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EDUCATION AND LIFE

THE American wit, Oliver Herford, once remarked of New York's large and lavish hotel, the Waldorf-Astoria, that "It brought exclusiveness to the masses." A similar mot might be constructed around the Luce publications, especially *Life,* which regularly exhibits a truly remarkable capacity for presenting serious issues with both gravity and sprightliness. If *Life* does not bring "culture" to the masses, it at least makes bold gestures in this direction.

Latest *Life* achievement along these lines is the "U.S. Schools Face a Crisis" issue (October 16), entirely devoted to educational problems, in which there is an article for every taste. Statistics, for those who like figures—praise, for those who are proud of America's schools—some rather brilliant criticism, for those who feel that the schools are falling down on their job—and lots of excellent pictures of schools, teachers, children. Nearly everyone who pages through this issue—which is well-upholstered with advertising keyed to the "educational" theme—will be "impressed," if not by the articles themselves, at least by the skill with which the total treatment has been put together.

The opening editorial (based on a Roper "survey" designed to find out what the American people think about their schools), after revealing that Americans are both complacent and dissatisfied about the schools, presents this choice bit of information:

> Sometimes the people are magnificently inconsistent— especially when they get down to the curriculum job of the present-day high school. Here 86.6% say that its duty is to supply vocational training, build character, polish personality, and so on. But when they were asked what they missed most in their own high school education, three people wished they'd had more math, English, grammar and spelling for every one who wished that he had been given more vocational work.

The issue has two starring contributors—Henry Steele Commager, and Bernard Iddings Bell. Prof. Commager chronicles the great achievements of American education in training the citizenry for self-government, establishing national unity, and Americanizing the children of millions of immigrants. A fourth achievement of the schools has been in its spread of the ideal of equality. After these flattering and more or less justified praises of American education, Prof. Commager sets the contemporary problem. We are worried, he points out, about our schools—

> Yet no one seems very positive as to what the job of the schools is today. It is oddly ironic—to say the kindest—to hear people who rear their children on comics complain that the schools fail to instil a love of literature. It is shocking—to say the truth—to hear the very people who support teachers' oaths and textbook censorship contend that the schools are failing to encourage greater intellectual independence.

Then there is this important paragraph—Prof. Commager's best, we think:

> We need to get our standards straight and clear. Many of the old purposes and criteria have disappeared, and the people have not defined new ones to take their place. The 19th Century school, for example, had an enormous job in "Americanization"—but it was a clearly defined job, universally willed by the people. Today's school faces a nice problem in deciding whether its education should reinforce nationalism—or inspire internationalism.

Prof. Commager also makes the point that the schools are products of their times and can hardly be expected to be better than the society in which they exist. "A society that slurs over fundamental principles and takes refuge in the superficial and the ephemeral cannot demand that its schools instruct in abiding moral values." Finally, he says, "to reform our schools is first to reform ourselves." But having established this sound

basis for re-examination of education—and of ourselves—Prof. Commager stops short. Doubtless he had to, for he had reached the end of the two pages alloted him by *Life,* and we need not quarrel with a man who has made the basic and necessary criticism in principle. The problem, however, remains—the problem of how to propose reforms for ourselves that will be fundamental enough to reflect themselves in education, which means, fundamental enough to make parents alter their lives in a number of significant ways. Any other sort of self-reform would be no more than verbal in content and rhetorical in effect.

Prof. Commager refers to instruction in "abiding moral values." This brings us to Canon Bell's article, which gives every evidence of having been regarded by the *Life* editors as the core of their great contribution to the understanding of the educational problems of the United States. Canon Bell is an Episcopal scholar with numerous books on education to his credit, and years of experience as a college professor and president. Briefly, he has two complaints. One is substantially that of Dr. Hutchins of Chicago, and he expresses in some particularly well-chosen words the fear of a large number of disillusioned observers of the educational scene in America. The fear is that—

> We are producing—at great expense and with the most incongruous self-gratulation—a nation of Henry Aldriches. The dismayed and the skeptical further believe that those in charge of what is called (so loosely) "education" in America have little perception themselves of what schooling is supposed to be or to do. They feel that the failures of the schools promise eventually to make our culture crude and unstable, our nation politically inept, and insecure. Ours should be a "democratic education" indeed—as our rhetorical pedagogues repeatedly assert. But the critics are no longer exorcised by the glib use of that magic phrase. "Democratic education"—splendid!—but the beauty of the adjective does not conceal the vacuity of the noun. Let whatever we have be "democratic"—but let us be sure it is also *education.*

Canon Bell has some wise counsel to offer in his advocacy of Pestalozzi's "disciplines of word, number and form." He is, in short, an Essentialist in education, and his remarks concerning these basic disciplines will win almost any thoughtful person's agreement. But as a sound Episcopal Canon, he naturally arrives at a sound Episcopal conclusion in the grand summing up. We are, he declares, a nation of religious illiterates. Even thus far, the "thoughtful person" can agree, religious literacy not yet having been defined. The exceptions, however, to this woeful ignorance, he tells us, are numbered among "a small minority who have gone to Protestant or Catholic parochial schools, and another few who have had parents exceptionally able to counteract the influence of the public schools."

The cat is out of the bag. Canon Bell's major complaint—which may be said to be *Life's,* also, at least for this issue—is that "out of the public schools, dismissing religion at Protestant insistence, come successive generations of young people born of Christian families, of the Christian tradition—and ignorant of the faith of Christianity."

Canon Bell has a winning way with his use of the English language. One can hear the echoes of approval in banks, department stores, and the high places of industry, as well as in the pews, when he says:

> About all that most Americans possess nowadays in the way of religion is a number of prejudices, chiefly against faiths other than those with which they have traditional affiliations; a few quaint moral taboos, not very strong; infantile notions about deity: devotional techniques which rarely go beyond "Now I lay me down to sleep" and "God bless papa and mama." Perhaps half of them—not more —go once in a while to some church which they joined with only a foggy idea of its tenets or requirements. This does not add up to religion as the race has understood religion.

The confusion certainly exists, and few writers have described it more aptly than Canon Bell, but is instruction by the public schools in the

Christian faith the solution? We have the idea—and we are willing to be corrected—that if many nominal Christians had much more than a "foggy idea" of the tenets or requirements of their denominations, they would leave their churches in a hurry. How many Episcopalians know anything about the Thirty-Nine Articles in which they are supposed to believe? How many Episcopal ministers are interested in conveying the full "impact" of those dogmatic inheritances from medieval church councils to their congregations? And how many Presbyterians are acquainted with the fact that, until 1937 or thereabouts, all *good* Presbyterians were supposed to believe in a kind of celestial lottery through which, according to the incomprehensible "will of God," some souls were chosen for everlasting bliss, and some for eternal damnation and intolerable hell-fire, before they were born?

The "most deep-rooted ailment of our school system," Canon Bell tells us, is "its seeming bafflement by religion." Perhaps it is better for the schools to be baffled by it than to accept it, on these terms. Let us have the Sermon on the Mount, by all means; and the *BhagavadGita* and the *Dhammapada* and the *Tao Te King* and the *Phaedo.* But let us also admit that the apathy of Americans toward religion, and the "bafflement" of the schools, have not resulted from a distaste for the ethical treasures of the world's great religions, but from the sectarian manias and obsessions which have covered up these treasures and left them hidden from all but scholars and antiquarians. With this, Canon Bell himself seems to agree, for he says:

> Religion is man's search, in a world where every human career ends in frustration of ambition and speedy death, for strength and courage to be gained from the heart of a spiritual reality greater than matter, greater than an individual man, greater than the more or less human race. This search lies beneath creeds and cults, rituals and sacraments, techniques of prayer and meditation.

The Russians, he adds, have their substitute "religion" of Communism, and in all the world, "Only we Americans decline to recognize the necessity of a living faith."

This is indeed our weakness and our vulnerability. Since the decay of the primitive religious drive which brought the first colonists to North American shores, since the decline of the Deist philosophy of the learned and courageous men whom we call the Founding Fathers, Americans have had virtually no faith at all worthy of the name. We have religious "sentiments," and we have skeptical "tendencies," but we have no genuine faith.

One wonders if Canon Bell would settle for a nonsectarian—non-Christian, even—religious revival, if it meant a genuine stirring of the hunger of human beings to know the meaning of things? Would he be willing for the great churches and cathedrals of our time to grow empty and desolate—like the mournful ruins of ancient Rome—if, along with this dying out of institutional Christianity there might come a deep questing toward the actual purposes of a Buddha, a Krishna, or a Christ? Would this reading of the Gospel text, "Take no thought for your life," be acceptable to the ministers of orthodoxy—any orthodoxy, Christian, Muslim, Hebrew, or Hindu—as the price of a renewal of philosophical religion among mankind?

It is true, as Canon Bell says, and we should admit it, that the aimlessness of modern life arises from what he calls "religious illiteracy." But it is also true, as he does not tell us, that a chief cause, if not *the* cause, of religious illiteracy is an overdose of religious orthodoxy. This is what the splendid, well-edited, clever, sometimes profound, and extremely profitable issue of *Life* magazine, devoted entirely to the subject of education in the United States, says nothing at all about

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—The British Association for the Advancement of Science has always shown an interest in population problems, and the 112th annual meeting (1950) was no exception to the rule. On this occasion, however, special interest was aroused by the Bishop of Birmingham, who is author of mathematical works as well as being a Bishop of the Church of England. In a Sunday discourse before the Association last September, Bishop Barnes said that the most significant development to be observed in our science-controlled world was the vast increase in human fecundity. As a result, population in most areas was increasing faster than food supplies. He believed that, sooner or later, as overpopulation became acute, the question of preventing the increase of "tainted stocks" would have to be faced, and violent controversy was likely to ensue. "The emergence of subnormal groups in an overpopulated land was at present a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. Before another century had passed it was likely to become a cloud covering the whole sky."

The Bishop then proceeded to do some tightrope walking between "enlightened science" and the call of his Master—not, it is to be feared, to the edification of the sedate members of the British Association nor of the larger public who read his words in the newspapers. For he went on to say that the use of euthanasia or sterilization to prevent the increase of "tainted stocks" was sometimes thought to be a form of punishment; but he strongly urged that the difference between this and such a thing as capital punishment needed to be continually emphasized. The difference, in his view, appeared to be that euthanasia or sterilization had both to be kind to the individual, and also tend to the ultimate welfare of mankind. His concluding words on this subject, in relation to the suggestion that war would end all our overpopulation riddles, were these:

> He who has heard the call, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," may without hypocrisy approve of bringing human life to an end when its burden has become intolerable; he cannot, to protect himself from fancied enemies, approve methods of mass murder and mass mutilation. If the alternative be a pacificism willing to endure and to suffer, let us choose it. We may lose our lives, but the loss will ultimately be in the service of mankind.

It will be seen that Bishop Barnes gave no particulars of the "tainted stocks" to whom he referred, nor does he define the authority which, by law, is to decide who are to be put to death or sterilized. Nor, apparently, does the Bishop see the illogicality of approving a single murder or mutilation, and discountenancing similar treatment on a mass scale. Such a differentiation as he proposes lacks any moral principle. Guizot used to affirm that the Church has always sided with despotism. In such a policy there has always been much of political necessity. If now we are to have the despotism of science in alliance with the dogmatism of religion, and both protected by the resources of the modern State, then indeed do we live under the shadow of tyranny.

In the matter of population trends we are still arguing within the framework provided by a young clergyman in an English rural parish at the close of the eighteenth century. The issue raised by the Rev. T. R. Malthus in *An Essay on Population* (1798) was as to the ever-increasing pressure of population on the means of subsistence. The industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, with the growth of population and increase in wealth going hand in hand, seemed at first to controvert Malthus's arguments. But now it is seen that the conditions which made for rapid expansion are passing, and that any possible increase in food supplies, however secured, means also an increase of population. It is going to take a much larger dose of idealism than that offered by Bishop Barnes and those who may think with him (a) to face the facts of population, tainted and untainted, without mental reservation or equivocation, and (b) to find remedies for the problems involved other than the scientific murder

of individuals, methods of contraception, or the dysgenic effects of modern mass warfare. It has been truly said that peace demands a new simplicity, a new asceticism.

On the study of "tainted stocks," it is worth while reminding advocates of euthanasia and sterilization of some wise words of William James in *Varieties of Religious Experience.* "No one organism," he wrote, "can possibly yield to its owner the whole body of truth." The psychopathic temperament, for instance, may open the door "to corners of the universe, which your robust Philistine type of nervous system, offering its biceps to be felt, thumping its breast, and thanking Heaven that it hasn't a single morbid fibre in its composition, would be sure to hide forever from its self-satisfied possessors." No one, in fact, is in a position to set limits to the potentialities of a single human being.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

JOHN STEINBECK—AN APPRECIATION

A SORT of letter-essay on John Steinbeck that has been in our files for some time may serve to stimulate thought on the educative potential in popular reading, as well as upon Mr. Steinbeck himself, although the letter is really about any author who writes, as Steinbeck often does, in support of the inherent dignity and worth of the "least" of men. A short paragraph from *Tortilla Flat* illustrates this quality well. Like nearly all of Steinbeck's better known books (exceptions being *The Moon Is Down* and *The Pearl*), *Tortilla Flat* has been considered both bawdy and vulgar. Yet one would have to be extremely insensitive not to note also its positive current of appreciation of beauty, and the warmth of a love for Man—any man expressed in descriptions of innate strength and natural dignity. The scene is Monterey, California:

> It was purple dusk, that sweet time when the day's sleeping is over, and the evening of pleasure and conversation begun. The pine trees were very black against the sky, and all objects on the ground were obscured with dark; but the sky was as mournfully bright as memory. The gulls flew lazily home to the sea rocks after a day's visit to the fish canneries of Monterey.
>
> Pilon was a lover of beauty and a mystic. He raised his face into the sky and his soul arose out of him into the sun's afterglow. That not too perfect Pilon, who plotted and fought, who drank and cursed, trudged slowly on but a wistful shining Pilon went up to the sea gulls where they bathed on sensitive wings in the evening. That Pilon was beautiful, and his thoughts were unstained with selfishness and lust. And his thoughts are good to know. There was not, nor is, nor ever has been a purer soul than Pilon's at that moment.

In any case, this passage describing the main character of *Tortilla Flat* shows why the following letter to MANAS could be written:

* * *

Editors: Here is one of my "unforgettable experiences," in case you are interested. If it is too long, cut it down, but the essential theme, I think, establishes its own importance.

There are many locations with which one associates the discussion of books and authors. Usually they are found in the homes, cultural societies and schools of the "intelligentsia." A conversation with a comparatively uneducated sailor during the middle of a stormy English Channel crossing suggested to me an entirely different relationship between man and literature.

This particular deck hand had grown up in his trade as a fisherman, becoming tough and knowing in all ways of the sea. The storm was one of the worst in fifteen years. Thirty-foot waves were throwing their crests as high as the top deck of a wallowing steamer already overdue in France. It was a seaman's duty to discover why someone was risking being washed overboard by remaining on deck, and he made inquiries, then lingering to talk. The vague word "writer" did not terminate the brief introduction to our conversation. This man wanted to discuss literature! He apparently felt a great need for communicating to someone what "reading" meant to him—and his opinions on authorship. He had sampled many of the writers of modern fiction, at first laboriously, and then with greater understanding. Action stories, murder, hero, and detective tales, however, did not intrigue him. . . . His hero was John Steinbeck. Somehow Steinbeck had made this man feel more significant, and part of a significant humanity. In Steinbeck's plots he saw his own character unfolding and expressing itself.

The power of ideas and of literature is indeed great. If Steinbeck can reach halfway around the world to the heart and mind of a man occupied with tough duties somewhat analogous to the struggle of survival itself, how can we ever insist that man's primary motivations are biological or even self-preservative?

But, I thought, there must be a special reason why Steinbeck is the chosen one. The seaman did not know that Steinbeck is an artist with words;

he was not sure what an artist is. He was not taught to appreciate poetry or music or the lyric beauty of well-constructed prose. But he had received a *communication,* and it had become for him some kind of foundation upon which he was gradually building a philosophy which moved him to becoming a more tolerable and tolerant man. What qualities, specifically, reached him where be lived? One thing was sure, he was not learning about the rough side of life from Mr. Steinbeck; he had known it intimately from the cradle. (Steinbeck's second preface to his *Tortilla Flat,* one of the first novels which brought him to the general interest of the reading public, indicated Steinbeck's genuine impatience with those who were obviously reading his book because they thought it bawdy, or because they were enjoying the experience of a little "slumming" with "utterly fantastic" characters.) This seaman could almost have been Pilon himself; his life had apparently been salty through the courtesy of many agencies besides that of ocean spray. He didn't read to be either shocked or amused. But he found something in Steinbeck which made him feel more of a Man.

Of course, we all know that Steinbeck "realistically" portrays the thoughts and lives of people few bother to write about. But he finds color and warmth and beauty in these men and women. His books are not a satire on the stupid frustrations of the ignorant, nor are they dramatized by stupendous events during which the masses somehow acquire social significance. His "heroes," if we can call them that, usually live in a very small world and follow the simplest of routines. But you, the reader, learn that these people are alive—and truly so— not imbued with some artificial sense of purpose to serve the ends of the author, but embodying their own purposes which do not seem small, meaningless nor valueless when Steinbeck portrays them. It began to occur to me that Steinbeck had *reached through* to some level of simple human understanding which eludes too many writers.

The unhappy people are the ones who have lost a sense of personal direction, the ones whose lives have become too complicated—not the ones who are suffering through "conditions of environment." Time was when the Greeks and the Romans and the early Christians were able to feel, *under* the outer routines of life, some sense of an inner Odyssey. Much of life used to be symbolic. The structure of obligation which compelled attendance of church or temple was like the skeleton of a crustacean—under which some real life pulsed. But that was before we all became cynics, either as sophisticated representatives of the "brave new world" of scientific realism, or by reflection of the cynicism of the intellectual leaders of our culture. How deep the latter has reached! My seaman friend had been born in the atmosphere of a *reflected* cynicism, not even touched by the sense of pride and dignity which the British have somehow maintained throughout the death-throes of an empire. And Steinbeck was showing him that there was fragrance and hope and dignity in human living and that the fragrance and the hope and the dignity, not the frustrations, were the *real* things of life. Steinbeck curses at the indifference of the intelligent rich, and again at the machinations of totalitarian-trending governments. But in this cursing he never sums up his attitude toward human living. These things are the back-drop of the stage. They are to be accepted without poetry and gloss, but *poetry is underneath,* in the hearts of men.

And so, perhaps, there is no such thing as time and place and circumstance. There are states of mind, perhaps, which sum up the feeling that the human story is without a point, *but these are not life.* These are only the temporary hurdles over which life climbs. There are also those other psychological occasions upon which a man feels that he is a Whole Man.

Is it foolish to philosophize so much about Mr. Steinbeck and a sailor? In a realistic sense it may indeed be so. For one sailor and even one author cannot prove another writer's theory about

the hidden threads of beauty in most lives. But since the sailor found a symbolic meaning in Steinbeck, why should not others find one in him, and others in those others? Why should we not be eager for every shred of evidence that the human being may be, as Macneile Dixon once phrased it, "a Prince in misfortune whose speech at times betrays his birth."

Steinbeck will never give the Gifford Lectures nor will sailors ever attend them, yet here, I thought, was a link between whatever reflective consciousness existed under the dripping oilskin cap and the author of *The Human Situation.* In his Foreword to *Tortilla Flat,* Steinbeck wrote that his characters "are characters whom I know and like, people who lived successfully with their habitat. In men this is called philosophy, and it is a fine thing."

COMMENTARY
ONE MORE "PHILOSOPHY"

A POSSIBLE comment on the just published pamphlet, *Moral Crisis,* issued by the Moral Welfare Council of the Church of England, would be that the Church has discovered sex just half a century later than Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud, and is by that much behind the times. This will, indeed, be the reaction in many quarters to the clerical candor which declares:

> In a society, where, as in ours, religion has ceased to be the main driving force, it is inevitable that sex should take its place—inevitable because sex is the great natural means of fulfillment, completion and union for human beings.
>
> If the church is to save the world from its own despair, she will have to take more seriously than she has so far done her duty to help men and women to understand and accept, in the deepest sense, their sexuality and to see in it a clue to their very nature.

This instruction will have the purpose of saving the people from misleading "half-truths and falsehoods which scream at them from the cinema, from advertisement columns, from novels and magazines." What is needed is "what for want of a better term may be called a Christian philosophy of sex."

Thus the preachers, so long withdrawn into shocked and prudent silence, are to add *their* half-truths to this long-suffering subject. It was inevitable, we suppose, that something like this should happen. Lacking a Christian philosophy of life, we are to be favored instead with a Christian philosophy of sex. The notable thing about our age is its fascination by specialties. We have no big and broad convictions which we trust through thick and thin, but only short-term theories and ponderous discussions of matters which are unimportant to people who do have big convictions. We debate euthanasia with a great show of concern for the right thing. We will argue endlessly about the Good Death, but become bored by theories of the Good Life. To plan a Good Life, you have to make big assumptions. But death and sex need no assumptions. They come without any effortful thought about them.

How can we hope to understand death—and the Good Death—without first understanding life, and the Good Life? And what can the Church of England tell us about the spring of physical life, when it has failed to persuade us of anything important concerning the life spiritual?

Everything seems upside down, these days.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A COMMUNICATION from an enthusiastic student of Junior College age affords a good basis for introducing our readers to another educational experiment of merit—the Telluride Association, with present branches at Cornell and at the Pacific Oaks Friends School at Pasadena. Our correspondent wrote the following, and a good deal more, for any possibly interested MANAS readers:

> The ten or fifteen boys at Pasadena Branch are taking the first two years of college work in two or three years. Usually there are between ten and fifteen students. They divide their year into a summer study term of two months and a spring term of six months. During five months of the fall and winter they work in various industries, each student trying to get a job in factory, field, and office before he leaves.
>
> The group is run by the students, who hire their faculty select their applicants, evaluate themselves and do for themselves the mundane tasks of cleaning house! The business of the group is carried on in student body meetings and rousing discussions are held weekly at public speaking meetings.
>
> The classes are very small to permit a good deal of personal contact between student and professor. Several professors live with the group, providing a relationship found to be very valuable in the development of the students. The work of the employment period is integrated by the student through his work reports.
>
> The success of a plan such as this cannot be commented on because this institution is still in its green years. Interested people who desire to know more about the school are always welcome and may contact the school at 714 West California Street, Pasadena.

The Telluride Association was endowed in 1911 by wealthy industrialist Lucien Nunn. While the definition of the purposes of the institution is hardly noteworthy, repeating many much used idealistic phrases, the actual methods of instruction and the planning of curricula are worth a great deal of comment. In the first place, Telluride has never been interested in building a large enrollment. In the history of the Association's efforts at Cornell, at Pasadena, and at a self-sufficient community-type school located at Deep Springs, California, there have been many courses involving no more than one or two pupils. In other words, members of the Telluride groups have been proceeding on a theory in direct contradiction to prevailing educational customs, for the Telluride people apparently believe that there is no use worrying about mass education until you have learned how to really educate a few individuals.

From time to time, of course, the question has arisen as to whether the comparatively new Pasadena group could not enjoy better library and equipment opportunities if affiliated with some large University, but despite the fact that the Pasadena Branch is quite poorly equipped, from the Big University standpoint, this suggestion has been consistently rejected. Excerpts from a report furnished by two faculty members of the Association accurately express what seems to be the common sentiment—that "Affiliation with another institution would divorce the Telluride activities, community life, and character development from the formal intellectual training to be provided by a university."

Although the Pasadena Branch has been in existence only since February, 1947, we particularly recommend its present faculty and membership. In the first place, they have done strenuous work to insure an organic school life by having *all the students* live together, even while some are out working at paying jobs during certain portions of the year when study is not scheduled. Work experiences, one of the most important factors in anyone's education, can be discussed both formally and informally, in evening bull sessions. This is real sociology and psychology. Further, the Pasadena Branch, although dependent upon the financial backing of the Telluride Association, does not seem to be afraid to undertake new things. It is even possible that the Pasadena Branch may devise some way to

include girls in the membership, or at least in the classes. (This would be quite an accomplishment, for founder Nunn was apparently more than merely suspicious of co-education, and Deep Springs has been kept free of Eve.)

Perhaps we can say that Director Yarrow and his small faculty are trying to actually live up to the profession of "pioneering" which the Telluride Association has advocated from the first. Some selections from one of Yarrow's articles in the *Telluride News Letter* (for October, 1949) does an excellent job of summing up the accomplishments of Telluride, the methods of education in process of evolution, and the attitude of the faculty at the Pasadena Branch:

> The important quality of the pioneer is not that he is doing something highly original; it is rather that he is off on his own with little support from established institutions. So at Pasadena Branch each student has the sense that the program depends upon him, and in a very real degree it succeeds or fails as his efforts measure up. Student initiative and responsibility are not just aims set forth in our brochure; they are essential to the survival of the project.
>
> I could cite case after case of students who have come to us expecting to ride easily along on established patterns reserving the right to protest now and then. Instead they have found that it was up to them to set the pattern. There is some floundering and considerable dismay at first, but it is remarkable how rapidly seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds gain the necessary maturity to cope with a new and different situation. These problems can be tackled by a small group much more readily than a large one, because it is more flexible and also because it is more intimate.
>
> This last factor of intimacy is a very important one and can be better understood if we glance at what the sociologists say regarding the "primary group." A primary group is defined as an association of persons with relatively unspecialized, intimate and enduring relations. The family, the gang, the erstwhile neighborhood come immediately to mind. Secondary groups are generally larger and certainly less intimate. Individuals are involved in a particular function or role rather than as a whole person.
>
> It is in the primary groups that basic reactions of loyalty, responsibility, sensitivity are developed and concepts of freedom, truth, and fairness are experienced. Sociologists have suggested that many of the ills of emotional security which obsess our society are traceable to the diminishing part played by primary groups.

FRONTIERS

The Scientist's "Reality"

GOOD books on science are as important and almost as rare as good books on religion, so that when one comes along, it is easy to undertake its praise with enthusiasm. Henry Margenau's *The Nature of Physical Reality* (McGraw Hill, 1950) seems to be such a book, although candor compels the admission that we are far from understanding it in its entirety. Actually, it is the excellence of the non-scientific qualities of this book on the scientific method which persuade the lay-reader that its technical aspects are at least of equal merit.

What, in brief, are Prof. Margenau's conclusions? He holds that physical reality, as approached, conceived or defined by the scientific method, is a semi-durable reality. It undergoes change through the progress of science. He justifies this kind of "reality" for the scientist on the ground that "immutable" or "ultimate" reality is not investigated by scientists, who have enough to do in pursuing *observable* reality. This may be something of an over-simplification of what the book has to say, but all tightly argued views suffer from brief repetition, this book being no exception. At any rate, its main virtue is not so much in its principal conclusion as in its more general purpose, which is to attempt to tell what physical science is really about.

An early paragraph in the first chapter will establish the quality of this volume:

> A quest for the real inspires most of the efforts of our race. It fills the scientist with curiosity and zeal for new adventures; it sets the mind of the philosopher to a contemplation of past pinnacles of thought; it leads the historian to scrutinize the recorded deeds of man for constant patterns. It flares in the exuberance of the mystic and congeals to dogmatism in the reliant knowledge of the practical man; it sings in the symphonies of great composers and vibrates through the vision of poets. It may attain the stature of Promethean defiance or reduce itself to the humility of a sinner seeking divine grace. In one way or another it is of peculiar concern to us.

Plainly, Prof. Margenau is something of a poet. He is also, as the rest of the book discloses, something of a mathematician, and we say this, not because the pages of subsequent chapters are peppered with equations (a reader "reasonably conversant" with ordinary infinitesimal calculus can follow them, the Preface tells us), but because of the delighting precision with which his sentences are constructed. The reader has a sense of the author's mastery of his subject, even though the reader may only trail along, increasingly dependent upon a sort of "faith" that the trail is worth following.

A faith of this sort is certainly justifiable, even though it may be difficult to defend against adverse criticism. One may take up a book like the *Bhagavad-Gita,* or one of the *Upanishads,* and read through numerous almost incomprehensible allusions, relying upon a kind of security which grows from the majestic meaning of what is comprehensible. We do not offer Prof. Margenau as the author of another *Gita,* but suggest to those interested in a mature measure of the meaning of physical inquiry that it is likely to be found in *The Nature of Physical Reality.*

It will not hurt those who pretend to little interest in science to have a look at this book. A disciplined mind at work at its chosen task is always a worth-while spectacle. Beyond the catcalls of the anti-scientists and the adorations of the science-will-solve-all-problems cult lies the actual domain of scientific investigation, marked off by impartiality, determined search, and respect for truth and fact. Some may say that Prof. Margenau wrote a very long and difficult book to arrive at a position which the rest of us, with our great common sense, have occupied for lo these many years. This may be true, but Prof. Margenau has brought along with him in assimilated form a lot of "data" which our admirable common sense knows very little about.

Because this book is a study of the meanings which scientists have read in the phenomena of nature, it is also a history of the philosophy of

science. In part, it is the story of the dissolution of former conceptions of physical reality. With recent advances in atomic physics, for example, the old mechanical models used to illustrate the nature of "physical reality" had to be set aside. "The physicist," as Prof. Margenau says, "in order to grasp reality, has had cause to heed the counsel: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . ." And with the breakdown of mechanical models came the breakdown of mechanistic explanations. The success of modern physics seems actually to depend upon its brave disregard of the requirements of consistent mechanical explanations.

Prof. Margenau ends with his own definition of Physical Reality—it is "the quintessence of cognitive experience and not of values." Physical reality is represented by stable *relations* between the phases of experience, and since it draws its power from relations, it preaches no sermon, creates no *"unconditional* 'thou shalt'." Thus—

> To know physical reality is to know where to look when something is wanted or needed to be seen; it is able to cure when a cure is desired, to kill when killing is intended. But natural science will never tell whether it is good or bad to look, to cure, or to kill. It simply lacks the premise of an "ought."

The next paragraph is of equal importance:

> Now some oughts are very easily smuggled into science. One may say that psychology, anthropology, and sociology can determine what is good for the human species, then regard this as a scientific finding and base upon it a scientific code of ethics. The multiple reference to science in this and similar proposals is unwittingly designed to camouflage the fact that the statement is in fact a recommendation of hedonism, albeit in a modern and altruistic form. But never can it relieve us from the necessity of an ultimate nonscientific commitment, in this instance from a dedication of ourselves to the maxim that it *is good to seek the goal of hedonism. . . .* moral postulates are not reducible to scientific ones, nor the reverse. I should regard the failure to recognize this as an impediment to the progress of both science and philosophy, . . .

That science may, however, *enrich* ethical perception, and act, perhaps, as critic of ethical ideas, seems entirely possible. One has the feeling that Prof. Margenau's book will serve this purpose.

Has it Occurred to Us?

OUR Korean war rouses many emotions, many disturbing thoughts and imaginings. It is incredible—and yet we are naive to think so. It is horrible, yet horror will only congeal every helpful impulse. It is hopeless—or do we cover our reality with our own despair? Is *this* war unjust or righteous, necessary or arrogant, useful or degrading?

There is a certain futility about such questions, as applied to an international situation. But has it occurred to us that, if these are the questions we ask, they are the ones to be answered? To small pegs like these, we tie our council tents. When we can no longer drive them into the ground, when there no longer is "ground" where we can place them, then dictatorship—in whatever external guise—will be complete.

According to a convenient political superstition, the man who cannot declare his thoughts is practically thought-less, and he who is not permitted free enterprise in the service of his convictions *has* no convictions. This superstition is convenient, politically, because, wherever it is believed, politicians have at their beck and call human beings without identity or purpose—the ideal passive material for the "forces of history" to shape and mold. Think what would happen, in the most organized totalitarianism conceivable, if the leaders felt, despite all state ordinances and authorized propaganda, that the power of thought is unconquerable.

The defense against totalitarianism is well-known and simple, just as simple as the gaining of world peace. Both consist of a proposition rather than a program, a principle rather than a system, and can be expressed in one word as much as in many. The word is *Think.* Totalitarianism is the attempt to invade the human sanctuary— the mind; to obliterate integrity in the person of will; and to uproot the almost involuntary feeling of compassion, which now and then, or happily oftener, allows the human being to transcend himself. But totalitarianism, dreadful as are its forms and methods, is only an *attempt,* one half the equation, one end of the club with which it beats down human freedom. To be successful, a dictator needs, literally, cooperation from his victims; his regime requires live sympathizers, minds of a bent similar to his own. The optimum conditions for a totalitarianist are, strange as it may seem, identical with those the democrat often prefers.

Until we feel able to think for ourselves and act for the general welfare; until nothing is so important as our personal understanding of what we are doing and why; until we are strong enough to hold onto our convictions without support and without despair, even though they are all we can hold to—we can defend ourselves only partially against fear, favor, privilege, preferment, authority and the desire to lead, power and the impulse to use it; against, that is, dictatorship on our own part or on the part of others.

The Korean war, we may realize, is not to be dismissed by either cynicism or blind faith. Even if only one man had so far been killed, it would be a most serious situation. Even if no one had been killed or wounded, and there was only the clash of rival politicians, the elements of the situation would basically remain the same. It is not death which gives war its significance, but only unnecessary death. If war is necessary, so are all the ways of making war. If war is not necessary, we can prove it in no other way than by demonstrating that none of the things which make for war are right and useful. We scarcely have the right to point at an army and say, "You are wrong!" Rather, let us ask, How did the army come to be what it is and do what it does? If we do not falter midway with this question, we shall eventually come down to the most practical consideration of all: What did I have to do with this situation, and what is there for me to do next?

Has it occurred to us that the chief purpose of a value judgment is not to discover how efficiently we can detail someone else's infraction, but to remind ourselves of the values we respect and, hence, are morally obliged to exemplify? Perhaps we could with benefit carry the "war" into our own territory—and try behind our own lines to make the battle somehow worthy of those who wage it.