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THE NEW THINKING ABOUT MAN

AGAIN, a pair of letters from readers helps to focus the explorations conducted in these pages. One subscriber returns us to the question of politics by remarking:

> I am afraid I miss the point in "Dilemmas of the Holists" (MANAS, Feb. 12). Is there not a further conclusion to be reached, beyond your comment that "the road is better than the inn"?
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> Would not the political means, or work pertaining to politics and the working of government, be working for the future, for better social and other arrangements?
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> Thus the road for a good life can be nothing less than a political life. We must improve the reputation of the political life by example.
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> Hand in hand with the elementary doctrines of fundamental equality and rights of all men goes the doctrine of personal responsibility. No one can long get something for nothing.
>
> I continue to be active as a member of our local school board and frequently meet related dilemmas. This allows me political expression here and now.

What is really at issue, here, it seems to us, is the distinction between Politics with a big "P" and politics as the functioning aspect of the social community in relationships where practical intelligence and well-established ideas of justice and social good are the ruling principles. All such divisions have only a relative validity, of course, but they are nonetheless important. Take for example the role of the school board, spoken of by our correspondent. In a frontier community, or even in a small town of today, the "political" overtones of educational philosophy may hardly arise. You have to get a school house and find a teacher or two willing to live in your community. The questions to be decided are of the town-meeting sort. But in a larger city—the size, say, of Pasadena, California—the issues grow from practical considerations into fearsome ideological controversies and you have the spectacle of people arguing from assumptions they hardly understand, except as slogans they have emotionally embraced, seeking objectives which are largely "symbolic," only remotely connected with the practical needs of the children. If you attend the campaign meetings of some competing groups of this sort, or public debates, you see people in various degrees of passionate self-righteousness striving to maintain their self-control, trying to be "good citizens," yet almost completely closed to an interchange of ideas. These people did not start with this problem by thinking about children and teaching; they started at the slogan level, and they were well supplied with rabble-rousing pamphlet literature which explains how anything related to Progressive education and John Dewey is a covert attack on Free Enterprise, the Christian religion, and a soundly competitive examination system.

Well, such controversies finally get an approximate resolution. The personnel of the Board is reshuffled. A "moderate" superintendent is put in office. The heat of the argument dies away, and the teachers, who after all know their jobs, get on with the tasks of education.

The point, here, is that what happens in such communities is not an example of the political process, but of its breakdown. There has not been any real solution. The remedy for such situations does not lie in politics, but in a kind of understanding which will help to immunize people from supposing that, after they have followed the directions of a few ardent propagandists, and won a school board election, they have done their duty by "education." No doubt the school board meeting is one of the places where such understanding can and ought to emerge, but this sort of growth is really too big an assignment for the political process, with its urgent conflicts, its pressing immediacy, and its instinctive rejection of

the "defeatism" of self-examination. What is it that closes the minds of people in political controversy? For an answer to this question we borrow from Jerome D. Frank, a Johns Hopkins psychiatrist who has been studying the problems of war and peace for a number of years. Certain of Dr. Frank's observations are appropriate here, since war often becomes the last resort in insoluble political controversy. The following is quoted from an article, "Non-Violence and Human Nature," in *Peace News* for Jan. 3:

> . . . the main attribute that frees men from inhibition against killing their own kind is the very one that makes us human, the capacity to symbolize. In contrast to all other living things, humans are motivated chiefly not by biological needs but by values, by ideas of right and wrong. This leads us to attach supreme importance to abstractions like freedom, Communism, and God, and we are ready to kill and die for them. In this lies man's greatest danger and his greatest hope.
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> Our power to symbolize enables us to view the same experience in an endless variety of ways, depending on the values we attach to it. The danger is that men can freely kill fellow humans by picturing the group they wish to kill as non-human. The enemy is always viewed as lacking in the characteristic that makes humans human—a sense of right and wrong. The enemy is either supremely wicked—bad beyond any hope of redemption or too low to have any morality. In the first category is the picture of the enemy as utterly unscrupulous, deceitful and cruel. Christians could righteously kill the infidel; Mohammedans had a holy duty to exterminate Christian dogs; and Nazis, with dear consciences, could wipe out Jews, who were alleged to indulge in ritual murder of children. We are told that the Communists, because they are atheists, have no moral scruples, and they view us as capitalist-imperialist oppressors whose only god is money.
>
> The other way of dehumanizing an opponent is to see him as too primitive to have any morality. Thus Kipling characterized the Indians as "lesser breeds without the law," and today the Afrikaners refer to the Blacks as "things." They do not even count the Blacks in their census figures.

To work, the political process must have a common ground in common assumptions about man, about values, about ends and means. Last week we quoted Amiel as saying: "The honest politician should worship nothing but reason and justice, and it is his business to preach them to the masses." The politician can *be* honest and do his job of preaching only so long as "reason and justice" mean approximately the same things to people. A constitution, you could say, is an achievement in defining these meanings satisfactorily for the great majority. From the general consensus on these meanings arises the power of the state to coerce, to exact conformity.

What happens when the people grow indifferent to these meanings, by reason of the complexity of their lives, or by reason of the replacement of old motives with new ones? The operation of the political process becomes indifferent, also, and the field of political action is invaded by ideological symbolism, and now the objective is no longer the attainment of reason and justice, but *power*—power to put down evil men, to apply ruthless solutions to aggravating problems. Politics now takes the place of religion. It feeds a false popular faith in the miraculous promise of general revolution, or general reaction. Political action is no longer nourished by the will to follow reason and do justice, but by emotional desperation. In such circumstances, there can be help only from basic philosophy, from a renewed effort to comprehend the human situation. What is wanted, now, is not more "politics"—which is only a kind of trigger-pulling—but working evaluations as to what can be accomplished by politics, and recognition of what must be done by other means.

Certain elemental realities have to be faced. One is that politics cannot make a heaven on earth. Or, in the terms of the psychotherapeutic insights of Dr. Glasser, quoted in MANAS two weeks ago (April 1): "We are puzzled because we haven't been taught that we can't make people happy and that unhappiness is the result, not the cause, of irresponsibility." With political power, one can manipulate people, move them around, increase or decrease their material welfare, and

there are times, no doubt, when these things ought to be done, but what we are now examining is the idea that *all* human problems and difficulties can be helped by such means. This is the totalitarian doctrine. It rose on the shambles of political failure in modern Europe. Its dynamics have been variously described—by Ortega y Gasset, by Dwight Macdonald, by Hannah Arendt, and others. What we are proposing, here, is that totalitarian politics is a compensating force which always arises when there is a need to fill the vacuum in the lives of people who have become accustomed to rely on outside forces for their private good. Totalitarian politics comes simply as a confirmation of what they have already decided in their hearts—that they as individuals don't amount to much and that they have a significant role in life only as their political arrangements give it to them. In such societies, the free individual becomes known only as a rebel or a victim.

What about resistance to this trend? It awakens in various ways. In our time, the resistance appears in the form of furious activity in the struggle to preserve civil liberties, in the alienation of the perceptive members of the coming generation, in diverse, almost "revolutionary" expression in the arts, in the break-up of religious orthodoxy and the emergence of small religious groups, the members of which seek pre-political roots and human relations unmediated by the current ideological symbolisms, and in efforts to do basic religio-philosophical thinking in the hope of developing the foundation for a new political consensus.

But none of these activities is properly called "political." They have to do with fundamental judgments concerning the nature, potentialities, and ends of human beings. Political philosophy may be a by-product of this sort of thinking, but political thought cannot in the nature of things originate the assumptions on which politics must be based.

Our second letter may be introduced here:

> I've been a reader of your publication for many years; in fact, I even bought two bound volumes of your writings, but there is something about MANAS' course that disturbs me.
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> Have you ever watched plate-spinners at a circus? The performer gets a saucer spinning and then he starts another, and so he is rushing from saucer to saucer as they begin to falter. I'm afraid that in some way, MANAS seems to jump from subject-saucer to subject-saucer, and while the performance is impressive—what is the purpose? Philosophers enjoy philosophizing, but this can become pointless and an addiction, can't it? Philosophical meanderings make for interesting intellectual jaunts, but eventually the familiar landmarks become too familiar—"I've been here before." How many ways can the same thought be uttered? Could it be that MANAS has unknowingly "locked itself in" as a closed system, while it editorializes about the sanity of staying "open"?
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> I realize that some of my comments may sound critical, but isn't this one of the functions of a friend? To put it graphically, each issue starts off at point A, and after some circumnavigation reaches point B—or N—and then, the week following, you go back to point A and, with somewhat different words, or a variant of route, arrive at about the same place.

There is far too much accuracy in this comment for it to be ignored. We do indeed go back to point A each week, and make a new beginning, and we do come out at about the same place. We are looking, we suppose, for a certain kind of ground whereon to stand.

Some definite statements had better be made here, to keep the discussion from getting too abstract. With many others, then, we have the feeling, verging on psychological certainty, that we live in a period of accelerating change in the attitudes, ideas, and affairs of men. It is as though "pressures" were building up in people, and that a time will come when they can no longer be confined. When the pressure is converted into energy, and the energy directed by vision, vast changes will begin. These may be compared, perhaps, to climactic moments of past history when masses of people streamed away from their ancestral homes, migrating to new opportunities under new conditions; or to the psycho-social

impact of cultural intermingling as a result of wars of conquest. Both of these factors, operating with varying intensity, were at work during the revolutionary epoch of the eighteenth century; and at the same time there was the profound influence of new thought about Man, lifting, synthesizing, unifying, and inspiring. For one thing, the expression, "We, the people," has a meaning for modern man which did not exist before the eighteenth century, and a whole range of similar concepts and values defines a universe of discourse which came into being through the travail of that revolutionary epoch. To give these generalizations body we quote from the American historian, Carl Becker: first, from his essay in appreciation of his teacher, Frederick Jackson Turner; then, from his account of the mind-shaping effects of eighteenth-century philosophy. In his essay on Turner (printed in *Every Man His Own Historian*, Crofts, 1935), Becker said:

> The significance of the frontier in American history was just this, that America was itself the frontier, the march lands of Western civilization, the meeting place of old and new the place in the world where one could still observe the civilized man adjusting his habits to the rude conditions of life in a primitive environment. From the civilized man the frontier "strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin." It drags him out of his coach-and-four and throws him into a birch-bark canoe, deprives him of his paneled halls and gives him a log cabin. A rude shock this to the civilized man, who finds that his traditional habits and ideas serve him but inadequately in the new world; and so, the environment proving at first too strong for the man, he temporarily reverts to the primitive, to something half savage. But little by little he masters his environment, by ingenious devices fashions rude comforts, falls into a rough routine of life, imposes crude laws and a ready-made justice, snatches at such amusements and amenities as are to be had for the taking—in short, painfully builds up once more a "civilization," a civilization all compact of memories and experience. The memories are old, but the experience is new. And the experience modifies the tradition, so that in the end the "outcome is not the old Europe. . . . The fact is that here is a new product that is America." . . . American development has exhibited not merely an advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating the American character." . . .
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> These are the conditions that explain the essential traits of American character—"that coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness, that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy, that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which come with freedom." And these also are the conditions that explain American institutions, American "democracy"—the questionless faith in "liberty" and "equality" and the right and the capacity of people to govern themselves; not by the "glorious constitution" are these ideals to be explained, but by the conditions peculiar to our situation—our situation on the frontier of Western civilization. "The larger part of what has been distinctive and valuable in America's contribution to the history of the human spirit has been due to this nation's peculiar experience in extending its type of frontier into new regions; and in creating peaceful societies with new ideals in the successive vast and differing geographic provinces which together make up the United States."

This passage, made up almost entirely of quotations from Turner's famous essay, *The Frontier in American History*, has the clear ring of truth; but it is now a sound out of the past; we respond, not with delight of recognition, but with nostalgic melancholy—that is what we *were*. What are we today, and what are we now becoming?—this is the important question.

But the subjective side of what we were and perhaps still are, although with less excitement and enthusiasm—needs attention. In his chapter, "The Laws of Nature," in *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (Yale University Press, 1939), Becker wrote:

> Nature and natural law—what magic these words held for the philosophical century! Enter that

> country by any door you like, you are at once aware of its pervasive power. I have but just quoted, in another connection, extracts from the writings of Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau, Volney: in each of them nature takes without question the position customarily reserved for the guest of honor. To find a proper title for this lecture I had only to think of the Declaration of Independence—"to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal situation, to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them." Turn to the French counterpart of the Declaration, and you will find that "the aim of every political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man." Search the writings of the new economists and you will find them demanding the abolition of artificial restrictions on trade and industry in order that men may be free to follow the natural law of self-interest. Look into the wilderness of forgotten books and pamphlets dealing with religion and morality: interminable arguments, clashing opinions, different and seemingly irreconcilable conclusions you will find, and yet strangely enough controversialists of every party unite in calling upon nature as the sovereign arbiter of all their quarrels. . . . Christian, deist, atheist—all acknowledge the authority of the book of nature; if they differ it is only as to the scope of its authority, as to whether it merely confirms or entirely supplants the authority of the old revelation. In the eighteenth-century climate of opinion, whatever question you seek to answer, nature is the test, the standard: the ideas, the customs, the institutions of men, if ever they are to attain perfection, must obviously be in accord with those laws which "nature reveals at all times, to all men."

Again, the mournful emotion of nostalgia stirs, and we long for those wonderful days when the Nature who was to guide us to the gates of Paradise was a friendly goddess dispensing the promise of beneficent laws which we had only to find out and follow to the end.

Our point, however, is made. Human destiny is shaped by the spur of ideas in the matrix of conditions. And for history, the ideas which gain general acceptance in any epoch give the incisive thrust to the forces of change.

What can we say, then, about the interrelation of these factors in the present, as they apply to the individual and to society? First of all, the conditions which confront present-day man are an unbalanced mixture, combining in bewildering proportions the problems of the eighteenth century with those of the present. The so-called "advanced societies" of our time have no serious problems of physical conditions and external environment. The magic of technology, were it intelligently managed, could easily usher in a Utopia made to almost any material specifications; our problems are psycho-social, having to do with the adjustment of man-made relationships and the dissolving of great institutional dilemmas. "Nature" has no clear explanatory doctrine for these difficulties; indeed, nature speaks to us, now, only in mathematical ciphers and morally neutral equations. The great and commanding emotion which one or two generations ago drew young men into the sciences has not the same power, today. The Jack Horners of physics and chemistry are more likely to take from their seething puddings new formulas for mushroom-clouds than blueprints for the Good Society. From neophytes before the altar of truth, they have suddenly seen themselves changed into sorcerers' apprentices; it is not a good feeling.

And in the ominous shadows created by today's stumbling, mumbling Goliath States, you hear the tumult of small, eighteenth-century revolutions which seem anachronisms to all except the men who are fighting them, making the uneasy people of the "advanced" countries use oversimplifying twentieth-century labels to explain away these passionate struggles of an overtaking past.

How does the present differ from the eighteenth century? It differs in that the conditions of today shout massive equivocation, while the ideas about man and nature, which are the tools, the engines and the levers of change, are still embryonic, still in genesis. These ideas are *philosophic* ideas; they are the living bones, the naked structure of the self-image of the future. What we now seem to be discovering about "nature"—our own nature, that is—is that viable

concepts of the self do not result from scientific research alone, but are also *acts of the imagination.* This is a way of saying that the substance of human reality is the very stuff of ideation, and that to know the self we must be able to think in a sustained fashion about the meaning of being human. For society and culture, this process has a cumulative aspect. A body of thought about the human essence has to be built up by the thinking of many men; by this means, the concepts of Man take on flesh and blood, dimensions and dynamics, and then, in the progress of time, we gain the ability to see ourselves as we are and may become. It is, as Pico Della Mirandola proposed five hundred years ago, a process of self-creation.

Along with this requirement is the need to see that the conditions surrounding us are equivocal because they are increasingly the reflexes of human behavior, and participate in all the mystery and contradiction of human nature. There is a sense in which to understand ourselves is to understand the world.

Many MANAS articles are little more than attempts to outline and establish the elements of this situation. So, from week to week, we go back to point A and make a new beginning, hoping, once in a while, to add a cell or so of viable tissue to the body of new thinking about man and society.

REVIEW
A STUDY OF THE DEATH PENALTY

EUGENE BLOCK'S *And May God Have Mercy . . . The Case Against Capital Punishment* (Fearon, 1962) is an excellent text for any extended course which deals with crucial social issues. The author is a San Francisco newspaperman, the author of three historical studies, who has been actively involved in movements to abolish the death penalty in California for nearly half a century. In his 200 tightly-written pages Mr. Block summarizes the most important material in print on this subject, providing a manual of public education far superior to most legislative debates. Mr. Block's Preface begins:

> I acknowledge at the outset—frankly and with pride—that for nearly a half century I have been actively identified with the movement to abolish the death penalty. It is my purpose in this book to present the case for abolition factually and completely, with due recognition of the arguments of those who favor retention of the supreme penalty. I believe, however, that the contentions of those opposing abolition will not stand the tests of time and experience, and I am heartened by the growing support the abolition movement is receiving.
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> Capital punishment has become an increasingly controversial practice, and the movement to abolish it has become a matter of great social significance in the United States and in many other countries. This has created the need for a presentation, in one volume, of all the major aspects of the issue fisocial, historical, legal, moral, and penological. This need I have attempted to satisfy.
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> It is my hope that on the basis of the evidence and arguments contained in this book the unbiased reader will decide to join the ranks of the abolitionists. Furthermore, I would like to think that this book will provide pertinent material for those actively engaged in seeking abolition, and help to persuade retentionists of the uselessness and injustice of the death penalty.

An introduction to *May God Have Mercy*, by Austin MacCormick, professor emeritus of Criminology at the University of California at Berkeley, places this volume in its contemporary setting:

> In recent years, interest in the question of abolishing or retaining capital punishment has mounted fast in the United States and England. With France, these remain the only major Western nations still imposing the death penalty.
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> Rapidly growing movements in this country and abroad to end capital punishment have met with the vigorous opposition of retentionists, often involving bitter controversy and heated legislative debates. Meanwhile, there has been an ever-widening awareness by the general public of the basic issues with many people openly or silently aligning themselves on one side or the other of this battleground of conscience.
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> Numerous books have been written by earnest and able writers, many of whom have approached the subject from one or another field of interest—penological, social, moral, or religious—or a combination of fields of interest. A vast array of works covering the entire area of the debate has been accumulating over the years. It is in the light of these circumstances, and especially because of the current resurgence of effort for total abolition, that the writer of this book has been prompted to attempt a collation of the various viewpoints, within the framework of the average layman's interest, and also to present a comprehensive review of the abolition movement, here and abroad, both past and present.

May God Have Mercy is rich in quotations from respected sources. The first chapter, for example, begins with a single sentence from Thomas Jefferson:

> "I shall ask for the abolition of the punishment of death until I have the infallibility of human judgment demonstrated to me."

The chapter titled, "Is Death a Deterrent?" focuses on a point cited from Beccaria:

> If it is important to show the people frequent proof of power, then executions must be frequent, but in that case crimes must be frequent too, which will prove that the death penalty is far from making the desired impression.

Under the heading, "How Many Innocents?" there is this sobering statement by Judge Jerome Frank:

> No one knows how many innocent men, erroneously convicted of murder, have been put to death by American governments. For, once a convicted man is dead, all interest in vindicating him generally evaporates.

On this subject Mr. Block presents a number of case histories to show how easy it is for the innocent to be adjudged guilty and executed, and why such executions constitute one of society's serious crimes against itself:

> The constant, haunting danger of executing an innocent man is one of the most frequently voiced arguments against capital punishment. While abolitionists also contend that it is morally wrong, degrading to society, and satisfies only a barbaric cry for vengeance, they emphasize the obvious fact that the death penalty is irrevocable—that vindication after death can have no solace for the victim and serves only to compound the tragedy for family and friends.

Mr. Block agrees with Dr. Douglas M. Kelley that "the only value of capital punishment is in keeping a person who would not commit a crime in the first place from committing one," and, further, that executions are for the poor and ignorant. The chapter titled "Victims of Vengeance, Poverty, and Prejudice" develops this point:

> This vital point is also made in "National Prisoner Statistics, Executions, 1961," issued by the Bureau of Prisons of the Department of Justice. Of 42 persons executed in the United States in that year, 22 were Negroes. Of 57 put to death in 1960, a total of 35 were Negroes. The disproportion continues throughout the record down to 1930, when of 155 executions, 65 were of Negroes.
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> The House Committee of the District of Columbia, reporting favorably on a bill to abolish the death penalty, said: "As it is now applied, the death penalty is nothing but an arbitrary discrimination against an occasional victim. It cannot even be said that it is reserved as a weapon of retributive justice for the most atrocious criminals. It is not necessarily the most guilty who suffer it. Almost any criminal with wealth or influence can escape it, but the poor and friendless convict without means or power to fight his case from court to court or to exert pressure upon the pardoning executive, is the one singled out as a sacrifice to what is no more than a tradition."
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> Warden Lawes once made this comment on the long list of condemned whom he had been obliged to lead to the death chamber: "In one respect they were all alike. All were poor and most of them friendless. . . . Juries do not intentionally favor the rich—the law is theoretically impartial—but the defendant with ample means is able to have his case presented with every favorable aspect, while the poor defendant often has a lawyer assigned by the courts . . . thus it is seldom that it happens that a person who is able to have eminent defense attorneys is convicted of murder in the first degree, and very rare indeed that such a person is executed."

The last chapter in *May God Have Mercy*, "The Voices of Protest," embodies the view that executions are atavistic and exert a retrograde influence on the efforts of society to improve its ethical standards:

> Professor MacCormick appeared as one of the principal witnesses before the California Legislative Subcommittee on Capital Punishment in 1957. Concluding a long argument, he said: "That the death penalty will eventually be eliminated from American penal practice nobody who reads the signs of the times can doubt. It cannot go too soon, not only because it is a thing well nigh as evil as the crimes it punishes but it also helps to keep alive the public's mistaken belief in the efficacy as a crime deterrent of severe penalties inflicted on a few, and delays the day when an effective attack on crime can be made by sustained preventive measures, vigorous law enforcement, and fully staffed correctional services."
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> Professor John B. Waite, who for more than 30 years served as professor of criminal law at the University of Michigan, expressed himself strongly in a message to the same California committee: "I am satisfied that capital punishment accomplishes no good and does harm. As a deterrent of murder it cannot be any more effective than the threat of long imprisonment. That is the only logical conclusion. The man who kills on sudden impulse does not think at all of the consequences. The man who plans his killing does not weigh the consequences because he does not care—he believes he will not be caught and is therefore indifferent to the consequences. The man who realizes that he may be convicted, but kills nevertheless, is willing to chance the consequence whatever it is. He is no more fearful of death than he is of a lifetime in prison.
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> "As to 'proof' in addition to logic, there is nothing which affirmatively indicates deterrent values in capital punishment and there is much to show its lack of effectiveness. . . . Nowhere have I found evidence of deterrent value in capital punishment."

May God Have Mercy is of obvious value to the case for the universal abolition of capital punishment.

COMMENTARY
LETTER ON LISTENING

[The following is a letter from Dr. Rachel Pinney, whose article in the London *Peace News* (March 8, 1963) was the basis of the MANAS lead article for March 4 of this year. Dr. Pinney's idea involves a way of overcoming obstacles to communication by "really listening" to one's opponent, with manifestly no intention of "refuting" him as soon as he is finished speaking.]

I READ, with great interest, your comments on my article in *Peace News.* (The name of the organisation has now been changed to Creative Listening.) What you say about the word "New" has added light to one of my problems. It has long been my custom to take a quick look at an audience I am addressing and to make a decision as to whether I can safely use the word "New." It is my experience that there is a certain type of person who hears the word "New" and immediately closes his mind to anything further that I have to say. As soon as I stop and ask for questions, he gets up and tells me it isn't new and sits down triumphant, still with closed ears. This has occurred so frequently now, that I try to forecast who will do it. Sometimes I will go on as usual to see if my forecast is correct. (I should add that I address many gatherings of very liberal minded people, including members of the Society of Friends, who are known throughout the world for their receptive listening.)

I have found that I need to demonstrate the "newness." This I am in the habit of doing by asking directly a member of the audience if he has ever had an opponent come up to him and say, "I don't agree with you but I want to know your ideas—please tell me about them, and I will not tell you mine or answer back in any way." The answer is always "No"—usually with a humorous "of course" attached to it. Then I say: "This experience that you have never had, and that none of the two hundred other people, to whom I have asked the question, has had, I have personally given to about 8,000 people during the last three years. That is why I call it 'New'."

Your article has given me a fresh angle on the question of "newness." It is known at some deep level, but has long ceased to be practiced.

I have been fortunate, I think, in promoting this idea, in that I am not an academic person and have not been tempted to formulate a theory to fit my observed fact that "it works." However, I will attempt a slight explanation in physiological language. The "urge to interrupt" is a reflex that cannot be controlled by an act of will. This urge operates as soon as the speaker says something with which the listener disagrees, or thinks to be wrong. Even if the interruption is not voiced, it is nonetheless thought. As soon as it is thought, it is no longer possible to give full attention to the speaker; attention is divided between the speaker and the interrupting thought. If this "urge to interrupt" can be controlled by an act of will, I have yet to see it. What we have devised is a simple method for conditioning a reflex. As soon as an individual voices his intention to listen without stating his own view, even if asked—and not even tomorrow—the urge is conditioned and the thought interruption does not occur. The listener *can* listen, and the speaker has the unique experience of being listened to by a willing adversary who is not going to say "oh but" at the end.

I will recapitulate the basic method for the benefit of your readers who missed the March 4, 1964 issue:

This is a method for use by two people who hold opposite views on a subject. It is a method to be applied when dialogue fails.

The "Listener" states his disagreement very briefly and then invites the speaker to explain his views and why he holds them. At the same time the Listener promises not to state his views, further than the first brief statement of opposition, at all—not even at the end, if asked. He then listens and lets the speaker know he is listening by questions, summaries, or whatever method comes naturally to him. He does not listen in silence, as this can become frightening or aggressive, so that the speaker will not know that he is fully listening. At the end of the "Listening" the listener thanks the speaker, and that is the end. One act of one-sided listening has brought two people nearer to each other in understanding, and nearer to the truth.

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CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

EDUCATION IN RELIGION—A PROPOSAL

TO introduce discussion of the Brameld proposal for inclusion of religious teaching in the public schools, we return to the California State Board of Education bulletin (concerned with the significance of the Supreme Court decision of June, 1963). The closing paragraph of this bulletin remarked that "Our schools should have no hesitancy in teaching about religion. We urge our teachers to make clear the contributions of religion to our civilization . . . through history, art and ethics. . . . This point of view, we believe, is in accordance with the tradition handed down by our fathers and reaffirmed by the United States Court."

As the quotations last week from Dr. Brameld indicated, teaching "about" religion could easily become so pedantic as to obscure matters of conviction and the fact of transcendent belief—which are, after all, elements which demand respect. The Brameld proposal, a "sixth alternative" to the various approaches to religious education," is structured according to the principle of what he calls "defensible partiality." Is it possible for sincere advocates of various religious traditions to present their positions in the classroom? Dr. Brameld feels that the difficulties here involved must be weighed against the obvious fact that nothing *but* a difficult approach can serve the ends of both democracy and religion. As for the specific proposal:

> To translate the principles of defensible partiality into classroom practice is anything but easy—certainly so in the inflammable field of religious education. As a beginning, I propose a series of pilot projects. Each project, though differing in detail from others, should have the following common features.
>
> Teams of teachers holding at least two but preferably several religious viewpoints should conduct the course together. In many communities, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant teachers are abundant. Ideally, a teacher who holds a nontheistic and naturalistic position (perhaps a member of the American Humanist Association) should also be included, as well as a teacher of Oriental extraction who professes one of the religions of the East. Where such inclusive representation is impossible (and probably it is except in a few of our largest cities), the team should represent at least two or three religious positions in the community. Those not represented must be recognized by other means shortly to be discussed.
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> Time schedules should be flexible enough to permit sessions of various lengths, depending on the range of activities. As an average, however, a period of one and one-half or two hours daily for a semester is worth trying. Shorter periods do not permit enough time for "warming up." Longer ones may be fatiguing. Here again experience is necessary, as it is to determine whether two semesters are better than one.
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> Inauguration of the project should be preceded by months of in-service workshops and conferences for the participating teachers. Representative parents and other citizens should also be involved at various times—for example, in sessions with professional consultants in religious education. This preparation should include many practice sessions by the teaching teams (including role playing and discussion techniques), intensive study of the beliefs and practices of every major religion, and the development of high rapport among those involved in the project.

Dr. Brameld faces squarely the argument that neither teachers nor communities are "ready" for such a project, even though some may be more ready than others. Of course, neither teachers nor local communities are "ready" in a complete sense, but this is not the problem. The problem is to overcome the assumption that what is difficult is impossible, and to build faith in the far-reaching benefits of an undertaking which calls for continued revaluation by both students and teachers. Dr. Brameld continues:

> Throughout the project teachers should feel just as free to express their own religious beliefs as do visiting resource persons. So, too, should every student. An atmosphere of mutual respect for one another's views is, of course, imperative. Equally so is a questioning and critical attitude on the part of all participants. Each proponent of a position should

thus be expected to state and defend his partialities, but also to expose them to comparison with others. Where logic and evidence point clearly toward some error on his part, he should try his best to concede the error and accordingly to modify his earlier belief.

Intermittently in the course of the project but concertedly near its conclusion, teachers and students should together take stock of where they are—what agreements, if any, they have reached as well as what disagreements. Here the consensus principle comes into fullest operation. For example, one aim could be to determine whether, on the basis of the best evidence available, the psychological roots of religious experience are more similar than different in the cultures of the world—whether, again, the ultimate values of the chief religions are also more similar than different.

Dr. Brameld hopes that this proposal will find implementation by the pilot project method, and that its constitutional legitimacy under the Bill of Rights will be reviewed by the courts—a process which should lead to further clarification as to what may be identified as responsible public study of religious issues. Dr. Brameld concludes:

One last objection: Does not the project, especially if and as it spreads across the field of general education, threaten to undermine the faiths of millions of young Americans? Is it not better, then, to leave well enough alone?

My reply is that we do not now leave well enough alone. The issue of religious education can no longer be side-stepped even were this thought to be desirable. I have reviewed five current ways of dealing with the issue—all of them supported by vocal advocates, none of them satisfactory.

I gladly concede, however, that the sixth plan submitted for consideration would probably affect the religious attitudes of a great many students. But a myriad of influences already affect them. As in the case of other controversial issues—sex education is one—most young Americans are now being exposed, one way or another, to a variety of views. Thus the germane question is not whether they shall be exposed at all, but in what ways and under whose auspices.

Under the rightful auspices of the public school, some young people will of course reject their earlier religious beliefs, others will modify them, still others will find them reconfirmed and deepened. This is the risk created by any kind of effective education. It is a risk worth taking.

There is much to be said for a relationship between religion which places primary value on the individual human conscience and the principles implied by the Bill of Rights. The "kingdom of heaven" is beyond majority rule, but the majority *can* agree that nothing is more important than to encourage each individual to seek it in his own way.

FRONTIERS

Letter from Poland

WARSAW.—A good many changes have taken place in Warsaw in the three years since my last visit. The telephones are no better, but are now supplemented by a more or less reliable telephone book, no more than eighteen months old, and the dial is now standard. A lot more people speak English or French than before—waitresses, clerks, taxi-drivers. One of the latter said he studied by radio, and he practiced his English on us clear across the city.

Whether more subtle and more important changes are also taking place—changes in attitudes—is a question worth asking. From several persons it seemed to me we had thoughtful answers to probing inquiries, not so often made with the pat ideological phrase. A journalist spoke quite freely in identifying the close limits within which he has to work. An old acquaintance, a member of the Party, told us mail censorship still existed, and then defined it. "Outgoing censorship," he said, "is to sample the opinion of the citizens; while incoming is a form of Socialist Redistribution." This last refers to the non-arrival of a good portion of the mail, with which I was already familiar.

Stores are better supplied with what look like better goods. In window after window appears the word "SAM." There is even a flaring modern structure labelled "SUPERSAM." The word SAM means literally "self," and SUPERSAM is, of course, a first super market. This store is regarded by some Poles as a mixed blessing. Said one of my friends: "We used to have to queue for everything—meat, vegetables, fruits, even bread. Now we are well supplied with everything, but we have to queue even longer in SUPERSAM to get a basket." "Well," I said, "be a Swiss. Bring your own basket." "It's forbidden," was the reply.

Which reminds me, perversely, of the definition of Switzerland as "that country where almost everything is forbidden, and everything else is compulsory." Maybe, after all, the real difference between the Socialist and the other states is disappearing. Aren't all men, everywhere, becoming more and more the servants, even the victims, of some sort of collectivity? At least, whether you like it or not, there is a definable purpose in Socialist collectivity, not just a mindless search for things.

But I don't see much hope in it. I don't think the Socialist states—that is what they call themselves; you can call them Communist if you like, but it isn't accurate—are going to succeed in creating a paradise on earth. In the first place, I am not sure they are going to change man, very much, except in appearance, and then only while the lid is clamped tightly on. The minute it comes off, the *status quo ante* tends to return. In the second place, I don't think man gets essentially, permanently, changed by changes in the economic and social conditions under which he lives, unless he himself changes those conditions. MANAS for Sept. 25 last put this and related questions in precise polysyllables, but the answer should be more plainly and simply written.

A problem which keeps puzzling me is how to describe the relationship between "Man" and "men"—between the academic or philosophic collectivity and the actual individuals. How much living-space does a man have, within his particular twentieth-century collectivity? If the usual human situation is acceptance, conformity to the collectivity, then the typical and essentially *human* reaction, above and beyond passive acceptance, is surely that of Socrates. Exploiting all his "living-space," Socrates went too far and was cut off by the collectivity. Such unflawed lives must be pretty rare. I am not personally acquainted with one. Is the answer, then, that a man has as much living-space as he can create and exploit? So a remarkable man understands this and works at it, and then proceeds to formulate or to realize "the most inspiring insights of philosophy" anew for himself and his generation, as MANAS says is inevitably necessary. Beyond his sheer ability to

do this, then, a man is no different from any other animal. And yet this man, achieving this mountain of development, is far and away the best we can offer. Where are the other 99.44% of us? Locked up in collectivity?

Authority seems to have no place at all in the human development described here. Yet we are living in an increasingly authoritative world. In the almost one third of humanity usually called "underdeveloped," there is moving a tide, almost a flood, toward authority as the key to human problems. In some countries, like Ghana, even intelligent, able, and admittedly honest adherence to the free institutions of the recent past is not sufficient to keep the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in his seat if he fails to side with authority. Granted, this may be an extreme case, but don't expect anything better, anywhere else in this third of the world. In the Socialist third of humanity authority remains enthroned, though one sometimes wonders, as economic conditions change, whether authority is not inventing some pretty agile steps to keep up with the music.

We Westerners are, very roughly indeed, the other third of humanity. Our material achievement is so vast, we could very nearly take care of all the rest, if we wanted to. It is in our understanding of the rest, the other two thirds, that we so abjectly fail. I'm not sure we really try. The other day I was talking with an acquaintance of some years, an intelligent Swiss diplomat. I had proposed a private meeting for this summer, to bring together a small group of intellectuals from an unfortunately divided European country, and had drawn up a list of about a dozen leading persons from each side, mainly to illustrate what was intended. He was impressed: "Your Western list has the real intellectuals, a *most* impressive group. But look at the Eastern—all you have here is a bunch of . . . Communists!"

Leave aside the fact that what he said was not true. Concentrate upon the refusal, or at best the abysmal failure, to try to understand. I have no clear conviction that conversations between intellectuals will soon point ways to solutions of human problems. What might come, however, would be some minimal mutual understanding, along with a disposition to believe that further understanding might profitably be sought.

It is hard not to lump people in categories, but the willingness to try to avoid it is at least the first step for intelligent people to take. There may be a truth hidden in a joke being told in Warsaw. It involves an American tourist and his Polish friend. The tourist is terrified, one morning, to discover that his hotel door was left unbolted all night.

When the Pole asks why he is so worried, the American replies: "Why, a Communist might have walked in!"

"What," says the Pole, "in *Warsaw?"*

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