

GREAT QUESTIONS: V

THE question of knowledge or certainty is among the oldest inquiries, and one which, while it may occasionally seem to be "settled," is continually being raised again in a new framework of human problems. It is probably far better, for now and for any foreseeable future, for this question to remain unsettled, although it seems inevitable that, from time to time, many men, perhaps the majority, should delude themselves into thinking that they know what knowledge and certainty are.

This question tortured the Middle Ages over several centuries. It was asserted—and contradicted only by heretics willing to risk the threat of hellfire as well as the Inquisitor's stake—that Certainty lay in Holy Writ. Many found it easy enough to accommodate themselves to this view, but the others—the men with minds and an eagerness to use them—were inwardly disturbed at the prospect of not needing to think in order to know the truth. It was natural for them to insist that even if all needful truth were declared in Revelation, there ought to be considerable piety in attempting to show that *reason* as well as Revelation gives access to knowledge. So the scholastic philosophers put reason to work, although always with Revelation hovering in the background, as a stern monitor ready to chastise too independent flights of speculation, and to "protect" less ambitious souls from any "dangerous thoughts" which might result. The conventional view of certainty in the Middle Ages was well described by Adam of Saint-Victor in these most righteous lines:

Thus professing, thus believing
Never insolently leaving
The highway of our faith,
Duty weighing, law obeying,
Never shall we wander straying
Where heresy is death.

But the attempt to support Revelation with reason was a difficult enterprise. In time, it became evident that the enterprise was not only difficult but impossible. Reason had a tendency to lead away from Revelation, as Peter Abelard demonstrated so

long ago as the twelfth century. In his eagerness to teach people to reason, Abelard asked a number of questions which he not only did not answer himself, but also showed that the Church had no answer for—at least, no consistent answer. His *Sic et Non* (Yes and No) collected a large number of theological and ethical problems, to which he appended the opinions of the Church Fathers. The Fathers, needless to say, were often in hopeless disagreement. Only Scripture, Abelard maintained, was free from error, but by sharpening the wits of his readers on the questions raised, Abelard helped to make the inerrancy of Scripture seem relatively unimportant, as, indeed, it was. For his pains, Abelard was mercilessly pursued and persecuted by the doughty defender of orthodoxy, Bernard of Clairvaux, who realized perhaps better than Abelard's friends and admirers that this bright young man's activities could only expose the weaknesses in the orthodox position and undermine the authority of the Church. The propositions which Abelard argued, pro and con, but was careful not to settle, ranged widely over the fields of theology and ethics. They included, for example:

That faith is to be supported by human reason, *et contra*.

That to God all things are possible, *et contra*.

That only Eve, not Adam, was beguiled, *et contra*.

That nothing is yet established concerning the origin of the soul, *et contra*.

That works of mercy do not profit those without faith, *et contra*.

That we sin at times unwillingly, *et contra*.

That a lie is permissible, *et contra*.

That it is lawful to kill a man, *et contra*.

Quoting the Fathers and debating their meaning on such questions was bound to produce a New Freedom in the Middle Ages. Besides the tendency to reveal the inconclusive nature of "revealed truth," there were also born the seeds of a future realization of the sterility of reason alone. From the point of view of the search for knowledge, the birth or revival

of the scientific spirit was an effort to give reason something to go by—something substantial, something *real*. It was the early scientists, the men who in the sixteenth and seventeenth and eighteenth centuries rediscovered the outside world, the world of nature around them, who found the material on which reason could work. Galileo, one of the founders of modern physics, spoke clearly and well for the new adventure of the mind:

Philosophy [he said] is written in that great book which ever lies before our eyes—I mean the universe—but we cannot understand it if we do not first learn the language and grasp the symbols in which it is written. This book is written in the mathematical language, and the symbols are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures without whose help it is impossible to comprehend a single word of it; without which one wanders in vain through a dark labyrinth.

What we have to do, urged Galileo, is to study the world of sense experience:

In every hypothesis of reason, error may lurk unnoticed, but a discovery of sense cannot be at odds with the truth. . . . How could it be otherwise? Nature did not make human brains first, and then construct things according to their capacity for understanding, but she first made things in her own fashion, and then so constructed the human understanding that it, though at the price of great exertion, might ferret out a few of her secrets.

This was the origin of the famous Galilean "World Machine," which moves in a mathematical way its wonders to perform. The great project of modern science—the reduction of the forces of the external world to mathematical formulas—was successfully launched early in the seventeenth century, and because it was a project which energetic and thoughtful men could work on, with measurable success to show for their pains, it gradually gathered to itself enormous authority and prestige. A. E. Burt, in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Science*, sums up the content and the consequences of the Galilean world-view:

Physical space was assumed to be identical with the realm of geometry, and physical motion was acquiring the character of a purely mathematical concept. Hence, in the metaphysics of Galileo, space (or distance) and time became fundamental

categories. *The real world is the world of bodies in mathematical reducible motions, and this means that the real world is a world of bodies moving in space and time . . .* Teleology as an ultimate principle of explanation he set aside, depriving of their foundation those convictions about man's determinative relations to nature which rested on it. The natural world was portrayed as a vast, self-contained mathematical machine, consisting of motions of matter in space and time, and man with his purposes, feelings, and secondary qualities were shoved apart as an unimportant spectator and semi-real effect of the great mathematical drama outside.

Now the stage was set, the drama conceived, and the players cast in their roles. God and his angels, Satan and his demons, were no longer the important personages to consider in adjudging the realities of human existence. Vast impersonal entities had taken their place. As decisively as Michael Angelo had shaped his David, and painted Jehovah breathing life into Adam, the new creators of the human outlook gave form and substance to the world of nature by compiling its laws, classifying its creatures, and analyzing its properties.

What of God? In time, God was relegated to the unenviable position of a monarch without power, something like the British King. He was there—up there—in Galileo's system, but he had no work to do. He was there, in Newton's system, but only as an unoccupied overseer who might possibly touch up the cosmic mechanism, but only when the mathematical formulas could not be made to get along without Him. He was there in Descartes' system, but only as a voiceless and voteless presiding officer sitting over an assemblage of mechanical devices which operated very nicely by themselves. Descartes might need God to arrange an occasional interchange between Mind and Matter, but Descartes' tendency, and the tendency of scientifically minded thinkers ever since, was to do without irrational intrusions into the mechanics of natural existence.

There has been, of course, during the past three hundred years, a lot of history other than the history of science. Empires have been made and lost. There have been democratic revolutions against autocracy, and autocratic revolutions against democracy.

Technology has grown apace as the natural child of science, but with an independent career. Technology represents the collectivity of the prodigal sons of science, and their name is legion, their character mixed and diverse. But during all these changes, a great theory of knowledge was being applied, was working itself out to the last possible implication. The conclusion finally reached, so far as the scientific theory of knowledge is concerned, was well expressed by Bertrand Russell some twenty years ago in *A Free Man's Worship*. While some may complain that Mr. Russell is neither a suitable nor representative spokesman for scientific thought, there can be no doubt that he sums up with vigor the views of a large number of scientists of his generation, and that, as co-author with A. N. Whitehead of the most important mathematical treatise of our time, he qualifies as one of the most disciplined thinkers that time has produced. Gloomily, Mr. Russell wrote:

That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve as individual life beyond the grave; that all the labor of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.

This, we can easily say, was not Galileo's dream, nor Newton's. The vision before the scientist's eye of endlessly unfolding achievements—of the greatest good for the greatest number, to be compelled from a reluctant nature by the champions of natural discovery, won by the knightly men bearing the pennant of science who search out and slay the dragons of infectious disease, who cleanse and purge, who build and facilitate, until the heavenly city on earth of the eighteenth-century

philosophes stands created before us—this has nothing to do with doom and despair. Yet despair, and possibly doom, is what we seem to have got. Russell, at any rate, even if he did write closer to our time, was a better prophet than the earlier heralds of scientific progress and future ages of enlightenment to come.

We are not dealing, here, with the abstractions of future possibilities in scientific discovery, but with the psychological temper of human beings in relation to a hope that has not come true. Science has not squared the circle. We cannot press a button and find happiness. In fact, the science of today is very largely occupied with how to bring the greatest evil to the greatest number; unless, of course, it can be successfully argued that atom bombs and other even more promising implements of mass destruction are somehow instruments of good.

Perhaps the Middle Ages expected too much of God. Perhaps the modern age has expected too much of Science. And perhaps both ages have expected too little of Man. But wherever the fault, and whatever the mistakes of the past, the choice is before us again. Where lies certainty? What is knowledge?

The present is certainly an interlude between theories of knowledge. We say "certainly" for the reason that it seems clear that human beings cannot live without faith. An aimless, faithless life is a life bent upon self-destruction. For some, it may appear that, with disillusionment with religion and the breakdown of hopes for science, no further alternatives for faith are available. A bleak pessimism soon overtakes those who adopt this view, which may be a part of the explanation of the various revolutions of nihilism which have become almost characteristic of the twentieth century. But this pessimism overlooks one fundamental reality—the fact that the "authorities" which have weakened and failed before our eyes are both *outside* authorities. These authorities do not represent our capacities, *our* inward potentialities, *our* ability to meet and cope with the problems of life. Instead, they represent the delegation to external institutions of our yearnings for knowledge.

In terms of large-scale historical influence, the church has meant the deprecation of human worth and human possibility. The greatness of God, from Augustine on, was made to depend upon the degradation—the initial depravity and essentially sinful nature—of human beings. Science, in psychological terms, changed the vocabulary and the level of the deprecation of man, but not its major impact. It made of man, as Burt puts it, "an unimportant spectator and semi-real effect of the great mathematical drama outside." The last chapter—one hopes it is the last—of the involvement of human beings in this doctrine of the insignificance of man is represented by the "conditioning" theory of modern psychology, according to which people are the victims of their environment, and have practically nothing to do, themselves, with the kind of people they turn out to be. There is some truth, of course, in the theory of conditioning, but to raise it to the status of an absolute determinant of human behavior and quality is to destroy the moral significance of being a man.

It is a realizing sense of this—the moral significance of being human beings—that must be regained before any new feeling of certainty, or hope of reaching it, can be attained. Thus it is that MANAS is profoundly concerned with all views, theories, doctrines, expressions, which express or reflect the conviction that man is a power unto himself. The dream of human greatness must be rediscovered, cherished, amplified and justified. It is not the great engineer, nor the architect of political systems, nor even the sagacious statesman, who is the benefactor of mankind, these days—not these, but the simple individual who thinks for himself, who recognizes that the worth of a human life is what the man who lives it makes of it. There is a kind of jaunty pretension in Shakespeare's lines on this subject, but they speak to the point:

Why should my birth keep down my mounting
spirit?
Are not all creatures subject unto time?
There's legions now of beggars on the earth,
That their original did spring from Kings,
And many monarchs now, whose fathers were
The riff-raff of their age. . .

It is difficult to evolve a metaphysic of self-reliance without extensive borrowing from archaic systems of spiritual belief. Yet in these systems one finds a core of conviction which has been repeated, again and again, by the independent spirits of every age. Some have heard the promise of their inherent nobility in the whispering voice of the natural world. A Thoreau was at home among free men, and at home nowhere else, because he lived in kinship with the whole of life. When he spoke, he spoke in behalf of endless brothers of field and stream, mount and sea. There have been many others of like conviction, who drew their inspiration from some well of solitude, yet found their consanguinity infinitely extended through this secret communion. The mystics, perhaps, have come closest to formulating the psychological ladder to certainty, to philosophic serenity, but the vocabulary of the mystic is notably obscure, and too often he seeks only a sanctuary for himself.

Perhaps we shall have to conclude, with Spinoza, that knowledge, like all precious things, is exceedingly hard to come by. This, indeed, may be the most precious bit of knowledge of all, for if we have thought it easy to gain the truth—if we have imagined that the specialists of our society, in either religion or science, are more important sources of knowledge than our own, unprejudiced reflections—then, surely, we have shut the world of knowledge out from ourselves, and are bound to feel friendless and lost when our authorities topple and give way.

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—It is generally agreed that the chief aim in education should be to engender the power of discrimination and a sense of values. The supreme betrayal in the case of the printed word would be a book or periodical which had no purposeful ideal, or which failed to relate morality to truth, but almost as great a treachery to the growing social consciousness of the times must be any action which tends to impede the free flow of books, and, consequently, the circulation of ideas, from one country to another. Such a proceeding, combined with the increasing difficulties of international travel, owing to a variety of "curtains" and currency restrictions, makes nonsense of the "One World" objective to which so much lip allegiance is being paid. How has the recent "war for freedom" affected this particular problem of book circulation ?

The answer, in one respect, is to be found in the sickly fate that befell a resolution unanimously passed by the Ministers of Education of the allied countries in London in 1944. This was to the effect that in future there should be no obstacles of any kind to hinder the free movement of books from one country to another. Really, it was a decision to revert to the pre-war position, when scarcely any country except the United States taxed books, and even the United States taxed only books in English (a practical discrimination against the British Commonwealth). Today, however, we find from a chart issued by the Publishers' Association of Great Britain that no less than fifty-five countries indulge in the practice of taxing the importation of books. Here are a few examples. Belgium has a 4½% *taxe de transmission* on a value calculated as francs 7,000 per 100 kilos. Brazil has a 5% tax on all foreign payments, an import duty of Cruz 1.54 per kilo on books in full cloth and leather bindings, with various invoice and handling charges in addition. Canada insists upon an 8% sales tax from which books are not exempt (as they are in England from

the purchase tax). Pornographic magazines are not liable to this tax, and enter Canada freely. Finland charges 10% sales tax on entry plus 10% turnover tax on increased sales. France levies not only on the cost of the books but on the postage also, and on leather-bound books there is an import duty of 20%. Italy levies a 10% import tax plus 2% to 3% local tax. Norway has a 6¼% *ad valorem* sales tax from which books are not exempt. The Philippines taxes at 10% all books other than USA publications. Fortunately, in Britain, books from the Dominions (other than Canada), the Colonies, and most of the sterling and soft currency areas, can now be freely imported under open general licence, and only importations from hard currency countries are limited by quota, although we are free to import twice as much from the USA as before the war.

These statistics may appear tiresome; but they have vast implications. After all, the chief means of getting to know one another in different countries is still by means of books and the encouragement of translations. In this sense, international restrictions upon the free flow of books, whether by taxation in the interests of revenue or by censorship, partial or complete, really constitute a tax on knowledge. These vexations and delays press particularly upon foreign students. As an instance, British medical and technological works have largely displaced German textbooks. A doctor in Spain, or an engineer in Japan, however, may be kept waiting indefinitely for information easily procurable from British works. There would seem to be no limits to the power of the modern State; but, in this direction at least, Sir Stanley Unwin (President, International Publishers' Congress) records one victory over the prevalent obscurantism. In 1940, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, in seeking to justify a purchase tax on books, made the remarkable statement that he could not distinguish between books and boots! Publishers thereupon organized a most successful campaign against the proposed tax, with the result that "no one was more surprised than the Chancellor at the

unanimity with which intelligent people in all sections of the community rose with one accord against a tax on knowledge. Books are free of all taxation in Great Britain—something of which we may justly be proud."

If peace be indivisible, so also is the fight the world over against the ever-increasing encroachments of the modern State. "Beware of reducing men to the state of machines," wrote William Godwin in 1793, "govern them through no medium but that of inclination and conviction." The warning has gone unheeded, and now we have substituted the Divine Right of the omnipotent Power-State for the sanctity that once surrounded Kings and Emperors. Between the public burning of books by Hitler and their ill-treatment by so many countries today, there is little to choose so far as the expression of the general attitude of contempt is concerned. Wrote an English theologian and logician (R. Whately) early last century: "It makes all the difference in the world whether we put Truth in the first place or in the second place." Governments which hinder the free flow of books, and, therefore, of ideas, are blind to this distinction.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW REACHING MINDS

Two current novels, available in popular editions, lend weight to some of the contentions embodied in the MANAS leading article for Oct. 17—"Psychic Possibilities." The central thesis of this article is that the reality of psychic phenomena has been taken for granted during the whole span of recorded history with the exception of the last three hundred years. We are therefore entitled, if we wish—and we do—to choose to assume that the last three centuries have suffered from an extraordinarily rigid bias on the subject, explainable by the post-medieval determination to avoid anything transcendental or "extrasensory." Now, then, with the achievements in psychic research of workers such as J. W. Dunne and Dr. J. B. Rhine dragging the question of extra-sensory perception back through the door of orthodox laboratory investigation, a natural average-man willingness to believe in extra-sensory experience may re-assert itself.

Both the books we propose to discuss, however, are by authors who have displayed an earlier interest in mysterious subjects. Dorothy Macardle's best seller, *The Uninvited*, has been called one of the most fascinating "ghost" stories ever written. In *The Uninvited*, Miss Macardle suggested the possibility of temporary personality-survival after death, and worked out a plausible psychology to support this theory. Her latest book, *The Unforeseen* (now a Bantam reprint), is a conscientious attempt to persuade readers of the reality of extra-sensory perception. Perhaps this very determination makes *The Unforeseen* a less impressive novel, but the fact remains that a popular author displays a powerful urge to proclaim belief in the supernormal world. In *The Unforeseen*, we find the orthodox medical viewpoint of an established practitioner confronted with experiences which can be explained only on the basis of Rhine's work at Duke University and Dunne's earlier compilations of adequately verified prophetic dreams. Since his

orthodox colleagues had never been able to take Dunne and Rhine seriously, the doctor has never given time to studying their methods or conclusions in any detail. But before the end of the story, his conversion is complete. When asked whether or not he finally agrees that the customary denial of extra-sensory perception has been unjustifiable and unscientific, he replies:

"It has been culpable ignorance. The data have been within reach; clues have lain under our eyes and we have blinded ourselves; there is a vast reservoir of inherited knowledge in all corners of the world: we have dismissed far too much of it as mere superstition. At least, that is the conclusion to which I find myself being led. . . . We *have* a whole new science to learn—or, rather, to accept. Freud, you know, after stiff resistance to the idea of telepathy, has accepted it."

Readers who recall "Psychic Possibilities" will doubtless note a correlation between Miss Macardle's discussion of extra-sensory perception and the suggestions of Lundholm, James and McDougall. When Miss Macardle has one of her characters ask, "Can there be some reservoir of knowledge, planetary, perhaps, with which individual minds come into touch?" she is obviously following the same current of thought found in the work of these men:

Since, as Dr. Lundholm believes, psychical research indicates that memories survive bodily death, and since evolution is purposive (as indicated by the role of instincts or racial memories in evolution), the author concludes that the individual memory continuum is a part of a wider field, eventually an infinite memory continuum akin to the transmittant universal mind of William James, or the superhuman monads of Leibniz.

Another volume, also available in paper covers, is based upon a dramatic exercise of psychic power. Nevil Shute's *No Highway in the Sky*—currently being shown as a motion picture—portrays a scientist whose research in the molecular field prepared him to accept any "unforeseen" possibilities in regard to the relationship of time, space and material substance. His small daughter develops definite power of

clairvoyance, which this unusual scientist is able to regard as a purely natural phenomenon, and worth nurturing carefully for its scientific significance. Finally, the child's clairvoyance is used to prevent tragedy, as also occurs in Miss Macardle's book.

These authors are not probing "the dark side of nature" for "horror" material, but rather showing affirmative interest in the hitherto unexplained psychical powers latent in man as an indication of the hope that human consciousness will someday expand to include new perceptive horizons. Nevil Shute has long had a penchant for writing on "odd" subjects. His *Round the Bend* (see MANAS for April 18, 1951) showed considerable imagination in depicting the origins of a new, nonsectarian religion, while an earlier novel, *An Old Captivity*, was based upon a presumed instance of reincarnation.

Both Miss Macardle and Nevil Shute are capable authors, and worth reading regardless of what one may think of their interest in the cause of extra-sensory perception. Mr. Shute, in particular, attempts to arrive at a synthesis between faith in scientific method and metaphysical exploration. Of itself, this fact seems to have special significance, since so many of the defenders of superphysical reality have been religionists, spiritualists, or otherwise anti-scientific in bias. Mr. Shute's description of a scientist's consecration to his work and his tremendous capacity for self-discipline summed up in a quotation which proves beyond doubt the author's respect for scientific creativity:

"You cannot limit a keen intellect, or try to fetter its activity. At times, perhaps, I have no job on hand for a few weeks that will wholly occupy the energies of some member of my staff, but I cannot put the untiring brain into cold storage, or prevent the thinker from thinking. If there is a hiatus in the flow of work, my research workers will start researching on their own, into the problems of thought transference, or ghosts, or the Lost Tribes of Israel, or the Great Pyramid and the coming dissolution of the world. That, gentlemen, does not mean that they are going mad. It means that I have picked my men well,

because the true research worker cannot rest from research."

Is it possible, then, that such popular authors are pointing the way to a broader synthesis between the realms of science and "superstition"? Miss Macardle, too, gives evidence of her belief that such a synthesis needs to take place. The setting of her story is in Ireland, making it possible for her to point out that the "new discovery" of the astonished doctor in respect to the validity of clairvoyance is taken matter-of-factly in a country wherein extra-sensory experience has always been accorded validity. The important question, obviously, is, how much of the ancient traditions and beliefs on this subject have actually been far more than superstition? We suspect that a great many tentative answers will be formulated during the next few decades.

COMMENTARY

IRREPLACEABLE IDEAS

DR. MORGAN'S reflections concerning the price we pay for thoughtless destruction, whether of a way of life or a species of animals, are easily linked with the theme of our leading article. One thing that has belonged to other civilizations, yet seems perilously close to being gone from our own, is a sense of wonderment at the universe around us. The gadgets of technology do not, perhaps, increase our appreciation of the forces we have learned to make our servants, yet those forces have a majesty in their own place and function which have led better men than ourselves to a wise humility.

The ancient Platonists, and some of the modern ones, also, nourished the conviction that this is a living, intelligent universe. Their "reverence for life" was really a cosmic emotion or sympathy, and they acted as men who play a part in the destiny of the world. Even if that destiny has no clear definition—even if we are not *sure* of the "intentions" of natural law, if any there be—we can still feel that the profundities of which the human mind is sometimes capable are also an expression of Nature, in consonance with natural law, and strive to make our contributions worthy of our highest potentialities.

Surely, no real scientist has worked to create a body of argument for the deprecators of human freedom. No deeply religious man ever meant that his searchings after the Infinite should be turned to justify systematized ignorance and priestly politics. These execrable orthodoxies were not the work of men who acted as men, but of those who behaved as less than men—they sought to weaken and discourage the human race.

Every age has its dogmas, its "climates of opinion." It is a worthy task to attempt to recognize those dogmas for what they are. We have long wanted to reproduce for the pleasure of our readers a passage on this subject from Joseph

Glanvil, the seventeenth century latitudinarian who contended valiantly for impartial science.

. . . they that never peep'd beyond the common belief in which their easie understandings were at first indoctrinated, are indubitably assur'd of the Truth, and comparative excellence of their receptions . . . the larger Souls, that have travail'd the divers *Climates of Opinions*, are more cautious in their *resolves*, and more sparing to determine.

Glanvil, we may note, was the originator of the phrase, "climate of opinion," lately made popular by A. N. Whitehead, and there are other evidences of the modern spirit in this Renaissance thinker.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

ONE of the best purchases of the year for home educators, it seems to us, is a small volume entitled *What Do You Think?*, edited by Anna Pettit Broomell (Harper, 1950). Suitable also for classroom use in Junior High and Elementary schools, this collection of discussions based on folk tales of ancient India offers numerous unique approaches to moral problems.

In the first place, *What Do You Think?* makes most of the ultimate questions of philosophy, religion, and morality come very much alive, as they often can, in the setting of drama. Second, it awakens a feeling of intimacy for one of the greatest philosophical cultures in the history of the world, and affords a perspective in which many of the regrettably short-term values of western civilization may be evaluated. Finally, by including the remarks of youngsters who have discussed the tales presented, demonstration is provided of teen-agers' capacities to ponder deep questions deeply. Anna Broomell gives the intent of the undertaking:

The purpose of this simple book is to help young people to think.

It is set up in such fashion as to call attention to some of the basic problems of human nature which are the same in all times and places, no matter what cultural dress they may wear. In vivid story form these human problems are set forth in terms of motivation, of means and ends, of values by which men live and grow and are happy. Some boys and girls are inclined to think on a low plane, some on a high plane; they as well as we know the difference in the terms. Some have what might almost be termed an instinct for the categorical imperative; an intense sense of the fairness of an individual's acting in such fashion that his way of life if duplicated by everyone else would advance the well-being of all. Others scorn such a criterion, or do they? Perhaps they have never pressed for the ultimate meaning of selfish living; and what, after all, is selfishness. Students vary in their time sense: some think in terms of immediate results; some think in long runs.

Adolescents, and even children, like to weigh and ponder; they come upon similarities beneath differences with some of the verve and excitement of a prospector. Before long they recognize what Thomas Mann calls "recurrence in continuity." They recognize themselves in other persons. The 1948 report of the Commission on Liberal Education of the Association of American Colleges points out how young people "take inordinate interest in what they think is *practical* study, failing to realize that self-knowledge, which is indispensable to the most practical judgments, is the highest practicality." But once that point of the value of self-knowledge strikes home, they are avid on the scent and deal relentlessly with themselves as well as with the adult generation which has built up these selves of theirs.

Those who are at all familiar with the great epics of Indian tradition, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, will be both impressed and pleased by the manner in which these stories are retold in simple language. The selection from the *Mahabharata* becomes a treatise on the many varieties of human loyalty. Yudishthira, the chosen king among the Pandava princes, struggles with the help of his mighty brothers to regain a kingdom wrongfully usurped. But in the planning and the waging of this war, he follows ancestral traditions, retaining the philosophical humility and respect for the natural order of events that the great kings of Indian lore were obligated to possess. Finally, at the close of the story, Yudishthira, having outlived his royal family and accompanied only by a faithful hound, is offered admission to the city of the gods by the celestial power, Indra. Weary from his years of struggle and privation, Yudishthira longs to enter, but refuses unless his faithful dog is allowed to come, too:

"Not for heaven itself will I leave a living thing that looks to me for love."

And the King turned his face again toward the desert.

A great light shone as Indra smiled. "Mount the chariot, my son, and bring with you the hound. True king are you, Yudishthir, who would not enter heaven and fail one humble soul who has trusted you."

Certainly we can see that a class could learn much from this symbolic story. For instance, some might argue the practicality of this type of loyalty, while others could easily point out that ascending to the Kingdom of Heaven is not exactly a "practical" matter. There is opportunity for the emergence of a realization that some of the most important aspects of human life can be represented by the symbology of legends—legends wherein common aspirations for "truth, goodness, and beauty" may be appreciated without reference to "proof."

Another of the stories is a humorously told tale about the pitfalls of self-righteousness among saintly people, with obvious bearing on the frailties of most conventional religious attitudes. One of the stories introduces the logic of the concept of reincarnation as a stimulating conception for those who think of the human soul in terms of the rewards and punishments of Christian afterlife.

Harry Overstreet, author of *The Mature Mind*, heartily endorses the book:

By the method here used the reader is made to concentrate upon the clash of principles. This should make for clear thinking in the realm of human behavior.

Here are some of the questions Anna Broomell asked the children, each one of which grew naturally from the Hindu tales:

- Of what does heroism consist?
- Does valor require frankness ?
- Do you believe the effect of a deed, be it good or bad, dies or goes on forever?
- What is jealousy?
- What causes it?
- Are young people ever put in similar situations today?
- What should one do with a mad prince?
- Does possessing beautiful things enhance their value?

If one has read a few of the interesting—even profound—answers to these questions provided by some teenagers, and still doubts that the *average* young person "likes to weigh and

ponder" such values in philosophical terms, we recommend experimenting with this book at home or in class. Those who have proved Anna Broomell's thesis for themselves are inclined to offer guarantees of success. And is it not a wonderful thing to be able to believe that "once the point of the value of self-knowledge strikes home, they are avid on the scent and deal relentlessly with themselves as well as with the adult generation" ?

FRONTIERS

Irreplaceable Resources

ONE of the blind spots of our everyday life is the unconcern with which we eliminate species of plants and animals. Several years ago I was visiting a remote corner of Yellowstone Park with the president of the American Audubon Society when we saw a lordly crane in a mountain meadow. My companion said that not more than about twenty individuals of that species were known to be alive, and that within a few years it probably would be extinct. A considerable number of species have been entirely extinguished. A few such spectacular cases are well known, including the passenger pigeon and the New England heath hen.

It has taken probably millions of years for species to develop; once eliminated, they are gone forever. With our present crude appraisals we do not know their longtime significance. Some might prove highly useful to us. Early man probably killed off the mammoth and the aurochs. Preserved and domesticated, they might have had a useful place in the human economy.

But there is a deeper reason for insuring that species are not eliminated. Man is so dominant and so egotistical that he thinks of himself as the only animal that has value in and for itself. All others are here simply for his convenience, or as nuisances to get rid of. Just as his gods have been anthropomorphic, so has his world been anthropocentric. Should he get outside of himself and take an objective view, he might come to the conclusion that he is not the measure of all things, and that other species have inherent value.

Dominant human societies have looked upon weaker or less favorably situated human societies in the same way. In America, for instance, the aborigines were considered as of little worth, and principally as obstacles to the pioneer. Where humane considerations checked brutality and extermination, the American Indian was seen as an unfortunate creature without significant culture, to be herded onto reservations where he would gradually disappear. Until recently it was the settled policy of

our government to destroy the Indian native culture and to replace it with our own. There was almost total unawareness that each indigenous culture had unique qualities, some of them of great potential significance. They provided new ways for looking at life and value, and few things are so difficult to achieve or so precious as new outlooks that are the outgrowth of human experience.

The rough and ready pioneers who made contact with Indian tribes were no more capable of realizing the existence of philosophic values there than would a common sailor arriving in Boston harbor have been capable of realizing the significance of a nearby William James or a Whitehead. Radin's *Primitive Man as a Philosopher* gives a hint, in his study of Wyandotte Indian philosophy, of thinking of which the frontiersman was unaware. Some American Indian languages had elements of structure so inherently superior to similar elements of our own that they might supply precious outlook and example for use in developing—in the universal language which is to come—the most effective and economical ways of communicating ideas. These people had priceless contributions to make in philosophy, outlook, aesthetic genius, and in worldly wisdom. In destroying the social structure of these people we destroyed irreplaceable resources of culture. Unaware that anything of value was being destroyed, we were like the barbarians who overthrew the culture of ancient Greece, using the marble of beautiful temples as stone for making lime.

This long reference to the destruction of the values of other human cultures is to suggest that our disregard of the values of other species may be similarly blind. Even today psychologists are coming to recognize the existence of unique animal "viewpoints," whereas a few years ago animals were declared unintelligent because they did not excel in particular tests by which men were accustomed to measure intelligence. Our present contempt for the mental and personal potentialities of other species may be no more appropriate than was the contempt in which we have held the minds of "savages." For man's own sake he should guard the continued existence of other species, even if in some cases they

be confined to limited areas, as to some small islands.

But to get back to the deeper reason. Just as with our attitude toward non-dominant races, our chief reason for not eliminating species should be that we consider sharing our world with them, rather than monopolizing it for ourselves. With man's present egotism this may seem a bizarre and ridiculous concept, just as sharing life with "inferior" races has seemed ridiculous to most men of a dominant race. Possibly this feeling is due in part to our own insensitiveness and lack of imagination.

Is it not possible that the value of life as a whole may depend in part on the variety of ways in which it can be appreciated and participated in? Perhaps all life will lose if, by eliminating species with their unique ways of sharing in and enjoying life, we reduce the range in which participation in life may be experienced. At least while we are so blind and uninformed in the matter, would it not be high wisdom for us to refrain from the irremediable course of eliminating species which never can be replaced? Man is now perfectly sure that he is the apex of creation, and that no other species is fit, or ever will be fit, to share his preeminence. This may be a premature judgment.

This discussion is anthropocentric. We constantly get back to the prospect that *men* will benefit from having regard for other species. It is difficult to actually look at the matter from the standpoint of other species. While we are now superior and dominant—as dominant as the trilobites were for fifty million years—some other species probably are as intelligent as we were when we assumed dominance, and are still evolving in intelligence. Without giving mystical or absolute meaning to the word "rights," is it not possible that other species also have rights to continued participation in the adventure of living? Perhaps humanity is not unique in having rights, if by that term we mean potential ability to experience value which makes continuance of existence an asset to the total worth of living.

The great menace to human life is not the atomic bomb, but boredom. So long as the wolves

of need and want are chasing us, life remains interesting. Given a universal economy of abundance, satiety would loom as the chief of all dangers to human life, as is pictured in that remarkable production, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*. Under such circumstances every resource of variety and interest would be prized. One reason for repeated anthropocentric emphasis is a feeling that only from that point of view can men in any numbers be led to take an effective interest in the subject. Loyalty to life as such is a quality not yet generally achieved.

The view here presented has little or nothing in common with that of the Sikh who strains his breath through a cloth to prevent bringing death to any flying insect, or with the Hindu refusal to take the life of cow or monkey or snake, no matter how much damage these creatures are doing; or even with the point of view of Albert Schweitzer, whose "reverence for life" leads him where possible to avoid killing any living creature. Most species, in pursuit of survival, have become very prolific—in some cases almost incredibly so. If reproduction and development were uninhibited, the earth would soon be smothered with life. In America if the deer population were not held in check it would soon multiply to the point of consuming all our crops. Preventing, controlling, and taking life are processes imperative to human survival. Regard for living species is another matter. While types are realized only in individuals, yet it is peculiarly through types that living values are preserved.

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