

## AN INTENSITY OF LIFE

THERE are probably many reasons why love between those of opposite sex remains so much of a psychological mystery, but one neglected reason, it seems to us, is that it is usually considered as a thing-in-itself, when it ought to be examined as a facet of wider and perhaps deeper mysteries of being. This mood of reflection—it is hardly a "theory"—first arose as part of the pleasant afterglow which followed reading Dorothy Roberts' *Enchanted Cup*, which is the story of Tristram and Isolde. What we should have suspected, but didn't know, about Tristram and Isolde, is that these lovers were extraordinary individuals, quite apart from loving one another. Both were moved by high feelings of duty, and to both came great obligations to be fulfilled. Their love had somehow to be "fitted in" with the schemes of their separate destinies.

How different the love which grows into a heady *egotisme à deux*, and ends, as Dante indicates, in the purgatory of an emotion which shuts out the world. Paolo and Francesca float in isolated misery, locked in each other's arms, outside of time. Their punishment was not for love, but for the fact that they had no other claim to greatness.

Could a love like Tristram's and Isolde's be felt today? Rather than argue the point, we offer in evidence *A Many Splendored Thing* by Han Suyin. This book is indeed a tale of love, a love so tender, so intimate, so affecting, that from the first page to almost the last, where the reader finds an answer, one wonders how the author felt able to write it at all. Suffice it that the book grew from a purpose almost unique in origin. Han Suyin, a talented, beautiful Eurasian woman, writes to reveal the riches, not merely of her love, but of her world—to show that out of this heritage which unites both ancient and modern China could spring an experience of the heart that washes away to nothing the differentiations of geography and race.

Curiously enough, it is the girl of the tale who embodies the questing, positive spirit, while her lover, an English war correspondent, represents ancient and honorable tradition. He is the gentle one, a fair but

quiet man in whom the virtue of forbearance provides a link for understanding China, and for being understood by the Chinese. She, a doctor practicing medicine in a hospital in Hong Kong, is the one who feels the tug of duty, who longs to return from the political limbo of the foreign colony to inland China to work for her people. And it is he who wishes to accompany her on this mission. That he is married, and cannot, shapes the conventional form of the tragedy.

We have said enough, perhaps too much, about this love of Han Suyin. It is, it seems to us, an intensity of life which makes her vision of China shine with a corresponding brightness. Not since Robert Payne's *Forever China* have we encountered writing which so effectively tears down the barriers of culture and language between East and West. When Suyin returns to a village in China for a visit, she sees the struggle of the communists to transform China into a new world. It is, we suspect, a faithful picture of that village, those days:

To the communist, each individual was a fortress to be taken by spiritual struggle alone. That the struggle involved sleepless nights and physical strain was added proof of spiritual superiority. They were out to conquer souls, and the bodies would follow.

For the absentee landlords, the idle rich, the warlords in retirement, there were fines, and buying of National War Bonds, and taxes until the family had nothing left to sell in the streets. The fiercest and richest ax-warlord of the little town was paying for the cost of a road to the next city. "It is your contribution to your ancestors' country. You will pay."

The members of the Youth Group which had worked underground for the last two years in the little town were now in the open, organizing, planning, leading the citizens. They had seen many of their comrades imprisoned, tortured and shot by the Kuomintang in those nightly terror raids carried out in all the universities throughout the country. They were seasoned fighters and lived only for the Cause and for the Party. Devoid of human weakness,

absolutely pure, absolutely sincere and occasionally very naive, they were respected by everyone, and many had caught from them some of their passion for work, their honesty and their altruism.

Two of these young people had tuberculosis, badly. That did not prevent them from working sixteen hours a day. When they spoke they kept a hand upon their mouths, so as not to infect other people. They have since died. "Life does not matter. We gladly die, for we have seen the Revolution triumph. It is the most wonderful thing on earth, to die for one's Country and the Cause."

An old and formerly wealthy Chinese, Suyin's Third Uncle, speaks for traditional China. "The young," he says, "do not know their limitations, and devour the earth with fury of their burning spirit which clamors for perfection in all things. . . ." But, he adds, "they are building a new heaven and a new earth, and it is a big thing. I am old, and must be content. . . . I am taking a course in the New Thinking and in Self-Criticism. It is only the very wisest and the very stupidest who do not change."

Through Han Suyin's eyes, one sees the New China and the Old China without ideological prejudice. She loves the humanity beneath the party label with the same freedom of heart that enables her to recognize the follies of mechanical Marxism. When with fanatical young communists, her maturity of outlook makes them seem as children in their unyielding classification of men and nations by strict Marxist categories. They suspect her lover as a capitalist agent, and belittle her love as a relic of feudal customs. Yet her love is organic to life, while their redefinitions of "love" are as artificial as a child's parroting of a catechism.

Here is a mystery as great as the mystery of love the differences in psychological maturity. This man gives his heart to a doctrinaire interpretation of politics and history, and lives and dies in the secure fraternity of common belief. That one suffers a life of lonely commitment to an ideal which is so subtle that it cannot be "organized" or made into a "program." Yet the devotion of both is real, their self-sacrifice equally genuine. Suyin speaks of quiet Chinese who will cut away "great pieces" of themselves in order to labor for their native land:

It is not easy to cut out great pieces of oneself. For whatever the West had done, some of us had loved it for one thing: that delicate reality, frail and

hard to handle, gentle, and strong in tenderness—spiritual liberty.

And although even in the West spiritual liberty was fast waning under the frenzied compulsion of fear, yet it was there that we had known it.

. . . But now that it seems so right to hail as heroes those that flee persecution of freedom, and that it is so wrong to say a word for those who chose not freedom, I must say it.

They remained to serve their people. They believed beyond political creeds, beyond wars and balances of power. They did not join their voices to the small indignant chorus of those who pollute the word of freedom with hope for a third world war to re-establish an order dead long ago.

They wanted to be whole again, wholehearted among their own people. Some of them were the best and the most honest among us. They are in China.

From great love, it is said, must come great understanding. How much longer the world must be torn by passion and trial, by faith sustained and faith betrayed, no one can say. But here, surely, is understanding of a sort that will bring triumphant freedom to the love in men's hearts, when once men learn to give this understanding unsuspecting hospitality.

## ***THE ARTS OF PEACE***

MUCH as we admire Mr. Huxley, his reference (in *Evolution in Action*, quoted in last week's Review) to "progress in the universe at large" strikes us as a bit incautious in a scientist of note. Only a few years ago, men of Julian Huxley's background and training would startle you with sniffs of condescension if you so much as hinted that the world or anything in it displayed any distinct Purpose, or was capable of Progress toward some definable End. But now, with little or no warning, Mr. Huxley has restored the notion of progress to respectability, and not merely ordinary progress such as revolutionists like to dream about, but "progress in the universe at large."

We endorse the idea, of course; it has extensive possibilities. But what does it mean? Mr. Huxley helps us by saying that man is "one of the few possible instruments" of this kind of progress; while on earth, as distinct from the universe at large, man, he tells us, is "the sole agent of evolutionary advance." The biologist also makes it clear that man has this responsibility on earth because he is animated by mental and spiritual forces arising within himself. This seems reasonable. And with the kind of a world we now have, it becomes easy to set goals for an evolutionary advance during the next few years. Peace, mutual aid, trust, fellowship in working for the common good—it is no trouble at all to list them.

But what about "progress in the universe at large"? Almost anybody may feel able to describe the good of man, but who will define the good of the universe? What is progress for a planet, a solar system, a galaxy? Is Mr. Huxley willing to say?

Our page-2 Space-Time continuum will not allow speculations of this order, but we should like to suggest the possibility that progress on earth may really depend upon progress in thinking about progress in the universe at large. Do we mean that the Romans might have gotten on better with the Carthaginians if they had both reflected on how to get on with Arcturus? That Versailles and Yalta and Panmunjom might have plotted less troubled courses

for the future if the Milky Way held fewer mysteries for mankind?

Well, yes. Petty quarrels, historians tell us, are often absorbed by larger issues which bring the unity required to face a common task. If either philosophy or religion could provide us with credible accounts of "progress in the universe," and we found ourselves able to take them seriously, a new dignity might be born in the strivings of men to take part in so great a collaboration.

Even Napoleon paused in the presence of the Sphinx, and a feeling of kinship with the stars may easily enrich a man's relationship with his next-door neighbors. Surely, the mental and spiritual forces active in human beings are more than merely "local" energies. The spirit in man, we should think, is precisely that which generates the feeling of an infinite extent of being, and leads the mind to reach beyond the outermost sun, and into the atom's heart, in quest of the meaning of things.

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Our title, "The Arts of Peace," is borrowed from the last of the great Romantic individualists—Lord Byron. It is a tractish sort of title, chosen for desperate times. Yet it has a pleasant sound, evoking quiet scenes of people busy at tasks which delight them, making the world beautiful with their happiness more than with the products of their arts. Here, perhaps, is the secret of the peaceful arts, in the need for people to enjoy their work, to respect it as of the greatest importance. For a man to give up his work should be regarded as a kind of death, for him to hate it should be held a fate worse than death. This attitude toward work, we think, is in the spirit of the great Romantics. How long before we shall hear their voices once again?

## *REVIEW*

### MORE BREAD AND WINE

THERE is something about the novels of Ignazio Silone— about the first few chapters, at least— which puzzles the American reader. You don't know what is going on, and meet little indication that you will ever find out. Silone's great trilogy begins this way in *Fontamara*, the first book of the series. After a while, however, you realize that Silone is allowing the reader to be an invisible witness of the private lives of Italian peasants. This is the way they talk, what they think about, and how they react to one another. He doesn't "explain" them; he exposes you to their moods and ways. In this respect, Silone is like the Russian novelists of the nineteenth century, who plunge the reader into the exotic and emotionally complex atmosphere of Russian existence under the Czar. It may take a reading of fifty or a hundred pages for you to begin to feel really acquainted with these people—to acquire, that is, a sense of fellowship and sympathy for the characters.

But to appreciate Silone, it is necessary to understand the Italian peasant, or Silone's Italian peasants, for they are the raw material of his art. Silone is a kind of Italian Tolstoy. Like Tolstoy, Silone attempts to retrace the course of civilization to the point where the corruption of modern life set in. He finds, like Tolstoy, the quality of integrity among the peasants. Here, he says in effect, I take my stand. This is where we must begin again. In the trilogy, *Fontamara* sets the stage for this discovery, *Bread and Wine* brings his vision to a climax, and *The Seed Beneath the Snow* describes the new beginning.

Silone's latest book, *A Handful of Blackberries*, is described on the jacket as his "maturest and finest work." This seems an overstatement, for it lacks both the high drama of *Bread and Wine* and the ingenuous charm of *Seed Beneath the Snow*. It is simply more on the themes of both these books but worth reading for

this if for no other reason. The plot is simple. Rocco, the devoted Marxist revolutionist and Communist Party member, finds full scope for his humanitarian feelings so long as the Party is a persecuted minority; but when, after the fall of Mussolini, the Party gains power, and starts its own cycle of persecutions, Rocco is disillusioned. The entire book, one might say, is a study in disillusionment at various levels of human perception and understanding. Rocco's disillusionment is the mature product of intellectual comprehension and a deeply emotional attachment to justice. The disillusionment of Stella, whom Rocco loves, is more personal in origin. She remains in the Party after Rocco leaves, hoping to win him back to the movement to which he has devoted his life since early youth. Only after she is used by the Party as a tool in the denunciation of Rocco does she realize how futile were her hopes. The shock of the Party's duplicity almost kills her. By this means, however, Stella grows up.

The drama is played out against a background of peasant existence in a small village—doubtless typical of most of rural Italy. There is the traditionally grasping landlord, the occasional outbreaks of the peasants against intolerable injustice, the hypocrites and time-servers, the lazy and ineffectual priests and one priest in whom dawns the light of a new understanding. There is the rebellious, amoral humanitarianism of brigands and smugglers, the loyalty to one another of a small group of peasants who love their fellow men, and even a mystic symbol of revolt—an ancient trumpet which, on rare and desperate occasions, is blown to summon the peasants to attack their hereditary oppressor, the big landowner of the region who obtained his holdings by transparent fraud.

One might conceive *A Handful of Blackberries* as a composition of four-part contrapuntal harmonies. It begins with staccato impressions of life in the village market place irrational, uncommunicative except in scattered,

unconnected phrases of dialogue. This continues as a background throughout the book. Then, as a theme of pure melody, the rational mind of Rocco slowly gathers the vagrant impressions, making them fall into place. Rocco's mind can be followed. When he speaks, pattern results. Rocco, however, is a complex being. He may speak with the obscurity of a peasant or as a brilliant analyst of the times and its distempers. Through Rocco, the book achieves unity.

Another line of melody comes from the priest, Don Nicola, whose religious feelings are slowly illumined by an appreciation of all that Rocco stands for. Like the old revolutionist in *Darkness at Noon*, Don Nicola accepts his "guilt" as an extremely "unorthodox" priest, as he must, since he finds that human integrity is much more important to him than correct belief. Then, as a simple, resonant, and percussive sub-melody there is the love of the peasants for mankind, as mirrored in their fellows, their neighbors, and all who suffer the ever-present injustice. In the end, Rocco's theme unites with that of the peasants: in Rocco and Stella, the earthy mysticism of the peasants becomes in a sense articulate and self-conscious. The roots, good roots, and the soil, good soil, have survived the surface disasters brought by one ideology after another. They will become these roots. They will work with this soil.

For the flavor of Rocco's contest with the Party, there is this dialogue between him and Oscar, a Party functionary sent to investigate Rocco's failing interest:

Oscar resumed his questioning of Rocco. There were some essential points to be cleared up for the report he would have to write on his return to Rome.

"Why," he asked, "have you been refusing to speak in public for the Party these last months?"

It was clear that Rocco had no desire to play at hide and seek.

"The last few times I forced myself to speak in public," he confessed, "I suffered from a peculiar ailment."

"Some physical difficulty?"

"No, not exactly. You see, while I was speaking, I could hear my own voice as though it belonged to someone else. I was listening to someone else's oratory. I wonder if the same thing happens to actors on the stage. At first it merely seemed queer. Then it began to terrify me. I found it impossible to continue."

Here, at last, was something that Oscar could write down in his notebook

"This 'difficulty' of yours—do you have it at other times?" he asked. "Does it ever happen to you in private conversation?"

Again it was the calm, unruffled tone of the doctor at the bedside of his ailing colleague.

"It never happens to me when I'm saying what I think," answered Rocco in all simplicity.

Oscar wrote down this answer in his notebook. . .

The end of the book affords an illustration of Silone's way of commenting upon theories of history. In the development of the story there has been plenty of exposition of the Communist view that innocent persons are expendable during the struggle of the People to attain to power. There is no "moral" question involved in the shooting of the wrong man. These things happen. Truth is what the Party declares to be true. Success is what the Party proclaims success. What the Party does to serve the People is right and good. There are no "mistakes." What might be termed mistakes have to be redefined as necessary measures to accomplish the highest social good.

So runs the justification of the ruthlessness of the Party. Nature, also, is ruthless. We cannot be sentimental about such things.

Now, on the last pages, Stella is sitting with Lazzero, who owns the ancient trumpet that is sounded when the time comes for the peasants to right their wrongs. They are speaking of the trumpet, and Lazzero says he doesn't know where it is, at the moment. Stella asks:

"Can't it ever be found again, then?"

Lazzero reassured her.

"I'm so happy," said Stella. "And how long must we wait till it reappears?"

"How can I know?" asked Lazzero. "It doesn't depend on me, you know. Maybe next year, or twenty or five hundred years from now."

Lazzero's wife offered the guest some bread and cheese with a glass of wine. The cheese was very hard and had a strong taste of herbs.

"It's good," said Stella.

"It's from Massimiliano's sheep," said Lazzero.

He never grew tired of looking at her. That day, somehow, he was moved by her presence.

"Who'd have thought," he said to her, "when you were born in Vienna, that you'd end up here with us?"

"I'm not a bit sorry I did," said Stella with a smile. Then she added: "In these few months, how many things have changed for you too, and for Rocco, and Martino. Sometimes Rocco and I talk about it, and wonder if, in the end, there's any meaning in it all. I'm not sure."

"Haven't you ever thought," said Lazzero, "that there's something guiding the movement of ants underground and the flight of birds from one continent to another?"

"Are you really sure there's something?" Stella asked. "I'm not at all sure."

"It seems to me," said Lazzero, "that it doesn't greatly matter whether you know it for certain. Even those that don't know it go the way they must. Did you know you were to come here? Yet you came. Maybe the ants don't know anything about anything. They have such small heads. But they go the way they must."

Stella was thoughtful for a moment.

"But not all of them arrive safely," she said. "What if one of them doesn't have the strength? Or is suddenly afraid? Do you think they all arrive safely?"

"Not all of them," said Lazzero. "On the way, there are some that get trampled and killed by the horses' hooves."

Meanwhile Lazzero's wife had peeled the potatoes and lit the fire in the chimney place.

"The weather's changing," she said. "The smoke is coming down again."

## *COMMENTARY*

### **NOW WE ARE SEVEN**

Well, practically. A publication, it seems to us, is privileged to arrive at stable, if not stolid, maturity, much earlier than human beings. Unlike a child, a magazine is born into physical format more or less finally shaped, so that its development is largely a matter of growing into sympathetic relationship with its readers, and gaining that balance of content and direction of interest which serve the purposes of both readers and writers.

Imperceptibly, as the years go by, the editors lose the feeling of being engaged in a new venture of uncertain welcome and hazardous future. The welcome gained by MANAS, while not as widespread as the publishers would wish, has been decisively enthusiastic in practically all those quarters where the publication had hoped to excite a friendly interest. In other words, MANAS seems especially appreciated by persons whose opinions the editors especially respect. We might say, for the record, that these friends of MANAS have expressed themselves from time to time, yet it has always seemed unsuitable to print such compliments, since they were not written to serve a "promotional" purpose, and ought not to be so used.

We may, however, on a "birthday" such as this, share with our readers the general satisfaction which arises from a recognition of this sort.

Finally, the lines of inquiry being pursued by MANAS, as they achieve increasing clarity of purpose, are peculiarly interesting to the editors and contributors. For what it is worth, this amounts to assurance that what appears in these pages is almost certain to represent an honest effort toward discovery, in the directions chosen.

As for the future, we can only wish that the economics of publishing a magazine of this sort were as secure as the editorial enthusiasm and will to continue. At the outset, the publishers and

editors resolved never to inflict upon their readers a sense of the desperation which periodically overtakes a journal which must sustain substantial losses in order to keep going. This resolve has not diminished, even though it sometimes seems fitting to remark upon the special difficulties which attend a non-acquisitive enterprise undertaken in an acquisitive society.

Here, perhaps, while discussing the financial question, is a place to offer belated recognition to the Cunningham Press, our sympathetic printer, which on occasion has done much more than merely wait for its money, and to workers at the press whose generously contributed labors are a substantial factor in making ends meet.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

WE doubt if Robert Hutchins would consider a review here of his *University of Utopia* demeaning to his work. The educational considerations he sets forth are so basic that they recommend themselves to every parent, even prospective parents. While the chapters dealing with "Social and Political Conformity" have occasioned the most discussion, and while Hutchins' opinions here amount to a highly controversial tract for the times, the core of the book is an analysis of what education should be about. Elementary and secondary institutions, as well as universities, receive attention, and the author outlines, after the manner of Plato, what a Utopian educational program would be, and why it must be as described in order to be Utopian.

Even if we agree with some critics that writing about Utopias is childlike, the book remains important, because children, until corrupted by their elders, have free-roaming imaginations—are natural idealists. To be childlike, then, is to have a penchant for enthusiastically envisioning the difference between what is and what might be. Surely, this is a quality that we should encourage, in adults as well as children. That is, if we haven't ourselves altogether lost the capacity for hoping that various features of Utopia may yet be made into a part of our lives.

Utopians, Hutchins tells us, are what they are because of the "habit of asking themselves at all times what they are trying to do." While they enjoy the advantages of a highly developed science, an efficient industrial system, and access to an expanding market for their commodities, the Utopians regard such things as incidental circumstances rather than the ends and aims of life. As Hutchins says:

The Utopians cannot conceive that the aims of their lives are to produce industrial strength, military power, or more gadgets. They do not even believe that they are here to exert a favorable influence upon the mortality tables. They do not see that industrial strength, military power, longer life, or more gadgets would be beneficial if they did not know what to do with them. They think that their educational system ought to have some role in helping them to determine what to do with these things when they get them. They do not believe that an educational system aiming at industrial strength, military power, longer

life, or more gadgets will, by any stretch of the imagination, help the people learn what to do with them.

Thus the Utopian citizen would conceivably provide better stimulus to the imagination of his young than teenage science-fiction. He would believe that even children can benefit from a mental atmosphere in which aim and purpose are held more important than the wonders of mechanized living. Hutchins points out that our own educators, living in what they term a "specialized society," have failed to make the proper specialization of the art of education itself. Actually, we appear to have based our schools and universities upon the mistaken notion that if we introduce the young to a little of everything, we are following the example of science. Nothing, Hutchins contends, could be further from the truth. A truly specialized educational system would neither try to amuse younger generations and keep them out of trouble until ready for industry and finance, nor train them for participation in either. The intelligently specialized educational institution would be concerned with one thing and one thing only—teaching the young how to communicate clearly and precisely, how to ask questions, and how to conduct an individual search for values. Hutchins describes the prevailing educational philosophy of Utopia in this way:

The Utopians believe that education is a conversation aimed at truth. Their object is to get everybody to take part in this conversation. They therefore start their children off by teaching them the techniques of communication. Those of you who have children may feel that this is a work of supererogation; but the Utopians think there is a great difference between chattering and conversing. The first ten years of the Utopian educational system is devoted primarily to reading, writing, and figuring. Because the Utopians are aware of the axiom that subjects that cannot be understood without experience should not be taught to those who are without experience, they do not bother inexperienced children with what are called the social studies. They want to fill their minds and touch their imaginations with the kind of knowledge suitable to their years. In the first ten years of his education, therefore, the young Utopian studies history, geography, and the greatest literature of the world. It is not supposed that he will understand all the implications of history and literature, but it is believed that he should be introduced to them in childhood and in such a way



that he will want to continue to study them all his life.  
 . . .

By the age of sixteen the young Utopian has studied very few subjects; but he has studied all those appropriate to his time of life. The object has been to get him to go on studying them as long as he lives. The object has also been to fit him to understand any new idea or any new field that presents itself to him. And the great overruling object has been to prepare him to become a member of the republic of learning and of the political republic. Almost all the teaching in Utopia is conducted through discussion. The educational system is a paradigm of the conversation through which learning is advanced and through which a democracy works.

The foregoing constitutes the rudiments of an educational philosophy, but an educational philosophy which thrives upon diversity of opinion rather than upon conformity. This cultivation of diversity begins in the elementary school and reaches its highest development in the university:

The Utopian experience may suggest to us that it is possible to have one educational philosophy and many philosophies. The Utopian example may show that a country can have one educational system and one educational philosophy in the face of philosophical diversity.

The Utopians have accomplished this feat by making the consideration of philosophical diversity the primary concern of educational philosophy. A glance at the University of Utopia will show how this is done. The University is not a center of propaganda for an official doctrine. Still less is it an institution like many American universities that is not concerned with doctrine at all. It is concerned with all doctrines that can have any reasonable claim to be taken seriously. Its effort is to work toward a definition of the real points of agreement and disagreement among these doctrines, not in the hope of obtaining unanimity, but in the hope of obtaining clarity. The object is not agreement but communication. The Utopians think it would be very boring to agree with one another. They think it helpful and interesting to understand one another. The University of Utopia, like the educational system as a whole, aims to bring together men of different attitudes, backgrounds, interests, temperaments, and philosophies for the purpose of promoting mutual comprehension. The University of Utopia is an understood diversity.

In his chapter, "Philosophical Diversity," Hutchins returns to the subject of "communication" by another approach. This brings a look at the results of uncritical application of the "learn by doing" theory of education. "The Utopians do not believe that the method of discovery has supplanted the method of discussion," he writes. "They insist that they need both, employing each in the fields in which each is appropriate. Therefore they do not say, for example, that they can learn only in the laboratory, because no knowledge can be obtained outside it. They say they learn the things that can be learned in the laboratory by the method of discovery and the things that can be learned outside it by the method of discussion." He continues:

As I conclude this necessarily brief and incomplete account of the organization and activities of the educational system of Utopia, I must do my best to answer a question that I am sure is in your minds. Granted that the talk in Utopia is about the most important subjects, granted that communication is indispensable to a community, that every social group should be a community, and that a university should be a thinking community, when do these people decide anything, and when and how do they learn to do it? How do they ever get any convictions? Have they any? Can an ideal country be one in which people are forever talking and communicating and trying to find out what they ought to think and believe? Isn't it possible, in short, to carry this sort of thing too far?

If I may say so, the questions that I have attributed to you, perhaps falsely, reveal what is wrong with the world today rather than what is wrong with Utopia. The Utopians distinguish sharply between knowledge and opinion. They also distinguish sharply between two methods of advancing knowledge: the method of discussion and the method of discovery.

*The University of Utopia* is published by The University of Chicago Press at \$2.50. Readers who have profited in the past from Hutchins' writings will probably regard this 100-page volume as a welcome addition to their libraries, while parents may find it clarifying and deepening in respect to questions about the preparation of children for life in the modern world.

## *FRONTIERS*

### BOOKS FOR OUR TIME: Discussion

#### A LETTER FROM SANTA BARBARA

ALTHOUGH there have been many particular points of interest in each of the discussions of Books for Our Time, I should like to comment on one general aspect of the series. That aspect is the nature of the books on the list. There is a characteristic common to them all which the editors have either slighted or overlooked. I am particularly interested in this characteristic because of the relation which it bears to the question, "What does MANAS stand for?"

I must add that I am in deep sympathy with what I think that the editors of MANAS are doing. There is no criticism implied in the following remarks. I am instead relying upon the editors' explicit dislike of closed-mindedness, in the hope that the points I wish to make may be seen to concern a hidden facet of their work. I want, that is, to be constructive, not critical.

The characteristic which all the Books for Our Time share is their scientific quality. What I mean by the latter may be made clearer by pointing out that there is not a volume of creative literature or poetry among them. The books are all *about* the problems of our time. They are critical *discussions of* our age and its perplexities and hopes. The books are not of our time in any sense except that they have been written during our time and about our time. The insights these books give, and they give many, are all scientific, or philosophic. Perhaps for this reason they do not bring us much into contact with ourselves, although they tell us much about our age and each other.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, it must be said that I should be the last to underestimate the great importance of science. It is difficult to think of any more successful method for dealing with problems of all sorts than the scientific. Nor should I urge a return to religion as a panacea for

the ills of our age. Understanding, facts and reason are what we need. Precisely for this reason, however, the point I wish to make is hard to get at. I can scarce make it without being accused of a distrust of science. Yet such an accusation would be unjust.

Let us approach the matter this way. Ask yourself what are the Books for Our Time for? To help us to understand our time? I suppose that we could agree to this. But why, then, should a list of Books for Our Time contain no books of poetry, no novels, no short stories? Is it because works of art do not increase our understanding? Is it because they are not meant to? Is it because they are in some sense beside the mark?

When you consider this matter you find, I believe, that literary and poetic creations (to say nothing of painting, architecture and sculpture) can and do contribute to our "understanding" as much as scientific works do. And they do so in a way in which scientific works do not; not the least important aspect of which is the rich pleasure which the esthetic works also give.

Consider, for example, James Joyce's story *The Dead*. I can think of no work off-hand which will "tell" you more about yourself and the age in which you live than this little piece of thirty pages. And one has only to mention the efforts of Eliot, Auden and others to come to a vast source of understanding of our times. I refer, of course, to the poetry of these men, not to their essays.

Part of my point, therefore, is that there are other ways to understanding than that which lies through analysis and science and logic. There is the esthetic way, or something very like it. I suppose that when generations ago men spoke of the life of the spirit they were getting at a similar point. We have, however, made a mystery of this way of understanding or coming to understanding and it is difficult for twentieth-century men to allow it as a type of understanding or *a* way to understanding.

We have, if you will, come to rely too much on science. This is not to say that science is unimportant. It is simply to say that it is not all-important. Man is rational; but he is also an animal, a living, sentient creature.

I should say further that the fact that lists of books for our time seldom if ever include titles in creative literature and poetry is a sign of the illness of our time. It would also be a sign of illness if such lists were to include only titles in literature and poetry. Our neglect of creative works is a mark of our spiritual impoverishment, just as it is a mark of a failure to see that there are other roads to understanding than the path of analytical reason.

In a way it seems to me that to call the MANAS list a list of Books for Our Time is a symptom of our trouble. And, paradoxically, to rely upon such a list is to prolong an important phase of the very difficulties from which we suffer.

We have become too analytical, too coldly reasonable, too objective, too interested in changing things and people. We have forgotten how to play and share in creative experiences and get a sense of ourselves. Philosophically speaking, we are suffering from the metaphysical idealism of the nineteenth century. This is a tendency which has blinded us to the sources of understanding by making us think that the scientific reason is the only source. This tendency has also forced us to the life of reason to the neglect of other aspects of men's make-up: the esthetic, the playing, the creative, the relaxing. Again philosophically speaking, I should say that I am simply reiterating in another form John Dewey's message for us.

Were I to select a text for these remarks, I can think of none better than William Blake's inscription on his Laocoön: "If Morality was Christianity, Socrates was the Savior."

There are, I think, three morals in what I have written. The first is that there are more routes to

understanding than the rational. Or, to put the matter the other way around, "reason" can be given a broader definition than it has at present. If the mark of a reasonable approach to life were a list of titles, the *list* would include books by poets as well as books by "philosophers" and scientists. The second moral is that such books would be so much more fun to read. If anything we are too serious today, too unconsciously moral in our outlook. And, finally, in being thus moral we are understanding things and other people, but not ourselves.

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Mr. Wienpahl's letter (it is our impression that he, like Mr. Hutchins, cares little for the honorific "Dr.") enables us to continue the "Books for Our Time" discussion in a way most pleasurable to the editors—that is, by appending quotations from Macneile Dixon's *Human Situation*. This is one of the volumes on our list which, we suspect, Mr. Wienpahl has not yet read, and we hope that what we quote will serve as an agreeable invitation to the volume. For Dixon and Mr. Wienpahl are very much in basic agreement.

Most of the points stressed in the "Letter from Santa Barbara" are major themes of Dixon's. A later essay, *Civilization and the Arts*, is but a continuation and expansion of ideas first expressed in *The Human Situation*. Had we left Dixon's book off our list, and found no other way of examining these aspects of "the human situation," MANAS would indeed have been remiss. But we have quoted Mr. Dixon more often in this series than any other author, precisely because we think him an artist as well as a philosopher. Few are able to blend poetic utterance with precise assessment of the intellectual scene, yet Dixon, in the spirit and manner of Plato, shows that it is possible for the poet and the philosopher to be one man rather than two.

The experience of art, especially in literature, writes Dixon, is "intensive, not dimensional." That is why, perhaps, art can be spoken of as bringing us into deeper "contact with ourselves." But let us now seek in Dixon an amplification of Mr. Wienpahl's remarks:

To strip the human being of all his attributes save his logical or calculating powers is an unwarrantable mutilation. Nature made him what he is. You cannot pick and choose. Nature is asserting herself in him, and you must take account not of one or two, but of all her assertions. On every side today you meet with an exaltation of the intellect at the expense of the spirit. You may trust, it is said, your thoughts, but not your aspirations.

With this sword science confidently lays about her today. You see the design. Nature is rent asunder. You enthrone the measuring, weighing, calculating faculty of the human creature. His remaining attributes are irrelevant. But who told you that nature had drawn this line? Where did you learn of this preference? Nature has no preferences. If she has given us deceiving souls, how can you argue that she has given us trustworthy intellects? . . .

The peculiar place of the arts in human esteem, if we understood aright the reasons for it, should throw light on many dark matters, even the most obscure. For it is in the exploration of human nature rather than of the material world that we are likely to come to some understanding of our most pressing problems. Its secrets lie deeper than the secrets of the vault of heaven, and the astronomy of souls is a more difficult science than that of the stars. And it almost seems as if nature had taken man into partnership to carry on her creative design. For in the arts he has planted new flowers in her garden, which some think fairer than any of her own, since in the pictures, the music and the poems much has been said that nature herself never so much as thought, and could not herself have said. . . .

In the words of Hegel, "It is in works of art that nations have deposited their profoundest intuitions, and ideas of their hearts; and fine art is frequently the key—with many nations there is no other—to the understanding of their wisdom and of their religion." Yes, but why? Why in the fine arts? Why in them rather than in the religions themselves, in the sciences and philosophies, the civic structures, the political institutions should we have the key to the human soul, to the deepest strata of its intuitions, its

innermost wisdom? For the simple reason, shall we not answer, that they speak in the language of the soul rather than of the intellect, in a universal language, universally understood. . . .

Human nature derives from the arts its deepest satisfactions. Poetry appears to be something we have always known in our hearts, but have never before had so vividly presented to us. In these arts of divination the waking consults the dreaming mind; the surface consciousness, in search of more favorable omens, enquires of the oracle, of the better informed and wiser soul. And the inspired priestess by whom the world is seen in the wider perspective answers, "Your experience is real, but consult the god within you and know that this real is not the whole of reality." . . .

The happiness the arts provide is the happiness of life more truly divined, more fully understood. Face to face with the stupendous fact of existence, our sense of it quickened, we are startled into a recognition of its unsearchable depths and unfathomable significance. . . . It seems as if in these mysterious arts we become aware, not indeed that the world is a perfect harmony—neither art nor philosophy has provided for us that demonstration—but that it contains harmonies, rhythms with which we find ourselves intimately in tune. These arts seem to be in possession of a secret, which they half reveal, an answer to the question—"How comes it that existence with all its agitations, pains and anxieties, is somehow in itself a happiness?" . . .

I prefer to put my trust in the larger vision of the poets. It is to their inextinguishable sympathy with humanity that they owe their understanding. Not to science or philosophy, but to their profounder appreciation of the strange situation in which we find ourselves, to their sense of the pitiful estate of man who, with all the forces of nature proclaiming an alien creed, still holds to his intuitions, who knows and knows well that he cannot support himself otherwise than by clinging—as a sailor clings to his raft in angry seas—to his passion for justice, his trust in the affections of his heart, his love of the lovely, his lonely struggle for the best, however clumsy and mistaken he may be in his present estimates of what is indeed best.

These are the features and faculties in man that the poets love and admire, his endurance, his resolution, his heroisms, his quixotry. Yes, the quixotry, the inexplicable preference, even to his own hurt, for the noble and magnanimous, the high and honourable things. Miracles they are that out-miracle

all others if atoms and the void produced these human qualities. It is in the exalted thoughts and still more soaring dreams of "that wild swan the soul," the admirable lunacies, the sudden gleams that illuminate the sombre landscape of human life that the poets find the revelation of the vital truth. They issue no commandments, they censure not, they upbraid not. In the fierce turmoil they are not utterly discouraged. They sympathise with every creature. They know, and yet, *mirabile dictu*, love the world.

It is our impression that Edmond Taylor's *Richer by Asia*, another "Our Time" choice, also affords elements of esthetic "revelation." If one believes that partially autobiographical essays cannot qualify as "creative literature," this claim will be disregarded, but it seems to us that an essay may be as imaginative as a novel or a poem. The fact that so many "essays" are dull and pedantic may be simply due to that over-emphasis upon "intellect" discussed by both Wienpahl and Dixon.

An essay which penetrates the realm of feeling and intuition need not suffer in this fashion. However, as readers of MANAS will recall, considerable space in these pages has been devoted to quoting from works of fiction, and the editors are frank to confess that the opportunity to doff one's personality and live through the feelings and thoughts of others, as a reader may do when a novel is worth its salt, is an opportunity which we could only forego with regret. The intellect is a great thing, but to live merely an intellectual life is not only less than living fully—it is not living at all.