a role in the conception of man? Man, we are told, is the Word made flesh. But why not say that the body is first an *idea of a body*, around which, like all other productions of nature, matter is slowly gathered? This, too, would be the Word made flesh.

On this hypothesis, it might be said that the real man—whatever he or "it" is—is a being who makes for himself various embodiments. He lives in matter; but he also lives in feeling; and he lives in his ideas—matter, feelings, and ideas, sometimes good, sometimes bad. But he can change the matter, the feelings, the ideas. He can change his *body*, in short—or, to be more precise, he can change his various embodiments.

Is this "dualism"? It seems to us that some kind of "dualism" is necessary for any kind of experience. You can have a monist reality in the abstract, but you need dualism and even pluralism to have a life in which the diversities of form and circumstance provide a theater of experience for human growth and development. Dr. Huxley, it seems to us, is against a bad kind of dualism—the dualism which has a bad name because of its theological associations.

Now that Nature is coming into its own, why not begin to restore meta-Nature as well?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

ANOTHER GENERATION WRITER

ONE reason, perhaps, for the words used to describe "beat" and "angry" literary expression among young writers has probably been that no outstanding characteristic or intent can be discerned in what they produce. John Clellon Holmes' sobriquet, "The Beat Generation," has certainly caught on throughout the U.S.A., yet the words mean little of themselves, nor can its representatives agree upon their interpretations. Meanwhile England's "Angry Men" are often shown not to be angry at all. But a comparison between the American and British writers in this category is interesting—a process facilitated by the British monthly *Encounter* with its fairly continuous exchange of letters respecting such writers as Kingsley Amis and John Braine. Amis and Braine correspond, at times, to Kenneth Rexroth, Herbert Gold and Holmes, but no one in England that we have read about, thank the good British Lord, corresponds to Jack Kerouac or Allen Ginsberg.

Though Amis is better known as a "young English writer," Braine's name now appears more and more often, probably because of the success of his novel, *Room at the Top* (first published by Houghton Mifflin and now available for thirty-five cents in a Signet edition). In this novel we find Braine representing the individual need for development of a "classless" mind; else, the plight of his characters instructs us, a young man simply cannot discover himself. But self-discovery is often something less than a glorious adventure. First of all, there is the "self" which existed before the need for self-discovery was perceived, and if the pattern of conformity to unsatisfactory standards has been followed too long, escape may be impossible. Braine's "Joe Lampton," in *Room at the Top*, combines two sorts of snobbishness—the prejudices to which he was born as a member of the lower middle class, and the prejudices he diligently seeks to acquire in the upper and moneyed-class brackets. Lampton, not a bad fellow at heart, waits too long to find himself, so that the end of the book is depressing. The message, if there is a message, seems to be that one ought not necessarily to put off a personal awakening until the last minute. In these passages Joe reflects upon his emotional turmoils at a time when he rejected a woman he could truly love because she didn't fit into his plan for social advancement. Joe was bothered by what he was doing, but the pull of the pattern was still too strong, as he now sees:

> Looking back, I see myself as being near the verge of insanity. I couldn't feel like that now; there is, as it were, a transparent barrier between myself and strong emotion. I feel what is correct for me to feel, I go through the necessary motions. But I cannot delude myself that I care. I wouldn't say that I was dead; simply that I have begun to die. I have realised, you might say, that I have, at the most, only another sixty years to live. I'm not actively unhappy and I'm not afraid of death, but I'm not alive in the way that I was that evening I quarrelled with Alice. I look back at that raw young man sitting miserable in the pub with a feeling of genuine regret; I wouldn't, even if I could, change places with him, but he was indisputably a better person than the smooth character I am now, after ten years of getting almost everything that I ever wanted. I know the name he'd give me, Successful Zombie.
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> I don't of course care whether that young man looking at the theatre bill was wiser or kinder or more innocent than the Successful Zombie. But he was a higher quality, he could feel more, he could take more strain. Of a higher quality, that is, if one accepts that a human being is meant to have certain emotions, to be affected strongly by all that happens to him to live *among* the people around him. I don't mean that one has to love people, but simply that one ought to care. I'm like a brand-new Cadillac in a poor industrial area, insulated by steel and glass and air-conditioning from the people outside, from the rain and the cold and the shivering ailing bodies. I don't wish to be like the people outside, I don't even wish that I had some weakness, some foolishness to immobilise me among the envious coolie faces, to let in the rain and the smell of defeat. But I sometimes wish that I wished it.

> What has happened to me is exactly what I willed to happen. I am my own draughtsman. Destiny, force of events, fate, good or bad fortune—all that battered repertory company can be thrown right out of my story, left to starve without a moment's recognition. But somewhere along the line—somewhere along the assembly line, which is what the phrase means—I could have been a different person. What has happened to my emotions is as fantastic as what happens to steel in an American car; steel should always be true to its own nature, always have a certain angularity and heaviness and not be plastic and lacquered; and the basic feelings should be angular and heavy too. I suppose that I had my chance to be a real person. "You're always in contact," Alice said to me once. "You're *there* as a person, you're warm and human. It's as though everyone else were wearing rubber gloves." She couldn't say that now.

The young Englishmen seem to be short on the action and long on the thinking in their novels, and we find this much more worthwhile than Kerouac's frantic and nearly senseless hopping around. Braine does not believe that environment entirely shapes the man, but he does think that the sentimentality peculiar to any given class or group must be transcended by genuine *internal* struggle. Many men who are "decent," he knows, would not manage to be so with a different background. What Braine shows us is the average young person, who can't really be characterized by anyone else because he hasn't characterized himself. Braine doesn't particularly care for the attitudes of the people at the "top," but he also objects to looking at the working classes through a haze of sentimentality. In the April Encounter, Braine says:

> I might even be sentimental {about the "workers"} if it weren't for the existence of the football pools. Their existence proves conclusively that the ambition of most working-class people is to be a *renter* living at the Top on unearned income and to hell with social justice.
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> As for the New Men, they will be quite content with a little house, car, wife, TV, and a bottle of gin in the sideboard. And if they work hard enough they will get them. And what on earth is wrong with that? Only a tiny minority, thank God, ever wants power.
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> My hero, Joe Lampton, isn't at all nasty. He doesn't behave well; but whatever he does he does for money. He is poor and he wants to be moderately rich; if he had been moderately rich to begin with, there would have been no need for him to behave as he did. There is an Italian proverb, quoted in these pages some time ago, to the effect that tripe comes before morality. In short, if Joe had been the son and heir of a rich manufacturer, he could have afforded to be a thoroughly decent chap.

But the real point, conveyed better by passages from *Room at the Top* than from the above, is that one *can* become sufficiently "classless"—decent, without comfortable wealth—if sufficiently philosophical. This is not a new theme, but we are interested in its appearance at this time and in Braine's hands.

FRONTIERS
Miscellany

THIS department often receives for comment material which falls outside the area of the familiar interests of MANAS, and, be it added, outside the competence of MANAS staff writers. Take original poetry, for example, or works of art. MANAS does not review poetry unless, in the opinion of the editors, its significance ranges beyond the region of the poetic form, permitting comment which does not trench upon the territory of critics schooled in this field. MANAS tries to avoid all "specialist" points of view, since such matters are already covered by other journals, and with a skill we do not possess.

Occasionally, however, we succumb to the temptation to break this rule. The present occasion is made by a long-playing record called *Jazz Canto*, produced by Lawrence Lipton and William Claxton, and issued by World Pacific Records. It is an effort, as Lipton says in his introduction, to restore "poetry and music to their proper and historical integration." Walt Whitman's address to *Poets to Come* is the opening piece of the record, recited in what might be called a contrapuntal relationship to music composed for the purpose. Other poets whose work is heard are William Carlos Williams, Dylan Thomas, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Lawrence Lipton, Philip Whalen, and Langston Hughes. The music is by a group of modern jazz musicians.

Our advice is that if you listen to this record, listen to it several times, in order to overcome some initial bewilderment and to get at what the artists are trying to do. We make no judgments as to their success, except to say that of all the readers, we liked Hoagy Carmichael best. He seemed to be reading William Carlos Williams because he couldn't think of anything more pleasurable to do at the time.

The thing that seems difficult, in a project of this sort, is to achieve a quality of spontaneity—certainly a major appeal of jazz music—while using the elaborate technology of modern recording, and while attempting a synthesis of forms which can easily become studied or artificial in the process. The hope is to bring back the oral tradition in poetry and to wear away the barrier between people in general and the non-commercial arts. One can undoubtedly say that this record represents modern art forms in transition, while suspecting that experience and further experiment will bring greater freedom and more loose-jointed spontaneity.

One thinks, naturally, of Whitman, when this sort of free-wheeling combination of words and music is contemplated, yet the Whitman piece is perhaps the least successful of the offerings. Possibly, Whitman's full-throated speech and his undismayed vision do not fit so well with this epoch. We'd *like* it to fit, but our inability to see through the cultural smog of the present, much less see the horizons at which Whitman gazed, makes the reading of him out loud sound a little like a commercial of the spirit.

Then there is the question of jazz itself. Opinions about jazz come ready-made from the coteries. On the other hand, many people eagerly admit to being "old fashioned" and unable to understand the attractions of jazz, hinting that pleasure in it is either vulgar or slightly indecent. Others get exceedingly precious in the discussion of the virtues of jazz—somewhat in the manner of critics who find philosophic depths in certain comic strips. One view of jazz, for what it is worth, is that it is enjoyable at its own musical level for three reasons: it has a regular rhythm, or "beat," which gives the listener a pleasant security in knowing what to expect; it is syncopated—it is late, but still comes out on the beat—and this gives psychic satisfaction; finally, it supplies a sense of wild abandon which at the same time is subject to perfect control—the flight of an improvised line is like the flight of a boomerang, it always comes home. Of course, it should be added that music of fixed rhythm creates a form which people may dance to without rehearsal.

The partners are both obedient to the beat and achieve an unplanned harmony of motion in this way. The limiting conditions of the jazz form make for its enjoyment by many people, although these limits also confine the enjoyment to a fairly small area of emotional experience. But there are times when no more is required.

What can music of this sort add to poetry? There are lines which need silences between them, and when the silences are filled with music which confirms rather than interrupts the meaning, sustaining it until the next line is spoken, the dramatic effect may be brought to an unexpected perfection.

In any event, the venture of poetry and jazz concerts and records may be one means of breaking up the stereotypes in the art forms of the present. And, sooner or later, somebody will do something with this new form that will have the thrill of authentic discovery.

* * *

The November-December issue of the *Humanist* has a report by Priscilla Robertson on a colloquium held in Boston last August on "Religious Faiths and World Ethics," in which the content of the discussion seems to have gotten away from the sponsors. The participants, according to Miss Robertson, included liberal Protestants, Catholics, liberal Jews, Moslems, and a Buddhist. Here is the interesting part of her report:

> Not until the second day of the conference did a Buddhist monk challenge the whole idea that ethics had to come from God. Buddhists have no belief in any one God, he pointed out, and for them religion is simply a way of life and a philosophy. Each man is an end in himself, said the Buddhist, and must not be treated as a means. And he pointed to the simple and obvious fact that over half the human race has no belief in a personal God—counting Buddhists, Communists and non-believers—and any code of ethics which did not satisfy them would not get very far.

Miss Robertson notes what others have remarked—that the Buddhist "talked quite like a Humanist"—going on to say that he was nevertheless "reverenced as representing one of the great religions of the world." Naturalistic Humanism, on the other hand, was classified by one of the speakers at the colloquium as belonging, along with "science" and "communism," among the "secular ideologies."

One hope of the conference was to discover if the great world religions could "concur basically on an objective power independent of and superior to man which ultimately is the sanction and guarantee for human ethics." This hope was not fulfilled, for, as Miss Robertson puts it:

> . . . it became clear that belief in God, where it exists, is a personal thing and cannot become the basis for any universal ethics. Instead the conference began to believe that striving for a lowest common denominator would weaken the springs of inspiration of each separate tradition. At this point they started to hunt for a nontheistic ethics, to perceive that peace could only come through secularism, to realize that it is easier to agree on a common code of morals than to find a common justification for one; to be willing that each man should find his private reasons for obeying the common code; and to state that fruitful tolerance would only come to men of deep personal convictions who could somehow see that the other man's convictions could be utterly different yet somehow valid for him.

"To a Humanist," Miss Robertson concludes, "this seems like quite a long way for them to have come."

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Readers will remember that, some weeks ago, our Finnish correspondent expressed considerable discontent with cultural conditions in his native land. That his judgments were accurate, we have no doubt, yet there is another way of looking at the Finnish people, recently brought to our attention by a letter from an English reader. This view of the Finns—and of the problem of military invasion—should be of general interest:

> This is just a brief comment on your Oct. 1 article, "The Far Horizon," especially on the letter from the man who wants to keep the Army, "unless we want to be ruled by the Communists." I suppose

he means, that if the American armed forces were disbanded, the Russian armed forces would move in.

Would they? Well, of course, no one can be certain. But it seems to me extremely improbable. Men talk, often, as if the Russians had been moving their forces into a number of independent countries in recent years. But have they? True, they overran a number of countries in the last years of the war, and, alas, they have remained in them; and in the case of Hungary they came back in strength when the Hungarians tried to drive them out by force. But I do not see any country into which they have moved their armies, without first provoking a Communist revolution. And if your correspondent thinks they could provoke such a revolution in America or in my country, England, I am glad to say that I do not in the least degree share his pessimism. I see no sign whatever of either country "going Communist." Why, they have not been able to succeed even in France or Italy, where there have been big Communist parties for years, and plenty of political crises.

But the country that particularly interests me is Finland. I have been there twice—in 1948 and 1958. Even in 1948, with the Russians in occupation of the peninsula just west of their capital, and the Finns burdened with heavy reparation payments, I found the Finnish people full of independent spirit and quite outspoken in their criticism of their neighbors. They were about to have a general election. In a small industrial town I noticed a number of placards posted up. "What does that mean?" I asked. "Oh," replied my Finnish friend, with a matter-of-course voice: "It just says, 'Down with Communism'!"

Ten years later I find—what? The Russians in 1956 suddenly withdrew from the Finnish peninsula (leaving it in a shocking mess). The Finns are still independent—still truly free, living their own democratic life in their own manner, saying just what they think of their Russian neighbors—and saying it openly, not furtively. One said to me: "We used to think we could defend ourselves against the Russians by our army. Now we know that our only defence comes from God." Just what he meant by that, it may not be easy to define. But if he meant: "Our best defence comes from a brave heart that has overcome and destroyed fear,"—or as Gandhi would put it: "We rely on the matchless weapon of Truth"—then I think that is today Finland's best defence.

Why don't the Russians march in? Why, instead, did they march out two years ago? I don't know. But certainly *not* for fear of American H-bombs. Neither America nor Britain would go to the military defence of Finland. Chiefly, I suspect, the Russians keep out of Finland, let them have their own free, democratic life, because (*a*) they can trade quite successfully with Finland as she now is; (*b*) they know that all Finns (or at least 95 per cent of them) would detest the occupation and would undertake all the non-violent and "spiritual" resistance in their power.

In his "Defence in a Nuclear Age," Sir Stephen King-Hall seriously proposes that Britain should, as an act of realism in the matter of defence, unilaterally renounce the H-bomb and organise instead non-violent defence and vigorous countermeasures of propaganda against authoritarian Communism throughout the world. It is an interesting argument from a man of military experience. As King-Hall says, the greatest difficulty is to persuade people to break through the thought-barrier on this subject: to begin to face the possibility that our conventional ideas on effective "armed defence" are out of date. Perhaps Finland is showing us a way through.

* * *

The chaplain of Yale University, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Jr., had some remarks of great pertinence to current issues in a recent sermon. Speaking of the worldwide tendency to make absolute commitments to some relative value—to Nationalism, for example he refers to a number of present-day idolatries, all of them resulting from the exaggeration of relative values. Dr. Coffin continues:

> Almost any relative value can be absolutized. Last month a loyal alumnus said to me at a gathering, "You look kind of young to be Chaplain of Yale, but I guess it will be all right as long as you believe in the free enterprise system." Quickly another alumnus rejoined, "Oh, Jim, I thought you were going to say the Trinity!"
>
> But even the Trinity, or shall we say, dogma, can be absolutized, as can be denominationalism or a particular form of Liturgy, and religion is potentially at least the most dangerous form of idolatry, for history has proved Pascal right: "Men never do evil so cheerfully as when they do it from religious convictions."
>
> At first all these different idolatries seem unrelated. But now we come to the profundity of the Jews, who saw in the common fervor with which

idolatries are pursued the clue to their common denominator. As the Jews saw, all idol worship is ultimately worship of self projected into objective form, the worship of the self writ large. Who, for instance, idolizes America? Americans. No American idolizes France, unless of course he speaks excellent French! Who idolizes Marks? The scholar. Athletics? The athlete. The Country Club? The Club member, or the outsider who feels if only he were an insider that he would really be someone. Idolatry in other words, is the neatest rationalization for self-worship, the best way to enhance our own egos. . . .

Another passage speaks of racism:

Harry Ashmore, in his *Epitaph for Dixie*, says this of racial idolatry: when America as a nation is trying to find its place in a nuclear age, that men should be worried about who sits next to them on a bus is a monument of irrelevance. In a nuclear age are not all idolatries monumentally irrelevant, and given the mortal jeopardy in which we find ourselves, instantly would seem not a moment too soon to challenge them in our personal lives and in our universities, communities and nations.

But this is going to take courage. Even in the face of ultimate extinction, most of us are not going to give up our idolatries; in fact, the particular anxiety of our time drives us to cling all the more to the immediate gratification our idolatries afford. And as no great Truth has been championed without cost to self and family, our friends will always give us persuasive reasons why we should just take it easy, do nothing. This means we are going to have to say "no" not only to our enemies, which is easy, but to our friends, which is hard, and to ourselves, which is hardest of all. . . .

No one at Yale—whether undergraduates or post-graduates, alumni or faculty—should have any difficulty in understanding Dr. Coffin's sermons.