

THE NEW WONDER-SEEKING

IT is not surprising, in these days of troubled uncertainty, to find a growing interest in the bizarre and clearly "un-American" subject of Yoga. Books sales, library reports, as well as the hearsay of campus bull-sessions and similar occasions, all suggest something more than curiosity in the direction of what, for lack of a better term, may be called the "occult." A century ago, wonder-seekers found fascinations in the domestic variety of supernatural happenings—among the Spiritualists, whose fanaticism has since cooled to a hum-drum orthodoxy, and whose particular brand of "miracles" has achieved a kind of oblique acceptance through the more dignified enterprise and testimony of scientific psychic research. Today, however, the quest is rather for unearthly powers than for unearthly experiences or communications from beyond the Styx. To be a medium is to be recognized as somewhat sickly, in mind if not in body, and to be given to a kind of involuntary mummery. A "yogi," on the other hand, according to popular accounts, is one who can do things other people are unable to do. Despite the dignified antics of Clifton Webb, knowledge of yoga is understood to involve more than the capacity to stand on one's head for a half an hour or so. A yogi, doubtless, can carry around with him his own, private Shangri-La. A yogi is a man of iron will and infinite superiority to the common herd. He always gets what he wants. And if he lives a strange life—who knows?—it may be worth it.

In a world where the worst can happen almost any day, now—and very likely will—there are one or two important compensations. The customary rules of action are easily relaxed, and the prescribed rules of belief and disbelief do not carry the same conviction. If the UN and General MacArthur are likely to let us down, why not some of our other authorities? The return to

religion is not *all* a matter of a "failure of nerve." For some, it is the recovery of a kind of daring. It depends, of course, upon the kind of religion you turn to. And if the progress of science means that, ultimately, we shall all crouch together in some subterranean hideout, waiting for the explosion to go off that may mean the end of the world, perhaps the scientific theories about man are equally at fault. Maybe we didn't ascend from the apes. Maybe we are a tribe of angels which lost its wings. Maybe there is life on other planets—a life considerably better than ours. Maybe the yogis know better secrets than the ones we know, or think we know. Maybe almost anything, for a change.

At any rate, there is a loose-jointed hopefulness about the anything-may-be-true-because-anything-can-happen point of view. There is hope, that is, in any kind of a solvent of the brittle concretions of orthodoxy. Such solvents always release confusion, but we have that anyhow, and something else may get released in the process.

Take this idea of "yoga." The term has an ancient lineage. Originally, it came from the same root as our word, "yoke," and has the meaning of *union* or *uniting*. A yogi, then, is one with unifying power. He is close to the essences of things. There are many books on yoga and yoga powers, most of them, doubtless, not worth reading. The *Bhagavad-Gita*, however, has considerable to say on the subject of yoga, and it is certainly worth reading. The yogi, according to the *Gita*, is a man to whom the ordinary rules don't apply. This is one of the most attractive aspects of becoming a yogi. It has its Western counterpart in a sect of medieval heretics who believed—as their Catholic enemies declared—that they were themselves "parts" of God; and as God is perfect, blameless, and free from sin, so

they, too, no matter what they did, were perfect, blameless, and free from sin.

But this, whatever the medieval heretics really believed, is not the meaning of the *Gita* on the subject of rising above the dogmas and beliefs of orthodoxy. Krishna, the sage who in the *Gita* instructs his disciple, Arjuna, points out that there are rules for those who know, and rules for those who don't. By definition, a yogi is one of those who know. Arjuna, the persistent and somewhat disconsolate questioner, was in the difficult situation of having grown tired and disgusted with those who don't know, yet he didn't feel quite equal to entering the league of those who know. There is safety in orthodoxy, if you're looking for safety, Krishna pointed out to him. But if you leave the fold of common belief, you have to be ready to live above the guide-lines of orthodoxy. Once you stand alone, and try to be a yogi, neither Church nor State can help you. This bothers Arjuna, who, like the rest of us, wants a sure thing.

Krishna assures him that sure things and distinction in yoga do not go together, but adds that "Never to an evil place goeth one who doeth good." He counsels Arjuna:

Seek an asylum, then, in this mental devotion, which is knowledge; for the miserable and unhappy are those whose impulse to action is found in its reward. But he who by means of Yoga is mentally devoted dismisses alike successful results, being beyond them; Yoga is skill in the performance of actions; therefore do thou aspire to this devotion. For those who are thus united to knowledge and devoted, who have renounced all reward for their actions, meet no rebirth in this life, and go to that eternal blissful abode which is free from all disease and untouched by troubles.

When thy heart shall have worked through the snares of delusion, then thou wilt attain to high indifference as to those doctrines which are already taught or which are yet to be taught. When thy mind once liberated from the Vedas shall be fixed immovably in contemplation, then shalt thou attain to devotion.

Arjuna wanted to be "liberated," all right, but he was nervous about what would happen to him after he cut loose from the conventional supports of religious belief. The "religious" man—which meant, in his time, the "conventional" man—was offered certain guarantees for his loyal belief and good behavior. The yogi said goodbye to all that. The yogi has to be willing to get along without institutional backing. He has to be willing not to get to heaven, which is the reward earned by the religious man. He outgrows the discipline of the community, only to embrace the more rigorous discipline of self-control and self-knowledge. He gets power, but he also gets responsibility, and he gets all the hazards which go along with power and the acceptance of responsibility. The yogi, in short, is a kind of radical. He looks at the root of things. He is willing to take his experience straight, without the cushionings of culture and the formal symbolisms of orthodoxy.

Curiously enough, in these terms, Western history provides numerous instances of a modified "yogi" idea of human development and activity. Lenin, for example, and his Bolshevik associates, were animated by impersonal commitment to an ideal. It is impossible to read a good biography of Lenin without being thrilled by both his determination and his achievements. The thrill comes, regardless of whether or not you like what he did with his determination or feel that his achievements were good. It is the hundred per cent commitment which is thrilling. Lenin threw aside the conventional rules. So did Trotsky. They wanted to seize the naked forces of history in their bare hands and change the course of history, so they threw away the rules.

The trouble with this western version of "yoga" is that it involved the exercise of power over other people. It became, therefore, a ruthless drive for control. First the power was psychological, then it became military. Now, what is left of that great impetus is a new and rigid and vastly ferocious *orthodoxy*.

This, plainly, is not the kind of yoga that Krishna speaks of in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. There the conquest is a personal one, and the influence over others is limited to precept and example. Perhaps the idea of yoga is really the origin of the relatively modern idea of aristocracy—aristocracy of mind, feelings, and purpose. The yogi, when he undertakes to contribute to the betterment of the world, has to remember that not everyone is prepared to throw away the rules—and to accept the higher discipline of complete personal responsibility.

Marx was a Western kind of "yogi" who couldn't remember that. He was immeasurably contemptuous of simple bourgeois ways. He thought the workman ought to spend his evenings studying revolutionary pamphlets, instead of asking his wife to bring him his slippers, his pipe, and the evening paper. Spina, the hero of *Bread and Wine*, Silone's lone revolutionist in fascist Italy, was moved to great disappointment when he discovered that the articles he had been writing in exile and shipping into Italy for the education of the peasant masses were not understood at all by the objects of his intellectual bounty. The yogi has to be wise in understanding of his fellow human beings, and patient with their defects. And he must never let the thought of his supposed superiority make him into an angry fascist.

One thing the true yogi realizes is that to serve the masses of mankind is the most difficult of all things that a man can undertake. Socrates seemed to have some ability in this direction. And Gandhi, through the conjunction of an historical cycle with the emergence of his own peculiar inspiration and resolve, showed that it is not impossible.

But what of the yogis who go about writing books on self-development, who have a penetrating and unwavering gaze, who can answer every question with a witty aphorism and get invited to all the best places? What about them? They are fakes.

Letter from **JAPAN**

TOKYO.—The president of the Hiroshima Union of Widows sent a letter expressing a desire to cooperate with American widows in "creating world peace" to the president of the United States Gold Star Widows. "We know every nation in the world is earnestly wishing for peace," the Japanese letter stated.

Sometime later, the president of the Hiroshima widows was surprised to receive in reply a bitter criticism of her letter which was said to "create a great deal of suspicion." Its writer, the American president said, either "is not aware of Russia's performance in the United Nations and Russian participation in the Korean war, or she is a Communist correspondent."

Shocked at the misunderstanding created, the Hiroshima widows immediately sent a letter of apology, explaining that their first message was written before the outbreak of the Korean war and that they were emphatically not Communists.

This attitude of the Gold Star Widows in being suspicious of a sincere expression of desire for peace and in grouping all such advocates of peace as "Communists" or ignorant fools is unfortunately becoming increasingly prevalent in Japan. It is thus that the conservative forces are gaining ground by charging that the Socialists in their advocacy of a peace settlement with all nations, permanent neutrality and a stand against military bases are working in cahoots with the Communists. Liberal thinkers and liberal newspapers are discovering that they cannot express their devotion to peace freely. There is an unwritten taboo on writing against the possible rearmament of Japan.

It is easy to kill off liberal and progressive thinking by hurling the charge of "Communist," just as the Communists themselves counterattack their critics with the terms "fascist" and "reactionary." Needless to say, such practices can only result in a totalitarian state.

One of the great instruments in channeling Japanese thought away from communism and—presumably—toward democracy is the purge being carried out during the past few months and expected to continue for some time against Communists and their

sympathizers in the press, public enterprises, key industries and government offices. No fixed standard has been set for the purge, and this has resulted in many persons of liberal views being discharged together with the known Communists. If the object is to deter progressive thinking, the purge is succeeding, for the term "sympathizer" can be stretched at will to cover a lot of territory, and it will have to be a brave non-Communist who would want to lose his job for merely expressing his liberal views.

It should not be difficult to see how this purge could be extended to bring about a situation in Japan not unlike the police state of the pre-surrender period when people had to think and talk as the government wished them to do. That is the danger of this new attitude of intolerance seen among some Japanese leaders—and Occupation personnel—in classing all those people who do not agree with them as Reds and Communists and thus to be discredited and purged. And it should surprise many people to know that the Communist Party is an officially recognized political organization, although their leadership has been driven from office by the purge.

The iron fist as represented by the purge will never cleanse Japanese society of communism, for it is the persecution and intolerance following purgative measures which lead people to seek the sweet promises and soft words of the Communists. It would be better if the energy of the nation is turned to meet the social and humanitarian needs of the people instead of being wasted on a witch hunt which would be totally unnecessary among a happy and contented citizenry. It is by understanding that a better world can be achieved.

JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

IN MEMORIAM—"GREAT WARS" II AND III

A RECENT poll informed the American newspaper-reading public that most men now believe World War III has already begun—something which, if the poll is correct, "most men" obviously already know through sharing their instinctive reactions to news dispatches with their neighbors. But just what will the new war—whether close upon us, or yet comparatively far away—mean to the men who fight it, and to the men who look back on it afterward? How do we tell what a war "really" means?

It is clear that now, more than ever before, a war means all things to all men. Its carefully-defined-by-experts "economic meaning," its "political meaning," its "military meaning" and its "security meaning" are so many hieroglyphic symbols to nearly everyone, including the experts themselves. Nowhere, do we think, is this point made more effectively than in certain passages of Irwin Shaw's World War II novel, *The Young Lions*—passages which really ought to be isolated for thoughtful attention while "the-die-is-now-cast" sentiments first prevail in respect to World War III.

For neither "The Korean Situation," Stalin, Truman nor Atlee actually cast the die for anyone. The reality of group experience, no matter how apparently all-encompassing, is in individual experience, and awareness of this seems keener among novelists than among others. Shaw's *Young Lions* is not a great novel. It is passing full of conventionalities of situation and opinion, yet it is also indication that the artist almost always sees more than the politician. One theme in particular stands out vividly—the idea that modern war has passed the point at which propaganda can be truly effective. The new style is Realism, and the trouble with realism is that, so far as an army is concerned, it is self-defeating. With the best of intentions, no doubt, with a kind of pride in a kind of honesty, World War II and III recruits are

adjudged able to swallow their pills without saccharine. Yet this is one case where honesty apparently did not and does not make for "fighting morale." You can tell R.O.T.C. students in training at the time of Germany's or Japan's capitulation that they must realistically focus attention upon a nearly certain war with Russia at some future date—and this, we understand, was done but you cannot make such a war sound valorous or even necessary. Shaw picks up this thought, first, in describing the effects of up-to-date orientation lectures upon new recruits:

The orientation lectures. Military courtesy. The causes of the war which You Are Fighting. The expert on the Japanese question, a narrow, gray-faced professor from Lehigh, who had told them that it was all a question of economics. Japan needed to expand and take over the Asiatic and Pacific markets and we had to stop her and hold onto them ourselves. It was all according to the beliefs that Michael had had about the causes of war for the last fifteen years. And yet, listening to the dry, professional voice, looking at the large map with spheres of influence and oil deposits and rubber plantations clearly marked out, he hated the professor, hated what he was saying. He wanted to hear that he was fighting for liberty, or morality or the freedom of subject peoples, and he wanted to be told in such ringing and violent terms that he could go back to his barracks, go to the rifle range in the morning believing it. Michael looked at the men sitting wearily beside him at the lecture. There was no sign on those bored, fatigue-doped faces that they cared one way or another, that they understood, that they felt they needed the oil or the markets. There was no sign that they wanted anything but to be permitted to go back to their bunks and go to sleep.

Yes, something was missing. Apparently, men cannot quite believe in their wars any more. They may, of course, even *like* obscurely the experience of war, for the otherwise unknown close comradeship it brings, for relief from a civilian whirl which they may be trying to escape, for the rare emotional experience of the proximity of danger and death—but they will not have faith in the war except as a temporary means to these ends. And most won't like it for any reason. Waiting in London for the beginning of European

invasion, viewing a production of Hamlet while German planes rained bombs on the city, Michael reflects that attitudes towards war have gone a long and discouraging way since the men of Shakespeare's drama evidenced pride in their tasks of arms:

We never hear what a Private First Class in Fortinbras' infantry thought about his tender and delicate prince, and the divine ambition that puff'd him. That would make an interesting scene, too. . . . Twenty thousand men, that for a fantasy and trick of fame, Go to their graves like beds, was it? There were graves waiting not so far off for more than twenty thousand of the men around him, Michael thought, and maybe for himself, too, but perhaps in the three hundred years the fantasy and the trick had lost some of their power. And yet we go, we go. Not in the blank verse, noble certainty so admired by the man in the black tights, but we go. In a kind of limping, painful prose, in legal language too dense for ordinary use of understanding, a judgment against us, more likely than not, by a civil court that is not quite our enemy and not quite our friend, a writ handed down by a nearly honest judge, backed by the decision of a jury of not-quite-our-peers, sitting on a case that is not exactly within their jurisdiction. "Go," they say, "go die a little. We have our reasons." And not quite trusting them and not quite doubting them, we go. "Go," they say, "go die a little. Things will not be better when you finish, but perhaps they will not be much worse." Where is the Fortinbras, to toss a plume and strike a noble pose, and put the cause into round language for us? *N'existe pas*, as the French put it. Out of stock. Out of stock in America, out of stock in England, quiet in France, too cunning in Russia. Fortinbras had vanished from the earth. Churchill made a good try of it, but when you finally sounded him there was a hollow and old-fashioned ring to him like a bugle blowing for a war three years ago. The mouth we make at the invisible event today is twisted into a skeptical grin. This is the war of the sour mouth, Michael thought, and yet there will be enough of us dead in it to please any bloodthirsty paying customer at the Globe in the early 1600's.

As the story of *The Young Lions* unfolds, giving us, praise be, the war behind and on both the opposing fronts, the common psychological denominators of modern enemies appear—and we know they are true ones. Half of what Shaw writes, moreover, whether he shifts his scene to

Germany, Africa, England or France, applies to Germans when he is talking about Americans, Americans when he is talking about Nazis. It is the fraternity of all men who are caught in similar positions, whatever their nationalities or ideologies.

Abstractly, squinting out in front of him through the hedge toward the enemy's lines, shaking his head a little to clear his ears of the shock of the percussion of the bombs, he felt sorry for the Germans behind the bloody imaginary fall line of the Air Forces. On the ground himself, armed with a weapon that carried a two-ounce projectile a pitiful thousand yards, he felt a common hatred for the impersonal killers above him, a double self-pity for those helpless men cowering in holes, blasted and sought out by the machine age with thousand-pound explosives hurled from the impregnable distance of five miles. . . .

He walked thoughtfully down the line. Everybody is in flight, he thought dreamily, through the Calvados, in flight from Lesbians, in flight from the Italians and the Jews who were their parents, in flight from frigid wives and brothers who won the Congressional Medal of Honor, in flight from the infantry and regret, in flight from conscience and misspent lives. The Germans five miles away, too, it would be interesting to know what they were in flight from. Two armies in despairing flight toward each other, fleeing the dreadful memories of peace.

It might be hard to find a better point of departure than that afforded by the last few sentences for speculations upon the unseen propulsions which bring wars about with such regularity. Historians have told us again and again that governments often resort to arms to flee a difficult domestic situation—one from which diversion must be won at all costs to allow the regime to stay in power. But might it not be that governments could never take this "easy way" out unless literally millions of citizens *wanted* a diversion, even the supremely vicious one of war, because they were "fleeing the dreadful memories of peace"? This sounds like elaboration on the Nemesis of Homer's *Iliad*, with special emphasis upon the minute causes which create the inflexible force pursuing all combatants.

So much for Shaw's startling shafts of illumination. One might expect that such an author could somehow intimate what men might do to avoid the vicious circle. Yet here Shaw's ingenuity will not function. When he finishes the 621-page story he sounds weary, too; like his soldiers, he is able to go no further, though the story moves on to the death of two of its principals:

Keane sat on a stone and took out a pad of paper and a pencil and began writing a letter to his wife. He sent his wife a detailed account of everything he did including the most horrible descriptions of the dead and wounded. "I want her to see what the world is going through," he had said soberly. "If she understands what we are going through, it may improve her outlook on life."

Michael stared past the helmeted head of the man who, at this distance, was attempting to improve the outlook on life of his frigid wife three thousand miles away.

Michael closed his eyes. Someone ought to write me a letter, he thought, to make me understand what I am going through. The last month had been so crowded with experience, of such a wildly diversified kind, that he felt he would need years to sift it, classify it, search out its meaning. Somewhere, he felt, in the confusion of strafing and capturing and bumping in dusty convoys through the hot French summer, somewhere in the waving of hands and girls' kisses and sniping and burning, there was a significant and lasting meaning. Out of this month of jubilation, upheaval and death, a man, he felt, should have been able to emerge with a key to wars and oppression, a key to unlock the meaning of Europe and America.

Ever since Pavone had so savagely put him in his place that night on sentry duty back in Normandy, Michael had almost given up any hope of being useful in the war. Now, he felt, in lieu of that, I should at least *understand* it . . .

But nothing fell into generalities in his brain; he could not say, "Americans are thus and so and therefore they are winning," or "It is the nature of the French to behave in this fashion," or "What is wrong with the Germans is this particular misconception. . . ."

All the violence, all the shouting, ran together in his brain, in a turbulent, confused, many-threaded

drama, a drama which endlessly revolved through his mind. . . .

The Young Lions may be bought for fifty cents from Signet Books, and the chief significance of this, it seems, is the fact that such commentaries, however abbreviated, are at least available for the men and women whose "Nemesis" may be that of World War III unless they discover how to cast a few new "dies." Michael had a good thought, a resourceful and brave thought, after he had reluctantly decided he was a horrible soldier. The thought was to try to *understand* the war, even if he couldn't do much about winning it. The only trouble was that, while being a nobler job, it was also, like all nobler jobs, much more difficult.

This review is probably somewhat "subversive." It uses Shaw to argue, in a way that Shaw perhaps never intended, that neither this nor any war is "our" war. It's a good time for the argument, in any case. No one can say that it isn't relevant to a contemporary issue.

COMMENTARY
JANUARY 3, 1951

AT the commencement of its still very short career, three years ago, MANAS announced "a single fundamental intent: to seek out, to examine, and if possible, to help to establish the foundations for intelligent idealism under the conditions of human life in the twentieth century." That the past three years have not brought this magazine to the end of its quest, goes without saying. The conditions of human life may not now be less inducive to intelligent idealism, but the mere passage of a thousand days or so cannot be said to have improved them. Fresh over the half-century mark, MANAS faces much the same prospect as in 1948, with one important addition—its friends and subscribers. The final harvest is a long way off, but the foretaste of that harvest—the warm appreciation and willing cooperation of MANAS readers—is convincing evidence of the possibility of full success, even in the midst of a century of much dishonored faith.

Seeking the threads of unity in the tangle of strife and bitterness, MANAS is sensible of the magnitude of its undertaking—all the more, since the first few steps away from conventional solutions, opinions, beliefs, and panaceas bring both editors and readers to an open road—a thoroughfare to yet discoverable regions. Outside the creeds of religion we come upon religion itself, but we do not need to be immediately carried away by the urge to melt into the stratosphere where mystics have disappeared without a trace. If we take liberties with recent, but nonetheless venerable, sciences, we do so without a thought of abandoning forever the solid ground of scientific achievement. If we choose to consider new ideas at work, it is not to throw into the dungeon of disrepute all previous philosophies. Religion, as that which sustains man's humanity; science, as the fearless explorations of man's universe and his power in it; philosophy, as sustenance for the mind on long

flights to understanding—these are indispensable to life in any century.

The final foundations for idealism may be discovered in one or another great field of inquiry, or as the result of the combined forces of explorers from every field, from every age, and of all persuasions. But those who endure the rigors of an expeditionary force, are grateful to any spirits who can invest the search with a measure of goodwill. MANAS, facing a new year, has the same intent as in the beginning, and looks for still more friends to call forth greater strength and vision.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

IT is with pleasure that we introduce readers to the existence of something called The Junior Town Meeting League. In a League pamphlet, *Teaching Controversial Issues*, are to be found succinctly stated arguments for a thesis more than once advanced in MANAS—that children, like all other people, have a maximum opportunity for learning from those fields of inquiry where there is immediate interest or concern.

The Junior Town Meeting League has recently concluded a "work shop" in the problem of how to best teach, via controversial issues, in the public schools, and the participating educators, headed by the Assistant Superintendent of the Cincinnati Schools, the Director of Secondary Education in Des Moines, and the Director of Radio Education in Ohio State University, have come forth with some helpful proposals.

The first task of the pamphlet, an obvious one, is to define "controversial issues":

An issue is controversial when some of its proposed solutions conflict with the cherished interests, beliefs, or group affiliations of a section of citizens. Fundamental to most controversial issues is the intellectual or emotional attachment of some citizens to the interest or welfare of organizations or groups.

It is the belief of the rather radical sponsors of the Controversial Issue Program that "It is an obligation of the school to provide specifically and carefully for the realistic induction of young citizens into the methods of arriving at rational decisions on the tough problems which must be determined by popular will or consent. No other agency of society even approaches the school in either capability, opportunity, or responsibility for performing this function, which does not exist in a totalitarian social order." The explanation is then provided that it is possible to have valuable

discussion *without an attempt to reach any predetermined conclusion.*

It is obvious that most school communities will fear to risk the heated feelings which may be aroused when opposing backgrounds of economic theory and political conviction meet in the conflict of debate, but it is the purpose of the pamphlet quoted to convince communities that this danger should be met straightforwardly rather than skirted—that such "danger" is good for us to live near. In order to make acceptance by community School Boards a little easier, though, the League makes a point of *not* presuming to state precisely which issues should be taken up. Each school community should consider, however, that *some* issues must be worth the risk of classroom argument. Both administrators and teachers, it is recommended, should draw up a "policy statement" for the particular community.

One of the most significant sections of this 30-page pamphlet deals with the teacher's part in "setting the stage" for argument and analysis of evidence. The implication is clearly that no teacher should undertake to promote this sort of work unless willing to devote extra time and arduous effort to the project. At the outset he must realize some of the "inherent difficulties":

1. Parents do not ordinarily send their children to school in the expectation that their basic ideas will be modified. The school must at the very least keep the parents informed and steadily reassure them as to what is going on.

2. Every community includes a number of groups, often quite powerful, which do not want certain topics to be opened up to scrutiny.

3. Parents who encounter a marked change in the views of their children are likely to suspect that the school or the teacher has deliberately sought *that particular* change, and that the new view is a result of deliberate indoctrination or propaganda.

The following suggestions are provided to indicate what the teacher may legitimately accomplish if he keeps his mind fixed on the major objectives:

He is not seeking to "teach" a point of view on any controversial issue; rather, he is creating a situation within which the pupil can clarify, refine, and extend the range of *his own* understanding of the issue.

He is trying to establish an atmosphere of inquiry. This means that he must deliberately cause the student to question or wonder about the adequacy of the opinion he has picked up, for doubt is an indispensable condition of inquiry. Even those opinions which the teacher himself shares and for whose soundness he has considerable evidence should be challenged in order to provide the stimulus for seeking out additional factual evidence which will either remove the uncertainty or render the opinion untenable.

He is trying to maintain a permissive atmosphere, within which students may talk freely without fear of ridicule or reprisal. The student must feel confident that any relevant hypothesis he cares to advance will be entertained seriously, that any relevant information from his experience or reading will be welcomed, and that neither his grades nor the esteem in which he is held by teacher and classmates will be adversely affected by any opinion he may express. Obviously, no teacher can guarantee to maintain this last condition; but a steady effort to do so will provide a great measure of reassurance.

It will be of particular interest for those who have followed the several discussions in "Children . . . and Ourselves" involving Religion in the Schools to note the forthright position taken by the League on this matter. The opening page of the pamphlet asserts:

The teaching of sectarian religious beliefs is not the function of the public school. This qualification, however, does not mean that important social issues are to become taboo in the schools whenever any religious group takes a stand concerning them.

It has often seemed to us that a genuine interest in subjects such as government, economics, sociology—and history in general—must be stimulated before the maximum benefits can be gained from a study of any of these as specific departments of learning. The key to a determination to study "theory," or "history," is some real issue of the present, and therefore we assume that any high school training which does

nothing to prepare adolescents for relating their own opinions about current affairs with the various categories of their school work does not give them adequate preparation for satisfactory college work. Often only during the last two years of college is there opportunity for the type of discussion now being recommended by the Junior Town Meeting League, and since the methods of debating controversial subjects require careful introduction on the part of the teacher and a considerable amount of disciplined experience on the part of the pupil, a great deal of valuable time may be considered as presently wasted before reaching Upper Division College work.

With no hesitation we make the recommendation that all readers who are either teachers or parents provide themselves with a copy of *Teaching Controversial Issues*. It may be obtained from the Junior Town Meeting League, 400 South Front Street, Columbus 15, Ohio.

FRONTIERS

Wanted: "A Basic Revolution"

THE indictment of man, in Ashley Montagu's latest book, *On Being Human* (Henry Schuman, \$1.95), is far more impressive than his prescription for human ills. This is not a criticism to be made with pleasure. Any reviewer, simply in virtue of being "human" himself, ought to prefer to share, if he can, the estimate of the publishers, that this book "is the carrier for an epoch-making idea, an idea of the first magnitude out of which may well evolve a basic revolution in the outlook of man upon man." Or to agree with the journalist who declared it "possibly the most important book of its kind which the modern era has produced."

But unfortunately, Dr. Montagu's book will not start any revolution. It lacks the germ of a revolutionary idea. While its author is obviously warm-hearted and well-disposed toward mankind, and while he has attempted to call all good men and true to the standard of a new world-order of human relations—an order based upon cooperation instead of competition, upon understanding rather than hostility and aggression—his effort, we think, will do little more than excite a passing sympathy for his purposes, when what is needed is to inaugurate a great movement capable of transforming both the moral basis and the social and economic structure of modern society. We do not know how this is done. The only man we know of who succeeded in doing it, on anything like a world-wide scale, was Gautama Buddha. The Buddha, however, did have a revolutionary idea, and was himself, if we may believe tradition, a being of such extraordinary personal power that he was able to start countless revolutions in the hearts of other men. (If we are asked what Buddha's revolutionary idea was, we can only suggest a reading of Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* for at least a glimpse of what it meant. If pressed for a definition, we would say that it was and is an idea that helps to make the potential moral energies in the human being available to him. A man's use of

these energies, one could say, is the precise measure of human greatness. And a great teacher is one who knows how to help other men to liberate their moral energies for practical use.)

All this is rather hard on Dr. Montagu. As an anthropologist of international repute, and a humanitarian of unblemished record, his field of exercises hardly suggests a comparison with the greatest religious reformer of history. He speaks only for our time, and speaks better than most. But the comparison becomes apt in accepting his sense of the extreme desperation of our time, and in appreciating his grasp of the disorders from which we suffer. So, to take the best part of his book first, we turn to his account of what man has done to man, in the twentieth century:

Most human beings want to like, to love their fellow men. Yet in their everyday lives they, for the most part, practice self-love and are more or less hostile toward all those whom they conceive to stand in their way. The reason for this tragic disparity between what they feel to be right and what they do is simply that the structure of this society is such that the life of the person becomes reduced to a competitive struggle for existence. Under such conditions, men everywhere become nasty, brutish, and cruel. Under such a system it is hard for them to do otherwise, for the first law of life is and has always been self-preservation (the satisfaction of basic needs), and if the individual will not do everything in his power to gain security for himself, who will? . . .

Western society, in short, does not encourage the development of goodness because goodness is not what that society is interested in. Goodness belongs to a frame of reference other than that in which we make our living. It belongs to the covert rather than to the overt part of our culture. What we must do is to enthrone goodness, human relations, in the place at present occupied by economics. The idols of the market place must yield to those of humanity. A society such as ours, in which human relations are submerged in the economic system, can rescue itself only by submerging its economy in the matrix of human relations.

And this is the task that the schools must assist in undertaking, no less than the rescue of man from his debasing enslavement to the principles and practices of an acquisitive society.... Let no one be deceived. Unless Western man is able to release

himself from the degrading tyranny of his enslavement to the religion of economics, he is as certainly doomed to self-destruction as all the portents indicate. Man cannot live by bread alone. Physiologically, biologically, psychologically, and socially, he can retain his health and flourish only in love of, and co-operation with, his fellow man.

There is the indictment. Dr. Montagu goes on to show that we are not only acquisitive by conditioning and belief, but predatory in practice, and that the *social* results of all this aggressive and callous individualism are the countless frustrations, prejudices and hostilities which characterize the Western scene. We are victims of economic determinism because we believe in economic determinism, because we have fashioned a society which treats men as commodities, and manipulates the emotions of insecurity as a weapon in the struggle for existence.

In his last chapter, Dr. Montagu speaks in the prophetic accents of a man with a mission. A man who sees so clearly and is able to describe so forcefully the symptoms of our decline ought to wax prophetic. He concludes that what is needed is "social engineering":

Who are to be the engineers? The answer to that is: The children who are to be the adult members of the next generations. How are they to be prepared for their task? By being taught as clearly and as soundly as possible what the nature of our society is, why it must be modified, and how it can be changed, and this must constitute part and parcel of their training in human relations. Thus, at once will they be equipped with the reason and the means of bringing about the new dispensation of man.

This must be our program, courageously and unequivocally expressed, for our cause is in the interest of every human being, of all mankind. . . .

The first half of *On Being Human* is devoted to the thesis that man's biological nature demands the use of the principle of cooperation. It begins with a rejection of the doctrine of "social Darwinism"—which maintains that competition among human beings is a natural expression of the "struggle for existence." The author then recalls

Prince Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, adding recently accumulated evidence in support of Kropotkin's claim that the ethical sense in human beings has its origin in the animal behavior. With or without this theoretical foundation, Dr. Montagu has no difficulty in proving that cooperation is a good thing, that love is essential to normal human life. Perhaps the most striking illustration of the importance of affection is provided in a chapter which reviews the new knowledge—is it really "new"?—of the needs of infants. The baby which obtains a minimum of "mothering" often becomes a backward child. The child raised in an institution is usually marked by language retardation and lack of motivation. The absence of affection and of the intimate ties of family life lead to "marked insecurity with a resulting hunger for attention and affection." Deprived of these elements of the normal psychic environment, such children develop attention-seeking behavior, at the same time manifesting overt hostility and aggressive actions. While adoption into a family may help in some measure, the effects are lasting. "It is not difficult," says Dr. Montagu, "to recognize such persons in adulthood. The basic personality defects are congealed at a level of extreme immaturity. By the age of six years, the damage has been effectively done that will mar the institution child for the rest of his life."

We may take the case for cooperation as sufficiently stated, even in this reverse form of demonstrations of what happens when affection and fellowship are absent, from infancy to maturity, in human relations. At least, Dr. Montagu supplies a number of intellectually persuasive arguments on behalf of cooperation. But, curiously enough, he does not allow that intellection is really an essential part of human life. This is a major complaint against *On Being Human*. For example, in the chapter, "The Basic Needs of Man," he says:

Man as an animal must breathe, eat, drink, excrete, sleep maintain adequate health, and procreate. These basic physiological needs constitute the minimum biological conditions which must be

satisfied by any human group if its members are to survive. They and their functioning interrelations constitute the innate nature of man. Second nature is that organization of cultural conditionings which is imposed upon, and more or less integrated with, the primary innate needs of man.

What about *thinking*? The book as a whole puts a pretty high premium on thinking, if, as its author says in the last chapter, we are "doomed to self-destruction" unless we release ourselves from the degrading tyranny of the "religion of economics." Why not say then that Thinking is a basic need? And if, as may be argued, thinking is what differentiates man from the animals, why not say that it is *the* basic need of man?

We are puzzled, too, by the statement that "the first law of life is and has always been self-preservation." It was not the first law of life to a number of distinguished human beings. Great figures of religion could be named as exceptions to this "law," but there are many others who have counted self-preservation as less important than something else, such as adherence to a principle. Would it be wrong to say that, for the best of men, self-preservation is *not* the first law of life?

The psychiatrists, whose opinions Dr. Montagu seems to value quite highly, all tell us that aggressiveness and hostility to others are the natural product of self-deprecation and self-disgust. If this is so, and if aggressiveness and hostility are the qualities in our society that we need to overcome, then don't we need, also, a conception of man, of *ourselves*, which is more inspiring than the merely biological account in *On Being Human*?

Actually Dr. Montagu wants us to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. This idea is not unacceptable. Either we pull ourselves up, or we get Jehovah or the Leader to do it for us. But if we are to do it ourselves, we have to believe ourselves to be the kind of people who are *capable* of performing this miracle. *On Being Human* does nothing to persuade us that we have this capacity. It calls out to nothing in man that

promises this capacity. Most books fail in this, but then, very few books expect and require us to do miracles. When a book promotes the idea of a miracle, without even hinting that the way of performing it has been left a complete secret, it seems necessary to take special note of this lack, despite the author's admirable intentions.