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THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF IDEALISTS

MUCH, during recent issues, has appeared in MANAS concerning the debate between the Idealists and the Materialists. The tendency in these articles has been to make as clear as possible the virtue of the idealist position, although with an attempt, also, to state the materialist view with justice and without distortion.

We have found, however, that certain subtle discomforts seem to attend the defense of idealism, and propose, here, to explore these discomforts.

First, idealists sometimes betray the presence in their minds of an ill-concealed self-righteousness. Are they not on the side of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful? Would not a world converted to Idealism be a better world? What if the idealist argument is faulty, its premises insecure? Really well-intentioned persons should be willing to overlook these defects, since blessedness for all will result from an idealist victory.

Then there is the cavalier attitude toward reason itself which occasionally creeps into idealist reasoning. Is not Reason, after all, a frail reed on which to rest the grandest of truths? Idealism voices the convictions of The Spirit, which knows the truth without tiresome argument. Indeed, sometimes the idealist employs reason at all only as a compromise in the service of the weak—in behalf of the lesser souls who are lacking in Intuition.

These are obviously poor attitudes. They help no one, least of all the man who manifests them. Even if there should be an element of fact behind them, they are still bad, since they reflect vanity and the egotism of the party spirit. Finally, they are not persuasive, but the reverse of being persuasive, so that when an idealist exhibits them we are justified in concluding that he does not really want to share his convictions with others, but wants to parade his own virtue.

Another weakness of idealists, or idealist-tending thinkers, is to fail to make their premises explicit. This probably grows from intellectual timidity and the desire to seem to share with "tough-minded" thinkers at least some of the well-established "facts" of science. This is bad, because the lack of a clear foundation makes idealist reasoning weak. Without a good foundation, Idealism's chief claim to attention becomes its "moral tone." Now, while a high "moral tone" is not only legitimate but greatly desirable, it is a mistake to hope that this quality can and ought to make up for logical weakness. A high moral tone may be all that a philosophy of life needs to give it justification, but then its defenders should not *pretend* that it has the full support of reason. This is a species of hypocrisy, and idealists ought not to be guilty of it, even in a good cause. An honest, unpretentious materialist doubtless has more truth in him than an opportunistic idealist, and this undeniable fact constitutes a devastating attack on the whole category of intellectual constructions concerning the nature of things. An intellectual construction or a metaphysical system is like a tool—it can be used by anyone, or almost anyone, and with widely varying purposes and undefined integrity. Those who reason about the nature of things have urgent need of reflection on this absolute limitation of their enterprise.

What, precisely, *is* Idealism? Volumes of discussion could be written to answer this question. Here, we shall make Idealism mean that view of the world and human existence which offers philosophical justification for what a reader recently described as Freedom—"the conscious sense of making decisions—choosing between alternatives." Why should there be any question about this? The question arises from the scientific account of the world and the laws of nature. There is no hint in science of the capacity of any thing or being for choice. In the scientific view, every event, every human act, or human thought, is in theory capable of being explained by some prior cause. The work of the scientist lies in precisely this activity—of explaining every action by some cause which is prior and external to the entity or person who does the acting. There is no place in the scientific universe for an *original* cause that is, an uncaused cause.

Why should human beings object to this conclusion by science? They object to it—most of them—because it denies any significance to them as persons. Strictly speaking, according to this view,

when a man does something, be does not really do it at all. His act is only a confluence of causes which reach him without his knowledge and consent, and over which he has no control.

The strength of Idealism, today, is mainly gained from the repugnance of this idea of a human being. We want to be more than mere "foci" of the Cosmic Process. We want to believe that we have something to do with our loves and hopes, our dreams and aspirations. We demand an identity. We want to be *real.*

It is therefore appalling that the logic of science, to which we owe nearly all we know—or think we know—about the universe around us, should deny us this reality.

But why should we say that science denies that we are real, when this is not really the case. Science does not deny our reality as "original causes." It merely fails to affirm that reality.

It is just here that we have trouble. A man may say, "I did this yesterday." Then the scientist concerned with explaining human behavior takes over. He works on the problem of *why* the man did that thing yesterday. With infinite pains, he assembles causes which, he proposes, made that man do what he did. It is the scientist's undoubted intention to reduce the man who says "he" did something to only the most nominal reality. This intention has two practical effects. First, it tends to destroy the man's identity as a choosing being. This is a kind of "murder"—at least it seems so to the man, who doesn't want to be dissolved into a constellation of causes which are not "himself" at all. Second, it takes away his freedom, for if "he" did nothing yesterday, he can do nothing today or tomorrow. With this prospect, he is obliged to conceive of himself as an utterly helpless victim of circumstances. Of course, he can console himself by saying that his *illusion* of making choices supplies him with a sense of importance, but this is sorry compensation for a loss of identity.

Most people solve the problem by ignoring it. Common sense tells them that they do in fact choose, and while scientists are impressive persons who can do lots of wonderful things, they can't quite mean that human beings don't really exist!

The scientist himself escapes from this situation—if he wants to—by saying that the scientific neglect of "original causes" is methodological. For the scientist, an "original cause" can never be anything more than a simple "postulate." It is a postulate, moreover, which bars research. To tell a scientist that the "man" did what he did because he, the man, is an Original Cause, is like telling him that "God" did it. But, the scientist will say, "I have been able to explain a lot of things you used to tell me God did; why should I stop looking for causes to explain *this."* He might add: "Even if you say that this man *is* God, I still want to have a look at him and what he did. Maybe there is a more 'reasonable' explanation!"

How are you going to answer the scientist?

About all you can say to him is that his method is fine in particular instances, but that it becomes dangerous when turned into a big assumption about all human beings at all times. You can probably get him to agree with you on that; at least, he will tell you that that's what he is doing, anyway, so why don't you leave him alone!

But you can add one thing: That a man's idea about himself is a cause of human behavior, along with other things; that when a man gains the impression from the way scientists work that he is a "nothing," this impression itself becomes a block to human freedom. The man *thinks* he has no freedom, so he just sits and waits for things to happen to him.

This, for the scientists, is a moral problem. They have an influence in human affairs. They can't help but affect men's ideas about themselves. That, fundamentally, is why philosophers insist upon reasoning about the scientific conception of the universe, and why psychologists, particularly parapsychologists, psychoanalysts, and psychiatrists, are driven to invade the territory of philosophy.

In the terms in which the problem confronts modern philosophers and scientists, the great question is this: How do you recognize the citadel of freedom within a human being? What is the self? How are we to recognize that inner something which our moral instincts tell us is "free"? When a man does something, and it seems that we can explain it by some "outside" cause, how shall we know when we are wrong? Finally, how can we fit "original causes" into a

universe which in so many respects seems to work so well without them? It is only when you get to man that the question of freedom becomes an issue. Or rather, it is an issue at two points: (1) The point of ultimate beginnings—how did the universe get started without an original cause?—and, (2) the point of human decision between good and evil—for to think that this decision is unreal and without meaning destroys all human nobility.

This subject is getting so difficult that it had better be dropped. All that we have tried to do is formulate the problem impartially and to show why it is a real problem.

The idealist, however, attempts a solution. It is not a thorough-going solution, of course, but we can hardly demand perfection from the idealist when the materialist has no solution at all, or none worth talking about.

The idealist's solution depends upon one Big Postulate. It is that the prior and fundamental reality is not matter, but Mind or Spirit. He argues that the real processes which are going on in life are unseen processes—that intelligence makes form, in some sense survives it, and makes new forms. This is an enormous, sweeping, and overwhelming assumption. To make sense, the idealist must adopt it.

If you don't make an assumption of this sort, you are caught (theoretically) in the heat-death of the second law of thermodynamics, which says that everything wears out—that all arrangements break down, that all forms eventually lose their pattern and return their structure to primordial chaos, or undifferentiated, random motion.

This is the dark Nirvana of matter and motion. The only argument those who are not idealists can offer against this prospect is the Existentialist resolve to spit into the cosmic whirl and go down with glory.

The Existentialist view certainly makes more sense than the man who says, "Sure, I'm nothing, like the scientists tell me, but I can *think* I'm something!"

Being an idealist, however, requires a strenuous act of the imagination. The idealist must be willing to say to himself that the world around him is like a suit of clothes he is wearing out—that spirit or intelligence is continually wearing out its clothes, its planets and universes, and devising new ones.

This is where mysticism, or something corresponding to it, becomes important. How is the idealist to sustain his conviction that mind and spirit are the real? He can do it partly by inductive study of what men value in their lives. He can discover to himself that the things men live and die for are non-material values. Even abnormal psychology helps, here, for human beings are continually doing things which are utter folly from a "materialistic" point of view. It is not "matter" and the "things" of the external world which determine behavior, but what men *think* and *feel* about the world that makes them do what they do. The values are really subjective; they only seem to be objective.

But studies of behavior are only outward signs of this presumed reality. The mystic reports personal experience of an inward life, of an ideal scheme of relationships in mind and spirit. For the mystic—sage, transcendental philosopher, spiritual teacher—life proceeds in the framework of an ideal reality. How is he able to do this? We can only say, read what these men have written for an answer. Plato was not a deluded fool; his *Phaedo* is a moving testament to the reality of unseen being. Read the *Upanishads* and the *Tao Te King* and the *Bhagavad-Gita.* Read Plotinus and Emerson. Read the free and uncompromising poets of idealism, not their academic successors who may be able to "reason" about such matters, but have never *felt* them.

This is not "proof," of course, since proof depends upon the capacity to examine evidence. It was never urged that the idealists have a sure thing. They can never convince a man against his will, and may even have a hard time keeping themselves convinced. Most idealists are men of faltering hopes, led on by a sense of wonder, but driven from behind by what seem the ignominy and despair of Idealism s alternatives.

Actually, there is very little sense to a search for proof of Idealism in terms which can convey nothing of ideal reality. The study of the laws of matter to find evidence of an enduring spirit is like breaking up a piano to find the little dwarf who makes the music, or cutting up a dead man's brain to discover his "soul." If Idealism represents a truth about being, it will have to be verified in its own terms.

But there is a sense in which Idealism may be *implied* by evidence of another sort. The more complete the picture of the universe in material terms, the more unacceptable it becomes in immediate human terms. The logic of matter works best for *bits of* matter, and poorest for material "wholes," and this, it seems clear enough, is for the reason that, the more complex the material structure, the more of an "ideal" meaning it reveals. The climax of a material development or evolution is its "transubstantiation" into some sort of "spiritual" manifestation or achievement. The mechanistic logic which worked well at the outset becomes totally incompetent to deal with the grand synthesis of the finale.

It is the same with the science of man. You might be able to trace the "causes" of a man's life back to his heredity and his environment, throughout his childhood and youth, but when he bursts forth into genius, moving the world to wonder and to awe, the little piecemeal explanations become an impudence. Some other force, great and inexplicable, has taken control. An "original cause" has incarnated, we might say, surely with as much reason as the claim that it is all the result of a blind, mechanistic conspiracy!

When, then—to return to our former question—does originality really occur? How does freedom "intrude" upon the tightly woven web of mechanistic processes? Possibly, whenever a man utters authentic truth, he experiences a moment of freedom. Or when he acts, in a moment of splendor, entirely without self-interest.

This would mean that a man really enters the world as a cause only when he becomes, through what process we cannot say, completely free of the world. Freedom, from this point of view, is vision or perspective, by which a man is both involved and not involved, by which he sees as both himself and as other selves. On this view, the wonder of material evolution is that it flowers in instruments of spiritual freedom. It confines, directs, and regulates, in order that, in its most glorious hour, there shall be no confinement, direction, or regulation. This is the meaning of the discipline of the artist, the endless explorations of the philosopher, of every mastery of every medium—that what was a principle of limitation shall transcend itself and become a principle of release, setting intelligence free.

But nature or matter, wise in its own ways, can only prepare the instrument. For itself, it has no release. Freedom must be the self-conscious expression of intelligence—with the intuitive immediacy of the artist, or with the reflective genius of the philosopher, but in any event, original, creative, and free.

We now have a number of other assumptions to go with the first great assumption of the idealist, gathered along the way. Perhaps we should end by suggesting that Nature, which includes both Spirit and Matter, remains a neutral spectator, and not even a spectator, to all these contentions and debates. Nature does not care, one way or the other, nor is there any super-being behind the cosmic veil which interests itself in the outcome of the process. Men have the opportunity to make themselves into self-created gods, or to turn themselves in as "things" or "no-things"—as merely the "old clothes" of a cycle of evolution—giving up to the heat-death of the universe. For it follows from the idealist assumption that if a man thinks he is not free, he can never *be* free, and can never move from his system of external determination into the larger world of self-directed intelligence.

REVIEW
THE CHALLENGE TO THE INDIVIDUAL

IF there is any one thing that a reading of serious contemporary books makes clear, it is that the very existence of the human individual is in question, today. This is a philosophical problem, requiring a philosophical solution, although few of the books which help to bring the problem to a head are by writers who are willing to formulate the problem in philosophical terms.

For most readers, the threat to individuality first made its appearance in political terms, a little later assuming a sociological shape. Then, with the new knowledge of psychology, it became a question of the control of human behavior. The threat began to appear ugly and wholly inescapable when political and psychological methods were joined. Then, with scientific endorsement of the idea that the human individual has no control over his own life, came the *coup de grace*—the doctrine that, in addition to suffering confinements by social and political forces, man is unfree by nature and cannot hope to realize his dream of a self-directed existence.

None of the writers to be quoted would approve without qualification the above analysis, and some might strongly object. Our proposition is only that a conclusion of this sort *can* be drawn from their books, taken collectively.

The first lucid analysis of the loss of political freedom is found in Dwight Macdonald's *The Root Is Man*—a book which seeks to fix responsibility for the terrible political and human disasters of the twentieth century, and which shows, as we read Macdonald, that the fault lies in the prevailing ideologies rather than in evil men. Everyone, and therefore no one, is responsible. This book ought to be read as a preface to all serious political and sociological studies of our time, not only for its search into the meaning of the Nazi outrages and its critique of the "Progressive" theory of history, but also for its brilliant defense of the anarcho-pacifist viewpoint as the only stance allowing human freedom, justice, and genuine fellowship to remain either theoretical or practical possibilities.

The next volume to be considered is C. Wright Mills' *The Power Elite* (Oxford University Press, 1956). Mills is a maverick among sociologists, a brilliant, fearless, outspoken man. The reviews of this book nearly all recognize Mills' unusual capacity for criticism and analysis and acknowledge his flair for forceful expression. But the reviewers, almost to a man, seem annoyed with Mills for one reason or another, chiefly, we think, because he has set a problem—*the* problem, so far as sociology is concerned—which no one has even a faint hope of dealing with. Mills does not "play fair," academically speaking. His book is "wild" because it breaks out of the limits of conventional diagnosis and announces that the world—and the United States in particular—is riding for a gigantic fall.

The Power Elite is an analysis of the classes and groups which hold the reins of power in the United States. The power elite, according to Mills, is a loose alliance of corporate business, the military, and government. There are more than 400 pages in this volume, which begins and ends with shrewd generalization, but with extensive documented analysis between. It is Mills' thesis that the elite *do* have power, that they *do* use it, and that their power is much greater than that of the men who have held power in former periods of history. As Mills puts it:

> . . . in our time the pivotal moment does arise, and at that moment, small circles do decide or fail to decide. In either case, they are an elite of power. The dropping of the A-bombs over Japan was such a moment; the decision on Korea was such a moment, the confusion about Quemoy and Matsu, as well as before Dienbienphu were such moments; the sequence of maneuvers which involved the United States in World War II was such a "moment." Is it not true that much of the history of our times is composed of such moments? And is not that what is meant when it is said that we live in a time of big decisions, of decisively centralized power? . . .
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> The major questions about the American elite today—its composition, its unity, its power—must

> now be faced with due attention to the awesome means of power available to them. Caesar could do less with Rome than Napoleon with France; Napoleon less with France than Lenin with Russia; and Lenin less with Russia than Hitler with Germany. But what was Caesar's power at its peak compared with the power of the changing inner circle of Soviet Russia or of America's temporary administrations? The men of either circle can cause great cities to be wiped out in a single night, and in a few weeks turn continents into thermonuclear wastelands. That the facilities of power are enormously enlarged and decisively centralized means that the decisions of small groups are now more consequential.

Mills is concerned with, first, the *fact* of power, at the disposal of a segment or loosely defined "caste" of the American population; he is concerned, second, with the tremendous *scope of* that power; and, third, he is concerned with the impotence of the great majority to affect in any direct or decisive way the exercise of that power, and the relative irresponsibility of those who do exercise it. Some of Mills' concluding passages will illustrate the latter thesis:

> "Nothing is more revealing," James Reston has written, "than to read the debate in the House of Representatives in the Eighteen Thirties on Greece's fight with Turkey for independence and the Greek-Turkish debate in the Congress in 1947. The first is dignified and eloquent, the argument marching from principle through illustration to conclusion; the second is a dreary garble of debating points, full of irrelevancies and bad history." George Washington relaxed with Voltaire's "letters" and Locke's "On Human Understanding"; Eisenhower read cowboy tales and detective stories. For such men as now typically arrive in the higher political, economic and military circles, the briefing and the memorandum seem to have pretty well replaced not only the serious book, but the newspaper as well. Given the immorality of accomplishment, this is perhaps as it must be, but what is disconcerting about it is that they are below the level on which they might feel a little bit ashamed of the uncultivated style of their relaxation and of their mental fare, and that no self-cultivated public is in a position by its reactions to educate them to such uneasiness.
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> By the middle of the twentieth century, the American elite have become an entirely different breed of men from those who on any reasonable grounds can be considered a cultural elite, or even for that matter cultivated men of sensibility. Knowledge and power are not truly united inside the ruling circles; and when men of knowledge do come to a point of contact with the circles of powerful men, they come not as peers but as hired men. The elite of power, wealth, and celebrity do not have even a passing acquaintance with the elite of culture, knowledge and sensibility; they are not in touch with them—although the ostentatious fringes of the two worlds sometimes overlap in the world of celebrity. . . . In America today, men of affairs are not so much dogmatic as they are mindless. Dogma has usually meant some more or less elaborated justification of ideas and values, and thus has had some features (however inflexible and closed) of mind, of intellect, of reason. Nowadays what we are up against is precisely the absence of any sort of mind as a public force; what we are up against is a disinterest in and a fear of knowledge that might have liberating public relevance. What this makes possible are decisions having no rational justifications which the intellect could confront and engage in debate.

There is plainly no academic doubletalk in Mills' book. He is endeavoring to write about the "real" situation, without any veils and curtains to hide the implications of that situation for human beings. And, of course, he has no inviting solution. For this reason *The Power Elite* has had few enthusiastic reviews. So uncompromising a volume is a frightening thing to readers who are beginning to realize that they are without power.

A book which might be read as a sequel to *The Power Elite* is William Sargant's *Battle for the Mind* (Doubleday, 1957, $4.50). Dr. Sargant is an English psychiatrist who thinks he has discovered that the same physiological mechanisms underlie brainwashing, religious conversion, and psychotherapy. How do you go about giving, or making a man accept, a new set of opinions? Dr. Sargant maintains that an accident in Pavlov's laboratory revealed the basic principle of all mind-changing.

Pavlov kept the dogs on which his famous "conditioned reflex" experiments were performed in cages. One day flood waters invaded the laboratory and rose until the dogs were swimming about at the tops of their cages, in terror, to keep

from drowning. At the last moment a laboratory attendant arrived and pulled them down, under the water and out of the cages, to safety. After the rescue, Pavlov found that the most frightened no longer responded to the recently implanted conditioned reflexes. The ordeal had "washed" them clean of these impressions. Every dog, Pavlov concluded, has his breaking-point. Further experiments showed that some of the animals were then especially open to further conditioning. Sargant summarizes:

> Application of these findings about dogs to the mechanics of many types of religious and political conversion in human beings suggests that, for conversion to be effective, the subject may first have to have his emotions worked upon until he reaches an abnormal condition of anger, fear, or exaltation. If this condition is maintained or intensified by one means or another, hysteria may supervene, whereupon the subject can become more open to suggestions which in normal circumstances he would have summarily rejected.

The fundamental parallel is this:

> Pavlov noted that when one small cortical area in a dog's brain reached what he called "a state of pathological inertia and excitation" which became fixed, repeated "sterotypy" of certain movements would follow. . . . Once acquired by a dog of stable temperament, patterns of this sort are, he found very difficult to eradicate. Which may help to explain why, when human beings of strong character suddenly "find God," or take up vegetarianism, or become Marxists, they often tend to become firm fanatics with one-track minds: a small cortical point has, perhaps, reached a state of pathological inertia.

The rest of Sargant's book is an effort to illustrate this hypothesis in human behavior. He draws on the entire field of psychological influence. Pages are quoted from the journals of John Wesley. The "techniques" of the Catholic inquisitors and the modern "brain-washers" are compared. Illustrations of persons in the grip of religious hysteria are reproduced to show the emotional tension which precedes "conversion." Dr. Sargant made a special study of the snake-handling sects of the American South and shows photographs of persons in ecstasy while holding snakes.

Oddly enough, Dr. Sargant is not entirely against such methods of re-making peoples' minds. He writes:

> The proof of the pudding lies in the eating. Wesley changed the religious and social life of England for the better with the help of such methods in a modified and socially accepted form. In other hands and other countries they have been used for sinister purposes.

After describing these techniques, the doctors, Sargant says, will be glad "to sit back and watch priests and politicians carry out their own proper work." He continues:

> Doctors—if I may speak for my profession—certainly do not claim that they are capable of formulating a new religious or political dispensation; it is merely their function to learn how to provide the health that will enable the most suitable of such dispensations to be fought for and won.

What about the fact that "men are not dogs"—since this theory rests upon experiments with dogs? The point, here, might be that the manipulators of men's minds often find it necessary to reduce their subjects to what is practically an "animal" level—through hunger, torture, fright, or comparable stimuli—until the truly human element is obliged to take flight. Thus the manipulators of human feelings and emotional attitudes do not really do to *men* what they claim to do; instead, they accomplish a kind of psychic "murder" and produce *zombies* which look like and behave like men, but are not truly men, since they no longer think for themselves at all.

One final word on the "scientific" viewpoint toward all this. In *Science and Human Behavior* by B. F. Skinner, professor of psychology at Harvard University, the author writes:

> The hypothesis that man is not free is essential to the application of scientific method to the study of human behavior. The free inner man who is held responsible for the behavior of the external biological organism is only a pre-scientific substitute for the

> kinds of causes which are discovered in the course of a scientific analysis. All these causes lie *outside* the individual.

Dr. Skinner concludes:

> . . . it has always been the unfortunate task of science to dispossess cherished beliefs regarding the place of man in the universe. . . . We may console ourselves with the reflection that science is, after all, a cumulative progress in knowledge which is due to man alone, and that the highest human dignity may be to accept the facts of human behavior regardless of their momentary implications.

Just how the direct claim that the human individual has *no* freedom can be named a "momentary implication" is not clear, nor is the consolation of "deciding" that we cannot decide anything at all, clear either. On the other hand, the conclusions of these books are clear enough: as human beings—as intelligences with creative, originating capacity, as moral agents—we simply do not exist. This is the high and dignifying truth of the science of man. And to resist this conclusion is, in effect, to challenge the authority of Church, State, Big Business, and the contemporary "last word" of academic psychologic science. This is an "interesting" situation.

COMMENTARY
WHAT "SCIENCE" SAYS

ARTICLES which drive toward a conclusion—and MANAS articles occasionally do this!—sometimes suffer from a lack of qualification, producing an effect, if not the fact, of contradiction.

For example, a number of recent discussions in these pages have pointed to the emergence in modern psychology—or modern psychotherapy—of a kind of thinking which can be identified as "transcendental" in tendency. Latest instance of an article of this sort is the review in MANAS for July 24, concerned with Ira Progoff's *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology*, a book which reports a veritable revolution in psychological thinking.

But this week's review, by contrast, gives evidence of a precisely opposite view in modern psychology! Dr. Sargant and Dr. Skinner reflect both the discipline and the logic of a psychological science which has neither eye nor ear for philosophical assumptions. Accordingly, when one speaks of what Psychology "says," some care should be taken to suggest *which* psychology, or which psychologists.

The key to this difficulty is found in a passage recently quoted from William James:

> But when was not the science of the future stirred to its conquering activities by the little rebellious exceptions to the science of the present? Hardly, as yet, has the surface of the facts called "psychic" begun to be scratched for scientific purposes. It is through following these facts, I am persuaded, that the greatest scientific conquests of the coming generation will be achieved.

In one context, MANAS means the "rebellious exceptions" (no longer "little"!) when it speaks of Science, and in another context the "science of the present" is indicated. One aim of MANAS is to attempt to recognize and to identify the important "exceptions" and to help them along to becoming more the science of the present. The criterion of selection is of course a philosophical criterion, since MANAS editors make no pretense to being scientists. Justification for using a philosophical criterion lies in the claim that the philosophical ingredient in many scientific theories or doctrines—and in *all* theories which are crucial in forming a conception of Man—is far more important and decisive than many scientific writers either realize or intend.

The present "rebellion" in science, so far as we can see, is not only "scratching the surface" of scientific orthodoxy, but is also digging deep and upsetting the smooth assurance of familiar assumptions and attitudes.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

WE have finally encountered a prospectus on religious education which seems to us to meet the proper philosophical requirements. The Council of Liberal Churches (Universalist-Unitarian), in Boston, Mass., has recently recommended a fairly complete revision of traditional concepts of Bible instruction—and has also managed, in describing the thought underlying the new program, to provide a definition of "God" with which few agnostics will quarrel. Something of the influence and inspiration of Emerson has found its way into the "New Beacon Series in Religious Education," as quotations will demonstrate.

In the first place, the whole series rests upon the conviction that essential religion cannot be contained or confined by a single creed, especially if that creed claims exclusive possession of the truth. "There are other Bibles," the Beacon brochure remarks. Further:

> These Bibles, too, have teachings in them that still inspire. Great as the Bible is, it is but one of our sources. It is the record of but one nation's religious development. We now know that the Hebrews were not more religious than many other peoples. During much of the time covered by the Old Testament, their religious and ethical beliefs were little, if any, higher than those of neighboring peoples. To treat the history of man's religious development as though the Hebrews and Christians were the only ones whose achievements are worthy of attention is but to foster narrowness and intolerance, at a time when wide sympathies are sorely needed. Indeed, the values in one religion cannot be appreciated until they are compared with those in another. This comparison should be made before children become too sure of the worth of their own tradition.

The Beacon people apparently regard the story of religion as the story of man's attempt to discover the meaning of his own highest "inward aspirations," and it is in this light that comparative religious study is to be undertaken:

> It is more important that children become broadly intelligent regarding man's long and costly adventures with his conscience, and with the invisible Powers he felt about him and groped to understand, than it is for children to be led to reverence the Bible as a Book.
>
> It is the Bible as one of our source books for understanding the past that our liberal children should first study, not the Bible as the great story of Christian salvation.
>
> The spirit of freedom demands a search into our greater world-wide heritage.
>
> The light of truth contains many rainbow colors.

It is also apparent that the most progressive among the Universalists and Unitarians agree with Dr. Brock Chisholm, who was recently quoted in MANAS as saying that to teach "fear of a personal God" is to inculcate exactly the wrong kind of morality. The Beacon publication says: "We do not encourage children to fear a God who judges, or to ask forgiveness for their normal feelings, or to feel guilty about their natural desires. Rather we believe that the natural curiosities and urges that impel them to reach out and grow are resources that we can depend on. We believe that the rich flowering of the natural self will lead children to the discovery of what men have called God in their own lives and in the natural world." It continues:

> The usual Bible-school approach to religious education rests on the belief that our human nature separates us from God; that certain of our natural urges and interests inevitably lead us away from God and the good life. Therefore the belief has been that children must look beyond their everyday lives and find God in a supernatural book. They must be taught about a Savior, a supernatural being, who can save them from their natural, "evil" selves. In these Bible schools children are taught to pray for strength to resist their natural urges, to ask forgiveness for their natural feelings.
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> The new religious education rests on the belief that by our human nature, rather than being *separated* from God, we are bound together *with* God. It holds that man is a natural child of the Universe; that what men have called God is the life force that sustains both us and the living Universe that surrounds us.
>
> We believe that there is no quarrel between God and man, no cause for an attitude of fear and trembling.

Further definitions of God, taken from another Beacon leaflet, offer a common ground between religion, science, natural ethics, and psychology. Here every emotional vestige of anthropomorphism has been

removed. God is really not "He," but "It," and it is noted that many have chosen to discard the word God entirely, "not because they are atheists, but because they must find other ways or symbols to express their emerging religion." The God of the Beacon Series is the God of Emerson's essay, "The Over soul"—not a God to be placated or petitioned:

> It is only as God is manifest in this present world that we may discover Him.
>
> The kind of God we care to discover is a God that is inescapable, that is manifest in the whole and not just in the good and beautiful, or merely in our own narrow ideals.
>
> We are unwilling to seek for God here but not there, to find Him in the good but not also in the evil, in living things alone and not in the things that seem not to have life.
>
> We join the modern scientists in believing in a Living Universe. Either this Living Universe is the Living God, or somehow within it the Living God abides.
>
> We feel what we call a Presence, a Power, a Creative Intelligence, a Soul pervading it all.
>
> The Mystery of this Living God is in the storm and the stars—in chlorophyll and the corpuscles of the blood—in electricity and the human mind—in earth and sky—in the lowest of the low and the highest of the high—in a Hitler and a Beethoven—in death and life.
>
> This Living God is manifest in the universe as an artist abides in his painting, or as a seed lives in the flower, or as a personality empowers a body.
>
> In this God we live and move and have our being together.
>
> It fathers and mothers us all. We are blessed, yet none is especially protected. We are all destroyed, yet in this God we live again.
>
> Nothing can separate us—"neither death nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come." God is an all-enveloping Life—Multitudinous yet One, the Universal Creative Mind or Soul—to whom we belong altogether, and apparently forever. We can never be alone.

Many will feel that the Council of Liberal Churches is taking all that is distinctively Christian out of Christianity. That is precisely what they are doing, yet in giving up Christian orthodoxy they may be approaching the truths that Jesus of Nazareth sought to help his disciples discover.

Readers who are Christian, whatever the denomination, are likely to benefit from a thorough reading of "The New Beacon Series in Religious Education," which may be obtained on request from the Unitarian Laymen's League, 25 Beacon Street, Boston 8, Mass.

FRONTIERS

Russian Reading Habits

THE UNESCO *Courier* for February, 1957, contains extraordinarily interesting information. The entire issue is devoted to the reading habits of the world, under the general heading, "Spotlight on the World of Books."

A statistical article reveals that in 1955, Soviet Russia led every other country in number of titles published—54,732. United States publications, including all hard-back volumes and pocket editions of more than sixty-five pages, ranked fifth, with a total of only 12,589. While a footnote explains that the U.S. figures ignore government, university and church publications, and that only 30,000 of the U.S.S.R. titles were "placed on the market," the difference is still enormous. Why should this be? The *Courier* comes to a simple conclusion—the Russians are more avid readers. Even foreign books—though undoubtedly only those not critical of Marxist philosophy—are often widely circulated before a Russian translation has been completed.

How can the citizens of a Communist country be so cosmopolitan when it comes to literature, even taking into account the Soviet government censorship? Either they don't have many TV sets over there, or the Russians are so eager to extend their experience through reading that they don't look at the screens. A *Courier* article reports:

> The people of the Soviet Union have so great a passion for things cultural that it is said they will read any good book they can lay their hands on. The works of Russian authors such as Pushkin, Gorki, Leon Tolstoy, Chekov, Gogol and Mayakowsky are so popular that they have been printed in editions running into millions of copies. Scores of foreign authors have been no less successful. Victor Hugo, Jack London, Mark Twain, Balzac, Jules Verne, Dickens, O. Henry and Maupassant—to name only a few—have been favorites for many years and their translated works have been published in editions totalling many millions of copies.
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> Most translated of all foreign authors are the French, followed by the Americans, the British and the Germans, in that order. Between 1918 and 1954, nearly 77 million copies of French authors in translation appeared (the volumes would fill a book shelf running from Paris to Berlin), as well as over 50 million copies of translations of American writers, 38 million volumes by British authors, and 36 million by German writers.
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> Among French writers, Victor Hugo is by far the most popular with over nine million copies of his books printed in translation during the past 38 years. Charles Perrault's *Fairy Tales* is close behind having topped the eight million mark, while Balzac, Jules Verne and Maupassant are almost tied at six million copies, although Baltac has a slight edge over his two compatriots.
>
> The most popular U.S. writer in the past 38 years has been Jack London, with Mark Twain and O. Henry close behind him. Among British authors, Dickens has long stood at the top of the list.
>
> Among contemporary Western writers who have become "best sellers" in Russian and other Soviet languages, two American names stand out: Theodore Dreiser and Howard Fast (though neither has managed to obtain anywhere near the same success in the United States). Dreiser is so popular in the Soviet Union that according to one report few cultured persons in Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev are unacquainted with at least one of his books. Along with separate translations of his novels, a 12-volume edition of his collected works in Russian was undertaken in 1951. Though sales of his books cannot be compared with those of the old standbys like Jack London Mark Twain or O. Henry, he is well on his way to becoming a "classic" in the Soviet Union.

Scheduled for 1957 publication in Russia are novels by A. J. Cronin, John Steinbeck, Vercors, and Sinclair Lewis. While the most popular American books are those critical of the economic and political order in the United States, there is abundant evidence that the Russians are seeking more than confirmation of official propaganda; in any event, literary cosmopolitanism is bound to mean good things for the future so far as popular attitudes within Russia are concerned. Incidentally, there are presently long waiting lists in Russian libraries for American, British and French books. The *Courier* says:

> An interesting sidelight on Russian reading habits can be noted in the number of foreign books in their original languages. It is not uncommon in Moscow and other cities of the U.S.S.R. to find persons discussing a contemporary French author

they have read in the original French or an American or British writer they have read in English.

An American visitor to the Soviet Union recently reported that a young woman showed him her copy of a Soviet edition of O. Henry in English. The size of the edition—20,000 copies—was printed on the end page (as it is in all Soviet books). Compared to Russian-language editions of translated books this was small (a 1956 edition of Dreiser's *The Titan* in Russian was printed in 225,000 copies). "But," commented the visitor, "imagine trying to sell 20,000 copies of a Russian-language edition of, say, Chekov, in the United States."

The complete works of many foreign authors are often available in their original languages in Soviet libraries, long before translations are undertaken. Thus, all of Faulkner's and Hemingway's books in their American editions have been on public library shelves for years. Their books are in constant circulation and the waiting lists are long (Russians read American, British and French literature in great quantities). Extra English copies of Faulkner and other American authors have recently been ordered for the public libraries to meet the growing demand.

Of the many books distributed in the United States, those which sell the best are seldom the most profound. Pocket Books, Inc. recently announced that by the end of 1957 it expects to have sold seventy-five million copies of Erle Stanley Gardner's mystery novels. An average edition of an ordinary "mystery" runs somewhere between 155 and 200 thousand copies. Book store outlets, before the age of the pocket books, or paperbacks, used to number approximately 1500. There are now 100,000 outlets for this literature, including news-stands, drug stores, stationery shops, supermarkets, chain stores, big department stores, hotels, airports and railway stations. But in America, also, the more serious works are coming to the fore. Every pocketbook publishing house now takes cognizance of the demand for the great classics: as the *Courier* points out, "a coin in the slot—and out pops Plato."

Meanwhile, the U.S. government regards favorably an extension of funds for better library services. Although President Eisenhower's budget for the Library Services Act for 1957-58 allowed only three million dollars for improvement of library facilities, the House Appropriations Committee upped this figure to five million. One intention of the Library Services Act is to bring adequate facilities to rural areas, in the interests of improved adult education. As reported in the *Saturday Review* for June 22:

> Counties all across America will enjoy the fruits of the Federal Library Services Act.
>
> Since 90 per cent of the 27,000,000 Americans without access to local public libraries live in rural areas of the country, the act concentrates on developing book and information services for them. Although the children and adults in rural areas have the same requirements for intellectual growth as all other people, many rural towns, villages, and counties are unable to finance good library service because of sparse population and tax limitations. Increasing the tax base of public library support is one of the keys to better public library appropriations and more adequate public library service in many rural areas. The Library Services Act will enable the states to determine the best patterns of service to solve these problems.

In general, it may be said that the more reading the better, wherever it is done, for it seems likely that those who read books for excitement alone—or for propaganda alone—will eventually come to want a better fare. Meanwhile, the UNESCO *Courier* report shows that the Russians, like other human beings, like to read and are influenced by what they read. If international competition could be reduced to the Olympic Games and to literary production this globe might begin to look like something besides a potential battlefield for nuclear war.