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AN UNPOPULAR QUESTION

THE actual processes by which a human society becomes better are seldom openly discussed in modern literature. The subject is of course enormously complex, but the difficulty of an enterprise does not normally deter the eager intellects of Western civilization. The explanation of the neglect of this sort of social study must be sought elsewhere than in the obscurity of the problem. Ancient thinkers, notably Lao-tze and Plato, attacked the question without inhibition, and Machiavelli, while not especially interested in the "good" society, at least wrote about the methods by which a ruler might expect to shape a society to suit himself. Why are not similar treatises written today?

The study of the processes of development is not to be confused with utopian essays. We have more than enough of descriptions of "ideal" societies. What we lack is practical instruction on how to create an ideal society.

Some may argue that the history of the United States since the days of the Founding Fathers provides the best possible example of such instruction. There is an element of truth in this, but there is a very great difference between the sagacious plans of the Founding Fathers and the manuals of Lao-tze and Plato. Lao-tze and Plato are frankly paternalistic in their outlook, while the Founding Fathers approached the problem of organizing society filled with the new ideas of the eighteenth century. There is little or nothing of the idea of "self-government" in Lao-tze, and Plato has been accused of too great a fondness for the Spartan conception of the social order, and too little respect for Athenian democracy.

Further, Lao-tze is profoundly concerned with the *psychology* of government. When he addresses advice to rulers, he proposes a benign Machiavellianism rather than the rationalistic conceptions of a man who hopes to raise the level of the entire body politic through universal education.

It seems self-evident that the really significant difference between ancient and modern writings on social change is that the ancients wrote with primary attention to the differences among men, whereas modern social planners make their foundation the equality that is declared in the revolutionary documents of the eighteenth century. Even though the scientific investigators of our time have published endless statistics on the extreme differences in intelligence among human beings, the planners of social change are debarred from taking cognizance of these revelations. To make these differences a practical part of political plans and programs would mean the negation of the most sacred ideals of our age.

Yet the differences exist. Ancient politics, having no eighteenth-century tradition to honor, relied upon the differences and evolved a hierarchical form of the social order which served mankind, for better or for worse, until the French and American Revolutions (except for the short term of Athenian democracy, the Swiss Republic, and some few other exceptions). We know of no *theoretical* adaptation of modern politics to the fact of human differences, except the Nazi and Facist adaptations, which are totally unacceptable for obvious reasons. On the other hand, there are countless *practical* adaptations in modern times, which are never recognized in theory. The American party system is an outstanding example of the use of the hierarchical principle as a means of making "equality" work. Political parties are *managed* societies, and the management of them is certainly Machiavellian to a degree, and paternalistic to a degree, even if the principle of equality has its noisy and well-publicized day

during conventions and at primary elections. Again, the hierarchical or aristocratic principle has extensive play in the theory of Free Enterprise, so strongly established in American thinking. Free Enterprise affords a kind of escape from the rigid dogma of equality in political affairs. The theory is that all men are equal in their right to be unequal—that is, the "superior" man has the right to rise to the top of the economic pyramid, if he has the ability to do so, under the ground rules of the American economic system.

The politics and economics of the West, in short, reveal a kind of functional schizophrenia, each affirming a principle which the other denies, the result being a practical compromise which works, after a fashion, since both aspects of human life, the ideal and the practical, are allowed expression.

It may be admitted, of course, that there are numerous superficial recognitions of human differences in the American political system. The Senate, for example, is made up of men who are presumed to be chosen by the voters of the states by reason of their excellence as statesmen and public servants. And the vote of a senator has the same weight in national government, regardless of whether he comes from a small state or a large one. The American system permits distinguished individuals to enjoy responsibility and power through appointment, and it assures tenure to the members of the Supreme Court, regardless of emotional fluctuations in the populace. There is, so to say, a tacit acknowledgement of the aristocratic principle ("aristocratic" in the pure sense, as meaning simply, "government by the best," and not by reason of heredity) throughout the American system.

But what is lacking in contemporary discussion of social and political problems is serious consideration of the factor of human differences which results in break-downs and disasters to the democratic system; or, to set the problem in another way—which limits the achievements now possible under the democratic system, as it presently operates.

The following, for example, gives a generally acceptable break-down (acceptable to psychologists and mental testers) of the distribution of mental differences found among 100,000,000 persons:

		I.Q.
250,000	"Near" genius or genius	140 - up
6,750,000	Very superior	120-140
13,000,000	Superior	110-120
30,000,000	High average	100-110
13,000,000	Low average	90-100
6,000,000	Dull	80-90
750,000	Moron	70-80
250,000	Imbecile and idiot	50-70

(Based on data from Sandiford)

What is measured here, in terms of IQ (Intelligence Quotient), is fundamentally skill in the manipulation of symbols, or the ability to think abstractly, and, therefore, to consider general problems. There is no pretense that intelligence tests measure moral qualities, although it is probably true to say that sensitive moral perception is more likely to be found among people of high intelligence than among those of low intelligence. But a man of great intellectual skill may be utterly irresponsible, morally, while a mentally dull person may have a strong moral sense. The point at issue is simply that wide differences are a fact. The above figures are given because psychological science has been able to tabulate intellectual differences. But since moral qualities are widely variable, as ordinary human experience testifies, it may be assumed that some such distribution of them also prevails, even though we do not know how to make precise measurement of such qualities.

In our society the plans and projects for human betterment become available to the population through printed matter and other

means of communication. It is fair to say, we think, that the best social and political thinking of our time is embodied in a relatively few magazines devoted to this field—such magazines as the *Nation,* the *New Republic,* and the *Progressive.* There are other magazines, of course, which deal with politics and social problems, and organs which reflect quite other points of view. But these magazines, surely, may be taken as "types" of journals which are directly concerned with the general welfare and which make themselves responsible for serious proposals of constructive change. The three magazines named, according to a recent estimate, have an aggregate circulation of some seventy thousand (allowing for some duplication), and this total is to be contrasted with the circulations of the mass magazines, which run into several millions.

The point, here, is not to imply "approval" of the political outlook and projects of these magazines, but to illustrate the fact that a very small proportion of the population of the United States evinces a serious concern for social problems—"serious" in the sense of wanting to play some kind of part in the thinking and planning for a better social order. Even if the circulations of every conceivable paper devoted to such thinking be added, the total would still be a very inconsiderable part of the total population of the United States, and inconsiderable when compared to the circulations of the magazines which cater to the mass audience.

In other words, only a very small fraction of the population is *interested* in constructive planning, to the extent of trying to keep track of serious thought on the subject. Again, we might add to that fraction various others who, while not political, are concerned in other ways with human betterment—the Quakers, to name a single group, might be thought of as working for human betterment at a nonpolitical level; and there are others, some religious, some philosophical, some of communitarian persuasion, some devoted, like Arthur Morgan, to the foundations of social life in human character—but even then the total would not be impressive by weight of numbers.

Now there is a sense in which we are here belaboring the obvious. But what needs pointing out is that "the obvious" is seldom sufficiently taken into account. Last week's MANAS editorial mourned the fact that Macdonald's magazine, *Politics,* reached relatively few people (some five thousand, actually), while the *Saturday Review,* one of the best of the magazines which deal in cultural subjects, has hundreds of thousands, and periodicals like *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post* go to several millions every week. It is necessary to make peace with these figures, not on the basis of a sad resignation, but from acknowledgement that this distribution represents the same sort of distribution of interests and capacities as the findings of the psychological testers. This is the anatomy of mankind, in terms of its awareness of the social situation. It represents what men who want to bring about constructive change have to work with, whether they like it or not.

The conclusion we draw from this analysis, however sketchy and brief, is that the constitution of mankind has an aristocratic structure. We see no way of escaping from this conclusion. In fact, it seems evident that the attempt to escape from this conclusion has complicated nearly all contemporary social thinking with tireless myth-making and pious when not hypocritical pretense.

But there is ample explanation, if not justification, for the pretense. In the political tradition of the West, capacity has been equated with power. The capable, we say, should have the power. And power, in the Western tradition, means power to affect or control the lives of others. We have been willing to live with this view of power, so long as the power (and the ability justifying it) gained ratification by the democratic process, but the prospect of exceptional ability (and therefore a corresponding right to power) having a real existence *before* the democratic process has identified it for us seems

politically indecent. For if you acknowledge the validity of these differences among men as practically *innate*, you seem to consent to a rejection of equalitarian dogma, with all that this implies.

The historical support for fear of aristocratic theory is very great. The evils arising from the rule of an hereditary aristocracy include not only abuse of power by the capable, but also abuse of power by the stupid and incapable, which is worse. Then, apart from the evils of a class society formed by hereditary descent, are all the difficulties involved in selecting the "best men." If we admit that some men are better than others, we are faced by the problem of picking them. The reaction to these difficulties is well described by Ortega in his *Revolt of the Masses*, which details the social phenomena which result from an actual hatred of human distinction and clear individuality.

The general problem of human differences reaches a crisis in a society which conceives its progress to be a result of wholly or predominantly political action. If everything that men can do in their own behalf is political, then the idea of equality as a political principle is pressed into every sphere of life, and what was once a principle of law is metamorphosed into a law of nature. There seems to be no way out of this situation save by adopting some criminal ideology—an ideology which rejects the idea of equality, and there we are, back in the Middle Ages!

But if we could reduce the scope of politics, then there would be less abhorrence of individuality, less fear of human differences. Even if we couldn't explain them, we could at least acknowledge them and allow them a role which is not guiltily played out in secret, in tacit defiance of our political principles.

We should like to propose that the present is a time when we are beginning to become intensely skeptical of all forms of power. The incredible development of physical power by modern technology is beginning to mean a *reductio ad absurdum* of political power. Increasingly, power, in the West, has meant power to *compel*, to treat other human beings as "things." But this kind of power, in its most effective form, is military power, and modern military power has changed from the power to control to the power simply *to annihilate*, to erase from existence, to obliterate. Such power no longer has a rational aspect. It is without measure or degree. It is absolute.

Human beings cannot deal with absolute power. Absolute power is as useless, ultimately, to its users as to its victims. It is not a tool of policy but a way of ending policy. Faced with this development, human beings will find it necessary to stop thinking about power, if they are to avoid going mad. And as they stop thinking about power, all those things and values which depend upon the relations of power will cease to be important.

If this is the case, then the time has come for some fresh thinking about human differences and the role they play in human affairs. When men no longer want power, when they distrust and reject it, then there is no longer a reason for fearing the truth about human differences. We can begin to study the changes in human associations and communities in terms which give full attention to the contribution of distinguished individuals and unusual men. We can begin to think of the social enterprise as an enterprise in education instead of a political enterprise.

In such an epoch as this contemplates, minorities would have some hope of affecting society directly, by educational means, instead of being obliged to attenuate their energies by submission to the political process. With politics reduced to a minimum—and therefore all *control* reduced to a minimum—there would no longer be any occasion for denying or ignoring the facts of nature. Then we could pursue openly the study of the actual processes of human development—to which politics has always been more or less irrelevant.

The cycle of political action has occupied about three hundred years of Western history. It has not been without its lessons and advantages. From it we have acquired the strong need to equate our behavior with broad general principles, and it has spread throughout the world the eighteenth-century ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The problem, now, is to evolve new forms of human relationships which will embody those ideals, while dropping the delusion that *power* can assist us in reaching them. And only by abandoning that delusion can we enter upon a study of the potentialities of *individual* man, in all the rich variety which nature reveals.

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—The BBC has been celebrating the coming of age of TV with special programmes and a degree of self-congratulation that may, or may not, appear to be justified. Sir Ian Jacob, the director-general of the Corporation, contributes to the current *Listener* (BBC's own weekly, mainly concerned with the reproduction of the week's best talks on sound radio) a declaration of policy. This is, he explains, entertainment—"light, serious, artistic, trivial." He then asserts that this new medium of mass-mind making "can stretch out and grasp life itself as it is lived by people famous or unknown; we can see those who are changing the world, and the events that result from their action." Again: "Throughout we must act responsibly and with integrity and truth. We must faithfully reflect the greatness of our nation." So much for the BBC's declaration of policy.

On Sound there was also a debate on TV which dissolved itself after half an hour into a somewhat monotonous pæan of praise, a chorus that lost something of its value as objective judgment from the circumstance that the three debaters were all much-publicised individuals who draw considerable fees from the BBC. One of these was Dr. Bronowski, a scientist employed by the Coal board and the natural successor as Know-hower of broadcasting to the late Dr. C. E. M. Joad of the defunct Brains Trust feature (one of the best things ever done by the BBC). Dr. Bronowski in rhapsodic periods likened the family sitting about their TV set to a family of olden times sitting round while father read aloud from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.* This sounded indeed like one bending over backwards to please! To your correspondent the parallel that sprang to mind on hearing that egregious piece of nonsense was somewhat different. The discovery of gunpowder's first impact on humanity was a new and delightful form of amusement: fireworks. But fireworks led on to the application of gunpowder to artillery and so, in due course, to the science of high-explosives with atomic energy as prime mover. Thus what began as fun has evolved into the most hideous menace to man known to history.

TV begins, in like case, as entertainment. But may it not contain the seeds of a future destruction of the minds of men, as gunpowder the destruction by the millions of the physical body? Your correspondent has to confess to no more than an hour or so of Viewing time. This brief period represents a considerable number of attempts to discover anything worth looking at for more than a few moments. Though now and then, the system no doubt offers something worth while, in the main, TV in Britain today is generally regarded as beneath contempt, culturally or otherwise considered. There exists between the brilliance of the technological achievement and the base and inept uses to which it is being put, a gulf wide as that which separated the damned from the bosom of Abraham.

It is not unreasonable to submit that the central problem of mankind today is to resist the imposition by mass means of cultural values and modes of thinking. Viewing imposes on the viewer immobility, absence of all function other than the use of the eyes, and the loss of time that otherwise might be employed in some form of creative effort whereby both mind and body gain and the whole personality is brought towards a richer development. TV makes it possible for many clever things, and many clever persons, to be displayed in shadow form for many fools, or foolish ones. The writer was told by a TV official at the first of the TV transmitting stations ever set up—Alexandra Palace, north of London—that a studio had to envisage an audience at the lowest cultural level. And it is a notable fact that the lower the cultural level the more popular is this form of entertainment.

One can travel for miles through the streets inhabited mostly by the well-to-do without seeing more than an occasional TV aerial. But the

humblest cottage is seldom to be seen without one. TV has become for that—the major—part of the population, a new drug. In tens of thousands of homes everything revolves about the TV programme; and already school teachers are noting the falloff in the standard of homework and general intelligence among boys and girls whose homes are centered about this sterile form of time-wasting.

Has, then, TV really any value beyond the trivial? Artistically, even when good drama is attempted, there must always be the fatal defect of the gross disparity between the image and the voice, one that, curiously enough, does not seem to trouble many people, or even to have been considered by them. To say that TV can display the world and the great ones of the world in one's own home, as does Sir Ian Jacob, is but a half truth. What the home viewer sees as moving shadow is a person or event that is taking place somewhere else. His mind and imagination are shifted from his own particular surroundings and preoccupations, which make his real world, to the world projected to him through the ether. Maybe the time will come when this new form of scientific diversion will be given a somewhat lower rating as an adjunct to living. But until then, on balance, it does appear that it is a lunatic preoccupation.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
WHAT'S WRONG WITH MORALITY?

ALONG with what the late Albert Einstein said about the dangerous psychological results of belief in an authoritarian God, one of the most outspoken critiques of the sort of relationship between man and morality encouraged by Christian orthodoxy appeared a few years ago in a United Nations World Health Organization Bulletin—in an address by Dr. Brock Chisholm, then head of the WHO. Dr. Chisholm maintained that the authoritarian God concept not only weakens the initiative of the individual—and therefore his integrity—but also supports a moralistic attitude which at most leads to harsh judgment and suspicion of character in both political and interpersonal relationships. In other words, in Dr. Chisholm's opinion, one reason for the ceaseless wars among Christian cultures has been the suspicion that our fellowmen are incapable of integrity, and therefore in need of constant judgment—a quite logical implication of the doctrine of Original Sin.

Beyond Freud (1957), a book on "mental health" by Camilla M. Anderson, continues the Chisholm theme. Apparently, Dr. Anderson has not encountered Dr. Chisholm's identical—and thoroughly unorthodox—interpretation of the Garden of Eden myth in Genesis. While, like Dr. Chisholm, she speaks of "morality" as "the root of evil," she adds that she has never seen this interpretation of the "Fall" by another writer. Here we have an instance of two original and daring minds running on the same track. Dr. Anderson says:

> To me the most amazing correlation between the religious postulations of our culture and our psychodynamic formulation occurs with reference to the conceived basis of man's human difficulties. Religion bases the separation of man from God and from Paradise (the good life) on the allegorical or symbolic story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as related in Genesis. This story says that Adam "ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" and as a consequence was immediately and henceforth banished from Paradise. To me this says simply that man took into himself or incorporated (ate) the fruits of the results of "the knowledge of good and evil"—or the knowing of right from wrong, or moral judgment—and that it resulted in his being shut out from the good life. Whereas this interpretation is not one that I have ever seen expounded, it appears to me that not only does "authority" say that the separation of man from Paradise is by reason of his having incorporated moral judgment, but it harmonizes completely with what I have found to be true clinically.

Dr. Anderson is convinced that the future will see a reconstitution of both psycho-therapy and religion, and the emergence of a theory of "psychodynamics" which will enable men to discard systems of morality for an ethical philosophy. In her view, ethics and morality are, from a psychological standpoint, in direct opposition. She believes that the breakdown of ethically sterile attitudes will be achieved only by a philosophy founded upon psychological discovery. The basic argument is expressed throughout her book. Dr. Anderson puts it this way in her concluding chapter: "When you can begin to accept yourself as you are—without praise, without shame, as you accept an objective fact in nature without moral judgment—you are in a position to make true development and to grow into your full potentiality. You are then in a position to begin to make genuine contact with other people, since the barriers of moral judgment have been removed. No person can truly accept the frailties of another person until he can accept his own." Further:

> Giving up one's moral value judgments does not imply giving up use of critical conceptual judgment. Man needs all the critical evaluative capacity he can muster. But there is a difference between the two. The one is acceptance of a fact even though it may not suit him, and the other is a condemnatory attitude. The one accepts causality while the other sees the detail as a detached, unrelated event in time and space. The one sees the assumption which lies behind the behavior and knows that the only approach to the behavior is through the assumption, whereas the other sees only the unlovely behavior. It sometimes seems almost impossible for people to omit

moral judgments where other people are concerned, although critical conceptual judgment would be more to the point.

In other words, when man tries to be a righteous or "correct" person instead of an *understanding* person, he not only alienates himself from his capacity for original, hence divergent, ideas, but also from his fellow human beings. He will forever be attempting to fit friends and acquaintances to the Procrustean bed of his conventionality. Dr. Anderson continues:

> The theory of psychodynamics presented postulates that man's propensity for moral judgments—his naïve assumption that he has the capacity for determining such judgments—is the basis of all his human trouble. His judgmental attitudes alienate him from his fellow man as well as from his true self; they make him incognizant of reality, and deprive him of mental health or the good life.
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> Even though the truth of this postulate may be seen by anyone who cares to look at himself or at human ills, it is difficult for people to accept it because they are convinced (they assume or believe) that all good and desirable behavior is the product of a moral value system essentially comparable to their own. It would be almost inconceivable for most people to look at their moral judgments as the real factor which keeps them out of Paradise. Yet we have seen that it is these which produce the fears, the half-lives, the cruelties, the symptoms, and the unhappiness of human beings.
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> Moral judgments are not based on wisdom or perspective but on the individual's attempts to survive or preserve himself when he is helpless and dependent. Man tends to accept almost blindly the particular system of moral values which he developed as a result of his own particular and individual experiences with his significant people. Even those assumptions which are totally individual are held tenaciously, while those which have a broader or cultural origin can scarcely be questioned. The patterns of behavior deriving from these value judgments are looked upon not as "workable" in such and such specific circumstances but as "right," and therefore beyond question or critical appraisal. If this were not so there would be no ideological wars.
>
> Moral judgments stand in man's way of achieving his full stature. His unhappy state is directly related to his having incorporated moral judgment, both as defined by religion and as found to be true in analysis of real people. "Be ye perfect" (or whole or complete) cannot be implemented so long as one is in bondage—a bondage to his belief in the finality of the value system he acquired in earlier and more dependent circumstances. It is only realistic appraisal or critical conceptual judgment which incorporates the element of perspective.

We have now outgrown the system-building moralists. Either religious or academic, these austere fellows once seemed quite impressive as they labored to develop logically constructed tables of Right and Wrong. But the formal philosophers and the formal religionists are giving way before the inroads of a more mature psychological insight. No valuation of ethics is possible unless the essential criticism be self-acceptance and self-awareness. If we deal more in censure than in praise—either of ourselves or of others—we cut off our potential human compassion at its roots. And the great sages of the past seemed to speak in one voice on this point—one must get away from the "systems" in order to discover Man.

COMMENTARY
CREDO?

MY WIFE, writes a reader, "does not like MANAS. She sums up her objection in a question, 'The editors of MANAS do not believe in *anything*, do they?' "

A back-handed compliment that. We do of course cherish beliefs. No man is without beliefs, or a faith of a sort. But beliefs are not knowledge. We know of no more important distinction for the modern world. Knowledge is the goal, and beliefs are only inadequate substitutes for knowledge. One who is ready to settle for beliefs, instead of looking for knowledge, is in danger of complacency.

Beliefs may be betrayed during discussion—it is hard for a man to discuss anything of importance without letting his beliefs show a little but beliefs are nothing to parade or to brag about.

The convictions of the editors of MANAS are mostly concerned with the way in which truth is sought, rather than with "certainties" already arrived at; and yet, certain leading ideas continually emerge as apparently consistent with the kind of search pursued in these pages. These "leading ideas"—which we are finding almost inescapable—include the immanence of pantheistic deity, the moral law, and a timeless and transcendental aspect of man. We pretend to no final knowledge on these subjects, yet when you cannot get along without certain ideas, they may, perhaps, constitute a "faith." But we prefer to speak of these ideas as "inclinations of the mind" rather than as "beliefs," since beliefs tend to be static affairs, without life or growth.

We would go as far as saying that we confess a great sympathy for H. T. Buckle's utterance, "If immortality be untrue, it matters little whether anything else be true or not." And if this be not enough of a "belief," we hope that we have at least met the lady half-way!

"PEACE CALENDARS" FOR 1958

As "an appropriate and inexpensive Holiday gift," the War Resisters League, 5 Beekman Street, New York 38, N.Y., offers a 1958 "Peace Calendar" for appointments. There is a full page (4 x 9¼) for each week, with fifty-three significant quotations, and anti-war decorations. The anniversaries of events important to peace and race relations are noted on the calendar. The Peace Calendars may be purchased at $1.25 each, or six for $7.00. Those who would like the WRL to handle the mailing (to save time) may ask that the calendars be sent direct to the persons to receive them, with cards to identify the giver.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

CHRISTMAS IS ALWAYS LATE

IT is a bit ironic that, in a civilization engaged in an endless struggle to get somewhere or other in a hurry, Christmas is not celebrated until the winter solstice is some three days past. The nature festivals of pagan peoples, during which they acknowledged their feeling of kinship with the great revolving sun cycles which bring a burgeoning of new life each year, were part of a Religion of Nature. But the Christians, hurrying to propitiate an all-powerful God through ritual, have always been late for Christmas. And most of us today, however much emotional and monetary attention we give to the Yuletide season, seem usually to devote this attention in frenetic fashion: greeting cards and presents are acquired in a last minute "rush," and even the trimming of a tree is usually accomplished in haste.

But whether we have picked the right date for our partial obeisance to a symbol and an idea, we do at least simmer down, if only for a little while. Glancing through the last volume of the *Progressive* we noted a well-turned paragraph by Milton Mayer on this theme, published in January, 1957:

> Christmas is the hinge on which the year turns. The world is suddenly quiet for the event, as quiet as the world can be. The sun, the source of tumult, is farthest and palest; the wind, which blows creation into its holes, is coldest, and the things that grow slowest. It is a time for quiet, in which the pagan ear is open for the sound of a snowflake pushed aside by the crocus. The liquorous celebration of merchants and statesmen only contributes to the quiet, for when they are merry they are not making mischief. Suez is quiet; Main Street is quiet; Holy Russia is quiet. The year is going to turn, and who, whether or not he knows it, is not brought to prayer that he will find less hate and more love within him next year than last?
>
> There is no time like it for man, no time so well and so widely known as the time of change and the time to change, if change there will be and if to change is possible.

New Year's resolutions, if linked to the significance of the winter solstice, need not be as ridiculous as our cartoons and jokes have made them. Men can do the most for themselves when they are encouraged with the promise of a new birth of hope and meaning; though the seeds are beneath the snow, everyone at least knows that nature will give birth again and yet again with the year's rising tide. The hidden promise of spring, the apparently "joyous" life of birds and flowers as the sun grows stronger, stands in pregnant contrast to winter, the time of quiescence.

Christmas, really, should not be a time for chopping down little trees, and so, for any susceptible readers, we add a note on the growth of an interesting idea—Christmas tree plantations, whereon each may cut his own tree in such a fashion as to enable the roots to produce again, year after year. *Sunset Magazine* for December, 1956, contained a brief article entitled, "Come and Cut Your Own Tree," from which we quote:

> You may be perfectly satisfied with the kind of Christmas tree you buy at a lot or store each December. Or you may pay your money half-heartedly, wishing you could put the family in the car, grab a saw, and go out in the hills to search out and cut down a verdant, needle-laden tree, just as they do in the nineteenth century etchings on Christmas cards.
>
> Since you live in the Southwest or Hawaii, you realize that conifer-studded hillsides are, for the most part, out of easy reach. Where conifers do grow wild, the Federal Government manages most of the land and judiciously husbands each little tree that grows there. You dare not be seen even looking at these trees with a saw in hand. Perhaps, if you are very fortunate, you "know a man" who can lead you to privately owned land up in the mountains where you can cut a tree legally.
>
> Today there is a ray of hope for frustrated pioneer fathers. It's commercial, but it fills the need. We are talking about the "choose-and-cut" Christmas tree farms that are now beginning to come into maturity in Southern California and are in infancy in Hawaii. These are places where landowners have planted trees specifically for the Christmas demand. When the trees reach 3 to 8-foot height, you may cut them.

> Compare a tree you might cut in December with the typical tree sold at a lot or store. The farm trees are more densely branched and symmetrical, because they grow in the open. Wild trees often have to seek out available sunlight in a crowded thicket or under big trees. Also, at a tree farm, the owner regularly comes around to prune back errant growth.
>
> The newly cut trees are full of moisture. They are much heavier and they stay fresh and fragrant much longer than the pre-cut trees sold at stores and lots.

Sunset provides names, addresses and prices for several California tree farms. It would seem to us that even a fairly lengthy trip to a tree farm would make for a more respectful Christmas season than a purchase at the corner market. Especially for children might such a pilgrimage hold values for the imagination, plus seeds for thought by way of appreciation of the time it takes a tree to grow, and the ways in which a tree is properly cared for.

Note number two: The Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, New York, offers beautifully designed Christmas cards that help the public to recall that the man for whom our Christmas was named was truly a man of peace. The "all men are brothers" theme is portrayed in the drawings of Hans Herzog and the verses of Byron Herbert Reece. This is the conception of the cards:

> Fellowship cards began with two purposes in mind: to provide greetings that spoke the rich meanings of the Christmas season, earnestly but without sentimentality, and to secure added income for the work of peace and reconciliation carried on by the FOR in this country and abroad. They continue to be published for the same reasons.
>
> In the twelve years since their first appearance, Fellowship cards have won a wide acceptance. We present this year's with the hope that they will prove equally popular. As in previous years, the entire net proceeds will go to the Fellowship's work for peace throughout the world—a work never needed so greatly as now.
>
> Of the many possible ways of saying "Merry Christmas," perhaps none is more fitting than one which at once captures the universal meaning of the birth of Jesus—an event transcending nations and races—and evokes the reverent wonder of little children as they kneel before the star of Bethlehem.

Along with the Fellowship of Reconciliation and such enterprises as the American Friends Service Committee, there are thousands throughout the world to whom Christmas is a reminder of dedication to the service of humanity. But there is also the hypocrisy of Christmas prayers designed to secure some sort of upper-level security for yourself and "your own" people. In his column, "Strictly Personal," Sydney Harris (Chicago *Daily News*, Sept. 30) voices a legitimately indignant complaint at what happened at the beginning of the latest "nuclear detonation season." Before the first test, a ship's chaplain addressed "Thee our God," asking Him to assist those present "to keep the commandments." As Mr. Harris remarks, "presumably there is at least one commandment that a chaplain on a warship is in no position to invoke. It would seem a trifle awkward to enjoin 'Thou shalt not kill' just before the detonation of a bomb with the power of several million tons of TNT, capable of killing a few hundred thousand of His children." Mr. Harris suggests that a more honest and meaningful prayer might well "be given by the Representatives of the Lord whenever they happen to be present on similar fraternal occasions." It would go, he says, "something like this":

> Unto us who have the pride and the presumption to release the most devastating forces of nature, O Lord, be merciful;
>
> Protect us from cardiac contusion
>
> Preserve us from cerebral or coronary air embolism
>
> Guard us from the dreadful consequences of respiratory tract hemorrhage;
>
> Allow us not to suffer from pulmonary edema
>
> Save us from the trauma of distended hollow viscera;
>
> Withhold from us the horrors of hemorrhages in the central nervous system.
>
> Visit these catastrophes upon our enemies, not upon us, and we promise to love Thee and keep the commandments—all except one, O Lord.

Yes, we are still a little late for Christmas.

FRONTIERS

Tribute to Mathematics

SOMETHING over a year ago, *Time* reported that *The World of Mathematics,* a four-volume anthology (1,100,000 words) compiled by James R. Newman, was enjoying an advance sale of almost 100,000 copies. Just why this collection of extracts (with notes and comments by the editor) from the writings of the world's mathematicians—"from A'h-mose the Scribe to Albert Einstein"—should skyrocket to advance sales which doubled the record set by *The Power of Positive Thinking* mightily puzzled everyone in the book business, although Mr. Newman, a Washington lawyer who happens to like numbers, gave as his explanation that people must be buying the book because of guilt feelings about their lack of mathematical knowledge. "They may feel," he suggested, "that if they can make some human contact with this terrifying subject, they'll be able to find some entrance, some passage through it."

Since the popularity of this anthology came before anyone had actually read it—the advance sale resulted from advertising which showed a table of contents—there was, as Mr. Newman suggested, no relation between its quality and the demand for the book, so that his explanation of why people bought it in such quantities may be accurate enough. But now, having before us two volumes of the four, and having sampled their pages, we are able to report that this "small library" on mathematics is often well within the grasp of the general reader, and that it would be difficult to find a comparable collection of examples of the minds at work.

We plan no "review" of this work, but will rather borrow some comment from a notice of *The World of Mathematics* by George A. Miller, associate professor of psychology at Harvard University, which appeared in *Contemporary Psychology* last April. Dr. Miller's observations accomplish two things: first, they reveal the sort of excitement which reading this book may produce; and second, they quite candidly disclose the inability of modern psychology to account for mathematical genius—or any other sort of genius, for that matter.

This is Dr. Miller's first paragraph:

> The processes of thought are like a huge reservoir of mystery, out of which psychologists dredge one puzzle after another. Dried out and polished up, they become sensation, perception, intelligence tests, memorization, or personality theory. So far, however, the big prize, thought itself, is still as remote and mysterious as ever. Where in our catalogue of j.n.d.'s [just noticeable differences] and IQ's, of Gestalten and reflexes, of ink blots and nonsense syllables, have we made room for Archimedes, Newton, or Gauss?

It takes a tough-minded psychologist to tackle such questions. There have probably been other efforts in this direction, but the one we recall is Lewis M. Terman's *Genetic Studies of Genius* (1926), and a less satisfying example of the practice of science would be difficult to find. This was no fault of Mr. Terman, but of the science of his time, and of ours. Psychological science, as Dr. Miller aptly suggests, has not yet made room for genius. To avoid admitting this, a conscientious psychologist would have to ignore such books as *The World of Mathematics,* so that some respect is due to Dr. Miller for writing a review of it, and to *Contemporary Psychology* for publishing the review. Here are two more paragraphs:

> James R. Newman's most recent contribution to the popularization of science is an anthology of psychological miracles. There is much in these four volumes to discourage a psychologist. Is there any formula but a probability that will add revelation to a concatenation of conditioned reflexes? But pure chance does not explain why so many happy accidents occur to the same person. What neurotic twist raised the faint voice of reason to a deafening shout in that "most fearful, cautious and suspicious" ego we call Newton, or turned the "feeble and timid" child into Poincare, the last universalist? What psychologist has a scientific alternative to superstitious credulity when he surveys the inscrutable mind of genius?

> It is easy to come away from Newman's anthology with the feeling that his heroes were born to know the truth. Somehow, from somewhere, they understood how things must be; equations and experiments were merely tools they used to demonstrate and communicate what they knew already. Thus the respectable English physicist, Andrade, says that Newton "derived his knowledge by something more like a direct contact with the unknown sources that surround us," and Keynes, who is not famous for his credulity, agrees that "it was his intuition which was pre-eminently extraordinary. . . . The proofs, for what they are worth, were . . . dressed up afterwards—they were not the instruments of discovery." "So happy in his conjectures," said de Morgan, "as to seem to know more than he could possibly have any means of proving." As for direct contact with unknown sources around us, the psychologist must, although somewhat uneasily, reply, "Buncombe !" But have we a better theory?

By interesting coincidence, within the hour of reading Dr. Miller's suggestion that Mr. Newman's "heroes were born to know the truth," we found in a manuscript by Miguel León-Portilla, sub-director of the Interamerican Indian Institute of Mexico, some passages on ancient Aztec (Nahuatl) philosophers with much the same ideas. A Spanish friar historian, Sahagun (d. 1590), identified these philosophers as men "predestined to wisdom," or the *tlamatinime*, "which in Nahuatl means 'those who know things'." The author of this volume, which is available only in Spanish, remarks concerning these somewhat mysterious Wise Men of the West:

> Reflecting upon their own condition as wise men and perceiving within themselves an irresistible desire to investigate and fathom the unknown—what is beyond the finite comprehension of man—they discovered in their own way what may be called the Nahuatl version of "to be born condemned to philosophize," as José Gaos has put it.

"Born to know the truth," "Condemned to philosophize," "Predestined to wisdom"—how much difference is there?

The fortunate thing about achievements in mathematics is that they often have practical fruits which the ordinary man cannot fail to recognize, once they are pointed out to him. You cannot speak of great mathematical inventions as "airy nothings." Of further interest is the fact that mathematicians are often philosophers and even, as in the case of Newton, mystics. Newton owed a great deal to Jacob Boehme—probably some of his theory of gravitation. Leibniz, we may some day come to think, was even a greater philosopher than he was a mathematician. We owe to Leibniz (and Newton, also) the differential calculus, but Leibniz' theory of the monads may prove as important to transcendental philosophy as his infinitesimals have been to mathematics—indeed, there may have been, for Leibniz, a close relation between the two.

Readings in *The World of Mathematics* puts one well along on the road to such wonderings and reflections.