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SCIENCE AND FREEDOM

[This article is a discussion of human freedom in relation to the prevailing ideas of science and religion. It begins with a communication from Ralph W. Burhoe, secretary of the Institute on Religion in an Age of Science. Mr. Burhoe takes issue with Joseph Wood Krutch's criticsm of "scientific determinism," as found in quotation in MANAS for Feb. 6. Mr Burhoe's remarks are followed by editorial comment on the issues raised.—Editors.]

DEAR MANAS: Your review of Dr. Krutch's lecture in the February 6 issue is only one of numerous stimulating pieces in MANAS in recent months, and I am often tempted to write you a note of praise or comment. I respond on the Krutch note, probably because I find it a rather crucial example of what is wrong with our thinking these days.

Certainly, on the face of it, the physics of Newton, the biology of Darwin, the sociology of Marx, and the psychology of Freud all suggest a determinism that seems to pull the rug out from under our ideas of freedom and the moral responsibility of the individual. And we all instinctively feel a horror at the thought that we might be the puppets whose strings might be pulled by some very unpleasant manipulators, or we fear the immorality and chaos of a society in which men abandon all effort to morality because they find themselves excused by the doctrine of determinism.

May I suggest, however, that the existence of freedom within determinism is logically a problem similar to that of the existence of people on the other side of the earth directly under us who do not have to hang on to prevent themselves from falling down into the abyss of space below. Any one reasoning from the analogy of how one would have to behave if one were on the under side of an overhanging precipice would indeed be terrorized at the thought of voyaging to the under side of the earth. The trouble lies in the inapplicability of our logic. Mathematicians and scientists have repeatedly found that the extension of a rule of operation that is perfectly sound in certain limited areas becomes unsound outside of those areas, where a more comprehensive rule operates within which the local rule is a special case. And we may very well discover that at the antipodes the direction we call down is in fact up. And by the same token what we call determined may be not at all incompatible with what we call free. We just have to be careful about the frame of reference from which we are reasoning

Let me suggest that there can be no possibility of any validity in thinking or reasoning if indeed there is not some underlying order in the universe we contemplate. If our minds were not able to operate in an order or pattern that was a model of the real universe outside our brains, we would have no possibility of knowing anything. On the contrary, as we increase the correspondence between our mental processes and the order that exists outside of them, to that extent are we able to know. Presumably, the primitive men who first generalized this process of increasing the range and effectiveness of knowing, also conceived that if this logic were carried to its ultimate end, one would have an all-knowing God for whom all things were determined.

Let me suggest also that Dr. Krutch is quite wrong when he says "you ought to be able so to control the factors which condition [men] as to make them think and do what you have decided they should." The scientist cannot even condition matter to do what he might fancy. He can do nothing that is not permitted by the laws which determine the operation of the universe. He who finds out the basic laws of the cosmos and who abides by what they decree can do many wonderful things. The scientific as well as the religious picture of man is a picture of a creature

which did not make himself, but was made by a power outside of himself, and endowed with the capacity to know that cosmic power and thus to operate successfully within it. You can take this from modern evolutionary theory or from *Genesis* or the *Psalms.* The religious and the scientific pictures seem to agree that man is totally dependent upon his creator, and can neither do nor be anything which was not given by the creator. Insofar as our fellow men become so aligned with the law or will of the creator that they act fully in accord with that law or will, then they may have a great power that lesser men do not have. But if these men should by chance begin to suppose that they are gods and then try something which is not in fact in accord with the real cosmic law, then they are doomed to failure. I can have no fear of Mr. Krutch's hypothetical fiend possessed of terribly destructive powers by his knowledge of psychology or anything else, a fiend who might inflict his fiendishness upon me. For, insofar as the fiend might do the slightest thing that is not in accord with the cosmic will he will destroy not the cosmos, nor whatever valid part of it I may be, but he will destroy only his own power and his own self.

It seems to me that both ancient religious and modern scientific doctrine proclaim an almighty power whom man must obey if he is to thrive. There is no question but what this almighty power is also right and good. There is no other reality but reality. If we don't like it the only viable response is to reform our concepts. In earlier evolution we would say that if the primitive beings didn't like the universe, they could either evolve or pass away. There is no freedom from God, from ultimate reality; but that reality has created us with freedom or power to choose. But, to live, we must choose only that which is decreed good by God. This very freedom that we have is, as we can see from modern science, also determined. It is determined by our creator that we shall be forced to be free, to make choices, to seek the right. Thus freedom exists all right, but within a more universal determinism.

The so-called "indeterminism" of modern twentieth-century physics is a bit of nonsense. Every physicist today believes that nature is just as susceptible of being ordered in some rational way as it ever was. The only difference is that the particular rational formulas have to be revised, including the hitherto valid notion that position and velocity can be simultaneously determined for all bodies of whatever size. As Mr. Krutch says, "individual atoms do not always follow the so-called laws." He put his finger on the vital point: *"so-called laws."* But no physicist fails to continue his search for a better and more viable way of comprehending the phenomena of experience. And the same is true of Mr. Krutch. His problem is not a lack of faith in the order and knowability of the cosmos, but a confusion or error in logic that leads him to the same sort of predicament and fear that filled early mariners when they thought of their ships sailing off the edge of the earth.

RALPH W. BURHOE

Boston, Mass.

The first of Mr. Burhoe's suggestions that we should like to pursue further is the idea of "the existence of freedom within determinism." A simple illustration occurs—a game of hand-ball. The fundamental determinism of a hand-ball game is comprised of the predictable behavior of an elastic body. If you hit the ball so that it strikes the wall at a certain angle, inexorable law determines the angle of rebound. Once you hit it, determinism takes over. But you *choose* the angle at which it hits the wall. The better the player, the more "freedom" of choice. If there were not this freedom, there would be no game.

In life, there is a much subtler problem of determining the areas of freedom. But the freedom must be there, or there would be no "life"—life which has meaning in terms of human values and life as we want to live it.

Men do, of course, deceive themselves concerning their freedom. They often think themselves free when they are in fact constrained by some unexamined desire or fear. It is the role of self-analysis to discover such hidden motivations, in the hope of obtaining greater *self*-determination. This is what a psychiatrist endeavors to contribute to the person suffering from some emotional disorder—help for the man who wants to make authentic decisions instead of pseudo-decisions. The psychiatrist is like a golf instructor who points out to the player that he has a "slice" in his drive. When the slicing tendency is eliminated, the player can make the ball go where he wants to.

The postulate in all such considerations is that human beings are able to move into any one of the innumerable deterministic systems which form our environment and to exercise an appropriate freedom within the limits and according to the laws of that system. Such freedom is possible only when the laws of the system are understood. When these laws are partially understood, the freedom is partial; when they are perfectly understood (if this is conceivable or possible), then freedom is perfect or complete. As John Dewey once said, "Freedom is knowledge of necessity."

What is the bearing of science on this formulation? Science has no bearing on this formulation. Science is mute on the subject of freedom, for science has no concept of the free subject. Science deals with objects, not subjects. An uncaused cause can have no existence in a deterministic system. This is not a criticism of science, but a definition of science, at least as we know it.

The problem of freedom, therefore, is in some measure a problem of how you determine what is "real." If you decide that what science can neither define nor conceive is *ipso facto* unreal, then you cannot have any truck with the notion of freedom. But if you decide that the subjective feeling of "freedom" possessed by every human being—however intermingled with or qualified by illusion—is just as much a part of reality as the objective world (we have illusions there, too), then you can use the word freedom with both reason and common sense.

Here, an important distinction needs to be made. Two kinds of rigor are involved in this discussion: the rigor of scientific method and the rigor of metaphysical reasoning. These rigors are not the same, nor do they deal with the same areas of experience. The rigor of science may be typified by accurate prediction. Given causes, science says, certain effects will result. Knowledge of the relationships between cause and effect makes prediction possible and, in many instances, control as well. Rigor in metaphysics applies to judgments concerning the nature of things which are trans-scientific. To postulate the reality of freedom is a metaphysical judgment. In any system that we observe, science can (in principle) tell you everything about that system except the free agencies (if any) which are active in the system. Scientific method has (at present) no way of accommodating itself to the existence of free-agents (except, perhaps, statistically, which eliminates the "free" aspect of their behavior). Since the time of Galileo, who divided the world into primary characteristics (which science could manipulate) and secondary characteristics (which science could not manipulate), man has been an "outsider" to the real world, and not a causal participant in its affairs. This is the great, implicit, metaphysical judgment of all modern science. It was by this judgment that science was able to banish metaphysics from modern thought. E. A. Burtt sums up the consequences of Galileo's view of nature in a clarifying paragraph (*Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science*, pp. 83, 95):

> Physical space was assumed to be identical with the realm of geometry, and physical motion was acquiring the character of a pure mathematical concept. . . . *The real world is the world of bodies in mathematically reducible motions, and this means that the real world is a world of bodies moving in*

> *time and space*. . . Teleology as an ultimate principle of explanation he set aside, depriving of their foundation those convictions about man's determinative relation to nature which rested on it. The natural world was portrayed as a vast, self-contained mathematical machine, consisting of motions of matter in space and time, and man with his purposes, feelings, and secondary qualities was shoved apart as an unimportant spectator of the great mathematical drama outside.

By banishing man, science was able to banish metaphysics, for only man has need of metaphysics; only man is confronted by a transcendent order of experience which requires metaphysics to give it order and meaning.

Is, then, man wholly neglected by science? Of course not. But man is studied in science only as an object, never as a subject. There may be some current exceptions in the field of psychotherapy, but here the practice of medicine verges on the practice of art, and when the therapist invites "freedom," he is following his intuition of the reality of a potentially free subject in his patient, and not any scientific account of such a subject. The free subject is a wholly metaphysical entity.

Man is both subject and object. Science examines only man-as-object. This does not destroy man-as-subject, but it throws him into shadow. Man-as-subject continues to have a common-sense reality—a naïve reality, if you will—and a poetic and a literary reality, but he has no scientific reality. This is a vastly bewildering situation. It is the situation of which Mr. Krutch complains. He complains of it for the reason that it leads many men, some good, some evil, to try to *use* man as if he had no subjective side—as though he were, indeed, the "puppet" referred to with distaste by Mr. Burhoe.

The second of Mr. Burhoe's ideas we should like to examine is that of the "underlying order in the universe," without which, he says, there can be no possibility of any validity in thinking or reasoning. Is the idea of "underlying order" disturbed by the idea of freedom? The "underlying order" of the universe, so far as we can see, gives human freedom both meaning and opportunity to be exercised. Only the "underlying order" of the scientific picture of the universe is disturbed by freedom. And that is because the scientific picture does not contain anything that is free. This is a kind of "semantic" problem, although of somewhat cosmic dimensions!

Then, there is the question of whether the scientists can "condition" men to make them behave as "they should." The scientist, says Mr. Burhoe, "cannot even condition matter to do what he might fancy. He can do nothing that is not permitted by the laws which determine the operation of the universe."

But doesn't the brain-washer use natural laws to distort the thinking of his victims? Either the brain-washer does it or the "laws of the universe" do it. We prefer to indict the brain-washer, admitting that his crime is possible because of his knowledge of natural law.

The elementary form of this problem is familiar in all debates on education. Shall we "indoctrinate" or shall we teach the young *how* to think, leaving the conclusions to the thinker? The believer in "conditioning" is an indoctrinator, the believer in freedom has faith in intrinsic human intelligence and is willing to trust it, once it has been awakened. We fail to see where Mr. Krutch errs in maintaining that it is wrong to spread the doctrine that man is *only* an object of nature, and not a subject as well. This doctrine is prejudicial. Tell a man that he is wholly a product of conditioning and he may seize upon this "truth" as an explanation of all his failures and shortcomings. Who am I, he will explain, to stand in the way of the flow of "natural law," which made me what I am? The wholly conditioned man is a man relieved of all personal responsibility. This is the implication of science which treats man only as an object of external causation.

Mr. Burhoe further proposes that both science and religion seem to agree that man is "a creature which did not make himself, but was

made by a power outside himself, and endowed with the capacity to know that cosmic power and thus to operate successfully within it."

This is the problem of beginnings. From the stance of independent thought, is it any more difficult to imagine man as self-existent, than it is to imagine God as self-existent?

Or perhaps we should argue that *Nature* is self-existent, and that man is an expression of Nature. Why not say that man is created by a power *within* himself? Why must it be an outside power? Pantheism seems as credible as Theism or the Cosmic Process.

"If men," says Mr. Burhoe, "should by chance begin to suppose that they are gods and then try something which is not in fact in accord with the real cosmic law, then they are doomed to failure."

But why should "gods" be so stupid as to try to go against "the real cosmic law"? Is this the inner meaning of "gods"—fools who try to live outside the law? A god, on any meaningful view, is a being with creative power. A being with creative power cannot create without knowledge of the medium in which he endeavors to work. A god worthy of the name, therefore, will know or learn his medium. As men learn *their* medium, they become godlike, or—gods.

As for the fiend who will suffer destruction if he offends against the cosmic law—we have no doubt that some such fate will overtake him. It overtook Dr. Goebbels; but we—and Mr. Burhoe with us, surely—have to acknowledge that companies of lesser imps and malefactors still remain on the scene. It is not so much a question of whether or not the mills of fate will eventually dissolve all nefarious undertakings, but of what, in the meantime, we can do to lessen our burdens of delusion and misconception. Righteousness may be constrained and wickedness erased, but only on Judgment Day. Meanwhile, morality is in *our* hands. Nature gives us latitude along with law; the capacity to err is inherent in the capacity to learn.

The point is this: What men believe about the nature of man has a great deal to do with what they make of their lives. A man with a low opinion of himself tends to degrade himself still further, and others with him. We have endless data from the psychiatrists to prove this point. Perhaps Mr. Burhoe fears that we may exchange a low opinion of ourselves for delusions of grandeur. Naturally, this danger exists, but the creative being can have no infallible guide. It is his role in the universe to *originate;* it is his nature to be *free.* To find a proper opinion of ourselves, we shall have to penetrate certain major mysteries, first among them, perhaps, the mystery of good and evil. Then there is the mystery of our own identity: What are we, as *subject?*

Examination of this question has been for Mr. Krutch a lifelong enterprise. So far, he has come up with one unequivocal answer. He is sure that we are more than simple objects of external determining forces—the forces studied by the several branches of modern science.

REVIEW
THE CLAIM ON THE WIND

HERITAGE, by Anthony West, is the story of Dick Savage, son of a famous writer and an accomplished actress. It tells how Dick grows from an unhappy little boy to a wise and tolerant young man. To stack the cards against Dick and to prove, perhaps, that parents of genius are worth having, even if it brings special difficulties for a child, Mr. West makes Dickie illegitimate—a burden he bears with surprisingly little embarrassment in what we had supposed was the heavily conventional atmosphere of upper middle class English life.

Some children, doubtless, would have been badly embittered by the circumstances which confronted Dickie. His mother's variable moods and her extraordinary capacity to twist the facts of any situation into a meaning that would accommodate her emotional attitude at the moment—these are unadmirable qualities which Dickie finally learns to forgive and accept. His father's susceptibilities to amours which produce situations of considerable awkwardness are also bewildering to him—for a time.

Mr. West's point, if we read him correctly, is that the child of such parents, with all their limitations, is still a child who has windows opened to him in walls that often remain entirely blank for more conventionally nurtured offspring. The book is not an "apology" for "unrespectable" behavior, but an appreciation of qualities which, for some reason or other, seldom occur in close association with respectability.

We found two passages memorable in *Heritage.* The first is Max Town's (the father's) serious talk with Dick about his future—what he plans to do with his life. Dick has shown an interest in writing plays and his economic situation is promising—he will probably inherit a valuable estate from his mother's present husband. His father says:

> "You've got a good mind. Are you sure you want a few plays—and a little estate management—to be the big things in your life? Are you going to be content, puttering on the margin of things?"
>
> "That and poetry—poetry is the biggest thing there is," I said, "everything feeds poetry . . . it says everything men know."
>
> "If it does, then you're right. But knowledge takes new forms, and the new forms mean new ways of expression. All, all, the constructive thinking in physics and chemistry, the new exploration of what the universe is, of what place life has in the universe, is being done by mathematicians . . .perhaps if you can make that mathematical language into verbal language you can make poetry out of it . . . but you'll have to understand a great deal you don't even think about now . . . the sort of intuitive responses to things that poets used to be able to get by with are almost worked out. . . ." He eyed me. "It's a challenge . . . you know up to a point the history of religion is the history of human knowledge . . . every new discovery about life and the human situation was turned into rite and ritual. The old religions dealt with everything men know in a compressed language of symbol . . . and they developed as men learned. Until they suddenly closed the books—the crystallization of the Bible, the development of sacred books, like the Koran . . . they were religious disasters. When the great expansion of knowledge came in our chapter of history it all took place outside the field of religious belief . . . the religious couldn't admit the new knowledge . . . their patterns of symbol were closed. They fought against opening them . . . they fought the new knowledge and tried to suppress it. They lost their universality . . . they were left with only a section of the human mind. . . . I've an idea that something like that is happening to poetry . . . the poets don't speak for their time any more, they speak the language of refined bystanders. They're educated out of the common run of new ideas . . . they speak to only a section of the educated world, a section devoted to old books and familiar ideas . . .
>
> . . . Coleridge is the first modern poet, with that fake German scholarship, and that portentous claim to a private revelation of universal importance . . . and then there's his ability to communicate, and then only partially, inside a tiny circle of friends . . . he's a sort of Ezra Pound born before his time ... you don't want to get into anything like that. . . ."
>
> "No." I felt my ears burning with hot anger. Max had no streak of poetry, of the artist in him. A silence spread between us over the polished table. How could I talk to someone so remote, about what I wanted to do. . . . he looked at me again.
>
> " 'Find in the middle air, an eagle on the wing, recognize the five that make the muses sing. . . .' It isn't as easy as it was. . . ." he said.
>
> "I didn't know that you. . ." I said, startled to recognize the lines from Yeats.

"It's always a surprise to find what people are carrying around in their heads. . . . I'm not against poetry, you know. It's just that I want you to take it seriously . . . not just yourself, that's not enough. But the thing itself. . . ."

Max gave his son the wisdom of his maturity—far from a complete wisdom, and by no means a full maturity, but it helped to set Dick free. A youth able to absorb the insight offered by Max—not his judgments, but the manner of making them—is a youth with opportunity to live at the height of his times. By realizing this, Dick came to love his father with a new emotion, with a kind of love not given to everyone to feel.

His vision of his mother comes later and is presented in another context. While still beautiful, Naomi Savage left the stage to marry a conventional "Colonel" who was devoted to her. After some years spent in his country home—years of happiness for both Dick and his mother, and for the Colonel—she suddenly leaves to play the part of an "older woman" in a play that is to open in New York. The Colonel is dumfounded. Dick tries to explain to him what has happened:

". . . Don't torment yourself with thinking you've been left for anyone, a man. She's gone to the theatre, to be what she is."

There was a long silence.

"She told me she was sick of it . . . that the whole life [in the theatre] had become horrible to her. Was she lying to me?"

"No, she believed it, absolutely, then."

"Have I been the damnedest of fools?"

"No."

"You couldn't very well have said yes. . . ."

"I would have if it had been true."

He grinned like a dog that has had poison.

"Then what in God's name has happened?"

"You offered her the perfect part, written for her, and she couldn't bear not to take it. It was a part she'd dreamed of playing all her life. . . ."

"Then I have been a damned fool."

"If you want to put it like that you can. But there's something else to be said. She was happier in the role you gave her, for longer, than anyone else ever made her."

"But in the end it wasn't a good enough part."

"She exhausted the possibilities that were in it for her."

"And now she's off to something else. . . ." He twisted his face into a grimace. "Upon my soul, you don't make her out very attractive. I can hardly bear to hear you talk this way about her."

"Tigers may not seem very attractive to goats, to see how splendid they are you have to take into account that they are tigers. She's Cleopatra to me, Shakespeare's, not Shaw's, she's Nora, all kinds of people, quite different—irreconcilable. She's been a loving mother, and an absolutely indifferent one who had a child by mistake, she's been a cold-hearted bully, and a wonderful friend. I wouldn't, now I'm not demanding that she always appear in a particular role, have her any different. The price would be to destroy her. It's too high."

"You at least have a claim on her that she can't very well shake off when it suits her."

"It's the sort of claim that I have on the wind to bring me air to breathe. I count myself lucky to get it."

He considered it, and then spoke quietly in an extremely gentle voice.

"But I love her, you see, Richard."

"Then you can't want to tie her down—she has to be all the different women she has to be."

"It's very hard to see that."

"It's painful, but we have to face it."

This sort of thing happens again and again to people in marriage, and in other relations. They marry with feeling for, but without knowing, each other. Then, when things go poorly, they blame each other, instead of blaming themselves for not knowing. Passages like this make *Heritage* an extremely good book. Anthony West, the author, is the son of H. G. Wells and Rebecca West. The book was published in 1955 by Random House and is now available in a Cardinal paper-back edition.

COMMENTARY
CONCERNING CAPRICORN

ON Sept. 19 last, MANAS devoted this space to a description of the Capricorn Africa Society, which proposes to offer to both white and black inhabitants of Africa a conception of government under which "there will be no discrimination on racial grounds." We wrote admiringly of this organization and its aims, suggesting only that the Capricorn contract's lack of provision for non-violent defense, as alternative to military service, seemed to overlook the value of Gandhi's contribution to the world of the future; and that possibly the notion of ownership of property should be broadened to include cooperative and community enterprises, in keeping with the natural traditions of "tribal" peoples in many parts of the world.

Then, in MANAS for Dec. 12, we printed a criticism of the Capricorn idea by Kirilo Japhet, an African farmer of Tanganyika.

Now, from Laurens van der Post, in whose book, *The Dark Eye in Africa*, we first learned of the Capricorn movement, comes a letter commenting on Mr. Japhet's article. He writes:

> This [the Japhet article], Sir, is not as your editorial column has it, a case argued "with manifest clarity and apparent good sense," but an extraordinary hodge-podge of unjustifiable suspicion, political special pleading and partial evidence wrenched out of context, deliberate misrepresentations and humanitarian slogans with which we all agree and whose principles are profoundly implicit in the basic provisions of the Capricorn concept of a greater and unsplintered African society free of racialisms of any kind. However, Sir, as I am a white African I feel that in a sense the detailed answer which I could so easily give to Mr. Japhet's criticisms could be discredited in advance because of my colour. May I beg you therefore to give equal prominence to a reply from one of the thousands of "articulate black Africans" who have worked from the start with us in the creation of the Capricorn concept of African society.

Mr. van der Post is asking a "black African" to write this reply, and we shall be glad to print it when it arrives. Our own comment, meanwhile, is a somewhat mournful one. It seems practically inevitable that there should be misunderstandings and confusion during the long process of reconciliation between the races. And if there should be an uneven temper in the spirit of the rising black man, there will doubtless be well-nigh intolerable trials of the patience of generous and well-meaning whites.

Most difficult of all, probably, will be the question of "motives." To have one's motives impugned is a bitter ordeal, but one that is likely to continue—not only in Africa, but wherever in the world there are cultures in conflict—until the adjustments which are *right* are at last found and made to grow into place. With considerable regret, therefore, we agree that it is better for a black African to write the reply, while adding that the suspicion of partisanship that might attach to Mr. van der Post's view because he happens to be white is not the least that is the matter in Africa.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

CORRESPONDENCE

ANOTHER communication comes from parents who are exploring the possibilities of teaching their children at home and meanwhile wondering whether California State Law will enable them to do so. As with similarly interested correspondents, these parents are motivated by two convictions. The first is that parents *should* be the best able to develop the spontaneous interests of the child, according to the natural pace of each individual toward a final linkage with the formal disciplines of learning and our heritage of culture. Second, the thought that one is presently *compelled* to send children to the public school affronts a healthy sense of civil rights. To these views is added a familiar footnote: the insistence that even tiny tots repeat the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag seems absurd, since "they have no conception of what they are saying," and since learning the rituals of nationalism without any comprehension of their origins is simply the bad education of a totalitarian-tending age.

One thing, at least, seems certain. Parents who are willing to undertake the task of teaching children to read, write and do arithmetic should be respected, not only by other parents who know they have neither the time nor patience for the task, but also by state legislatures. According to our correspondent, this is far from the case, since the only parents of their acquaintance who succeeded in keeping their children out of public school did so on the simple ground of insisting, "We want our children home." In other words, the tendency seems to be to respond to emotional appeals, but to disallow any *reasoned* preference for home education.

MANAS readers who have been thinking along these lines and wish to correspond, are invited to write to—

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* * *

Our wandering discussion of children's literature—with side notes on the "philosophical requirements" which we felt worth-while books should have—has brought both criticism and support. The following letter chides us for our generalizations and our "fogginess":

> Valuable as is the Jan. 30 "Children . . . and Ourselves" column on "Reading and Philosophy" in putting literature on the map of our lives, I found myself nodding my head too often.
>
> When I nod my head in approval as I read it means ideas are being set forth in a form simple and general. It is very easy to understand. Soon I get tired of nodding and stop reading.
>
> The abundance of generalities in this particular column fails to cover a simple question: if all good stories tell the same tale, why bother to read more than one story? Are we like children who reread the story they know by heart because they are pleased at anticipating correctly?
>
> Implicit in this column is the idea that literature and philosophy are identical in means and ends. I think there is a difference.
>
> The "boons," "stature," "heroes," and "suffering" you speak of are foggy. I still don't know what to look for in a book. My daughter knows what to look for. She likes animals. Where do animals fit in the one great plot?

The question as to why one should bother to read "more than one story" calls for a clarification. The one "tale worth telling" is the story of the person who grows in sympathetic understanding of his fellows by a progressive widening of personal horizons. Since the experiences afforded by life are innumerable, one can also receive enlightenment from innumerable "fictional" situations, for these, however contrived, may be psychologically true. And if such enlightenment is being received, one is partaking of "serious literature." So it is to this extent that we implied the close connection between ideal literature and philosophy.

In John Steinbeck's *East of Eden,* the author explains that all good plots are versions of "the story of the soul":

> We have only one story. All novels, all poetry, are built on the never-ending contest in ourselves of good and evil. Humans are caught—in their lives, in their thoughts, in their hungers and ambitions, in their avarice and cruelty, and in their kindness and generosity too—in a net of good and evil. I think this is the only story we have and that it occurs on all levels of feeling and intelligence. Virtue and vice were warp and woof of our first consciousness, and they will be the fabric of our last, and this despite any changes we may impose on field and river and mountain, on economy and manners. There is no other story. A man, after he has brushed off the dust and chips of his life, will have left only the hard, clean questions: Was it good or was it evil? Have I done well—or ill?

An article in *ETC* (Autumn, 1956) offers suggestions on the value of serious reading. Dr. Doris Garey, professor of English at Manchester College, Indiana, points out that escape literature affords neither the child nor the adult any opportunity to identify himself with the characters of the book, and that it is just such identification which leads to feelings of aliveness and sympathy. Here one again comes face to face with the fact that the capacity for intense enjoyment must be bought at the price of some intense suffering. Dr.Garey writes:

> Writers of serious literature differ from one another; but one quality seems to characterize literary artists and artists in other mediums as a group—they are all more fully alive than the majority of their fellow human beings. Perhaps this is the chief reason both for the interest they arouse and for the resistance and resentment they encounter. On the spur of the moment we might suppose that all of us want to feel as fully alive as we can and hence that we would always feel grateful to the artist who can increase our feeling of aliveness, can make our emotional experience more varied and more intense. A little further observation and self-examination, however, will convince us that this assumption is to some extent a mistake.
>
> At times we resist intense emotional aliveness because we are afraid of getting hurt. At least vaguely, we realize the truth of Keats's lines in the "Ode on Melancholy":
>
> Ay, in the very temple of Delight
> Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine. . . .
>
> In other words, if we care deeply for anything—if it arouses great joy in us—it also has the power to hurt us when it is withdrawn or when it perishes. And unlike Keats, we are sometimes not willing to pay the price. We might be willing to accept intense experiences of joy if we did not have to accept intense experience of disappointment and sorrow too; but we are unwilling to accept both, and the two cannot be separated. Consequently we choose to go through life half asleep or in a half-drugged condition. Perhaps you have known people who say, "I never let myself care much for anybody, because then no one can hurt me." This is only one example of the attitude just described.
>
> Again, we resist because we fear some of the things which the aliveness may reveal to ourselves. In one frame of mind we believe that we know most of the answers already. We have been brought up to "know the difference between right and wrong." We consider ourselves justified in dismissing some of our fellow human beings with just a laugh or with strong "moral" condemnation. We are sure that some other people are "the right sort," "our kind"; and we do not want to be disturbed in this conviction. We are "sure" about many things, or at least we want to be; hence we resent and dread the widening and deepening of our emotional experience, which might make us unsure again.

Dr. Garey closes her discussion by indicating how the "aliveness" of serious authors may awaken the corresponding quality in adolescents who come to appreciate them:

> A college senior once called on an instructor to announce a remarkable discovery. "I never used to do any thinking," she said excitedly, "but now I'm thinking all the time. And the more I think, the more I see that *everything is connected with everything else."* The moment when this realization comes is glorious indeed. For some people, of course, it never does come. But it can; and reading serious literature is one way to hasten its coming.

As for the question of how "animals fit in the one great plot," first of all, a genuine interest in the lives and experiences of animals can very well

lead to consideration for life in any form. We admire the books of Joseph Wood Krutch primarily because an understanding "reverence for life" grows in any person who lives with Dr. Krutch's point of view for a time. When Krutch studies animals, he is also studying himself, not because he thinks animals are "just like" men, but because he knows that if he can respect an animal and understand him he can better respect and understand everything else.

Another correspondent writes:

> I would like to add one or two more titles to your list of books for children given in "Children . . . and Ourselves" for Feb. 6.
>
> *The Lance of Kanana,* by John L. French. Bedouin shepherd boy, unarmed and dressed in simple shepherd dress, proves himself braver and more powerful than army leaders.
>
> *Narat the Brave,* by Radko Doone. Eskimo boy, put among the women because he would not kill, makes his living for two years after being carried away on an ice floe with his dog. He kills for food and equipment and preserves himself against the cold of the Arctic North.
>
> *Gay-Neck, the Pigeon,* by Dhan Gopal Mukerji. An Indian boy in India, with the help of the priest, helps his pigeon overcome fear.
>
> *Drinkers of the Wind,* by Carl R. Rasmon. On trek with Arabs, a man seeks the perfect Arabian horse. Man's unity with the earth and its creatures; his acceptance of circumstance and his truer sense of value than we of "civilized living" can generally know.
>
> Adults would be held by these books as well.

FRONTIERS

Society of Devil's Advocates

MILTON MAYER, we are happy to say, shares some of our troubles. He has always been a stubborn sort of fellow, and it is even possible that we can blame some of our own contrariness on the vitality of his writing down through the years. Whether at the University of Chicago as special assistant to President Robert M. Hutchins, or acting up as a very unusual brand of pacifist, Mayer has made it a habit to phrase his arguments so as to make what he said confusing to anyone who avoids thinking things out for himself. Not everyone at the University of Chicago liked Mayer, nor does every pacifist. Sometimes Mayer is not quite in favor of himself, but since this is only an old conventional virtue called "modesty," he can't be blamed for that.

The trouble Mayer has been having lately comes from his suggestion that the Russians not only may be human beings, however mistaken their ideology or political practices, but that they may actually be less accountable for their failings than we of the "free world" are for ours. In the *Progressive* for January, he compares the Russian oppression in Hungary with the British and French bombings of Suez. Many felt indignant at this failure to recognize a great "moral" gulf between anything the Russians did and anything "we" might do. A typical communication arrived via the *Progressive* from a man Mayer charitably characterizes as a "man—and a good one—of God." This particular man of God, like so many who take such appointments seriously, is full of virtue, and, thinking himself so well acquainted with the constituents of virtue, he wants to keep all lesser mortals well informed as to the degrees of culpability various deviants from the right path represent. His message to Mayer remarked that "the highly civilized British and French pin-pointed their bombing and stopped as soon as the U.N. asked them to do so. From all reliable reports, the Russians killed women and children, deported many, and refused to change one bit or allow the U.N. to enter the country. I ask you—could you think that the two things were the same—as you implied in your January article in *The Progressive?"*

In Mayer's reply (February *Progressive),* we have a little first-hand experience with the reasons for the unpopularity of some of Mayer's complicated contentions:

> No, friend, the two things were not the same. What the British and the French did was much worse, because the British and the French are, like us, highly civilized, and the Russians are not. It is even as St. Thomas says—there are two ways of looking at a sin: either simply, in itself, or in relation to the sinner.
>
> United Press report on pin-point bombing of Port Said November 12: ". . . The lagoon was filled with boatloads of evacuees. Many boats capsized and scores were drowned, many of them children. . . Port Said's tuberculosis hospital was hit. . . At dawn on Monday, incendiary bombs dropped on houses along the waterfront and fires broke out . . . Suddenly a formation of low-flying planes swept over us and began strafing . . . The Arab quarters in the Manakh area, where 60,000 people live, burst into flame from naval shelling . . . The French cut off the water supply . . . There was no water to fight the fires . . . More strafing planes screamed over. We hurried into side streets. But the whole town was a mass of bullets and fire . . . The streets were littered with bodies . . ."
>
> The Church Fathers—and not even all of them—take issue with Jesus and maintain that there is such a thing as a just war.
>
> But war, like all other sins, may be looked at either simply, in itself, or *secundum quod,* which means in relation to the warrior. The warrior may be a just man warring for justice. But war is, in itself, deadly sin because it requires the just man warring for justice to injure the innocent. If war, simply, were just, just men would rush to get into it; but it is deadly sin, so just men have to be forced by their government to fight.

The point that Mayer is trying to make, which is the point "Children . . . and Ourselves" was trying to make in some recent kind remarks about certain Russian elementary schools, is that if we *are* "more highly civilized" than the Russians, we ought to give evidence of it by being more charitable, more humane, more forgiving and

understanding. Perhaps we should even seek that state of mind which aspires to fight for truth, not with the violent weapons of war, but with the quiet and calm resolve epitomized by Gandhi. If we don't even aspire in this direction, we are simply fakes, and fakes have no business moralizing. A1though we suppose, really, that it is only the fakes who bother to moralize anyway.

Here and there, as in Steve Allen's recent comments on nationalism, or perhaps in a novel, we encounter that broader perspective which leads some men to greater interest in understanding than in condemnation. *Red Sky at Midnight,* by Robert F. Mirvish, has something of this quality. Mirvish spent some time in Russia during the war and he pictures a curiously understanding relationship between the Russian people and their government. Since the author of *Red Sky at Midnight* ends his story with the heroine's escape from Russia, we have no reason to think that Mirvish has any Communist or pro-Soviet leanings, and we like the sound of this Russian woman's discussion with the American seaman:

> She explained to Eddie many baffling aspects of life in Russia, and through these explanations, he came to understand the wide cleavage that lay between what the world knew, from the actions of the Russian rulers, and the actual will and character of the people themselves. By drawing parallels from her own experiences, Tanya illustrated for him the deep and enduring regard that all Russians had for their land, which had made them fight the Germans so ferociously, despite the fact that many were not in accord with the policies laid down by their leaders. He saw Tanya's own deep sense of loyalty to the land, and the way in which even she, with her wider intellectual gifts and greater information, forced herself to trust those who ruled Russia. Like all the rest of the world, she clutched at the promises made and tried to excuse them when they were broken. Like people of good will everywhere, and particularly the enormous mass of them in Russia, who were outside of the party, she sought and found confidence in the end-of-the-rainbow promises of the 1937 constitution, which might someday guarantee free speech, free press, and all the other privileges which dictatorship denies; and she accepted the general explanation that the present policy was only a stopgap one, necessary because Russia was in constant danger from without. She, like so many people in the world outside, clutched at the Utopian ideal that was offered to them in some nameless future, and hardheaded though she might be, by virtue of indoctrination she was no different from all the millions who had no say at any level in the policies that shaped their future, and because of deep inherent feelings for their homeland, despite inward misgivings about their leaders, would follow that leadership when it fostered a belief that they were beset by external enemies.
>
> Eddie learned, through Tanya, that though the Party was a minority in Russia, the people were behind it. That although many disliked much of what it did and said, by and large they trusted it more than they did the outside world, of which they knew little, and would back it against that outside world.