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ANTI-HUMAN POWERS THAT BE

WE have been reading in the thinking and judgments of what seem the most sagacious and well-intentioned men of our time. Periodically we spend a day or a day and a half in this occupation, to learn the conclusions of just minds. In this case we have read some fifty pages of a *Newsletter* of the Council for Correspondence, devoted, in retrospect, to "The Crisis of the Cuban Blockade," very nearly every word in the current (Winter, 1963) number of the learned quarterly, *Daedalus*, and much of the *American Scholar* for the same quarter.

Such a course of reading inevitably generates respect, but it also generates depression. These men are practicing what they know how to do—to define and evaluate what is going on in the world, particularly in the United States—and they do it so well that the reader is left with little doubt that they are right, right, right. In the case of the contributors to the Council for Correspondence *Newsletter*, it appears to us that no group of private citizens is better qualified to offer considered opinions on the meaning of the Cuban crisis. This causes respect. But it also appears, from the questions left undecided, that the ordinary citizen has not the slightest hope of finding his own way through this maze of psychological façades and political uncertainties. And it comes down to this: *Someone* has to explain what happens in international affairs to the general public. *Someone* will have not only to simplify, but to oversimplify, with the result that practically any communication concerning the Cuban crisis, if it communicates at all, will be in some measure a self-betraying communication.

What lesson do we gain from this? Only that the Cuban crisis is not the real crisis for the people of this age. The real crisis comes from the fact that we are all of us—experts and common men—the captives of situations which, in the nature of things, cannot be understood. For this there is only one intelligible solution: People must begin to give their assent only to decisions which they are able to understand.

But why should the "experts" be called captives? They, at any rate, show some understanding of the complex maneuverings of the international scene. The experts, no matter how wise, no matter how well instructed in moral principles, cannot influence action without popular support. We have some help, here, from Gerald W. Johnson, who considers the plight of the American intellectuals in the *American Scholar*. He says:

> . . . perhaps the trouble with our intellectual leaders, at least the Americans, is hypercivilization. They are aware that Alexander Hamilton erred when, in his haste, he declared, "Your people, sir, is a great beast." In that, they are civilized. But they seem unaware that he erred in gross, not in detail. In that, they are too civilized. Demos in certain circumstances—when uninformed, misinformed or emotionally manipulated—is in sober fact a great beast; but in all circumstances, whether beastly or rational being, Demos is enormously powerful, quite powerful enough to exterminate his own species.
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> To an untutored laic this appears to be the central problem in our current predicament. More than that it seems so urgent and so frightening that to its solution should be applied every resource that we can command. A complete solution, of course, is in the realm of fantasy; but that a partial solution is attainable is proved by the history of the United States. There has never been a day since 1776 when our democratic system was not in danger of collapse from the inherent capacity of Demos, under sufficient provocation, to turn beastly but in each succeeding crisis thus far the catastrophe has been averted, sometimes by a shudderingly close margin, but successfully. The inescapable inference is that we have found partial solutions of the problem of restraining the beast and restoring the creature to rationality. . . . Demos governs, and he governs in part by logic, but largely by whatever ethos is

> prevalent at the moment. Hence the construction of an ethical system that the modern generation will find credible is certainly as urgent as, and some of us lowbrows would say far more urgent than, any rearrangement of our intellectual furniture.
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> If we can't do that, it is a bit of a poser to assign any sound reason why we continue to burden the earth, much less assume to dominate it.

The construction of an "ethical system" is no doubt in order, but it seems more and more obvious that an ethical system worth having would immediately outlaw as futile and irrelevant a great many of the "choices" which now shake and bewilder the nation. It might be added that we have not made much use of the ethical precepts—to say nothing of the system—we possess by natural inheritance. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world (read *Cuba*?) and lose his own soul?" At any rate, a serious ethical system would be certain to demand the transfer of our attention to matters that have long been neglected in our society and culture.

Take for example the periodic stir-ups in labor circles over wages and hours and other controversial issues in relation to men who work in the great plants that make the implements of war. Not these questions have any longer an ethical importance, nor even bargaining power itself as a right of labor. The great question is, or should be: *Is this a proper way for a man to make a living?* We need a determined Pied Piper or two to lead away the young of the coming generation from these hideous and degrading tasks.

Who, even among our political leaders, would bother to think much about the little island of Cuba—with or without ground-to-ground missiles—if there were a revolt of youth from all the death-dealing occupations? We have not to protect our way of life from the Russians half so much as to protect it from ourselves.

We do not mean to belittle the brave and impressive effort of the writers in the Council for Correspondence *Newsletter*. The analyses of the Cuban incident by Tristram Coffin, Bart Bernstein, Leslie Dewart, Roger Hagan, with comments by David Riesman, form the most lucid discussion of the whole affair that we have seen anywhere. One could wish that such men edited all our newspapers and magazines. We hope that many MANAS readers will write to the Council for the Cuban issue (No. 21, dated October, 1962), to see that our comment by no means exaggerates the high quality of this material. Here we quote a short passage from H. Stuart Hughes' introduction to the Cuban issue, and some observations by two graduate students at the University of Michigan, which come at the end. Mr. Hughes begins:

> Before saying what I think is wrong with the President's whole approach to the Cuban situation, let me point out a constitutional question which often remains obscure to us and makes criticizing the President of the United States an extremely difficult role. Under our constitutional system, the President combines in himself two functions that in most democracies are separate. That is he is both chief of state and chief of government. Hence it is not always apparent in which function we criticize him.
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> Let me take two parallels from British history. It was perfectly possible in the Spring of 1939 for Winston Churchill and his friends to rise in the House of Commons and denounce the blundering policy of Prime Minister Chamberlain that had led his country into disaster, and in so doing not at all to threaten the King, the monarchy, the symbols of national unity. This cannot be done in this country. Similarly, it was possible in the autumn of 1956, after the fiasco of the attack on Suez, for the Labor Party again to rise in the House of Commons and literally to drive Prime Minister Eden from office. The Queen, of course, remained untouched.
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> Although we are not aware of it so much in ordinary times in our country the notion of a constitutional, responsible, loyal opposition is very weakly developed, particularly on foreign and military affairs, and in times of crisis it tends to disappear entirely. The sort of vehement denunciation that the British Labour Party vented against the Suez attack was totally absent in the Senate and the House of Representatives when our country launched the refugees' attack on Cuba a year and a half ago. . . .

The strange thing is that this extremely pertinent observation is not picked up and repeated on the editorial page of every newspaper in the country. Here we are, the richest nation in the world, with more millionaires per capita than any other land—and probably more well-intentioned and public-spirited millionaires, as well—yet the thoughtful, impartial deliberations of this man and other contributors to the *Newsletter* reach the public only because the Council of Correspondence is continued in existence as a conscientious labor of love by a handful of scholars. There are reasons why Demos occasionally brings Alexander Hamilton's hasty judgment horrifying confirmation!

The comment of the two graduate students, Tom Hayden and Richard Flacks, should be of interest to workers for peace:

> Perhaps the most positive outcome of the turmoil was the response to the crisis made by the "peace movement." For the first time since World War II, hundreds of local spontaneous demonstrations occurred as an unplanned, immediate response to the militarism of the blockade. Significantly, these demonstrations were not centrally called or coordinated for the most part. They were held despite acts of violence committed against the demonstrators in many places. In addition to demonstrations, thousands of letters and telegrams were written—again without the stimulus of organizational leadership. And, most interestingly, peace advocates became quite concrete and hard-headed "realists" in their proposals—many of which were similar to U Thant's and the non-aligned bloc's, and to the final lines of solution between Russia and the United States. Peace advocates claimed that the missiles could only be withdrawn in return for U.S. guarantees against invasion; they warned against further unilateral military action by the U.S.; they demanded UN "buffer" action between the two powers. All of these measures were incorporated in the settlement—which testifies to our sanity.
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> In a few instances, the swell of activity had constructive effect—especially in keeping the channels of dissent open at the local level. In Ann Arbor, for instance, the following happened in the week: demonstrations and counter-demonstrations; hundreds of wires to the President, a town meeting on Cuba; a 7-1 Board of Education vote rejecting cooperation with civil defense authorities who wanted to convert school areas to shelters and distribute survival handbooks to kids; a wire to Kennedy from local Democratic congressional candidate Tom Payne, denouncing Hale Boggs' call for the invasion of Cuba.
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> Against these few signs of controversy, a harsher fact must be balanced: the peace advocates were impotent to change national policy. There was nothing we could have done in the midst of the crisis to avert its extension to holocaust. Fundamentally, this impotence stems from the divorce between peace interest and institutional power. The leadership of every central institution—business, labor, most of the church—was almost completely behind any action the President might have taken.

We have thus a double impotence. There is, first, the impotence which results for the great majority from their incapacity to understand the issues which underlie such crises—as becomes plain from the careful studies of the writers in this issue of the Council of Correspondence *Newsletter;* and, second, the impotence of those who *do* understand the implications and possible consequences of aggressive measures taken by our or any government.

The situation is intolerable and is accurately identified above—"this impotence stems from the divorce between peace interest and institutional power."

What has to be realized, it seems to us, is that the "institutional power" which has no interest in peace is a deep-rooted cultural growth and not something that can be altered or reversed in its direction simply by some strenuous political action. It represents the progressive alienation of our major cultural institutions from essential human values. For this reason some notice of the Winter 1963 issue of *Daedalus,* which is entirely devoted to books,—the reading and the publishing of books,—does not constitute a change of subject.

If the reader of this number of *Daedalus* happens to be a plain man with a simple-minded interest in having something to do with books, and possibly making a living by this means, he will lay

down the learned journal, not once, but several times, with an overwhelming sense of frustration. It is still possible, of course, to write a book and get it published; and it is possible for someone else to publish a book and get it sold. More books are written and sold, today, than ever before. But to make a success out of book publishing and at the same time to put into print books worth reading is a combination of skills reserved for only the cleverest and most sagacious of individuals. It is not enough to set out, with modest capital, to do something "worthy" in the way of book-publishing. You have to understand the elaborate economics of the book business, its various eccentricities and dependencies, and to recognize that the model of very nearly every form of distribution in the United States is patterned according to the necessities of mass production. The small producer is systematically, impersonally, inevitably squeezed out of the scheme. It follows that the publisher who sets out to please a small, select market will almost certainly lose money and go out of business. Not the quality of a manuscript, but projected statistics of sales must control the choice of what is to be published. Even if you know that there are people "out there" who will welcome a really good book—how will you find them? The economics of bookselling is geared to selling the mass market, and your fine little volume will not satisfy this requirement. So its publication must be left to the university presses which are subsidized and can afford to lose money again and again.

This is only one aspect of the problems which, ultimately, affect and in some degree determine the quality of men's minds in our age. There is a sense in which we have allowed the slogan-makers of the free enterprise system to set the level of reading in the United States. The measured judgment of Marshall A. Best, of Viking Press, is put in a few words:

> . . . the opinion-making function has been diluted. In Laski's phrase, "We no longer hold the great ends of life in common." If this is true, it has a definite bearing on the fate of serious books. . . . the book intended for a special audience has a lessened chance of being noticed and of reaching that audience. If *The New York Times*, for example, has twice as many books to review in the space available, the chances for each are reduced by fifty per cent. . . .
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> "The curse of Bigness," as Brandeis callet it long ago, may prove to be today's greatest threat to the kind of books we are talking about: the books that ought to be published, that are needed by a particular audience, that help to develop new writers—but that do not show a profit.

What we are trying to say is that the uncomplicated individual who sets out to turn the conventional processes of our social and economic system to the service of ideals and the common human good, is almost certain to be tragically disappointed in his dream, and rendered penniless in his pocketbook. It follows, we propose, that the thing for such individuals to do is to work out their undertakings according to another scale—a *human* scale—ignoring the compulsions of the System and refusing to be compromised by its demands. The time has come to start raising new standards of communication. This will take endless ingenuity and a great deal of personal sacrifice, but what else is there to do?

REVIEW
A POCKET "WILLIAM JAMES"

PART of maturity consists in a realization that many things thought to be "outgrown" have not yet been wholly appreciated. This is often the case with contributions to thought made by unusual men. Thirty years ago, for example, America's first great psychologist, William James, was considered "dated." For the past ten years, however, James has been being "rediscovered."

James's monumental *Principles of Psychology* was first published in 1890, A few years later, when his primary concern was still with physiological psychology, he produced a much shorter volume for university use—*Psychology: Briefer Course*—which served generations of college students and is now available as a Collier paperback ($1.50). In his foreword to this edition, Gardner Murphy, of the Menninger Foundation, observes:

> William James' two-volume *Principles of Psychology* was one of the great landmarks of modern psychology. It drew together the threads of the great classical tradition, the doctrines of modern philosophy and medicine and the implications of Darwin's evolutionism. As James's letters show, he had cut a zigzagging course through French, Swiss, German and British centers of learning. His cherished contacts with many of the great reflective figures of the era could be impulsive and serene, systematic and scattered, tender-minded and tough-minded (the phrases are his own). Though a nervous sufferer, he was a titan of wisdom and strength—so much so that not even a reading of all his philosophical and psychological works could fully reveal this to the reader. Indeed, he would not be fully understood even if the reader were to pursue the hundreds of letters reflecting every mood and were to compare the reminiscences of those who knew him and those who studied under him.. It must be recognized that, along with the modern reader's desire to know all of the real William James, there is also much that seems to be buried deep in a past whose thought seems unlikely to recur.
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> Perhaps my predilection for James is already evident. Let me express it succinctly:
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> One: Firsthand contact with James's thinking about psychology can be a tremendous experience. His approach has great scope and depth.
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> Two: It is the first really full-fledged evolutionary psychology.
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> Perhaps an even more prejudiced word will indicate the mood in which I express my reverence for this deeply challenging and deeply loveable human being: There is nothing to be gained by saying that James recapitulates what the earliest Greeks had suggested or, on the other hand, by striving to equate James with modern psychologies like Gestalt psychology and psychoanalysis. James is uniquely himself and will be enjoyed and used most fruitfully by those who cherish his uniqueness.

One superficial judgment about James is that, in his later years, he deserted the disciplines of the "science" of psychology and became fascinated with metaphysics. On this view, there are two Jameses rather than one—the first "sound," and the second speculative and flighty. But James was too profound a thinker and too well integrated, even as a young man, for this dichotomy to apply. The man who wrote *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and whose "Human Immortality" displeased the determinists was the same James who wrote *Principles of Psychology.* A few passages from his introduction to *Psychology: Briefer Course* give evidence of this. At the outset, James acknowledges his debt to Prof. George T. Ladd, also of Harvard—the author of *Elements of Physiological Psychology*. Like Ladd, James wished to isolate the psychological factors which are susceptible of deterministic analysis, but did *not* identify himself as a "determinist":

> *The immediate condition of a state of consciousness is an activity of some sort in the cerebral hemispheres.* This proposition is supported by so many pathological facts, and laid by physiologists at the base of so many of their reasonings, that to the medically educated mind it seems almost axiomatic.
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> *This conception is the "working hypothesis" which underlies all the "physiological psychology" of recent years,* and it will be the working hypothesis of this book. Taken thus absolutely, it may possibly be too sweeping a statement of what in reality is only a partial truth. But the only way to make sure of its unsatisfactoriness is to apply it seriously to every possible case that can turn up. To work an hypothesis "for all it is worth" is the real, and often the only, way to prove its insufficiency. I shall therefore assume without scruple at the outset that the uniform correlation of brain-states with mind-states is a law of nature. The interpretation of the law in detail will best show where its facilities and where its difficulties lie . To some readers such an assumption will seem like the most unjustifiable *a priori* materialism. In one sense it doubtless is materialism: it puts the Higher at the mercy

> of the Lower. But although we affirm that the *coming to pass* of thought is a consequence of mechanical laws,—for, according to another "working hypothesis," that namely of physiology, the laws of brain-action are at bottom mechanical laws,—we do not in the least explain the *nature* of thought by affirming this dependence, and in that latter sense our proposition is not materialism.

To clarify these distinctions we may turn to Prof. Ladd, said by James to have made the "best definition of psychology." Ladd gives the basis for "metaphysical affirmations":

> The assumption that the *mind is a real being,* which can be acted upon by the brain and which can act on the body through the brain, is the only one compatible with all the facts of experience.
>
> *The phenomena of human consciousness must be regarded as activities of some other form of Real Being than the moving molecules of the brain.*
>
> On the whole, *the history of each individual's experiences is such as requires the assumption that a real unit-being (a Mind) is undergoing a process of development, in relation to the changing condition* or *evolution of the brain, and yet in accordance with a nature and laws of its own.*

These limitations of "physiological psychology" are again being made plain by such present-day psychologists as Erich Fromm, Clark Moustakas, Carl Rogers, and A. H. Maslow. To know how far James went toward Platonizing metaphysics, one need only turn to the preface of the second edition of "Human Immortality," in which James points out that psychological study in no sense renders untenable the idea of human immortality, although it may bring objection to the sort of immortality conceived in Christian tradition. James speaks of the "transcendent self which can assimilate experiences of which the brain has been the mediator," suggesting "the continuance of our personal identity beyond the grave." James adds:

> It is true that all this would seem to have affinities rather with pre-existence and with possible re-incarnations than with the Christian notion of immortality. But my concern in the lecture was not to discuss immortality in general. It was confined to showing it to be *not incompatible* with the brain-function theory of our present mundane consciousness. I hold that it is so compatible, and compatible moreover in fully individualized form. The reader would be in accord with everything that the text of my lecture intended to say, were he to assert that every memory and affection of his present life is to be preserved, and that he shall never *in sæcula æculorum* cease to be able to say to himself: "I am the same personal being who in old times upon the earth had those experiences."

The related question of "free will" also is treated:

> A psychologist wants to build a *Science,* and a Science is a system of fixed relations. Wherever there are independent variables, there Science stops. So far, then, as our volitions may be independent variables, a scientific psychology must ignore that fact, and treat of them only so far as they are fixed functions. In other words, she must deal with the *general laws* of volition exclusively; with the impulsive and inhibitory character of ideas; with the nature of their appeals to the attention; with the conditions under which effort may arise, etc.; but not with the precise amounts of effort, for these, if our wills be free, are impossible to compute. She thus abstracts from free-will, without necessarily denying its existence. Practically however, such abstraction is not distinguished from rejection and most actual psychologists have no hesitation in denying that free-will exists. For ourselves, we can hand the free-will controversy over to metaphysics.
>
> When, then, we talk of "psychology as a natural science," we must not assume that that means a sort of psychology that stands at last on solid ground. It means just the reverse; it means a psychology particularly fragile, and into which the waters of metaphysical criticism leak at every joint, a psychology all of whose elementary assumptions and data must be reconsidered in wider connections and translated into other terms.
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> At present psychology is in the condition of physics before Galileo and the laws of motion, of chemistry before Lavoisier and the notion that mass is preserved in all reactions. The Galileo and the Lavoisier of psychology will be famous men indeed when they come, as come they some day surely will, or past successes are no index to the future. When they do come, however, the necessities of the case will make them "metaphysical."

COMMENTARY
WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

THERE is a common base of fault behind matters discussed in both Frontiers and the lead article, this week. Mr. Best (see page 8) speaks of the dilution of the opinion-making function in our society, holding the businessman's drive to make a profit and the "curse of bigness" in commercial enterprise responsible. The same ruthless determination has turned the drug business into a vast acquisitive interest which, if we accept the disclosures of the Kefauver investigation, cannot be trusted to serve the nation's health without an inspection as vigilant as that which we claim is necessary to keep the Russians from destroying us.

These charges, which are plainly supportable, would hardly make a beginning if one set out to list all the counts that might be elaborated in a general indictment of commercialism and its effects upon modern life. One great chapter would deal with the rape of the land and the razing of the forests. Another would detail the adulteration of food products and the poisoning of the soil. The misuse of labor by capital enterprise—the main region of social criticism in the nineteenth century—would give way in this period to the thought-control practiced by the psychologists of industrial progress, the designs of the manipulators of consumer impulses, and the motivation researchers. Then there is the vulgarization of taste, the obscenity of the commercial exploitation, not merely of the sexual element, but of all human appetites; and, worst of all, the incredible hypocrisy of the legend that these cunning "techniques" of pandering, cozening, lecturing, and frightening people into doing things that they need not and often should not do, are mainstays of the great "spiritual heritage" of the American people. Hundreds of books and articles have been written to expose these ugly aspects of our civilization, but with what seems very little practical effect. We are not used to responding to muckraking exposes unless we are also given a villain to condemn and punish. Thus the frustrating thing about the present is that we can't find anyone to blame for our troubles. Only demagogues and the neurotically insecure are able to charge the communists with producing the ills of our civilization, and who else is there to denounce? The fact is that we have run out of scapegoats, and are unimpressed by any "bad guy" explanation of what is wrong.

It is at last becoming obvious that what we need is a non-moralistic theory of morals which will show us how the pettiness and insufficiency of the lives of countless individuals somehow add up to the massive disasters that are overtaking their total as society.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
LETTERS AND COMMENT

> Editors, MANAS: I notice that a number of your readers lean :-strongly in the direction of "actionist-pacifism," unilateral disarmament, and protest the idea that democracy can be defended by threat. My own sympathies are of this nature, and I am currently thinking of books for children which might possibly help young people to withstand, when they become adults, the pressure of attitudes which make for war. How about a bibliography?

NO MANAS bibliography of this sort exists and, as we come to think about it, making one would be extremely difficult, especially if an emphasis on peace or pacifism were desired.

The-trouble is that if a young person's reading is heavily conditioned by emphasis on nonviolence, labors for peace, etc., some essentials of a full understanding of the human story may be eliminated. There is much to be learned from stories of courage in war or other conflict, even though intelligence in our time should point towards a rejection of violence—and certainly of hate. But effective work for "peace" needs understanding of those who have defended their conception of right by violence, showing a willingness to give up their lives. There is no reason to replace whatever it is that makes us thrill to courage in the face of adversity, although we ought to refine our conception of what courage means, ultimately, in human development.

As a book of this sort for children, Armstrong Sperry's *Call It Courage* comes immediately to mind. This is a tale of a South Sea Island boy whose sensitivity made him more fearful than his contemporaries and who had to learn to conquer fear itself. His adventures are against this psychological background. It is an inspiring book for the young, with wide applications. Then there is Pearl Buck's *The Young Revolutionists,* and another book of hers, *The Big Wave,* recently reviewed here. Some Western tales by Jack Schaefer also speak a universal language—particularly the story of an Indian boy in *The Canyon.*

Often a great deal can be accomplished by reading to a child portions of a novel which needs some explanation or some skipping. Elliot Arnold's *The Broken Arrow* is such a book, and also books by Howard Fast. We have found that "stories of the future" by Fast, in *The Edge of Tomorrow,* are enjoyed by ten-year-olds. Then, for older children, there are portions of David Davidson's *The Steeper Cliff.*

Of course, when you come right down to it, there is hardly any way of improving upon *Winnie the Poo* as a preparation for any type of human experience!

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> Editors, MANAS: Parents who are not conventionally religious face a number of educational problems which are conveniently avoided by conventional Christians. The crux of the "problem" part is probably that, if you can't believe on faith, you want to believe on reason—and. reason seems to have little to do with religious doctrine.
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> When our children go on their own "search for God," I hope it will be a reasoned quest and not a frantic grasping for a refuge in time of emotional stress.
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> About the age of reason: I believe this is a very individual matter dependent upon chronological age, sex, and emotional stability. We cannot say, it seems to me, that a sixteen-year-old has reached the age of reason, if he is so emotionally disturbed that he exhibits homocidal tendencies. A younger child may be stable and therefore much more capable of telling right from wrong.
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> Rearing children without the Christian concept is considerably more difficult than dogmatically instructing them that "God will punish you," and on the other hand (in situations of fear), "God will protect you." In the first case, I find I am doing all the correcting; in the second, I am the sole source of security.
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> I am not quick to disagree with Bertrand Russell when he says: "I think all the great religions of the world . . . both untrue and harmful."
>
> READER

This communication brings to mind one aspect of "religious education" not yet given attention in MANAS—simply this: It isn't necessary to assume that the man who places reason ahead of emotion has no interest in religion or religions. There is a tendency to think of the "rational" man as an atheist, or at least an agnostic. But a mature rationalist will grant the possibility that religious symbolism contains important psychological truths—and in an intuitive rather than a methodical way. The rational *approach* to religious doctrine is simply to place that doctrine in the broadest context conceivable.

A very long time ago, a group of philosophers who called themselves "theosophists" started an eclectic school in the city of Alexandria. The time was the fourth century. Christianity then had a strong content of Platonic thought and had not yet become dominated by dogmas constructed to serve the concept of authority in Roman religion. These eclectic theosophists approached the philosophical and religious traditions from an initially agnostic point of view, but hoped to discover through study a true "gnosis,"—that is, a wisdom which underlay all the varieties of religious expression. The Alexandrian theosophists, in other words, sought to relate reason to matters of faith and belief, but considered that the latter should neither be based upon miracles nor supported by planned indoctrination. According to a nineteenth-century scholar, Alexander Wilder, the two chief doctrines of this school were:

> (1) Belief in one absolute, incomprehensible and supreme Deity, or infinite essence, which is the root of all nature and of all that is, visible and invisible. (2) Belief in man's eternal immortal nature, because, being a radiation of the Universal Soul, it is of an identical essence with it.

This theosophical approach to the problem of religious education—for those who feel that both gnostic and agnostic attitudes must be blended for full spiritual expression—can be provocatively used. A Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 in New York City and, in explanation of the point of view, a few sentences from one Dr. J. D. Buck (quoted in *The Key to Theosophy* by H. P. Blavatsky) are suggestive of the "Theosophical" appeal. Dr. Buck wrote:

> Individuals in every age have more or less clearly apprehended the Theosophical doctrines and wrought them into the fabric of their lives. These doctrines belong exclusively to no religion, and are confined to no society or time. They are the birthright of every human soul. Such a thing as orthodoxy must be wrought out by each individual according to his nature and his needs, and according to his varying experience. This may explain why those who have imagined Theosophy to be a new religion have hunted in vain for its creed and its ritual. Its creed is Loyalty to Truth, and its ritual "To honour every truth by use.'

Apart from Theosophical literature, which varies greatly in character, though still available in its most stimulating form through reprints of the works of H. P. Blavatsky, we would suggest that interested readers address an inquiry to the Beacon Press, (25 Beacon Street, Boston 8, Mass.), publishing headquarters for the Unitarian-Universalist literature. Beacon's children's books are an attempt to approach religion from a universal point of view.

FRONTIERS

"The Spectrum of Confusion"

ONE of the scandals of this country for a good long time, although rarely discussed in public media, has been the laxity of control over dangerous drugs by the government, and the almost unmeasured profits the manufacturers of medicines have made on something people felt they couldn't do without and live. Although an ethical and sympathetic physician might charge a patient in moderate circumstances a small fee for an office or home call, the prescriptions he made out could cost as much as forty or fifty dollars and there was even a chance that the doctor might be misinformed about the value and the safety of the drugs he prescribed. Having no time to read through the piles of reports on new chemical agents and their clinical application, the doctor often got his information from advertisements which he had every right to believe had been screened by the professional journals in which they appeared, or else he had attempted to keep up with things by reading the supposedly scientific reports that accompanied the pounds of medical samples that came through his mail in the course of a year.

"The spectrum of confusion," one physician was heard to exclaim in disgust as he opened the multi-colored samples of pills and capsules from his day's mail and threw them in the wastebasket. He was right, of course, and he might as well have said, "The spectrum of corruption." Many of those pills had been written up in popular magazines as "wonder drugs" and if he didn't give them to patients who thought they needed them the word would have soon been out that good old doc was falling behind the times. The publicity that attended the discovery of the sulfas, the antibiotics, cortisone, and certain tranquilizers, made people believe there must be a pill that would cure almost anything, and that, as the prescriber of such potions, the physician was the wonder man of the age. Far too often the practice of medicine was dictated by the patient on the basis of clinical material he got from the popular press, so that physicians were in danger of becoming patsies for the pharmaceutical houses. By such means the physicians were being deprived of such art and science as they had.

In 1959 the Kefauver Committee did an investigation of price-fixing in the drug business and of certain practices in the manufacture and promotion of drugs. The fact that a 2,000 per cent profit wasn't unusual shouldn't have been startling to anyone who has ever had a prescription filled, but exposure of unscrupulous promotion in which dangerous side-effects of drugs were ignored and for which enthusiastic clinical reports were all but bought, came as a shock.

In one case there was an antibiotic that had to be withdrawn because of its high margin of dangerous side-effects. As it later turned out, this antibiotic was effective enough in one or two diseases to be judged worth the risk of being used in life-and-death cases. It was released by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration with the stipulation that there be a warning on every vial. Soon, however, the warning was too small to read; later it was simply on a piece of paper slipped into the carton of the drug. This is one example among many where the desire for profit became what could be called lethal greed.

Still, until this summer, a bill introduced by Sen. Kefauver that would have given the Food and Drug Administration some real control over the dangerous aspects of the drug industry had small chance of passing. There was a feeling that he was trying to hamper free enterprise, especially after the drug manufacturers had dramatized the millions of dollars spent on research for the betterment of mankind—the implication being that they had financed the discovery of all the "wonder drugs"—a claim which, as we will show later, is very, very far from the truth.

Unfortunately, it took a disaster of tragic proportions to awaken the public and its representatives to the very real danger of an

uncontrolled commerce in even a "wonder drug" that at first seemed spectacularly safe--- an effective sleeping pill that wasn't at the same time potentially lethal in overdoses. It was also very good for the nausea of early pregnancy—an apparently utilitarian pill, in fact. Discovered in Germany, it was soon released there for sale without even a prescription. Britain, Australia, and Canada accepted it, but with the restriction that it must be prescribed by a doctor. It was available in Austria and, except for a bit of luck in the form of a perceptive and stubborn American doctor, it would have been released in the United States, for one of our most powerful drug houses acquired patent rights and applied for the right to release it here.

Dr. Frances Kelsey, the FDA physician who became responsible for the application to release the new sleeping medicine, called Thalidomide, would normally have had to license the drug in from 60 to 180 days, since "successful" animal experiments had already taken place and the drug had been hailed as a boon after more than a year's use in Germany. She would not, however, be hurried in spite of some potent pressure. From her point of view, the drug was not intended for use in any life-threatening ailment and it didn't do anything that was not accomplished with drugs that were already clinically proven. This in itself was no legal reason to withhold the license of the drug. At least 75 per cent of the drugs on a pharmicist's shelves duplicate the action of other available drugs and owe their existence to our competitive system.

Dr. Kelsey seems to have had a clinical intuition that all was not well with Thalidomide. For one thing, she noted that it did not act the same on animals as on humans—*i.e.*, put them to sleep. This was hardly enough evidence to stand off the pressure of a great pharmaceutical house, but stall she did for nineteen pressure-ridden months, bolstered a little in her resistance by a tentative report from England that the drug might be causing a mild peripheral neuritis—nothing really dangerous, but something that certainly shouldn't be cultivated.

Then came the story that now all of the world knows. Undeniable reports began coming in from Germany and England that mothers who had taken the drug during the early stages of pregnancy were giving birth to children with rudimentary arms and legs and other physical distortions. Thousands of deformed infants have been and may be born in the countries where the drug was in use. Some of the drug even leaked out into America, for Dr. Kelsey couldn't prevent the drug house from releasing amounts for "clinical investigation." Luckily, most of this material has been recovered. The pharmaceutical house withdrew its application after the bad news came in, and a great point was made of this.

Suddenly the nation realized that only one person, backed by insufficient laws, had been standing between the people and potential disaster. Now, thanks to the creation of thousands of monsters and one heroic woman doctor who had to bend our lax laws in order to protect us, a bill has passed to become a law that will give us more certainty that the medicines we use in the future will be checked and double checked. Government agents can go into the factories and test quality. Cost-wise, we will be protected by the fact that the generic name of the drug must appear in a size equal to that of the proprietary name and that in itself may cut some of the unconscionable profits. In medical school hospitals, as well as other public hospitals, doctors are being taught to return to use of the generic names of drugs rather than the proprietary handles, and this can cause as much as 1,000 per cent saving in cost. One of the strong reasons for the druggist's high markup is that he has to stock an endless variety of proprietary duplications in order to keep up with the fluctuating prescriptions the physician writes out of sales pressure and even public demand.

Actually, our "wonder drug" discoveries are largely overrated and one of the great myths of

our time is the picture of men in white in the laboratories of the great pharmaceutical houses laboring among retorts and Rube Goldberg-like devices to provide us with those drugs that are giving us long life and tranquility. Actually, there are very few *specific* drugs—those which can be predicted to have a controlling effect on a certain disease or condition. Opium, the derivatives of which can be depended on to relieve unbearable pain, has been known and used for over two thousand years and the name of its discoverer is lost in history. The best the great pharmaceutical laboratories appear to have done with it is produce dangerously addictive new compounds.

The digitalis leaf, which appears to have prolonged and made life more comfortable for millions, was discovered by physicians who noticed that the midwives and herbalists of the eighteenth century were bringing relief to dropsical patients, when doctors couldn't, simply by using this herb. Today, a month's supply of this valuable agent can be bought for less than a dollar. Yet, indirectly, there is the implication that this, too, was the doings of the men in white.

Cinchona bark, from which quinine is derived, and which conquered malaria, was found in so many places at different times that no one can take credit for its discovery. The vitamins that forestall pellagra were discovered in the form of lime juice by early ships' captains. Yet laboratories are still adding the cost of research on this into their research overhead, most of which is probably deductible in any case.

Coming now to the development of the wonder drugs of modern times, we may find physicians and scientists involved, but their expenses weren't paid for by the big drug firms. Banting, who discovered insulin, which has prolonged and made more bearable the lives of millions of diabetics, was an orthopedic surgeon without enough practice to keep him busy. Having time on his hands, he read scientific journals and from different findings in divergent scientific papers arrived at a principle that was fairly simple. Pawning his surgical instruments, he followed a hunch. Insulin, which brought profit to dozens of drug houses, was discovered, but Banting's payoff came largely in honor.

So, also, with penicillin. Dr. Fleming discovered it while quietly working on his regular salary at a university. He noted that when mold got on the slides upon which bacteria had been placed for microscopic examination, the bacteria died. (For a long time, by the way, there was a note in textbooks on bacteriology to keep mold off the slides—that it would kill the bacteria. And for centuries Russian rabbis had used wood mold as an antiseptic after ritual surgery.) Fleming was able to refine and control mold without calling on industry. Yet in making variations of his discovery, the big drug houses have racked up some of their biggest profits as well as creating some of the greatest hazards.

For thousands of years in India the rauwolfia root was chewed as a source of both tranquility and health. It wasn't in any sense a narcotic or a thing to be taken for escape, but an herb used naturally by the great and the poor. What brought it to a physician's attention was the fact that people who used it seldom had high blood pressure. Later it was noted that it could quiet the most emotionally disturbed person. What it accomplished in its raw form was great and good and possibly even enough. Here, however, is where the great drug houses did get into the show. Isolating its active chemical agents, they patented every derivative they could extract from the root and then set about creating synthetic variations. The prices of these products soared, each drug firm avoiding the patents of others by a chemical fraction, meanwhile making wilder claims for its product. Soon the price of tranquilization was high enough to create an economic tension no chemical agent could quell. Side-effects mounted in quantity and quality.

The above are samples of the "research" that is discovering "wonder drugs" for us. As was brought out in the Kefauver hearings, most of the

research money goes into developing drugs that will do the same thing as those of a successful competitor without infringing on his patent rights—duplications that after massive claims in their literature will note in small type that, say, "liver damage has occasionally been noted as a side-effect and the use of the drug should be discontinued when jaundice develops." Ethical drug houses? Of course. Until the Thalidomide disaster, Kefauver was accused of trying to impose creeping socialism on a dedicated and public-service-minded industry whose ideals were above suspicion. Now it appears that the public is beginning to doubt, and doubt with a will. For once, at least, a little government interference with business kept massive disaster from our shores.

Perhaps it should be noted in passing that it wasn't the pharmaceutical wizards who discovered the danger of Thalidomide, but, at the beginning at least, concerned physicians who used their own time and resources.

It is difficult to say that anything so horrible as the Thalidomide disaster is a blessing in disguise, but one thing is sure: Americans needed just such a shock as this to cure them of their belief in pharmaceutical magic and make them put a curb on the pill-happy hucksters who were turning us into a nation of people who were beginning to think that there is an Rx for everything and even that "peace on earth, good will toward men" might soon be supplied in a slow release capsule. Without the reins of control now given the Food and Drug Administration, there is every chance that some drug house would eventually have been offering a Peace Pill, no matter what the side-effects were.

There is a saying, "Go in good health." If you start in on pills for a minor ailment, you are apt to spend the rest of your life seeking chemical normality—something you already had before you took the first pill. But if you are seriously ill, ask the doctor to use the generic name of the drug on your prescription. This will cover the "specifics" that might be of some value, and keep you out of the hands of the proprietary bandits.