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DENMARK THROUGH BIFOCALS

[This article, as soon becomes evident, is by a Danish-born American woman who recently went back to Denmark for a brief visit. The observations and reflections of this MANAS reader seemed of sufficient interest to print them here.]

SUPPOSE I be permitted to shift my identity from somewhere in the middle of my Danish-American personality, all the way over to my American half, and that I describe from that vantage point what this American saw, heard, and felt as she stepped off the plane in the Copenhagen airport. What was most noticeable, and what made the greatest impression on me?

Unquestionably, the neatness and beauty of all that is man-made in this extraordinary little country! Nature left Denmark with a rather flat or mildly rolling countryside; no great mountains, water falls, ravines, deserts or special wonders to marvel at, as we have in abundance in America. But what Nature did give the Danes they seem to have enhanced and beautified in countless ways. Danes do wonderful things with plants and flowers, both indoors and outdoors. Their buildings somehow belong with the scenery, and are built to stand. The new and the old blend in a symphony of color and line. Designs are simple, clear, and functional; colors are bright without harshness, and lines are sturdy and unobtrusive. But the neatness in Denmark is an essential part of all this visual beauty. One never sees junk anywhere, and you can't scare up a single slum district in this "Welfare State," as the Danes themselves call their country. There is no waste paper flying about, in spite of the almost constant wind. There are paper baskets in the streets, and even one who has lived in America for almost thirty years goes around with a piece of crumpled paper in a sweaty little hand, rather than disturb the neatness and beauty!

Well, aren't the Danes just an orderly, homogeneous people? This is of course true, but necessity has here been an influential teacher, for the Danish culture, whose written history goes back more than a thousand years, has arisen from a need to get much out of little, to develop skill so as to feed, clothe and shelter an ever-growing population that is now 4.5 million people, living in an area smaller than Ireland—265 persons per square mile.

So there is a thousand-year tradition of little waste, good workmanship, and fine craftsmanship. This latter is especially stressed today when Denmark faces the danger of being left behind in the technological race with more industrialized countries. She has good soil but no raw materials for industry. (Incidentally, Danish neatness is unquestionably related to the fact that industry cuts into the ground and plunders with power-driven force and speed, while agriculture—even mechanized agriculture—must obey Nature's rhythms, must nurture, foster, and wait.) Denmark presently manages to compete with industrial countries by importing raw materials from near-by countries, such as England, Germany and Sweden, applying her skill and workmanship, then often selling the finished product right back to the country which supplied the raw materials!

The Danes have recently found "Turisme" profitable. The world has discovered beautiful little Denmark—especially Americans, but others also—and people come in droves every summer. More hotels have to be built every year, and even as late in the season as September 26 of 1959, when the airline had to house fifty-two passengers on one flight because of engine trouble, the people had to be taken to Elsinore, a long bus-ride from Copenhagen: No near-by hotel could provide accommodations. With the coming of "turisme," one begins to sense feelings something like the

following among the Danes: *"Before,* our country was neat and beautiful because we *wanted* it to be that way; *now* let's be extra neat and beautiful because it *pays."* Or: "What's the matter? Are we monkeys in a zoo, or something? Since you all are so eager to look at us!" Or perhaps a sense of: "We know it all—but why don't *you*?"

Actually, this self-satisfaction could be said to be well founded, for Denmark has the highest standard of living I have ever experienced—higher than ours, I feel, because it is *uniformly high.* Only in material extremes does ours exceed theirs. Americans do have more and larger cars, more and larger bath tubs, more and larger refrigerators. However, the Danes do have adequate cars, bath tubs and refrigerators. The improvements here since my last visit, six years ago, are impressive. Further, the Danish sense of design, line and color, as well as workmanship, is very effective in regard to functional things. Public transportation, for instance, is not only efficient, on time and up-to-date, but each train, trolley or bus is almost a thing of beauty. Each tidy railroad station is so enhanced with shrubbery and flowers that it becomes an integral part of the countryside. And again, no slums!

But where the Danish standard of living really outruns ours is at the level of the human contribution. The homes are rarely "store-bought," but mostly personally created over the years. Home-making is an art or at least a craft in regard to furnishings, cooking, and serving of meals. While the Danes are not an especially gifted people in the arts—such as, say, the Germans or Italians in regard to music—their workmanship and skill are such an integral part of everything they do that their artistic performances excel. People are thus conditioned over centuries to become very discriminating, and poor work is not tolerated. In passing, I might say that the Danes have real respect for the skill of our great orchestras, but some think that we are developing skill at the expense of content and warmth.

In the field of social science and welfare, Denmark leaves us far behind. Let me tell you a little of what this means. If you anticipate becoming old, or sick for any length of time, you should go to Denmark! Hospitalization is the best in the world and costs almost nothing—for anybody—in the state-owned hospitals. And almost all Danish hospitals are run by the state. You pay 40 cents per day for everything: doctors, surgery, laboratory tests, etc. If you need a mental hospital, it will cost a little more—$1.20 per day. All patients get the same high-grade treatment—no "class" distinction. If you are a man of sixty-seven or a woman of sixty-two you can apply for the *Folke Pension,* which means that you will receive a monthly check in the mail which is almost enough to live on. And you can still earn something besides, without penalty. If you have no earning power, no property or resources, you can move into the Old People's City or into one of the very large but adequate and modern apartment houses for older people, with elevators, cafeterias, etc. In this case the state keeps most of the Folke Pension, but supplies you with a bit of spending money.

Children and working mothers are well taken care of in Denmark. There are beautiful kindergartens where for a farthing the child may stay all day under the best of care and supervision. This service is also available for non-working mothers, for whom the price is a little higher. The children here, as well as in the primary schools, get medical and dental care free, and it is very good. Secondary education, also, is of high quality and quite inexpensive. A college student pays some $10 every three months for his four and a half years of education, plus $200 for books for the whole time. That is all. He can in certain cases get free dormitory privileges, but must pay for his food. The taxes needed to support all this are of course high. My brother, for instance, who is an artist with a wife and small child, earns no more than a modest living, yet pays about 20 per cent of his income in taxes, and my cousin, who is

a doctor's secretary and has no dependents, pays about 33 per cent.

In Denmark both radio and television are supported by a license fee, and contrary to our general experience, they actually put people in touch with public decisions. Neither radio nor television is much of a nuisance or problem for people with children. There is only one TV station which broadcasts only between 8 and 10 P.M. Nevertheless, many parents will not let TV invade their homes. I found no Danish home in which the radio was used indiscriminately. One looked up in the newspaper what was being offered, then decided whether or not to listen. And I did go into a lot of homes. I have forty-odd first cousins, most of whom are married and have families. I visited some thirty-odd of them in their homes, plus a great many friends, and slept on numerous guest beds and sofas. Further, I did not hear one juke box all summer long in Denmark. Of course, I did not go out of my way to round up a juke box!

Some Danish mannerisms may be of interest. I was rather appalled, for one thing, to discover that people in service positions still address their customers in the third person: Will the Mrs. have this; does the Mister perhaps prefer such and such? At times I wanted so much just to be a *person* like the one behind the counter! But this practice has seemingly no bearing on class differences, which hardly exist—even less, perhaps, because the barriers created by great wealth are so unlikely. Nowhere did I find any vestige of the old-fashioned "superiority of the male" attitude that we Americans may still associate with European ways, no all-powerful "master of the house" ordering about the whole family, demanding immediate obedience and special attention for himself from the wife and children. However, I was surprised to discover that there were still Danes who had trouble understanding each other. I expected that the various dialects would have finally disappeared with increased communication. But no. Dialect confusion has lessened, of course, but by no means disappeared. This has moved me to wonder if a person does not lose his dialect until he has let go of his emotional need for it.

I think it is interesting to note that there has never been a revolution in Denmark of the sort that took place in France, Germany and most other countries. Of course, governments have changed, but not through violent means. In that context I want to tell you of an experience I had while visiting a cousin out in the country. One evening she asked me to go along with her to a small town hall. Once a month the village has a meeting with, usually, a political speaker. This time it was a former minister of state, who spoke more philosophically than politically, however. The speech was well constructed and some 150 people were seated at long tables where we later had coffee and cake served to us. There was time for questions, and I could have thought of at least half a dozen, but decided to watch how the people usually conducted things, and not to stir anything up. Well, there was only one question, an unintelligible one, which the speaker used as an excuse to make another speech! That just couldn't happen in *my* America! Also, in this context, it was curious—and disappointing—to see that people generally, people in small gatherings, people in two-some conversations, old friends and new, as well as casual acquaintances, display no real interest in America and my experiences there.

Well, what *are* the Danes interested in? They want just to live nice, quiet, orderly and unemotional lives, it seems. The young people have few bull sessions in the universities. They are putting their noses to the grindstone in order to get through their studies and get placed in society, not unlike what happens in America. Perhaps where everything in the outer realms of life is so perfect, it is even harder to find anything to "bull session" about or rebel against. But Danes do talk of Russia and the power politics between Russia and the U. S. They definitely don't want Communism. They are afraid of it.

They have no conflict about that, especially since "Hungary," after which two prominent and respected Danish communists withdrew from the party and made a public statement of their reasons. One of these persons—a world-famous neurologist—was a member of Parliament. He served his fellow Danes well by helping, as perhaps no one else could, to make clear just why communism is not compatible with Danish temperament and ideology. Yet last summer, when he was invited to an important convention of neurologists in the United States, he was refused entry because of his former membership in the communist party! The Danes found this disturbing. The other former communist who helped the Danes to become clear on communism is a much-loved Copenhagen school principal, a woman who happens to be the niece of one of my best friends.

The Danes are fearful of Russia and want us to keep on arming, yet they feel that the hysteria we are displaying is ridiculous. And their feelings about us are mixed in other respects. They don't like most of what comes from America—the third-rate movies, which they get mostly because they can't afford the better ones, and there are plenty of such to be had for much less money from Sweden, France, and Italy. They don't like to see their youth picking up what they consider to be American bad manners and customs, such as carrying portable radios around in the woods. In short, Danes often feel that most of what comes from America is decadent and corrupting to their ancient culture; that American political policy is both naïve and stupid, though hard-hitting; that individual Americans seem like children, well-meaning but rather ignorant and adolescent! In this respect it is unfortunate that Danes don't have easy access to what I consider our greatest cultural contribution, our literature. Of course, most of the younger generation can read English, but it is easier to read Danish books, and translations are costly. While some American books—of varying quality—are well translated, they are only a drop in the bucket.

What I finally felt was that the Danes are operating on a subconscious assumption which might be tentatively expressed: "I'll do the decent thing in most instances and without much thought or trouble because of my heritage. I'll be kind to you, and even help you—but don't tell me anything, and don't raise any issues, for it'll all be old hat for me, and I already know how to do most things better than you do, anyway." On the other hand, let me tell you a story to illustrate the real resilience of this old country—much more than our far younger American culture usually exhibits. The ax-communist school principal I mentioned before, who is so loved by all, adopted a baby boy a number of years ago, which an unmarried woman can do in Denmark (by a law which has given many a hapless child a good home and has meant much to self-styled "families" of two women who create a home together). After the war, when my friend, the school principal's aunt, was practicing dentistry in Philadelphia, a patient brought her a newspaper clipping from the New York *Times* reporting that a well-known Danish school principal (her niece) had announced to her school board that she was pregnant! My friend, the dentist, knew nothing of this because we Danish-Americans had just recently begun getting mail from Denmark again, after the war, and none of her relatives had been anxious to write her about this "family scandal." It was known that the school principal was not married and she had not said anything about the presumed father! Well, my friend here in Philadelphia "hit the ceiling." When she arrived in Denmark for her retirement shortly after, she went straight to her niece "to have it out," and aunt and niece were not on very good terms for a time. Meanwhile, the Danes worried back and forth over this situation in the newspapers, on the school board, among the parents and the students, with the—for us Americans—rather amazing result that the school board let her stay on the job! Danish society survived, absorbing this whole thing. So did her aunt. As a matter of fact, there is a sequel: Her aunt took up bicycling again in

Denmark at the age of sixty-seven. One day she was bicycling across City Hall Square at dusk when a public news-bulletin arrangement in lights was just going on. Looking up, she read—to her consternation—the name of her niece. She nearly fell off the bike, but caught herself in time to read that her niece had won the annual reward from the largest Danish publishing company for some sort of literary accomplishment!

Well, I soaked up all the neatness, the beauty, the orderliness, the fine skill and craftsmanship, as well as the generous hospitality of the people everywhere in this welfare state. Yet, before I came home I had another vague feeling which I finally identified: I was getting weary of all the perfection around me! And soon odd thoughts began to present themselves, such as: Is not Denmark perhaps even more materialistic than the U.S.? Even with the obviously pleasing differences? Some Danes, too, are becoming aware not only of the money cost of all this welfare and security, but also that there might be other disadvantages. Are the people actually any happier, for instance? Whereas diphtheria, TB, and venereal diseases are practically wiped out, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, insomnia, headaches, ulcers, cancer and suicide are very much on the increase. There seems to be almost no awareness among ordinary people that some "physical" illnesses may have an emotional base. What little realization there is of this means no more on the practical level than a casual warning that, *of course,* one should not take too many sleeping pills. The Danes do talk of "problems" in an abstract way during the endless social evenings with coffee and cake, which are a favorite leisure-time activity. But this particular social pattern is itself almost a national curse, it seems to me. People get together, some six or eight of them, at 8 or 8:30 in the evening, around a beautiful table set with fine silver and china and lots of cakes and cookies. With this goes a lot of quite pleasant social talk. But the verbal fare is as unimportant to the mind and soul as the cakes and cookies are to the body. These everlasting parties have, for generations, habituated the whole nation to seek nice "cozy" situations where everybody is always in agreement with everybody else, and nothing of any importance gets said or can happen. There is no ferreting out of differences, no lively discussion. It seems to me that people cannot get to know each other and accept each others' differences in an atmosphere where complete agreement is the highest value.

When I arrived in Denmark I had one very particular question in my mind: Why the extremely high suicide rate? Why should so many want to commit suicide in this land of plenty and social security? The Danes are aware of this anomaly, but no one wants to discuss it. As a matter of fact, practically nowhere did I meet with any kind of discussion or meeting of minds over ideas or living issues. I began to realize that the suicide rate might have something to do with the almost complete impossibility of any friendly understanding of extreme emotional unbalance—such as would be under the skin of any person near suicide—in such an atmosphere. In other words, people who have deep emotional problems have no form, no opportunity, for the expression of their less rational feelings and ideas. It is my feeling that in this "cosy," secure atmosphere, with nothing to get hold of to rebel against, irrational feelings must turn inward, where they ferment and pile up and up until the pressure is so high that suicide seems the only way out. Are there no Danish psychiatrists? There are. One of my cousins is one, and I had some good talks with him about suicide and much else. But it is not as common over there to go see a psychiatrist as it is in America. The Danish therapists do most of their work in the hospitals, in the courts, and in social service activities. People who are out on jobs just can't be so sick as to need a doctor—at least not a psychiatrist, they feel. Nowhere did I find anyone engaged in what might be called "spiritual search." I don't mean to say that people necessarily should be out on some spiritual crusade, but it seems quite clear that the world needs *something* besides a "wool-over-my-eyes"

complacency. Nowhere, for instance, was there interest in the idea of non-violent resistance. No one had heard of the Montgomery, Alabama, bus strike.

What about religion? The first thing about the subject of religion that reached my attention after I arrived was a series of newspaper articles on the problem of the empty churches. Danish church buildings are generally much larger than they are here, which makes it doubly conspicuous when only a dozen or so people are present. It is worth noting, too, that Danish Lutheran churches do not serve as much as social centers as churches do in America. However, other sects are on the increase. I was astonished to find a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses—all Danes—taking place in July. Some 2,000 people attended. It was hard for me to associate the rather cool, matter-of-fact Danish temperament with this particular form of religion. My own church-going turned out a disappointment. The service consisted of an old-fashioned creed, after which the minister would expound on a text from the Bible. It was the same old package that has been handed to the Western world for centuries, what now seems to be a collection of colossal complacencies: We must forget ourselves, be unselfish and good, do good to others and forgive them their sins as well as turn the other cheek. How completely true, but how utterly ineffectual are the *words* about it!

Now permit me to change identity again! Let me become my best Danish self, and tell you in brief what this Dane sees, hears and feels as she arrives on American shores. I see a country of breathless beauty (the part of it I have seen, so far) of great vastness and natural wonders—almost totally ruined and degraded whenever man has encountered it! I see buildings which do not belong with the soil on which they stand, built to be torn down and be replaced any moment. I see, for instance, a public transportation system which is noisy, dirty, and disorderly. I see colors that scream at me, lines that spike my attention, designs that—if they happen to be good in themselves—cannot be fully experienced because they are drowned in mere clutter. I see very little workmanship or craftsmanship anywhere. I see a lot of waste and hear a lot of noise in so many areas of life. I see a haphazard social order with no effective social responsibility. I see multitudes of people who look tense and distorted and are sick in many ways; homes that are just places to eat and sleep, and food that is questionable as to its purity, in spite of much fussy "inspection." I see children who are insecure, youths who have no feeling of being related to their own families. The nation seems made up of individuals in great fear and deep conflict.

But after living in America for nearly thirty years, I also see a lot more: I have come to understand conditions here sufficiently and to love the people enough to want to live here, where—in a nutshell—the basic issues of man's life at this time in history have the greatest opportunity of coming out in the open. Here those issues cannot so easily escape our awareness as they can in lovely little Denmark. Here we shall *have* to grapple with our conflicts and tensions. We do not have ways of submerging them successfully. Denmark fosters stasis, America keeps on the move. Denmark lulls and protects the individual, America either "makes" him or "breaks" him.

REVIEW
"THE MOUNTAIN IS YOUNG"

HAN SUYIN'S A *Many-Splendored Thing* was an exquisite novel, an idyll of a love which crossed the barriers of oriental and occidental cultures. The characterization was delicate and mature, and the many psychological nuances so thoroughly integrated with the structure of the book that one was hardly aware of the "psychology" portrayed. *The Mountain Is Young* is more obviously a psychological treatise—one of extensive scope, and what it lacks in fire is perhaps balanced by its breadth, its many facets and philosophical and religious overtones.

The Mountain Is Young is primarily a book about the people and culture of Nepal, a small country bordering on Tibet, involving, also, the psychical and mental transformation of a futilely-married young Englishwoman. The love she finds with a Nepalese engineer involves for her the assimilation of Asian culture.

Anne Ford comes to Khatmandu to teach English in a seminary, and immediately experiences the beginning of a kind of "second birth" in an atmosphere removed from the West by a thousand technological years and a thousand-and-one joyful Gods. An old philosopher, who somewhat incongruously possesses the Nepalese title of "Field Marshal," notices Anne's sensitivity and receptivity, and introduces her to the spirit of the Indian and Nepalese gods by way of the *Bhagavad-Gita:*

> And then the Field Marshal had given Anne a book, the *Bhagavad-Gita.* On the first page, after the usual superscription, he had written: *Let your prayer be: Oh Krishna, Lord of Love and Life, give my roots rain.* "You have doubtless read it in translation," he said, knowing she had not. "You will recognize this as also extant in your culture my dear friend. You remember Herbert: For now in age I live again, I once more smell the dew and rain? This must happen to all of us, time and again, so that we never forget that life is all, and death only an insignificant tailpiece. Life is all, and Krishna, the God of Life, speaks here in these pages. And Krishna is the most beloved of all our gods, or manifestations of the One. Krishna is Life itself, life lived with delight in all its acts, play and work and love, sorrow and anger, pleasure and passion, error and wisdom. I think Krishna would be a happy companion for you, my friend, and he has so many shapes, so many loves, that even your lovely words could not encompass him. In this book you see him under one shape, but you will meet him in many other ways, I think, and especially if you fall in love again, my friend."

The lesson of the "gods" is an important one, for in Khatmandu Anne finds acceptance of all ways of defining the "sacred"—Buddhist, Hindu, and Tibetan religions existing in complete compatibility. Must not each pilgrim soul find his own way of understanding that deity and creativity are one, that man himself becomes god? Throughout *The Mountain Is Young* we are strongly reminded of Marguerite Yourcenar's "The Legend of Krishna," explaining that the purpose of Eastern religion is to increase the sense of the sacred in respect to all living things, and to increase the enchantment of everyday experience.

A middle-aged physician who becomes Anne's friend, ruminates on his feeling that the countless deities of the temples are a profound inspiration to the idea of life as a magic hall through which every wayfarer can learn to pass unafraid:

> The market place and Temple Square of Khatmandu was an agglomeration of temples, shrines, gods, animals and open-air stalls. It was lined by the Buddhist priests' houses of Tibetan architecture, white walls, black mass of carved pillars and beams, carved windows with projecting latticed balconies, and central courtyards. . . . Big and small, many-roofed, rose the pagodas, temples and shrines; the pagodas had rows of beams slanted forward and upward supporting roofs superimposed one upon another, each beam carved with many-headed, many-armed gods. At the foot of each god, on a slab of wood, were carved humans in the act of love in all its manifold and various attitudes. It was strange, thought Dr. Maltby, looking at them without shame or excitement (the Valley having cured him both of prudery and of smut), that the Europeans of Khatmandu *never* mentioned these carvings at all, except to condemn this beautifully ribald and accurate observation of human behavior with a tedious and, in

> Khatmandu, a silly word: obscene. The Nepalese themselves did not pay any attention to them. For them they were, as everything else, sacred, they served a ritual function. . . . And the act of love was as everything that was, holy and of God, who found Himself in creation.

As Han Suyin presents the case, the mood of Asian philosophy will save the Nepalese from the sort of "drowning in politics" that the West has suffered for countless centuries. Here the "Field Marshal" comments on communism:

> "It is not difficult to see beauty," said Sharma, "if one accepts without fear everything that is."
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> "It is difficult to accept," said the Field Marshal, "for it is the eternal problem of being which each one of us must solve for himself. What to do, when to do it, and how, in order to *become* ourselves. It has concerned our philosophers everywhere since man invented language to perpetuate himself in time and space. Confucius, two millenniums ago, prescribed the rules of correct and harmonious existence in all their minutiae. To the Chinese mind the issue has always been the problem of relationship to other human beings. Perhaps that is why the group spirit, the welfare of the collective, becomes so readily their social pattern. . . ."
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> "But," said Sharma, "so long as there is poverty and hunger in Asia, we Asians have no right to become selfishly immersed in the quest for self in God. *We* must now go through the Machine Age, and the Industrial Revolution, as Europe has done. We can't practice detachment for art's sake when it is selfish and inhuman to do so, when around us people—humans like ourselves—have no dram of life to spare for anything but quest for food. In short, we have no right to speak of the Kingdom of God before we've made the earth a kingdom for man. We've got to become materialists in our turn."
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> "That view, my friend," said the Field Marshal, "honors you. You are a poet, and therefore man's inhumanity to man will always move you. Are you not glad that in this day and age people all over the world are conscious of this need for social justice? I am an old man, and known as a conservative, yet I do not fear communism or socialism, because it seems to me they are, in Asia, necessary if harsh steps toward abolition of poverty around us. But all political creeds such as these are indexes of our failures to be human. If we were really conscious of our brothers' needs, and acted accordingly, their necessity would not arise. But since we are selfish and ignoble, amassing for ourselves and murdering our own kind for gain, real or imagined, we must pass through the crucible of such dogmas in order to learn again that humanity to the body is the first step to divinity of the soul."

There is little point in attempting to characterize the central love affair of *The Mountain Is Young*, save to point out that even here the breath of philosophy persists. A conversation between Unni, the engineer, and Anne is something of a paraphrase of the *Bhagavad-Gita*—"Thus said Krishna the Enlightener: 'The world is imprisoned in its own activity, except when actions are performed as worship of God. Therefore you must perform every action sacramentally, and be free from all attachment to results'." Unni is speaking:

> "As I read I thought of you, and the ascending journey which is that of all poets and seekers, good or bad, whether they fall early by the wayside or reach the summits. I thought there might be many stages of love. Lust, straight and wearisome desire, which makes one take a woman and be done. Possessiveness, most often mistaken for affection, vampire clinging to victim, sanctified by all legalities, gravestone over the corpse of love. That which nourishes the spirit as well as the body, a psycho-physical wholeness, the most successful human love between man and woman. Then another step upward, a deep tenderness, a will to understand, to be involved in other people's lives, demanding nothing, perceiving without effort, the love of saints for humanity. And perhaps, beyond all these, the complete beatitude. The unattainable summit, always desired by man, the only thing which seems to give sense and point to his living and the source of all his myths, creeds and religions, the goal of all his searches in and out of himself. What it is I do not know, and we're certainly not ready for that. Not yet."
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> Anne said: "In my country and in quite a few others in the West, we are near making a cult of boredom and cynicism. We have love-ennui, obsession with obscenity, love-titillation, love-clever, love-sex. The more we go on describing and detailing and gorging ourselves with the physical processes and the mental failings of the activities we pursue under the name of love, the less fun we have, the more bored we become, until we become ashamed

of being in love, of 'taking ourselves seriously.' It still happens, of course, that people do love each other, but then we immediately want to keep it, embalm it, own it frigidaire-fresh. We're so afraid of its decay that we mummify our loving. We take our love into barred houses and close doors and windows upon it, shutting out the housebreaker life, till it dies of suffocation. And now I am frightened, I am afraid that much more may be required of us than I want to give."

COMMENTARY
LABELS AND DEFINITIONS

IN this week's Frontiers it is declared that "free inquiry" is the highest value of MANAS. Something should be added to this. Communication of what is inquired into is also a value.

So, it would follow from this that freedom from labels is a value not to be despised.

Labels usually interfere with communication. A label is a conclusion, not an inquiry.

It may appear from the Frontiers article that we have labelled ourselves "Pantheists." This is not a bad label, as labels go.

But we didn't especially like the dictionary definition of pantheism quoted by a correspondent in the Jan. 27 issue, to wit:

> Pantheism means: "The form of monism that identifies mind and matter, the finite and the infinite, making them manifestations of one, universal or absolute being; the doctrine which holds that the self-existent and self-developing Universe, conceived as a whole, *is* God."

The definition is no doubt technically correct, but you can't really live by this technically correct definition, any more than you can live by some others. A man can be a pantheist, a dualist, and a pluralist, all at the same time, it seems to us. In fact, it seems quite impossible to be anything else.

The dictionary definition makes away with all differences, dubbing them "unreal." They are not unreal—not entirely—since the notion of unity could not be held in the mind save for the presence, also, of the idea of diversity. Polytheism, whatever else it may do, at least gives room to the idea that something of importance is happening in the world. And unless we acknowledge the *relative* independent reality of mind and of matter, our thoughts can have no meaning. Without this sort of qualification of our pantheism, we shall have to surrender to the logic of the haters of all "Absolutes," who are not so much the enemies of Absolutes as they are of those who use "absolute" ideas as bludgeons to destroy the validity of inquiries into the relativities of human experience. Why should anyone want to avoid the relativities? Because they contain most of the mysteries of life and are difficult to understand.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
NOTES ON PREJUDICE

IN an article in the *Nation* for Dec. 26, 1959, "The Prisoners: a Self-Portrait," David Cort comments on the psychology of the penal system:

> A child, after he has done wrong, been caught, and while he is being punished by prolonged disapproval (psychiatrically, a poor way to punish), has a long, sad, lonely and highly moral vigil. Theoretically his views on life in this period should be of great value, but in fact he is only re-collecting his ego, not probing into the moral law. His mood is rather beautiful in a minor key, but useful neither to him nor to society.
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> This childhood poetry is repeated and multiplied in all the prisons of the nations, though with differences. In America, the state and federal correctional institutions immure at any one time about 200,000 people, mostly men. This is about .1 per cent of the whole population—about one in every 250 men. Each costs the taxpayer about $1,800 a year, directly. The prisons, it is said by everybody including the prisoners, are failures. . . .

"Prolonged disapproval" is indeed the mildest way to describe the atmosphere surrounding the convicted transgressor. The child usually knows, in an intuitive way, that the disapproval will not be permanent—or, at the least, the child is unaware of the possible extension into an interminable future of his low-rating status. Not so with the adults convicted under penal law. These are well aware that they must produce something close to a miracle in order to remove the onus of their guilt.

The force of prejudice forever threatens the man who was once convicted. The ironical truth is that the same society which regards prejudice against prisoners as righteous, is also the society which is itself victimized by other forms of prejudice. At the level of international relations, for example, it has been virtually impossible for the Congress of the United States to define, support and embody an unprejudiced foreign policy. Why? For one thing, most history textbooks in the United States, both for high school and university, reflect a nationalist bias that is virtually impossible to escape, unless one happens to have parents with strong pacifist or radical leanings.

However, a meeting of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession recently struck an encouraging note. Some 700 delegates from seventy-four countries urged a revision of history textbooks in an attempt to eliminate national prejudice. A New York *Times* (Aug. 7, 1959) story said:

> The resolution on textbooks was adopted after it had been charged that books used in some countries presented a distorted view of history that hindered world understanding.
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> It called for a re-examination and re-writing of textbooks when necessary, "preferably by historians and educators of various nations." This should be done "with the aim of developing a true science of history, and with producing texts free from national prejudice," it added.
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> Textbooks should be written with "sympathy and understanding," it continued, and deal primarily with "action in terms of each nation's attitudes, thought and philosophy."

Arnold Rose has defined prejudice as "the mental state corresponding to the practice of discrimination." In the September-October, 1959, issue of *Children* we encounter the report of a survey by Dr. Rhetta M. Arter, indicating that participants in a government-sponsored project may be much more interested in eliminating prejudice than in supporting nationalist righteousness. Dr. Arter is principally concerned with the effect upon American children of attitudes prejudicial to Negro Americans. She finds that forms of anti-Negro prejudice may appear in children of only two years. Dr. Arter continues:

> This project dealt also with the question: What causes the children to be prejudiced? It found that in the children under study prejudices were largely a matter of conforming with the standards and expectations of their social environments. The children learned their prejudices from adults and

older children with whom they came in contact. This learning was conveyed through inadvertent example and teaching, as well as through deliberate training.

These findings are supported by other studies and observations, including the early studies of Bruno Lasker, the clinical findings of a number of psychiatrists, and the analyses of the sociologist Milton Barron.

By the time adolescence is reached, a rather complete transformation of the psyche is necessary if prejudice is to be eliminated. Dr. Arter remarks:

Else Frenkel-Brunswik, investigating prejudice in children between the ages of 11 and 16 in Berkeley, Calif., as part of the monumental work, "The Authoritarian Personality," concluded that prejudice was one of a number of attitudes correlating with personality type. She found it to be a significant outgrowth of the child's personality: the more prejudiced child tended to be more rigid, and more conforming to the values of authoritarian figures than the less prejudiced child. Thus, prejudice appeared as a function of the child's basic personality.

Generally, the investigators identify the processes of acquiring and maintaining prejudice as factors in the child's socialization and character formation. These findings tend to converge in the conclusion that prejudice against other ethnic groups, built on perception and feeling about ethnic difference, is associated with—in fact, may result in—interference with the healthy growth and development of the child holding the prejudice. Hartley summarizes the personality characteristics of prejudiced young people as: unwillingness to accept responsibility; acceptance of conventional mores; rejection of serious groups; rejection of political interests, desire for groups formed for purely social purposes, and absorption with, pleasure activities; conscious conflict between play and work; emotionality rather than rationality; extreme egocentricism; interest in physical activity, the body, health; dislike of agitators, radicals, pessimists, a relative uncreativeness; apparent inability to deal with anxieties except by fleeing from them; and, often, a physical activity which has in it a compulsive component.

The American Negro, Dr. Arter says, becomes aware of prejudice at an even earlier age than the children of non-Negro parents and this, she adds, "tends to affect negatively the Negro child's perception of himself and his group." Dr. Arter continues:

The following tendencies have been observed frequently among children who have experienced prejudice:

1. The development of self-hatred—"a social psychological phenomenon," even though it usually influences deeply the total personality.

2. The display of extreme over-identification with a "model" or "hero" within their own ethnic group.

3. The development of aggressive behavior patterns symptomatic of hostility toward society. In addition to individual personality problems, children so affected present a social problem in their susceptibility to becoming links in the negative cycle of prejudice, antisocial response, and reenforcement of group stereotype.

4. A stimulation to higher aspirations than those of their peers in the majority group. The investigator in one study with such findings offers as a possible explanation that "the Negro child on the elementary school level may, of necessity, have better defense mechanisms against defeats and disappointment than his white schoolmate." He surmises further that the Negro child's feelings of insecurity may be the bases for the higher aspirations.

With these considerations in mind, one can stand amazed before the general demeanor of Negro-Americans. Again and again—as during the Montgomery, Alabama, bus strike, in defense of the Highlander Folk School, and at the Koinonia Community—they show a quiet dignity that whites could well emulate.

FRONTIERS

The Editorial "Faith"?

A READER writes to ask that MANAS make more plain whether it is "an atheistic magazine, or only critical of organized religion."

This is not the easiest question in the world to answer, since it depends upon what is meant by Atheism. We are reminded of the eminent theologian who, after his retirement, remarked that the question, "Do you believe in God?", requires not an answer but an education.

Since MANAS, as our editorial statement on page 4 suggests, is committed to independent inquiry, it is critical of all views, doctrines, and institutions which seem to confine or prejudice free inquiry. And it is *for* anything that serves free inquiry. In short, the magazine's highest value is free inquiry.

To have meaning, inquiry must proceed in a context of assumptions about the nature of things. If the meaning, and the inquiry, are to have any hope of clarity, these assumptions ought to be reasonably explicit.

Such assumptions will inevitably involve judgments concerning the world about us and concerning ourselves. One assumption is that the world is of a character which makes it susceptible to investigation by rational means. The methods of investigation lying within the scope of rational means include science, in the broadest sense, and metaphysics.

The first assumption by no means indicates belief that there are no avenues of perception beyond the rational. In fact, it is possible to say from the evidence of history that when for any considerable period the role of intuitive perception in human life is denied or neglected, great excesses and abuses of the rational faculty ensue. A central problem, then, lies in the achievement of balance between man's rational and his intuitive capacities. The defining of this balance, insofar as it may be possible, is a task of philosophy, although it is obvious that extensive help from psychology will be required.

At what point, we might ask, do the deliveries of the intuition become subject to the critical review of reason? The answer should be, it seems to us, at the moment that they begin to have particular consequences for human behavior, in terms of attitudes and actions affecting oneself and others. This means—practically immediately.

So, if a man says, "My intuition tells me that there is a God," it is necessary to ask at once, "What sort of God?", and, "What does this imply for human beings?" Answers which are unsatisfactory in relation to the highest value of free inquiry oblige a rejection of that particular "intuition."

A God-idea which inhibits free inquiry is an anti-human God-idea, and the "God" which it represents is an antihuman God, in the terms of our assumptions.

Is this "Atheism"? Perhaps. It is Atheism if there is no other God-idea available than the one proposed.

Before considering the possibility of alternative "Gods," there should be value in asking why the God-idea is important to human beings.

Our postulate in regard to man is that he is a meaning-seeking being. He may be other things also, but he is more this than anything else.

We want meaning because meaning establishes validity for our being. With meaning, we are able to feel that it is good to be, and good to do the work of our being. What is work? Work is completion, fulfillment, realization.

What is the work of man? Essentially, it relates to comprehension of and participation in the *whole* of what is going on in the universe. Man will be afflicted with unrest so long as he remains unable to comprehend the universal processes and universal ends. There is an irresistible drive for unity in his thought. He needs

to understand in what way the universe is one and in what way it is many.

God is one of the names that have been given to the agency of this understanding.

If we could somehow merge the Spinozistic, Hegelian, and Leibnizian philosophies, we might have an idea of God which would answer to our needs, while offending against none of the values of the freely thinking individual. From Spinoza we would take the idea of the all-pervasiveness of Deity—that it is present in every atom of life. With Hegel we might argue that the totality of world existence represents the quest of the spirit to know itself—and since the potentialities of spirit are infinite, so the embodiments of the spirit are likewise infinite, although, in a given cycle of existence, they are expressed within some scale of measurable or knowable dimensions. From Leibniz we would borrow the idea of spiritual units, or *monads,* representing the consciousness aspect of all that is—one in their common spiritual root, many in their centers of awareness in the world.

There is not a great difference between this sort of thinking and that found in Asian religion—*Brahma,* Deity and the One Self; *Atman,* the aspect of the universal self present in individuals. Actually, Universal Self seems a better expression than the word "God," which has been almost irreclaimably misused.

The Platonists, also, embraced the idea of the One, a universal Good or *Agathon,* toward which men might aspire and grow by participation in its nature. By embodying the Good, men become Gods, in the Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy.

The foregoing might be called Pantheism, plus a kind of Polytheism. It cannot be called Atheism; but it is not Theism, either. At any rate, it is a view consistent with the various enterprises undertaken in these pages.