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GREAT EXPECTATIONS

A LARGE part of human disappointment—probably the greater part—comes from misconceived expectations. Teachers, reformers, and revolutionists; parents, children, friends—all of us suffer from the failure of others to do what we think they will or ought to do. The spoiled child who, upon reaching adulthood, discovers that the world cares little for either his wants or his woes, turns petulant and resentful. The reformer who thinks of human beings as plastic models whom he has set out to benefit, will grow disgusted at the unresponsive ingratitude he meets. In another way, men of nobility suffer tragic disappointment. Mazzini departed this life in a condition of depression, almost of despair, mainly because his vision of the Italian revolution could not be realized. He felt betrayed, but what happened to his plans could probably be traced to his too generous estimate of human nature.

How can a man make himself invulnerable to disappointment? He can become a cynic, embracing a low opinion of both his fellows and the arrangements of Nature or "God." The difficulty, here, is that the cynic must also accept a low opinion of himself, since he can hardly exempt himself from the common judgment. This is too great a price to pay for invulnerability, nor is invulnerability really gained in this way, since a brooding dissatisfaction with life is always the portion of the cynic.

With the sorely disappointed Mazzini, one could compare a Machiavelli or a Hitler. Mazzini sought to inspire his countrymen, while Hitler learned to manipulate them through their fears and hopes. On a mass scale, human responses to fear are more "reliable" than responses to high inspiration. Fear and resentment are a common denominator, while inspiration selects those for whom it has an appeal. So Hitler succeeded—for a time—while Mazzini failed. Yet Hitler is remembered with revulsion and loathing, while Mazzini still inspires, still selects and encourages those to whom his dream of a better society appeals.

The matter, then, at the very least is deeply confusing. It seems that disappointments should be the natural expectation of men like Mazzini—and of all those who try to stir their fellows to a better life. Abraham Lincoln, no doubt, was disappointed, and Gandhi was disappointed. Nor can we omit spiritual teachers like Buddha and Christ from the list of those who must inevitably suffer disappointments. But when we say that such men were "disappointed," it should probably be added that this means only that they had hoped for more.

A child's disappointments are different from the disappointments of a mature man. The child begins life, as Ferenczi pointed out, with a period of Magical Omnipotence. A cry, an outstretched hand, and some desire is immediately satisfied by the mother or the nurse. The child does not want very much, but what he wants he gets. Then, as time passes, the child becomes aware that a desire cannot always be satisfied. He learns that there are procedures to be followed for getting what he wants. This is the beginning of his education. The way in which a parent meets the desires of the child is the child's first instruction concerning the nature of the universe into which he has been born. The parent may not think that what he does about his child's desires is basic education, but it can never be anything else. Although the parent may be pleasing himself by indulging his offspring, the instruction nevertheless proceeds. In this case it is very bad instruction. Eventually, the child leaves the family environment and encounters less personal influences. The transition will be fairly easy if the parents have been wise, or rude and painful if the parents have been foolish. The

transition lasts the whole way along the path of maturation from childhood to manhood. In the course of human development, other motives than personal desires appear, which vary in character and intensity with individuals. The highest motive, perhaps, is the motive of a Christ—to be of benefit to others. But from the devouring appetite of an infant to the large-hearted intentions of a Saviour, a measure of disappointment is always the rule of experience. From *some* disappointment there is no escape.

What sort of a problem does disappointment represent? Disappointment brings pain, and pain is generally accounted evil, so we may be justified in saying that human disappointment should be regarded as an instance of the general problem of good and evil. But disappointment, while bringing pain, is often itself instructive. The spoiled child *may* learn to overcome his egocentricity from experiencing disappointment. He may school himself to the recognition that his desires are no more important than the desires of others. And having gained some momentum in the learning process, he may go on to another plateau in human attitudes, where personal desires become extremely unimportant in comparison to an eagerness to help with the education of others. It is only on this plateau, perhaps, that a man becomes able to philosophize impartially concerning good and evil.

In his *Preface to Morals,* Walter Lippmann has a passage which interestingly parallels this idea. He writes:

> A mature desire is innocent. This, I think, is the final teaching of the great sages. "To him who has finished the Path, and passed beyond sorrow, who has freed himself on all sides, and thrown away every fetter, there is no more fever of grief," says a Buddhist writer.

Mr. Lippmann then quotes Confucius:

> The Master said,
> "At fifteen I had my mind bent on learning.
> "At thirty, I stood firm.
> "At forty, I had no doubts.
> "At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven.
> "At sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth.
> "At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without transgressing what was right."

Mr. Lippmann adds:

> To be able, as Confucius indicates, to follow what the heart desires without coming into collision with the stubborn facts of life is the privilege of the utterly innocent and of the utterly wise. It is the privilege of the infant and of the sage who stand at the two poles of experience; of the infant because the world ministers to his heart's desire and of the sage because he has learned what to desire. Perhaps this is what Jesus meant when he told his followers that they must become like little children.

What is the meaning of "knowing" what to desire? So far as we can see, it means that the flow of desire in the sage is indistinguishable from the flow of what is wise, necessary, and good for all, so that such desires bring neither surfeit nor pain. This implies a knowledge of all the laws of nature and an intuitive conformity to the highest purposes of human life. The sage never expects from the universe what it cannot give, nor seeks for himself what he does not already have. Such a man, we may think, is as free of disappointment as anyone can be. Yet even the sage may be made to suffer, in that he can do very little to end the disappointments of his more ignorant or less disciplined fellows. He feels *their* pain, simply because he is a human being, something more than a contractor who fulfilled the terms of his private salvation. The sage, however, has long since become reconciled to this sort of pain. He recognizes it as a condition of human life and not as an evil from which he can hope to escape.

This sort of evil or disappointment might be thought of as *primal* evil, which can never be overcome.

What about the pain which comes from disappointed expectations? Can this be overcome? How, in other words, can we separate the reasonable from the unreasonable expectations?

A man's expectations result from what he thinks are proper and natural arrangements, values, and actions. The American Indians expected certain behavior from the white European settlers, and the settlers expected the Indians to conform to quite other standards. The settlers, for one thing, took for granted that land may have an exclusive owner. But the Indians, whose habits of life were different, had no conception of private property which resembled the white man's ideas on this subject. The white man's invasion and occasional purchase of the lands which the Indians inhabited could, for the Indians, be justified by no conceivable explanation. For the Indians, it was most unexpected that an alien race would swarm over their lands, build permanent dwellings, and drive away the game on which the Indians lived. For the Indians, this was completely demoralizing. So there were wars of extermination, based, for both sides, on disappointed expectations.

It is difficult, of course, to imagine any genuine understanding between the Indians and the colonials, although there were doubtless a few cases where it existed. How "understanding" might have prevented the bloody Indian wars and the expropriation of the original inhabitants of the Americas is equally difficult to imagine. Here was a great human river, flowing westward, and the Indians were in the way. Reflecting on the situation, one is drawn to the view that "understanding" is not something that is theoretically desirable to add to a "conflict situation," but a transcendental force which predetermines in subtle ways the events over which it is to exert a decisive influence. Perhaps we can say, however, that understanding, when it is possible, provides a small margin of variability for the practical events of history—that in this "margin" lies all the freedom there is for human beings, conceived collectively as organized in communities and national and racial groups.

Marriages, businesses, and all manner of enterprises in which human beings must depend upon one another are continually foundering on the failure of people to meet one another's expectations. In some fields, considerable study has been given to anticipating these disasters and learning how to avoid them. Usually, such investigations deal with "practical" problems. There are more books on labor relations than there are on international conciliation. There are more books on how to get along with your wife than on how to get along with the universe. It is easier to work out a code for running a business than it is to establish rules for running a life. We know more about raising livestock than we know about raising children. To avoid disappointment in limited situations, one has only to make lists of "typical" misunderstandings and failures and to establish safeguards against them. This is a way of taking out "insurance." The analysis is, so to say, non-moral, in that it is based upon statistics of behavior—on what is, instead of what ought to be. If men dribble in to work in the morning at different times, you put in a time-clock and dock them when they are late. Another approach would be to give them a kind of work in which they would take pleasure; but this, of course, is seldom practical, since joy in one's work involves much more than a particular kind of job—it involves the total life-attitudes of human beings. You may, however, be able to cajole them into being happier in their work; or, quite legitimately, try to establish conditions which support self-respect and ingenuity, within the limited situation of a commercial enterprise.

From "management" as a field of study, it is but a short step to the engineering of consent and the various advertising techniques designed to avert disappointment for the manufacturer who hopes for growing sales and larger profits. A point is reached, however, in the management of circumstances and of people's decisions, when the factors which must be controlled get out of hand. There is an extraordinary gap between the manageable aspects of human life and the regions examined by philosophy and religion. Now and then we come across people who expect God to

respond to prayer in the same way that the Consumer, as revealed by statistics, responds to advertising appeals, and the so-called "godless" cultures of totalitarian politics attempt to impose on the universe an order which can be managed by the party line ideologists. In general, however, we are too intelligent to suppose that the disappointments which occur outside the areas of "control" can be eliminated simply by extending the techniques of industrial management and modern merchandising. No effectual connection has been devised to relate either the mysteries of ill-fortune or the dark subjective disasters which overtake human beings, with the methods of insurance against disappointment that have been developed on an actuarial basis. A great night of unpredictability shrouds our relationships with the universe. Once a man becomes skeptical of the guarantees of caution and prudence, he is alone with the Alone.

It is on this frontier, peering into the darkness, that the men of our time stand, some with stoic courage, some with angry denunciation, and some in fear and trembling. Whence comes the evil which seeps into our lives like a formless, nameless infection, a veritable virus of despair?

Not only events—which are bad enough—but creeping anxieties of psychic origin, as well, are pressing modern man to a sort of decision he has not felt obliged to make for generations. What sort of a universe do we live in? On what basis may we hope to cope with the things which happen to us? Are the Existentialists right? Is there no hope of dealing rationally with the world and the people in it? Is Camus' Spartan comment, "Crushing truths perish by being acknowledged," the only reply that can be found?

The scientific view is that we can have physical relations with nature—or the world around us—but no moral relationships. The orthodox religious view is that the really important relationships are those which must be established with "God." The Existentialists reject "God" as an untenable hypothesis—how could a benevolent being who presides over the universe and orders its affairs have permitted the course of European history?—and they point to the total inadequacy of the scientific account for *human* beings. Yet they have no answer. Their contribution has been to complete the circuit of analysis, to exhibit the philosophical impoverishment of the modern world. They refuse to tolerate the bland indifference of the scientific view to human suffering and insist that it be recognized.

But a handful of modern stoics who, unlike the ancient stoics, find the world a pestilential swamp instead of a harmony of impersonal forces, will not be able to convert very many to their bleak outlook of disciplined despair. They mark a great divide in thought, rather then a point of view which has hope of survival.

The pressure to find some general explanation for disappointment, meanwhile, is growing very great. Only a few years, perhaps, remain before it explodes into ready-or-not resolutions of what has become unbearable uncertainty. The time is coming when a man will look up at the stars and insist upon a dialogue instead of a soliloquy; or when he will demand to know how Socrates could look death straight in the eye and laugh at the sorrows of his friends.

A man needs to know what independence he can claim from misfortune. Besides the theories concerning atoms and the void, he needs a doctrine about love and hope. The varieties of human beings—villains and saints, poets and Rotarians—all need explanation. We need new views of success and failure, of security and survival. Is life a contract with nature, or can a man live splendidly, without calculation? Are we creatures of society, offprints of our times, or are such confining theories excuses we make to ourselves for being what we are?

Then there is the matter of the pain caused us by other people who "let us down" or block our progress. Here we are on more solid ground. Whether or not others can be blamed for what

happens to us, the fact remains that the best men never bother with blaming anyone in particular for their misfortunes. There is considerable substance in this fact, that the best men behave *as if* they understood and are reasonably content with the circumstantial side of life—are willing, that is, to play the game out without complaint. What we need, in all likelihood, is a philosophy which supports and explains the intuitions of the great.

But how will you protect such a philosophy from the makers of creeds and the organizers of sects? Buddha seems to have preferred to remain silent, in view of this danger, and Plato, whatever he "knew," chose to embody what he thought about the workings of the moral law in myths which he invented for the purpose. It may seem odd to say so, but if a man really understood the transcendental arrangements of nature, in deciding what to tell he might find it difficult to choose between the terrors of ignorance and the terrors of the corruption of knowledge in the form of pretentious dogmas and creeds. There is stark nobility in a man who stands out against the tide of experience bravely, despite his admitted ignorance; and this is to be contrasted with the endless timidities and conformities of those who, far less modest, claim to have gained possession of religious truth from some orthodoxy or other. The comparison is certainly enough to drive a man to agnosticism and to live with the courage of his ignorance as best he can!

What can we expect of our fellows? The answer seems to be, in a sense, nothing, and, in a sense, everything. The more important question concerns what we can expect from ourselves, yet that, too, is difficult to answer.

REVIEW
TRANSFORMING ADVENTURE

OF recent paperbacks, Lawrence Earl's *The Frozen Jungle* captures our vote for the best written, most consistently developed, and provocative of adventure stories.

The time will never come, we are sure, when authors stop telling tales about "human behavior in extreme situations"—with an eye to the startling transitions of character which can take place when a group of people live under prolonged privation and exposure to danger. The man of superficial strength here becomes a craven weakling, especially if his graces are only those capriciously endowed by society. The man who is always a bit "out of step" in a social situation may, on the other hand, begin to find himself, if the challenges of the new situation are stark enough to open up inner resources.

One recalls, here, J. M. Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton* (made into the successful film, *Male and Female*), concerning the butler whose reserves of courage and resourcefulness made him the undisputed leader of an "upper class" group marooned on an island. *Sea Wife* is a recent novel and motion picture with a similar theme, and Walt Grove's *Down* dramatized a comparable situation, arising when a plane crashes in an uncharted Arctic wilderness. Perhaps the reason why such novels and movies, whether good or merely mediocre, will always attract public attention is that they supply an elementary device for forcing each character to face himself.

The hero of *Frozen Jungle* hardly presents an agreeable picture when he is first introduced. Apparently an incurable alcoholic who has been unable to banish the horrors of World War II—in which he killed a young enemy at close range—Lincoln Dahl drifts from one job to another, without caring greatly whether he lives or not. But when a plane is wrecked and a prominent and successful man begins to come apart at the seams, Dahl responds to the direct human needs of people faced with starvation. A core of discipline grows within him and firally, in the performance of Herculean tasks, he finds expiation for his sense of guilt. The climactic moment of the plot comes when, in pursuit of a treacherous pilferer of the communal food supplies, instead of killing him Lincoln saves him from drowning in an ice floe. Now his tortured dreams vanish, allowing him to return to society, after the party's rescue, as a stalwart human being.

Though Mr. Earl spends some time in describing character disintegration, he seems to be basically an optimist in regard to human nature. It is the emergence of the good from the dark labyrinths of personality disorder which arouses his enthusiasm:

> No man understands his own nature fully or knows what he will do under stress. So it was with Dahl. Only a moment before he had ached to bring his own justice to Prowse, but that had been an abstract want, however passionate. Now he saw Prowse's death a moment away as a concrete promise, and to win his rough justice all Dahl had to do was—nothing. Instead, without thought, he scrambled down, hands low to touch the heaved ice and keep from falling.

Lincoln Dahl had been too neurotic to function as a normal human being. But his neurosis occurred because he had been much more sensitive than many of his army compatriots as they pursued their slaughter of a retreating enemy. Earl tells how Dahl finally sees the enormity of war's crimes against humanity:

> Dahl murmured: "The guilt is always with you. . . . At least I know why I feel it."
>
> Then he said, badly: "Or do I, Alison? Maybe it goes beyond the German I killed."
>
> She was not following him now. "Beyond? I don't—"
>
> "Maybe that's what brings it home to me." In his excitement at his possible discovery, he almost forgot to whisper. "Maybe we're all guilty of wars when they come and of the killing done in wars. Maybe that's what is wrong with us in the world today: somewhere, down deep where we cannot easily find it, each of us carries his share of responsibility for what has recently been and soon may be—the legal killing of man in wholesale lots, the possible unleashing of hell bombs which may turn back and destroy us all."
>
> She stirred uneasily. "You said that we all shared the responsibility."
>
> He nodded. "Maybe we are unaware of our hidden guilt until it is made personal by some extraordinary impact—like the impact of my

German's smashed face falling into mine. It does not become real until then."

Despite the harsh outline of an "always near death" plot, *The Frozen Jungle* is a bracing and encouraging novel. One recalls the lessons of loneliness so impressively described in Admiral Richard E. Byrd's *Alone.* In both instances a man's coming to terms with an apparently hostile wilderness also awakens a love for the grandeur of the natural world, unspoiled by human exploitation. One has the feeling that even if the gaunt passengers of the wrecked plane of *The Frozen Jungle* had *not* found their way back to civilization, they would have gained more and learned more in that six months of forced adventuring than from a full life-span under "normal" conditions. When these survivors of an arctic winter finally make their bold cross-country journey in search of the sea, only one life has been given up to the demon of sub-zero temperature. Meanwhile the only woman among them discovers her attachment to the rude cabin which had sheltered them:

> It was ridiculous to feel regret at leaving this place of hardship and of sorrow, and yet a deep regret was in Alison.
>
> The cabin would be empty after today. Perhaps it would be visited at first by porcupines beguiled by the faint leavings of salty perspiration on objects that had been much handled. The roof would rot and begin to leak and at last fall in. The winds of next September would force chinks in the calking between the logs, and no one would be there to mend them.
>
> Why? She thought, almost fiercely. Why do I feel this way over leaving behind a place that has been merely a rough shelter against the elements?
>
> Yet it had sheltered them and seen the changes, and already the pain and despair it had enclosed were blurring in memory.
>
> Perhaps it had even been something of a home—the second home she could remember.

An unorthodox "nature story," perhaps, yet this is what significant portions of *The Frozen Jungle* constitute. The burgeoning of fresh hope from a chaos of ailing minds and bodies is paralleled by the beauty of an austere landscape—plus the hope of a vitalizing spring to come: "From all around there was the sound of running water, an aliveness: the booming of the stream that was now almost a river, the tinkling of new brooks the thaw had made, the many small overflowing flumes from the boggy places. The very hillsides glistened, and the air was sharp with the scent of extruding resin. Change was all about."

Perhaps Mr. Earl does not write "philosophy" in formal terms yet there are definite correlations between the respect accorded both human and external nature in this story—recalling the thesis of many contemporary psychologists, that man, in order to fulfill himself, needs through struggle to become a "self-actualizing" or "autonomous" person. In other words, the relationship between man and nature portrayed by some modern writers diverges sharply from either old-line theology or biological mechanism.

The struggle for survival, if successfully passed, leads a human being to reach *beyond* consolidation of the means for self-preservation. As Joseph Wood Krutch says in *The Great Chain of Life:*

> Alfred Russel Wallace, generously acknowledged by Darwin as the co-propounder of the theory of natural selection, steadily and from the beginning maintained one difference with his more famous co-worker. It was not and could not be demonstrated, he said, that natural selection could account for "the higher qualities of man. Most notable among these "higher qualities" was, he maintained, the moral sense.
>
> No doubt some manifestations of it had a survival value in society. But not all of them. Man's willingness, sometimes at least, not only to sacrifice himself but to sacrifice himself and others for an ideal, his human conviction that "survival value" is not the only value, did not in themselves have any "survival value." How then could they have arisen if it was, as Darwin said, the inviolable rule of nature that no organism can develop what is not biologically useful to it? An all-inclusive explanation of the phenomenon of life in terms of natural selection would have to account somehow for the very conception of "values which have no survival value." And no such inclusive explanation is forthcoming.

Mr. Earl's novel skillfully resonates this theme.

COMMENTARY
MORALS, EAST AND WEST

OF all the philosophers of the Orient, Confucius appeals especially to Western Humanists, possibly because of the rational temper in nearly everything that he says. Mr. Lippmann (see lead article) is plainly a humanist—or was when he wrote *A Preface to Morals*—and he cites Confucius to establish a rational view of the play of desire in a man's life.

Two great influences tend to discourage Western interest in the more familiar Eastern doctrine of the "elimination" of desire from human life. First, the flooding energy of the West breeds a natural antipathy to a merely negative conception of virtue. There is something repugnant, also, in the preoccupation of Western religion with "sin," with the result that any doctrine which seems to recall dark Calvinist condemnations and Puritan self-righteousness is almost certain to meet with instinctive rejection. The naturalistic background of Western thought can find no place for such apparent mutilations of human nature.

What the West may learn to accept, however, is a kind of "economics" of desire, through which it becomes apparent that a man simply cannot *afford* to respond to all his impulses indiscriminately. And once the value of a principle of control is established, the Confucian view is at the helm. Not in order to be "good," but in order to be effective, in order to have clarity of mind, to acquire the serenity of impartial judgment: this, perhaps, is the foundation of the morality of the future. And if, by unexpected coincidence, we find ourselves approaching the stance of Eastern wisdom, we may prefer to use the language of Mr. Lippmann—"A mature desire is innocent"—to characterize the moral ideal, instead of pressing goodness and virtue upon ourselves. We may in time gain even a Buddhist dispassion, in spite of all the moralizing to which we have been subjected.

One thing more: It is possible, even probable, that we will eventually discover that the truly ancient moralists were no more interested in "virtue" than we are; that they found the same good reasons for a regulated life that we are finding, and that the systematized religions of the Orient have given us a somewhat biased report on their attitudes of mind, even as Western religion probably misrepresents Jesus. Organized religions are very much the same, the world over, in this respect.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE DEADLY COMPLACENCY

THE *Saturday Review's* "Accent on Education" Number (Sept. 14) would probably interest all MANAS readers. Of particular value are two brief articles analyzing the "trend to conformity" in the modern university, affecting both students and professors. Leonard Buder, staff education writer for the New York *Times*, discusses "The Children of Conformity":

Many educators today assert that this emphasis upon conformity is prevalent among American students today. In "The American Teenager," which is based on studies made by the Purdue Opinion Panel, H. H. Remmers and D. H. Radler report that in one poll of high school students:

> Twenty-six per cent said, "More than anything, I want to be accepted as a member of the group that is most popular at school."
>
> Twenty-nine per cent admitted that they sometimes did things "just to make people like me."
>
> Thirty-eight per cent feel that there is nothing worse than being considered an "odd ball" by other people.
>
> And fifty-one per cent conceded that they try very hard to do "everything that will please their friends."
>
> One psychologist to whom I cited these figures, declared:
>
> "The student today does not take pride in independence; he conforms out of a fear of being considered 'different.' He has no sense of revolt against injustices.
>
> "The school program today, with its emphasis on producing well-adjusted, well-rounded students, is pinching off some of the creative energies of the youngsters. Contentedness does not breed creativity. Our geniuses are not, by and large, well-rounded people."
>
> The psychologist hastened to explain that he was not suggesting that schools turn out maladjusted individuals.
>
> "What I mean," he said, "is that when the school comes across a child with a high scientific interest, for example, who is constantly poring over books, perhaps ruining his eyes and developing round-shoulders—doing what may be good for the long-run welfare of society, even though the side-effects may be bad for him physically—the school shouldn't push this child out on an athletic field, just to make him well-rounded. In the end he probably still won't be well-rounded and what is more, he won't be a scientist."

Mr. Buder is one of many who feel that even unintelligent rebellion is preferable, in the long run, to submersion of the individual in a sea of innocuous group opinions. There needs to be an outburst of Dante's "divine discontent," but, as Buder puts it, the fact that so many young people have apparently abandoned idealistic causes "may be because an adult society has taught them that it is often safer to conform than it is to become an individual."

The college professor of 1957, implies Raymond Walters, Jr., in "Intellectuals in Gray Flannel Suits," tends to shy away from controversial subjects on political or social analysis. As a successful conformist he resembles the smart business executive, and he fits the 1957 college student as a hand fits a glove. Another contributor, Ray Briggs, sums up "College Professor 1957":

> Like his counterpart, the public school teacher, College Professor 1957 was turning to other fields for money and spending the minimum amount of time in teaching. Some side jobs: textbook compiling, manuscript reading, and jobs as consultant to businesses. (Most spectacular profit-maker in this way this year, of course, was Columbia University instructor Charles Van Doren who walked away with more than $100,000 from the TV show "Twenty-One.")
>
> He was finding less time to devote himself to scholarly research, travel, and other pursuits necessary for the broadening of his teaching ability.
>
> He was tending to become more of a guidepost than a guide in his classroom teaching because of the increasing number of students. In this way colleges were in danger of becoming less a community of scholars and more a mechanical information factory.

> Since the chief aim of College Student 1957 is to become a well-rounded business executive, College Professor 1957 finds himself more and more called upon to turn out junior executive talent for the country's businesses. But at the same time he finds himself more and more involved in the big business of running a college or a university--all the while on very little salary for himself.

This sort of generalization may be grievously unfair to the many professors who do *not* fit the Gray Flannel Suit pattern, but it contains enough truth to support Robert M. Hutchins' laconic judgment, that college professors tend "to have the same degree of independence as nursemaids."

If such criticism seems extreme, we invite consideration of other aspects of the "trend to conformity." Instead of pioneering thought in new directions, the American university is apt to reflect the *status quo-ism* of influential regents and trustees, and the average American has pretty well accepted the doctrines of adjustment and manipulation. Max Lerner writes vigorously on this subject in the New York *Post* (June 24), under the heading of the "Assault on the Mind":

> We live in an age of manipulation which is learning startling new ways of attacking the currents and patterns of the brain, disarranging them and rearranging them. Consider first the methods that work through the chemical modification of the brain. A grave-faced doctor jabs a needle with some stimulant into the arm of a deeply disturbed patient or administers insulin to him or runs a current of electricity through his brain. The silent grow talkative, the apathetic become excited and relive buried emotional experiences. Something happens in the brain of the patient. The point of toleration is reached and passed. He may go into convulsions. The old patterns break down and new patterns of behavior and personality emerge. These drugs operate by heightening the emotional excitement of the patient. There now are others to calm him.
>
> What is dangerous about the tranquilizers is that whatever peace of mind they bring is a packaged peace of mind. Where you pay 10 cents for a pill and buy peace with it, you get conditioned to cheap solutions instead of deep ones. This is the road to packaged conformity. Those who are today lulled into a sense of tranquility through buying something they will swallow and produce changes in their central or autonomic nervous systems may tomorrow buy and swallow a packaged social nostrum. In both cases they will feel that it is unnecessary to strive and fight to slay the dragons by will and courage. It will no longer interest them much, for all dragons will seem unreal, and the only reality will be packaged tranquility as advertised.
>
> We in America don't have to fear the cultural commissars nor any system of brainwashing or thought-control by the government. But the pressures from the culture are stronger than most of us like to admit and the brainwashers seeking to impose the cultural patterns on us for their own purpose and profits keep pretty busy. Maybe it is the MR (motivational research) "depth-man," maybe the TV "great man," maybe the Congressional "grand inquisitor," maybe the public relations firm building up the "indispensable man" in a Presidential campaign. Maybe it is the juggernaut at a political convention crushing a dissenter who has dared question the wisdom of running an anointed candidate along with the indispensable one.
>
> The way out is not by flight or breakdown and certainly not by tranquilizer pills. Nor is it by withdrawal into the cocoon of one's private life, letting the brainwashers and thought-controllers do their worst on others. It is by knowing who you are and facing both the cultural idols and your own fears and anxieties and fighting for the things you believe in. Foremost among them is the human personality in its preciousness and uniqueness.

For a time, after World War II, it seemed that both professors and students embodied a new attitude of inquiry. But it now appears that both young and old are in continual need of stimulus to stir up their minds.

FRONTIERS

Faiths for a Perilous Life

THE eleven contributors to the Autumn *American Scholar's* symposium on "Faiths for a Complex World" offer no exciting panaceas—they were asked for an expression of personal philosophy, a "faith to live by"—nor is there anywhere apparent in their testaments the notable presence of the "keys to wisdom." Yet this issue of the Phi Beta Kappa quarterly clearly lives up to its claim of being issued for "the independent thinker." (Of all the quarterlies which come to MANAS, none is picked up and read with more anticipation; and as the frequent notice in these pages of *American Scholar* articles indicates, we are seldom disappointed.)

The leading qualities of the writers who contribute to the *American Scholar* might be named as intellectual integrity, clarity, and a civilized spirit. Ortega y Gasset coined a phrase which seems to apply to such people: they live at "the height of their times." If you want to know about the best thinking that is characteristic of our times, you are likely to find it in the *American Scholar*. You may not find the most daring or original thinking, or the most "advanced" thinking, but you will find full representation of high literate intelligence.

The eleven essays presenting "Faiths for a Complex World" have certain things in common. They are in no case, for example, statements of "social" philosophy. Now since the writers (who are all over sixty, by choice of the editors) were asked to define their "personal" faiths, it may be said that there was no occasion for social philosophy, but there was a time when serious writers would have protested against this limitation. But not one of the eleven complains. Only two of the contributors offer a faith essentially "Christian" in origin. The rest seem to find an intuitive basis for their convictions and what "hope" they are able to muster. The journalist, R. L. Duffus, for example, has this to say:

> What is our faith then? I mean, of course, what is my own faith? I cannot speak for the faith of other persons even though we recite the same religious or secular creeds. The words we use mean different things to different speakers and listeners. My faith, then—possibly a survival of the nineteenth century—is a belief in the purposefulness of the universe, a belief which I have been unable to shake off. I cannot believe that life originated spontaneously and without some kind of premeditation, nor can I believe that the scene through which life moves and of which it is a part is unpremeditated. . . . although I do not know what the purpose is or what force in the universe itself has a purpose, I do believe in a purpose in the universe.
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> I believe also in a life instinct and in the power of this instinct over all the forces of the modern hell toward which we often seem to be moving.

Here is a man gritting his teeth in the face of the gale. But we ought not to pick at a man's statement of his ultimate convictions. The invitation to state one's personal philosophy is an invitation to strip oneself of all pretenses and one's words of all embellishment. The significant thing about what Mr. Duffus says is not, perhaps, its meager foundation, but rather that it is wholly independent of authorities other than Mr. Duffus (unless his suspicion of nineteenth-century philosophy makes an exception).

We did not include Henry Beetle Hough (who with Mrs. Hough publishes and edits the *Vineyard Gazette*) among the "Christian" contributors, despite his initial avowal. He writes:

> My difficulty is not one of discovering the tenets of a faith that will hold against all attacks, past and present; the Christian ethic is completely satisfying. My difficulty is in believing that men will, this side of any discernible horizon, abide by that ethic. Not to believe in men is an ill thing; I know that, but my skepticism persists.
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> Therefore it is a lean and sinewy conviction that is left to me: as utter a conviction of the eternal truth and value of the Christian ethic as when some of its significance was first taught to me long ago, and a readiness at any moment to find that professors of the

faith have abandoned it for some practical objective nearby or in the middle distance. . . .

For myself I live in the conviction that this is our only world and our only life, and the acceptance of man as one with nature brings no disappointment but, on the contrary, a genuine content and satisfactory glimpse of the requirements and opportunities of living in a natural world. To act upon any other belief, it seems to me, is to miss the real challenge, to fail in the whole justification for man's superior wisdom and capacity. . . . I am moved by these words of Irwin Edman's: "Maturity consists in trying to discover the conditions by which men may make the most of what is given." Can we afford to fail in this?

Mr. Hough is really a stoic. He notes that man, when he acts in groups such as parties, nations, or societies, generally acts from expediency rather than principle. "A reasonably normal man respects life, but a nation kills 78,000 human beings in a single moment at Hiroshima. A man avoids harmful substances, but a nation considers solemnly how much terrible poison can be discharged into the atmosphere with any remaining chance of safety for the human race."

Here, again, is a man gritting his teeth in the gale.

Howard Mumford Jones, professor of English at Harvard, is another stoic—an avowed one. Mr. Jones "accepts the universe," yet is somewhat troubled by the things that happen in it. "How," he asks, "can I acquiesce in a universe in which man daily threatens to destroy himself?" But destruction, he points out, is an old story, while—

The continuity of human experience! Life and death, love and regret, seedtime and harvest, gain and loss, toil and repose, infancy, childhood, adulthood, old age—are they not the same in any age, under any rule, with any religion? I find little in the conventional creeds to instruct me otherwise.

Mr. Jones concludes:

I hold, then, that though we may be here as on a darkling plain where ignorant armies clash by night, we ought to turn our attention to ignorance, not blame it on the cosmic weather. Ignorance can to some degree be diminished, but over the cosmic weather nobody has any control. In curing ignorance our aim should be to insure dignity to peasant and prince alike, not to diminish the stature of man. There are, I know, those who assure us that dignity is impossible to twentieth-century man. That quality they think was lost somewhere between *Le Contrat Social* and the concentration camp at Dachau. Seen from a good many angles, man remains the comic grasshopper Mephistopheles described; seen from other points of view, given his weakness, his rudimentary capacities, the uncertainty of his duty and the obscurity of his destiny, he has managed to produce things as various as the Parthenon, Verdi's *Otello*, the spectroscope, modern hygiene, Charlie Chaplin, the skyscraper, electronics, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and the rock carvings in ancient Indian caves. Grant that no other planet, so far as we know, has anything on it remotely resembling human life, is it not something that man has done this much? The stoic knows not surely whether the gods exist, but if they do, he believes he will know in their good time. He does know, and acquiesces in, the limitations of existence, and, acquiescing, does what he can to insure that dignity and peace shall be the goal of humanity.

Paul B. Sears, noted conservationist, constructs his credo from a critique of conventional faiths. Why have not the organizations devoted to the guidance of man gained a wider acceptance? His answer is that "the official faiths of the West, starting out with the noble premise (in theological language) that men are the sons of God, have balked at one corollary of this assertion of human dignity—that of the searching intellect." He continues:

Freedom of the inquiring mind to seek and find its answers in any cranny of the universe, on any question and in any situation, and particularly in the field of faith, is still too often begrudged. In this thirst to know and understand, it seems to me, is an essential if not a final test of human freedom and dignity.

Other articles in Mr. Sears' credo are faith in the order of the universe and faith in man—

The belief that the majority of mankind will tend to make a good choice of action if given the verifiable facts that are within his comprehension. This is a hard doctrine to justify but its validity is supported on every hand by the ceaseless efforts of those who would manipulate their fellow men. They

> fear the truth as the Devil hates holy water, and they manipulate the sources of information wherever they can.

Two other essays we should like to mention. Melville Cane, a lawyer who is also a poet, declares the "sacred right" of the individual to "be different and stand separate from the mass"—"to defend his identity, to preserve his own unique image." William Carlos Williams, a doctor who is also a poet, reveals his private "faith":

> The thing that sustains a man among his fellows is his secret opinion of himself. On the instant I look into a man's eyes I know what that man amounts to for me and know how to deal with him. I am seldom wrong. How can a man who has anything to do in the world about him afford to be often mistaken? A big dollar sign shows me at once to beware. Even the clothes a man puts on his back, his habits of speech, a snatch of his conversation heard in a public conveyance or at a board meeting or country club, should be enough to alert us to what particular circle of hell he comes from.
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> If a man is of the royal blood, an artist—and it is the life of the artist which I have been attempting to indicate here—he will be above all this. He can't afford to be caught at it. That is why men with whom you want to be associated keep themselves mostly silent, frequent mostly the family circle and groups of intimates. They do not give themselves away; the best of them are enigmas to their fellows, covertly open in their dealings with their fellow men. They have nothing to sell.

Well, what have we here, in *toto?* Acceptance of the Sermon on the Mount; a tenacious faith in the meaning of life, despite all contradictions; an unwilling skepticism toward the traditionally presumed "good" in man; a life after death rejected when mentioned; some tribute to the exceptional and the great in human achievement; an insistence on the right of the mind to pursue the truth without having to cope with institutional barriers; the demand for free individuality; and finally, the taking of the artist as a type of the non-acquisitive man. There is more, of course: the humane temper of these writers, the rich variety of their minds, their humor, their gentility and composure. But it is, after all, the humble wisdom of disenchantment, of men who refuse to deceive or be deceived.

Plainly, the intuitive values are here in far greater plenty than the constructions of reason; these are the things a passing generation will not relinquish, come what will.

These eleven essays have something of the character of a summation of our civilization. Would it be unfair to question the fate and the faith of all the rest—the millions to whom the members of our most distinguished learned society are, in *propria persona*, the teachers? Not many men have the personal ballast of inward faith to be found in these essays. We make no demand for a more "popular" religion or philosophy, but invite a simple wondering about the problem. If our culture presses such men to the wall, leaving them only the private defenses of the stoic, what is it doing to the more populous segments of society?