

## ARE WE ASKING TOO MUCH?

IT was an ill as well as a great day for human beings when, somewhere during the eighteenth century, the idea of *history* as something which could be changed was born. A principal originator of this idea was Giovanni Battista Vico, an Italian philosopher who declared: "*The social world is certainly the work of men; and it follows that one can and should find its principles in the modifications of human intelligence itself.*"

Vico said this in 1725. Before the century was out, great revolutions had occurred in which men took destiny into their own hands, threw down their kings, and designed constitutions which, they said, reflected the high intentions of the Natural Law. The eighteenth century was an epoch of heady drafts of freedom and intoxication with the idea that men could divine the laws of nature with the fresh eyes of science, or Natural Philosophy, and build their world anew. They have been building and rebuilding it ever since.

The first constructors of the new societies began with high confidence in their new knowledge. The extent of their enthusiasm is well described by Carl Becker in a lecture entitled, "The Laws of Nature," published in his volume, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (Yale University Press, 1932):

Nature and natural law—what magic these words held for the philosophical century! Enter that country by any door you like, you are at once aware of its pervasive power. . . . To find a proper title for this lecture I had only to think of the Declaration of Independence—"to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station, to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them." Turn to the French counterpart of the Declaration, and you will find that "the aim of every political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man." Search the writings of the new economists and you will find them demanding the abolition of artificial restrictions on trade and industry in order that men may be free to

follow the natural law of self-interest. Look into the wilderness of forgotten books and pamphlets dealing with religion and morality: interminable arguments, clashing opinions, different and seemingly irreconcilable conclusions you will find, and yet strangely enough controversialists of every party unite in calling upon nature as the sovereign arbiter of all their quarrels. The Christian Bishop Butler affirms with confidence that "the whole analogy of nature . . . most fully shews that there is nothing incredible in the general (Christian) doctrine of Religion," asserts with equal dogmatism that "natural law . . . which nature teaches all men" is that "upon which all religion is founded." The atheist Holbach, rejecting all religion, nevertheless holds that "the morality suitable to man should be founded on the nature of man." Christian, deist, atheist—all acknowledge the authority of the book of nature; if they differ it is only as to the scope of its authority, as to whether it merely confirms or entirely supplants the authority of the old revelation. In the eighteenth-century climate of opinion, whatever question you seek to answer, nature is the test, the standard: the ideas, the customs, the institutions of men, if ever they are to attain perfection, must obviously be in accord with those laws which "nature reveals at all times, to all men." . . . This was John Locke's great title to glory, that he made it possible for the eighteenth century to believe with a clear conscience what it wanted to believe, namely, that since man and the mind of man were shaped by that nature which God had created, it was possible for men, "barely by the use of their natural faculties," to bring their ideas and their conduct, and hence the institutions by which they lived, into harmony with the universal natural order. With what simple faith the age of enlightenment welcomed this doctrine! With what sublime courage it embraced the offered opportunity to refashion the outward world of human institutions according to the laws of nature and of Nature's God!

The hope of making human institutions approximate "Natural Law" gave both inspiration and dignity to revolutionary and reforming enterprise, but it also made for dogmatic certainty and a religious sort of ardor in political ideologies. When Karl Marx resolved to *change* the world,

instead of merely "interpreting" it, he went to extraordinary lengths to prove that he had discovered by scientific methods the laws of history, enabling him to disclose the necessities imposed on human affairs by "Natural Law." The "Dialectic" is Marx's name for Natural Law. Despite an obvious and vast moral indignation, Marx avoided moralistic or ethical arguments. As Federn says: "In order to disguise the fact that the demand for a more just and humane distribution of the goods of this earth is a moral demand, that socialism, in short, is a moral end, they [the Marxists] declare it to be a logical necessity and their political theory is called 'scientific' socialism."

Most of the advocates of Free Enterprise believe, like Marx, that their texts are taken from Nature. The less sophisticated expounders of "Capitalistic" doctrines often combine Scriptural authority with the supposed truisms of "natural" economics, to prove the righteousness of their cause on both religious and scientific grounds. The most hackneyed and no doubt partially accurate criticism of socialism is the claim that socialists ignore the facts of human nature. The self-love declared by Adam Smith to be the mainspring of human action is seen as a "natural" foundation for economic science, and a more or less regulated "free-for-all" contest for the material goods of this world is regarded as the manifest expression of natural law in the economic realm.

It is true, of course, that Capitalism as a form of economic organization appeared on the historical scene without benefit of propaganda or socio-political design. Like Topsy, it just "grew," so that the contention that Capitalism is "in accord with nature" has a measure of support from history. The difficulty with using this support, however, lies in the fact that, with the passage of time, "nature" may require something different. Accordingly, while Capitalism was born without any ideological midwifery, its decline and possibly its death seem likely to be attended by energetic hymns of praise and the administration of

cunningly prepared cosmetics to hide the new processes which "Nature" has introduced in the meantime.

For those yet able to believe in the tired but still competing doctrines of what Nature dictates for the social organization of mankind, the problems of the world remain simple enough, in theory. Their solution requires only that "the truth" be recognized, the believers in false doctrines converted—or failing that, suppressed—and Nature's Plan put into effect. But for the rest of us, the great project for the present ought to be to recognize the heavy load of responsibility which Giovanni Battista Vico placed upon our shoulders. We cannot go back to the safe and pleasant paths of righteous obedience to Divine Revelation. Something has happened to us: we can no longer believe. Further, we have discovered our power to change the world, and to comprehend it in some measure. We cannot give this up. The trouble is, we do not comprehend the world well enough; and while our ignorance of "Nature" is still too great to permit the blue-printing of the future, we cannot, alas, shift the burdens assumed by the doughty spirits of the eighteenth century.

What was wrong with the eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century formulas for the Good Society, based upon readings from the Book of Nature? Did we skip some pages, or is the printing blurred? Has the Publisher been circulating a bad edition, as the Existentialists suspect, or have we looked into only one volume, with many more remaining untouched on the shelf?

All these excuses or explanations have merit, but our trouble is that we cannot wait. We need the correct formula *now*, before the world blows up beneath and all around us. And yet we are beginning to suspect a desperate impatience even more than confessions of ignorance. It is always the desperate men who light the fuses of world conflagration—who, if they fail in their plan to

create peace and plenty, are willing to settle for a Ragnarok.

Can it be that the *natural* thing, for this epoch, would be to learn to live without the *whole* truth? Many great things have happened since the eighteenth century, due, in large measure, to the wide-eyed confidence of men who believed they knew the whole truth, and who set about to make its leverage felt in the world. We know the fruits of magnificent determination, the power of the man who *believes*. Only now are we beginning to discover the frightful consequences of the things done in "righteousness" by men who believe falsely, who are mistaken. Only now is "history" beginning to take off totals from the columns of human events and to show what all these doings add up to.

Can it be that Socrates is still the authentic prophet of our era? That we are far from having sufficient wisdom to declare to anyone how to live or even plan to live the Good Life? Shall we now admit that the laws which John Locke grandly announced that "nature reveals at all times, to all men," have been withheld from us? Is it, indeed, a law of nature for our time that we shall suffer in at least partial ignorance, and that a neglect of this aspect of the human situation amounts to foolish and blind defiance of the natural law?

To think about these questions may be to conclude that we have engaged to produce far more certainty than we are capable of, that we have been asking too much. Instead of expecting and demanding that our philosophers and politicians claim infallibility, we should perhaps begin to demand the opposite. The habit of wanting to be guided by Revelation, whether supernatural or natural, may be our worst offence against the laws of nature, imposing upon our leaders tasks which are far beyond them.

To strip ourselves of all dogma may be an impossible task. It certainly cannot be accomplished suddenly. But we can begin by eliminating the feeling of religious finality from our beliefs. It should be plain enough that we

cannot hope to discover much about what is truly natural for human beings until we have dispensed with at least some of the pretentious rubbish that has become associated with our "way of life."

Something along this line happened at the sixty-first convention of the National Association of Manufacturers, held last December in New York. In one of the sessions, several of the students sent to college by NAM as winners of NAM's annual scholarship awards participated in a panel with six industrialists. The topic was "New Dimensions for America." According to Dan Wakefield, a staff writer in the *Nation* for Dec. 22, these youngsters were not in the least cowed by their portentous surroundings. One of them asked what the NAM would do to prevent depressions, since its philosophy is opposed to government controls. A senior panelist replied that the NAM "has more confidence in a free market than it has in the decisions of the bureaucrats," adding his expression of "tremendous faith in the overall ability of the American consumer to spend his money." The questioning youth, Cadet Clark from Virginia Military Institute, was then asked by another panelist "if they didn't teach him over at that military academy how to get out there and fight for what he wanted, and not have the other fellow do it for him." The Cadet answered that he was taught to obey his officers. That ended the discussion.

A girl student of Chatham College then asked about Federal aid to education:

She wished to quote from Peter Marshall that "Liberty is not the right to do what you please, but the opportunity to please to do what is right." "Would it," she asked the panel "be more democratic for a certain business to decide what is right—or for a whole government, representing all the people, to say if we need federal education and ought to support it?"

The ideological batteries then wheeled into action:

Dr. Ralph Robey, economic adviser to the NAM, explained that he had no use for federal aid to education, that it would mean complete government control and students ("just like you") would be told

what to study and would have to do it, just as they did in Russia.

This evaluation drew the wrath of a young man listed as Lloyd G. Becraft, a student at Montana State College. "I disagree with you," he said. "I go to school at Montana State College and we get federal aid and our president says there are no strings attached and we do what we want, study what we want, think what we want. As for me, I'd be in favor of accepting money from the Communist Party as long as there were no strings attached to it."

A little confusion resulted from this disturbing thought, and there was a shift to the next question, from a Reed College student? which, unhappily, concerned what the NAM thinks is the way to avoid overproduction. *Que sera, sera*, quipped an industrialist in reply. Another philosopher of business "explained to the lost young man from Oregon that the reason businesses failed, after all, was that they didn't do what the consumer wanted." The *Nation* story continues:

Dr. Robey, getting more excited, moved to the fore and pounded out the philosophy of mass consumption. There was no need to worry about overproduction, he said, because of the wonderful phenomenon of consumption, which resulted in this saving line of thought: "Anything I have one of, I'd like a second one of—at the right price—including my wife."

Thus introduced to the mystique of the American economy, the college students were told by NBC that the game was up, thanks for the questions. . . . There was the feeling that given another hour of questioning the industrialists would have no choice but to ring down the curtain and revoke the scholarships.

There are moments when it seems that the colleges and universities of America are doing an exceptionally fine job.

## *REVIEW*

### THE ENIGMA OF SANTAYANA

SINCE the death of George Santayana in September of 1952, discussion of this controversial figure has been continuous—apparently growing rather than lessening during the past year. The *Saturday Review* recently reported publication of a new collection of Santayana's *Essays in Literary Criticism*, edited by Irving Singer. Lionel Trilling, in the December issue of *Encounter*, offers penetrating comment on Santayana's collected letters, while John Linehan, a Catholic writer for the *Voice of America*, contributes a critical essay for the *American Scholar*, titled "Santayana at Home." Interestingly, no one of these three can be regarded as friendly to Santayana as a person, nor in agreement with many of his views, but neither, apparently, can any one of them stop thinking about what Santayana said. This seems an instance of the often-denied truth that we should not measure a man's words by our immediate impressions, but rather by what sort of transformation or expansion of thought the words cause in ourselves. Santayana emerges as the most universally unpopular philosopher and critic of our time, yet is simultaneously recognized as a thinker of consequence.

Small wonder that Santayana could please no one in the dominant intellectual circles! Linehan puts it this way:

From his chosen vantage point on the mountain summit Santayana looked down on Catholicism on one side and skepticism on the other, seeking out with a poet's eye the merits and demerits, the assets and liabilities of each. Since he often indicated his wish that he could come down, and since he had the potentiality of becoming one of the greatest Catholic or non-Catholic philosophers if he could show preference for a cause, it was inevitable that men of conviction would bring pressure to bear upon him to convince him to endorse their side. Spurred on to consider that his was an important soul that must be saved, militants were encouraged by the occasional chinks in his armor, such as his fussy solicitude for the domestic life of an ex-king. He was avidly

interested in other people's conversion to Catholicism—that of poet Robert Lowell, for example. And as could be expected, the nuns around him were encouraged when he allowed them to put a medal around his withering neck. Whoever thought that this was more than a gesture to humor them, however, ignored the fact that he rejected their prayers in a way which might have been insulting were it not for the gruff tenderness that underlay it.

Santayana is usually considered a leading apostle of pessimism and despair, but Lionel Trilling reminds us in *Encounter* that Santayana also believed in a possible reevaluation of culture, a final awakening to philosophic as well as literary subtleties. In one of his letters, Santayana wondered if it were not possible that "a new art and philosophy would grow unawares, not similar to what we call by those names, but having the same relation to the life beneath which art and philosophy amongst us ought to have had, but never have had actually. You see I am content to let the past bury its dead. It does not seem to me that we can impose on America the task of imitating Europe. The more different it can come to be, the better; and we must let it take its own course, going a long way round, perhaps, before it can shake off the last trammels of alien tradition, and learn to express itself simply, not apologetically, after its own heart."

Prof. Carlos Baker, of Princeton, in reviewing Singer's *Essays in Literary Criticism*, comes the closest to outright praise, giving in two paragraphs the scope and genius of Santayana's uneasily free mind:

Santayana has the gift of mordant wit and gnomic summary, he can crystallize an idea memorably and instantly, like a bee in amber. For example, take this conception of the philosophy behind Goethe's "Faust." "He who strives strays, yet in that straying finds his salvation." Or this: "Our religion is the poetry in which we believe." Or this: "Poetry cannot be spread upon things like butter; it must play upon them like light and be the medium through which we see them." We see Emerson compared to a "young god making experiments in creation," Proust called "a tireless husbandman of memory" who gathers more poppies than corn. Whitman described as an exponent of "the innocent

style of Adam, when the animals filed by him one by one he called each of them by its name." There are apothegms like "oaths are the fossils of piety" and paradoxes such as "nothing was more romantic in Goethe than his classicism."

If this were all, of course, we might tire of Santayanan coruscations and yearn for order and sequence. But he displays likewise what so many epigrammatists lack—Oscar Wilde, say—and that is what he gains from his philosophic training, namely the capacity for sustained and rigorous thinking-through from a legitimate assumption to a bulwarked and assimilable conclusion. One may not always agree with either his assumptions or his conclusions. Yet he achieves, in any case, a healthy exacerbation of our sensibilities in such wise that when we take stock and marshal arguments against his position we stretch our powers to good purpose.

We should like to add to the foregoing a passage from Santayana's volume, *Three Philosophical Poets*, made up of essays utilizing Lucretius, Dante and Goethe as points of focus in establishing his synthesis of philosophy and art. Here is a summation which indicates why, despite Santayana's personal unpopularity, many of his words are unforgettable:

As the extent of experience is potentially infinite, as there are all sorts of worlds possible and all sorts of senses and habits of thought, the widest survey would still leave the poet with a sense of an infinity beyond. He would be at liberty to summon from the limbo of potentiality any form that interested him; poetry and art would recover their early freedom; there would be no beauties forbidden and none proscribed. For it is a very liberating and sublime thing to summon up, like Faust, the image of *all* experience. Unless that has been done, we leave the enemy in our rear; whatever interpretations we offer for experience will become impertinent and worthless if the experience we work upon is no longer at hand. Nor will any construction, however broadly based, have an *absolute* authority; the indomitable freedom of life to be more, to be new, to be what it has not entered into the heart of man as yet to conceive, must always remain standing. With that freedom goes the modesty of reason, both in physics and in morals, that can lay claim only to partial knowledge, and to the ordering of a particular soul, or city, or civilization. . . .

There remains a second form of rational art, that of expressing the ideal towards which we would move under these improved conditions. For as we react we manifest an inward principle, expressed in that reaction. We have a nature that selects its own direction, and the direction in which practical arts shall transform the world. The outer life is for the sake of the inner; discipline is for the sake of freedom, and conquest for the sake of self-possession. This inner life is wonderfully redundant; there is, namely, very much more in it than a consciousness of those acts by which the body adjusts itself to its surroundings. The art and the religion of the past, as we see conspicuously in Dante, have fallen into this error. To correct it would be to establish a new religion and a new art, based on moral liberty and on moral courage.

Who shall be the poet of this double insight? He has never existed, but he is needed nevertheless. It is time some genius should appear to reconstitute the shattered picture of the world. He should live in the continual presence of all experience, and respect it; he should at the same time understand nature, the ground of that experience; and he should also have a delicate sense for the ideal echoes of his own passions, and for all the colours of his possible happiness. All that can inspire a poet is contained in this task, and nothing less than this task would exhaust a poet's inspiration. We may hail this needed genius from afar. Like the poets in Dante's limbo, when Virgil returns among them, we may salute him, saying: *Onorate l'altissimo poeta*. Honour the most high poet, honour the most high poet, honour the highest possible poet. But this supreme poet is in limbo still.

*COMMENTARY*  
**SCIENCE'S ORIGINAL SIN**

THE point of this week's *Frontiers* article seems worthy of special attention. It is that for every generalization about what "causes" human beings to be the way they are, there are plenty of facts to the contrary, capable of smashing the generalization to bits. Human beings, in short, are unpredictable. They need to be left so, and encouraged to remain so. A predictable man is a useless sort of man, where matters of importance are concerned.

Take the familiar story of the "broken home." Dozens of carefully compiled sociological studies support the claim that broken homes make maladjusted, unhappy, and neurotic adults. But there are also carefully compiled studies to tell about the children who were brought up in dreadful home environments, and who emerged from ordeals of this sort as deeply sympathetic and strongly dedicated human beings.

For every theory of the formation of human character, some refuting and rebuking fact can be found.

But why, it may be asked, should we throw out all our research because of some exceptional cases which, as the saying goes, "prove the rule"?

We need not throw out the research, but we must not, on the other hand, devise rigid programs designed to produce "better people" on the basis of such research. You can be against slums and crime and depravity without demanding "sterilization of the unfit." You can believe that happy marriages are a fine thing without insisting that divorced parents are the worst thing that can happen to a child. You can advocate and try to produce a happy home environment without being deluded into thinking that children brought up in such surroundings are bound to turn out well. You can see the play of heredity in the sound physical strain of healthy people without concluding that poor physical ancestry makes for

poor human beings. You just can't tell about human beings.

The trouble with social and biological and psychological science on this subject is that they tend to make us think of human beings in terms of types, averages, and statistical conclusions. We should *never* think of human beings in terms of types, averages, and statistical conclusions.

It may be useful, and on occasion desirable, to think of certain human actions under certain given conditions as typical or average. Behavior can be studied in this way, but not human beings conceived as individuals. And when have we the right to think of human beings as something other than individuals?

We may need to think of types and averages when we have to do something about human behavior, such as passing laws or regulating traffic. But there is never any real need to do something *to* human beings as types and averages.

Human beings are continually upsetting theories of types and averages. It is their nature, their prerogative, and even their destiny to do so.

When science concerned with human beings takes this fact for its first principle, we shall have the beginnings of a Science of Man. Until then, we must do the best we can with fragmentary and often unimportant information about human behavior. We may be able to make some use of this information, but we ought never to mistake it for knowledge about man. This, for science, is Original Sin.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### READING AND PHILOSOPHY

LAST week's discussion of "reading recommendations" for children hardly approached consideration of the most important contributions "literature" can make to "life." While it is true enough that a young person's encounter with books should "broaden his understanding," this vague idea gives little direction. There is one kind of "broadening" which may be described as cultural facility or sophistication, and another kind—over-prized in our age—brought by the accumulation of facts and information. But, as our psychologists are beginning to discover, the human being needs far more than an ability to be facile and to impress his peers with facts. What he really needs is to discover a vision of himself which inspires toward heroism and integrity, and this vision is not apt to come through casual reading.

After putting together last week's "Children" article we reread portions of Joseph Campbell's *Hero With a Thousand Faces*, realizing that here is a man who really knows something about the relationship of literature to the striving life. Dr. Campbell is officially listed as serving on the faculty of Sarah Lawrence College, but in our evaluation he is one of the most percipient psychologist-philosophers of our time. The theme of his discussion of ancient myths and legends is that there is only one story worth telling—the drama of the human soul as it strives to emulate the image of the Gods above. As with the heroes of Greek myth, it is only when a young man realizes that he must undertake a perilous journey beyond the borders of the familiar that he begins to mature. He seeks, although unwittingly, a "purification of the self" and the power of "concentration upon transcendental things"—or, as Campbell puts it, he prepares to undertake the "process of dissolving, transcending, or transmuting the infantile images of our personal

past." The awakening of the response of the soul to great art is an awakening to realization of the kinship of the lonely individual to other lonely ones who have wandered, adventured and achieved. Out of place in his own time as he may be, he is *in* place against the backdrop of eternal time, for his dreams and his struggles, and not his environment, establish him as a Man. Perhaps these remarks indicate why it is that so many, even in our time, are instinctively loath to see the classical education in Greek and other mythology replaced by "practical" and informative reading, and why it is so hard for the editors of "Children and Ourselves" to feel enthusiasm for most "children's books."

To continue with Campbell a little further, here is suggestion of why something of magic and the mystical so badly needs to be reborn in the lives of our young, found in a few words of explanation of "The Universal Myth"—which is really no fable, but the true story of man:

The mythological hero, setting forth from his commonday hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark or be slain by the opponent and descend in death. Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward.

The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation-initiation-return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth.

*A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of super-natural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.*

The truly great novels are those in which suffering is never simply tragedy, but rather a



catharsis, and yet the awareness of suffering, and one's psychological participation in the struggles of the hero, are all-important, since they serve to release one's awareness from petty ambitions, directing attention to the qualities of the soul. And in J. W. N. Sullivan's *Beethoven*, we find an explanation for the greatness of Beethoven's music in the fact that this composer had "come to terms with suffering" as a necessary spur to self-realization.

Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were "sufferers" in the same sense, and probably anyone who contributes a sense of the awesome inwardness of life's experiences by way of writing must also know something about the sufferer. For the hero never springs into being at a single given moment. He must pass through innumerable psychological deaths and rebirths, often feeling lonely and confused, but proving his stature through his unwillingness to give up the struggle—or by an even deeper knowledge that there can be no turning back. Our children, no matter how prosaic and apparently unimaginative, are sufferers and adventurers, too. Perhaps not on a grand scale, perhaps never destined to fully harken to what Campbell calls the thrill of stepping "to the threshold of adventure," but nonetheless, at least at times, travelers on the same high road. And it is interesting that, in Campbell's account, the lonely journey of Ulysses becomes—and not miraculously either—the means by which he brings back a boon to mankind. The hero is not the professional altruist, the "do-gooder," but one who manages to do the greatest good of all simply by increasing the breadth and depth of man's vision of himself.

In any case, the function of inspiring literature is to create an atmosphere of heroism in which the child can live in his moments of aloneness. And the formation of that atmosphere *can* be the daily work of parents. Perhaps it is more important for parents to read and ponder the contributions of great literature and philosophy than it is to try to select "children's books." The child who is

fortunate enough to have parents who know something of the relationship of literature to philosophy is a child favored by the gods, for he will have opportunity to realize that the business of life should never be over-simplified, nor the merely pleasant confused with the profound.

## *FRONTIERS*

### **Jukes, Kallikaks and Others**

WITH some surprise, we learned from a recent column by Dr. W. C. Alvarez (*Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 7), that the principal defect of the notorious founder of the Juke family, Max Juke, was that he "lived by hunting and fishing and was averse to taking any kind of a steady job." Perhaps Juke had other qualifications for being the "good-for-nothing" that Dr. Alvarez calls him, but his fondness for a free and easy life does not seem half so sinful, today, as it probably did in 1874, when Robert H. Dugdale began the researches on which Dr. Alvarez reports.

Dugdale, according to Dr. Alvarez, was commissioned by the New York Prison Association to investigate conditions in New York jails. Pursuing this task, he found that many of the inmates were closely related. A large group of petty criminals, alcoholics, vagrants, prostitutes, and paupers were all descended from Max Juke. Dugdale eventually traced and interviewed 540 "direct blood relatives" of Juke, and 169 other men and women who had married into the Juke family. Harlotry was typical of the women, vagrancy, of the men. Only one in five of them learned a skilled trade, one in four had no occupation, some were moronic, and many drank to excess.

In 1914, Dr. Alvarez relates, a skilled investigator, Arthur H. Estabrook, went over the material assembled by Dugdale and found his work surprisingly accurate. Estabrook apparently did some more tracing of Juke's descendants, classing 43 per cent of the total of 705 persons identified as "antisocial and a nuisance and an expense to the state." Only 152 in this group, Dr. Alvarez says, "could be called industrious." Many of the children in a group studied by Estabrook did not get past the fourth grade, while others were "vicious and untrainable." "What a terrible price," Dr. Alvarez exclaims, "the State of New

York has had to pay in taking care of some 2000 descendants of old Max Juke!"

Dr. Alvarez offers no severe methods for controlling such propagation of "the unfit." His article, however, is headed: "Degenerate Family Has Wide Effects," and the implication of his discussion is that heredity played the major role in these effects, although he does echo Dugdale in saying that "one of the reasons why the children in generation after generation did so poorly was that in most cases their home life was awful, and nine out of 10 were early left to shift for themselves." The only definitive conclusion Dr. Alvarez draws is in the following sentence: "Unless one assumes that he [Dugdale] was a colossal liar, his book stands as a remarkable bit of proof of the fact that in man, just as in other animals, a poor stock breeds poor stock."

The difficulty with this statement is that it is possible to put together "remarkable bits of proof" which point to an opposite conclusion. There is no need to suggest that Dugdale's (and Estabrook's) facts are inaccurate. But it is important to look at other facts. For example, in the March 1940 *Ladies Home Journal*, Alfred E. Wiggam reported on the study of a group of Iowa children, carried on under the supervision of Dr. George D. Stoddard, director of the Child Welfare Research Station of the University of Iowa. The Iowa research began with the impression that "the I.Q. is fixed at birth mainly by heredity and that no environment good or bad will greatly change it." It was evidence contradictory to this assumption which began the investigation. The preliminary discovery was that foundlings whose parents were criminals or feeble-minded, when adopted into foster-homes from Iowa institutions, turned out to be *normal children!* This was sufficiently exciting to cause organization of a broad program of research. Hundreds of case histories were compiled and studied. The results, when interpreted, tell a single, striking tale. Children born in the least fortunate levels of society, when removed to better environment and associations,

developed intelligence ratings equal to and sometimes surpassing the general averages assigned to the children of college professors!

A psychologist participating in the program exclaimed, "*We are still looking for our first feeble-minded child whose environment was good from infancy onward!*" In certain cases, children whose I.Q. average equalled that of the children of college professors were children born of mothers who, *as adults*, were "definitely feeble-minded." Dr. Stoddard, who directed the research, commented:

The only extraordinary thing about these results is the shock to our expectations. We have been led to believe that dull parents must of *necessity* have dull children. The mothers of these children are certainly dull, and we are reasonably sure that the fathers are little brighter. Moreover, as we look into the life histories of the mothers and fathers, they present a picture of economic and social inadequacy, of delinquent and criminal records, and of frequent institutional care. Their life histories are thoroughly consistent with their low mental ratings. Nevertheless, their children have turned out to be even above average in brightness when taken from their parents at a very early age and placed in good homes.

This seems an interesting and entirely adequate rejoinder to Dr. Alvarez' concluding paragraph, in which he waxes eloquent on the disaster to society flowing from progenitors such as Max Juke is claimed to have been. Dr. Alvarez writes:

. . . when one finds living mainly in tumble-down, unpainted shacks, a clan of men and women and children of a type who all sleep on the floor of one room; when one finds that most of the men are vagrants who have never had any steady occupation; when one finds that many have been arrested for stealing or drunkenness or assault; when one finds that many of the women are prostitutes; when one finds that the children have to fend for themselves—like Huck Finn—never going to school, and when one finds that the neighbors of these people fear their depredations and have not a good word to say for them, it is fairly obvious that they are not good or intelligent citizens.

No one will wish to argue the quality of these citizens with Dr. Alvarez. The important question, however, is *why* they turned out that way. Is poor old Max Juke, who liked to hunt and fish, the terrible offender, the source of original sin? Dr. Stoddard takes another view. He says, concerning the work in Iowa:

Summing it all up, certainly these results should lead us at once to re-examine and *radically reform* many of our state institutions where children are being broken by a miserable environment. They should force upon us, too, the fact that our backward mountain and Tobacco Road regions and the slums of our cities are actually producing adult stupidity and, possibly, even feeble-mindedness. They should also cause the more radical advocates of sterilization of the "unfit" to proceed with caution.

On the purely scientific side, these studies should open up new areas of experimentation in human welfare and education. On the human side, they should cause natural parents to make greater efforts than ever to develop every mental and spiritual possibility in their children, and should give those excellent people who have adopted children, or plan to adopt them, a greater faith in the influence of good homes in determining human destiny.

We ought not to leave the subject of family "case histories" without brief notice of that other notorious tribe, the "Kallikaks," which rivals the Jukes for alleged heredity infamy. In 1912, Dr. Henry H. Goddard, a psychologist, collected data on two family groups living near Vineland, New Jersey. "Kallikak" is a name coined from Greek words meaning "good" and "bad," and was devised to cover the fact that the Kallikaks included two markedly dissimilar family groups, whose history Dr. Goddard offered as "a natural experiment in heredity." The two Kallikak groups were reputed to have a common ancestor, but one group for generations had a high proportion of mental defectives and degenerates, while the other was comprised of entirely worthy and normal persons. The "bad" Kallikaks, in theory, descended from a feeble-minded girl.

The "bad" Kallikaks have been offered as evidence for the claim that character is transmitted

by heredity, and in support of the argument for sterilizing the unfit. But Dr. Goddard apparently *assumed* that immorality, drunkenness, pauperism, epilepsy, criminality, and mental defects are demonstrably hereditary. A writer in the *Journal of Heredity*, Amram Scheinfeld, asks pertinent questions. Why did not Martin Kallikak, Jr., the son of the feeble-minded tavern girl, transmit his bad traits, inherited from his mother, to any of the many "good" Kallikaks? "Surely," says Scheinfeld, "the laws of chance must have awarded some of the seven good Kallikaks the shady half of their father's 'demonstrably' mixed heredity."

No doubt instances can be found of what appear to be the transmission of mental weakness by heredity. Epilepsy, also, sometimes seems to run in families. The point, however, is that all attempts to fix conclusions about these matters encounter serious contradictions and inconsistencies. In fact, the prevailing impression that results from a study of the evidence is that the rules of animal husbandry and Mendelian theory *do not apply* to human beings!

One popular myth that needs debunking is that the weak and feeble-minded propagate more rapidly than "normal" people. More than twenty years ago, reviewing work by Dr. Paul Popenoe and others, Waldemar Kaempffert, science editor of the *New York Times* (Nov. 29, 1936), pointed out:

. . . it has been found here [in Germany] and elsewhere that the incidence of feeble-mindedness has no relation to social stratum. It is true that the "lower class breeds more rapidly than the upper," but the incidence of mental defect for every thousand in either class is about the same. British research leaves no doubt that "the supposed abnormal fertility of defectives is largely mythical." The numerous progeny of the Jukes, Nams, Kallikaks and other classic families are not typical.

Mr. Kaempffert turns his attention to the national sterilization law which in 1936 was in force in Germany—a law which then had many admirers in the United States, particularly in

California—and writes to show how the German measure might have affected two selected groups in the British population:

One [group] consisted of 103 mentally deficient parents With 338 children of whom 110 were deficient; the other of 626 normal parents with 1,032 children of whom 68 were deficient. Compulsory legislation of the German variety would have spared us the 110 undesirable children of the first group, but it would not have prevented the birth of the 68 of the second group because even normal men and women may carry within them unrecognized taints (genes) which manifest their influence after the right matings have occurred.

The risk of losing something humanly valuable is driven home by a further consideration of the same two groups. Of the normal 228 children of the first, which would not have been born in Germany, 78 proved supernormal. A few were even touched with what seemed to be genius. Evidently there is more than a slight risk of suppressing Goethes, Bachs, Newtons, Einsteins and Shakespeares if a compulsory sterilization law is rigorously enforced.

And now, specifically, on the application of stockyard techniques to human beings, we call to witness Raymond Pearl, one of America's leading biologists. In a paper published in the *Smithsonian Institution Report* for 1935, he wrote:

The analogy often drawn between human breeding and livestock breeding is in part specious and misleading. In animal breeding it has been learned that the only reliable measure of genetic superiority is the progeny test—the test of quality of the offspring actually produced. Breeding in the light of this test may, and often does, lead to the rapid, sure, and permanent improvement of a strain of livestock. But when the results of human breeding are interpreted in the light of the clear principles of the progeny test the eugenic case does not fare so well. *In absolute numbers the vast majority of the most superior people in the world's history have in fact been produced by mediocre or inferior forebears; and furthermore the admittedly most*

*superior folk have in the main been singularly unfortunate in their progeny, again in absolute numbers.* (Our italics.)

The only generalization that seems possible from all this evidence and expert testimony is that neither heredity nor environment, nor even an appropriate mixture of the two, can really "explain" human beings. The journals of social science as well as more popular magazines have published numerous reports showing that incorrigible delinquents often come from some of our "best" homes. The formula that the "broken home" produces ineffectual, delinquent, and maladjusted children also breaks down dramatically in particular instances. All these influences, of course, may be contributing factors in the shaping of human beings, but none of them can be assumed to be either absolute or even decisive. The law of a superior mankind has yet to be discovered, if we mean by "law" a statement of procedures that are to be followed by experimenters or designers who have in mind a way of making "other people" or "future generations" superior.

It is natural, of course, for people to want to figure out a way to improve the human race. And it is equally natural, if not so admirable, for people to wish that they had some simple way to explain the presence of manifest failures among us. If we could explain failures by formula, we could work out some corresponding formula as the means of eliminating them—like the German sterilization law. But if there is anything to be learned from the human phenomena of our time, it is that the application of formulas to human beings produces the worst failures of all, and on a mass scale. This is the lesson to be gained from study of the effects of dogmatic, formula-laden religion, and formula-laden science. It is also the lesson shouted from the house-tops of our formula-laden, commercial and acquisitive culture which deals with human beings as units of "buying-power," and worships at the shrine of the all-powerful "Consumer"—that contradictory entity who is infinitely sacred in

the mass, but an unhappy, bewildered "other-directed" mouse as an individual.

The return of Dr. Alvarez to nineteenth-century science and his guarded espousal of outworn doctrines of the influence of heredity are perhaps symptoms of a general impoverishment in conventional theories of man. Dr. Alvarez is a distinguished medical man and journalist. He writes with freedom and a disregard of prejudice. And it is natural, in these days of confusion, that he, like others, should give attention to problems which cry out for solution. But these problems have no solution in any of the familiar terms we are used to hearing. We need, therefore, to strike at them at another level. The old level is that of a "managed" society—managed by humanitarian experts, experts in the manipulation of other human beings. Some say, "Let us change our heredity," others say, "Let us change our environment," and compulsive political doctrines have sprung from these attitudes of mind. We have exhausted the scientific theories and we have found the political doctrines to be devastatingly evil in effect.

The present seems to be, more than anything else, a time for getting our breath, a time of conservatism and stocktaking, before any more ventures for the "mass improvement" of mankind. So it should also be a time of self-discovery, and investigation of the potentialities of *unmanaged man*, or rather, self-managed man. If half the effort that has gone into managing man had been directed toward freeing him, Dr. Alvarez might find entirely different prospects engaging his attention.