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GREAT QUESTIONS: VI

A CORRESPONDENT with more bravery than most, not knowing, perhaps, what he may precipitate, having noticed occasional references in MANAS to "metaphysics," has asked the bluntly inviting question, "What is or are metaphysics?" As most readers will recall, we are often guilty of speaking highly of metaphysics, and when, prompted by this reader's inquiry, we found in *Webster's* a third of a column of small type devoted to the definition of this subject, it seemed worth while to attempt our own.

To borrow a phrase from *Webster's* for a start, Metaphysics is "the science of the fundamental causes and processes in things." More largely, it may include attempts at answering questions such as, "Is there a God?"; "Has life a purpose, and if so, what might it be?"; "What is the soul?"; "What happens after death?"—all, obviously, questions which have puzzled the minds of men since the very beginning (whenever that was—which is, incidentally, another metaphysical question).

Because of the way in which professional philosophers and speculators have worried these questions, the practical world long ago reached the conclusion that metaphysical investigation is a bootless and fruitless task, with no more reward than the uncertainty that existed in the first place. Lacking in the exact demonstration which has made the scientific method justly famous in other fields, metaphysics has been either sneered at or ignored for at least two generations, while its defenders during this period have been few, and seldom heard from by the majority of people.

It is just possible, however, that the defenders, or some of them, at least, have been right, and the great majority wrong in its disregard for the conception of life as, among other things, a profound philosophical problem to be solved by human beings. It seems fair to say, at any rate, that the great majority—the millions who give the world its general character and tendency—have been wrong about a great many other things, judging from the condition the world is in; and fair to say, too, that insistence upon a review of matters which the great majority has neglected is far from out of place.

We pass, then, to what one of the best, if not widely successful, defenders of metaphysics has had to say on the subject. In the Introduction to his work, *Appearance and Reality* (Macmillan, 1925), Prof. F. H. Bradley discusses the popular objections to metaphysical inquiry:

> The man who is ready to prove that metaphysical knowledge is wholly impossible has no right here to any answer. He must be referred to the body of this treatise. And he can hardly refuse to go there, since he himself has, perhaps unknowingly, entered the arena. He is a brother metaphysician with a rival theory of first principles. And this is so plain that I must excuse myself from dwelling on the point. To say the reality is such that our knowledge cannot reach it, is a claim to know reality; to urge that our knowledge is of a kind which must fail to transcend appearance itself implies that transcendency. For, if we had no idea of a beyond, we should assuredly not know how to talk about failure or success. And the test, by which we must distinguish them, must obviously be some acquaintance with the goal.

With regard to the uncertainty attending reflections upon ultimate questions, Prof. Bradley has this to say:

> Is it possible to abstain from thought about the universe? . . . by various causes, even the average man is compelled to wonder and reflect. To him the world, and his share in it, is a natural object of thought, and seems likely to remain one. . . . the question is not whether we are to reflect and ponder on ultimate truth—for perhaps most of us do that, and are not likely to cease. The question is merely as to the way in which this should be done. And the claim of metaphysics is surely not unreasonable.

> Metaphysics takes its stand on this side of human nature, this desire to think about and comprehend reality. And it merely asserts that, if the attempt is to be made, it should be done as thoroughly as our nature permits.
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> . . . it protests that, if we are to think, we should sometimes try to think properly. And the opponent of metaphysics, it appears to me, is driven to a dilemma. He must either condemn all reflection on the essence of things,—and if so, he breaks, or, rather, tries to break, with part of the highest side of human nature,—or else he allows us to think, but not to think strictly. . . .

Bradley's remarks on the highest end of metaphysical thinking present a neglected aspect of philosophy:

> All of us, I presume, more or less, are led beyond the region of ordinary fact. Some in one way and some in others, we seem to touch and have communion with what is beyond the visible world. In various manners we find something higher, which both supports and humbles, both chastens and transports us. And, with certain persons, the intellectual effort to understand the universe is a principal way of thus experiencing the Deity. No one, probably, who has not felt this, however differently he might describe it, has ever cared much for metaphysics. And wherever it has been felt strongly, it has been its own justification.

Lastly, there is Bradley's sense of proportion on abstract thought:

> I may have given the impression that I take the metaphysician to be initiated into something far higher than the common herd possesses. Such a doctrine would rest on a most deplorable error, the superstition that the mere intellect is the highest side of our nature, and the false idea that in the intellectual world work done on higher subjects is for that reason higher work. Certainly the life of one man, in comparison with that of another, may be fuller of the Divine, or, again, may realize it with an intenser consciousness; but there is no calling or pursuit which is a private road to the Deity. And assuredly the way through speculation upon ultimate truths, though distinct and legitimate, is not superior to others. There is no sin, however prone to it philosophers may be, which philosophy can justify so little as spiritual pride.

The substantial conclusion from these passages is that we are all inveterate metaphysicians, whether we know it or not, and whether we want to be or not. Every important decision in life is involved in and depends upon metaphysical assumptions. When a man acts in deliberate injustice, thinking that "no one will know" what he has done, he admits the law of human disapproval of unjust acts, but denies the moral law inherent in the nature of things. When a man practices racist discrimination, he denies the metaphysical propositions laid down in the Declaration of Independence of the United States. When a man appeals to his chosen deity to bring him victory in war over his enemies, without considering with all possible impartiality whether his cause is just, he is actually asserting the dogma (a corruption of metaphysics) that the deity—the highest principle in the universe—will lend a partisan ear to *his* petition, and will reject the appeals of the foe.

When Bertrand Russell affirmed in A *Free Man's Worship* that the loves, hopes, fears, and beliefs of human beings "are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave," he made a metaphysical judgment about the nature of things. How Russell shall be refuted is a metaphysical problem, and one worth inquiring into.

It is worth inquiring into for this reason: While not very many people will admit to agreeing with Mr. Russell, a very large number of people act as if they agreed with him. Their piety, that is, lacks roots of conviction. They behave *as if* no great and transcendent purpose may be fulfilled in their lives; and as if the death they fear is indeed the end of all their hopes and strivings. Metaphysics enables a man to reveal to himself the sort of foundations it is possible to have for his beliefs. Metaphysics recognizes no special revelation of truth, except as it conforms to the necessities of thought, although metaphysics may

indeed confirm ideas contained in what men have regarded as special revelation. Metaphysics seeks out the sources of conviction and exposes them to impartial review.

In an article published recently in *This Week* (Oct. 21), Senator Ralph E. Flanders offers a metaphysical proposition to which many will at once assent by what may be called "moral instinct." It is a faith to live by. Its phrasing by Sen. Flanders is clear and unequivocal:

> There is a moral law in the universe as there is a physical law. That moral law has never been broken. It cannot be broken. We can break ourselves against it, but the law remains firm. It shows itself to us in two aspects. If we see it and follow it, it is full of blessings. If we disobey it, we suffer punishment.
>
> The moral law is unlike statute law, which can be broken. It is unlike statute law in that punishment is not inflicted after indictment, trial and judgment. The punishment is an indissoluble part of the law itself. The unlawful act carries its own punishment.

But what is a "moral" law? Manifestly, a moral law is a law which effects justice. When a wrong is done, retribution seeks out the offender. Justice *may* be a divine concept, but it is certainly a human concept, and when we speak of justice, we mean something that a man can understand. He may not understand it all at once, but to have genuine meaning, justice must be embodied in a law which is in principle comprehensible by human beings.

Well, then, what about the swindlers and embezzlers who live extravagantly and die in bed? How has retribution reached them? Or the martyrs to noble causes? How was Socrates rewarded for the integrity which brought him death by poisoning at the hands of the Athenian State? And Gandhi, who hated no one, who loved the world—why, if there is moral law, did he suffer assassination by a religious fanatic?

Evidently, our conviction that the moral law is a fact in nature presses us beyond the visible world of nature. We have to say that the adjustments will take place in the life which follows death, whether here, under other circumstances, as Plato suggested in the *Republic*, or in some metaphysical "place" of reward and punishment. But this is a further metaphysical proposition about the nature of things. We are constrained by the demands of justice to postulate some form of immortality, that the moral law may be fulfilled.

The problem has other aspects. We have looked at only one side of the equation. If the present circumstances as well as the future represent the working out of moral law, then the present is in fact a retribution for the past. What we suffer, we earned. What we enjoy, we worked for. And here we encounter other difficulties. This child begins life in the lap of luxury, that one, in a stable or a slum. An infant may be born to an early death from ravaging disease, or to be overtaken in the almost defenseless condition of impressionable childhood by some form of moral corruption. This youth is cut off from life at the very portal of his career. That city is doomed to be erased from existence by flaming death from the sky, and all the inhabitants—old men, sorrowing women, kindly as well as mean and cruel people, and babies in whom the moral sense has hardly waked at all—are destroyed in an instant.

Who has the better of the argument, here—Mr. Russell or Mr. Flanders? Metaphysics compels us to ask questions of this sort. It is possible, of course, to reply to Mr. Russell that the wisdom of God passes human understanding, and that some recondite purpose is at work through all this tragedy. But Mr. Russell is entitled to answer that he requires a better explanation; he may say that when evil is made into an incomprehensible good, he prefers to keep the good he understands, and the evil he understands, too, even if this means doing without God entirely. Many men have found reason to accept this peace of mind which skepticism affords—the comfortless but honest haven of

those who prefer an unviolated sense of justice to the theory of a Friend behind the cosmic veil.

Metaphysics, however, would rejoin: Have you exhausted all the possibilities? If you are able to concede an immortality after death, why not an immortality before birth? This third metaphysical proposition, that of pre-existence, whether acceptable or not for other reasons, will at least satisfy the need for an explanation of present sufferings and enjoyments. Unfamiliar as it may seem, the idea is far from new. Some fifteen hundred years ago (443 A.D.), it was written off the books of Christianity as an execrable heresy taught by Origen, one of the early Christian Fathers of Alexandria. It is believed today, in one or another form, by what is probably a majority of the world's population—both Buddhists and Hindus, for example, maintain some version of the doctrine of preexistence.

Some stanzas from the *Light of Asia* present the Buddha's teaching on the subject of the moral law. They might easily form another chapter of development of Sen. Flanders' initial proposition:

> . . . each man's life
> The outcome of his former living is;
> The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrows and woes
> The bygone right breeds bliss.
>
> That which ye sow, ye reap. See yonder fields!
> The sesamum was sesamum, the corn
> Was corn. The Silence and the Darkness knew!
> So is a man's fate born.
>
> He cometh, reaper of the things he sowed
> Sesamum, corn, so much cast in past birth;
> And so much weed and poison-stuff, which mar
> Him and the aching earth.
>
> If he shall labor rightly, rooting these,
> And planting wholesome seedlings where they grew,
> Fruitful and fair and clean the ground shall be,
> And rich the harvest due.

Turn where we will, so soon as a man begins to reflect upon the idea of the moral law, great thoughts are born. The idea that justice is rooted in nature compels flights of speculation, and it also compels self-examination. For the metaphysician, there can be no bargain sale of justice. He cannot exchange his intellectual honesty for a logically insupportable religious security. This justice that we seek must be amenable to reason, or it is not justice, but something else, masquerading in its name.

Letter from NORWAY

LILLEHAMMER:—Many people, including the young of school age, feel more and more the necessity of regaining a sense of wholeness, both in daily life and in various educational activities. The stress on analysis and specialization—however necessary they may have been, and in spite of their enormous contribution to material progress—has played its part in making modern man blind to such concepts as wholeness, dependence, cooperation, common purpose and rich many-sidedness. In all countries under the influence of western culture, these shortcomings are easily demonstrated.

Intelligent men and women are everywhere conscious of this problem. Some have resorted to one or another we-have-the-whole-truth system. Very often they are oppressed by feelings of unbearable insecurity and an overwhelming need for rest and peace in an age where revolutionary forces are everywhere at work in the spiritual, political and economic spheres. Resort to communism (or nazism) in the field of politics, acceptance of Roman Catholic Christianity, or the postulated "science of spirit" (Anthroposophy) of Rudolf Steiner, are tendencies which have increasingly manifested themselves within recent years. The people drawn to these groups are in search of wholeness, purpose, and an extra-individual authority, and hope they have found a guiding principle both for their personal life and for cultural development. On the other hand, you find the great number of intelligent people who consciously or unconsciously take their refuge in detail work, in specialization, in the simple existence of various ivory-towers. *Noli me tangere* (do not touch me) is their slogan, and you will seldom see such people taking interest in their neighbours' doings.

Despite recent improvements, the Norwegian educational system does not assist efficiently in developing grownups with minds open to the richness of nature and culture. Nor does it maintain a sense of interdependence among the various subjects taught in school. The aim of education in schools was originally to introduce life itself, to create an active interest in it, to make children and young people creative in their relation to life. There is not much help in elementary school reforms if teaching in the upper forms still clings to the traditional system, where too many pupils meet daily defeat, where too much of the work is done to attain good marks, and where life itself loses its independent value. Marks are evidently of great importance to ambitious teachers, and parents take such a great pride in them that you now and then feel it more worth while to bring those two categories of people together in the classroom, leaving the children free to live a real life.

Many of the prevailing tendencies in modern Norwegian school education are due to the fact that admission to further vocational training at various universities, technical high schools, and teachers' colleges is made dependent on marks obtained at the lower levels. Competition for marks is extraordinarily sharp and is felt not only in matriculating classes, but far down in the upper forms of elementary education. The future dentist, therefore, must be careful with his marks in German, even when he is a boy of fifteen.

At present, educational reforms have shown best results in the first stages of elementary education. There most regard is paid to individual capacity and the creative spirit. In the best schools, progressive teachers manage to preserve the open-mindedness, the spontaneous interest of infancy, and since they are the only teachers for children, they are even able to integrate the various subjects taught.

Another noteworthy movement is to be found among university students and professors. Far from having made their ideas realized in practical reforms of university life, a group of prominent students and scholars has attempted to revive the idea of an *universitas* by seeking contacts across

the borders of specialized subjects. For example, the Scandinavian Summer University brings together some 300 students and professors for three weeks in a quiet, peaceful place, for discussion of one or another theme supposed to underlie the branches of science—be it history, literature, theology, biology, physics, psychology or anthropology. This summer, *Causality* was the theme; next year *Man and his Environment* will be considered. Very important it is that these plenary discussions at the Summer University are preceded by local teamwork throughout the winter terms.

Impressions from this summer's gathering in Denmark are very promising. Not that all these different people agree on every point, but they do agree in stressing the importance of coming together, of being acquainted with principles, methods and the main criteria of other sciences. The feeling of wholeness and companionship is stressed, even if one is unable to formulate it or build any system on it. It is to be hoped that this work, however unpretending at its initial stage, will have practical bearing upon the future organization of university studies. One may hope for a corresponding movement in secondary and adult education as well.

NORWEGIAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

THE STORY IS ALWAYS THE SAME

A SUBSCRIBER recently called our attention to a truly remarkable book, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces,* by Joseph Campbell, one of the Bollingen Foundation series. We know nothing of Joseph Campbell's academic pedigree, save that he obviously approaches the study of religious symbolism by the psychoanalytic method, but this volume is distinctive in the breadth of its contribution to the synthesis of psychology, philosophy, and religion.

Campbell insists that there is great merit in the comparative study of ancient and modern religions and, further, he proceeds to demonstrate the importance of such study. His description of the religious heroes of both East and West suggests a psychological unity—a unity of thought and feeling behind the myths—which gives us common ground for evaluation of even such diverse religious symbolisms as the Aztec Quetzalcoatl, the Asian Buddha, the Greek Prometheus, the spirit-worship of the Apaches, and the Christ of Western peoples.

Mr. Campbell has obviously thoroughly immersed himself in study of the spontaneous intuitions of men, which he represents as being behind legends of identical meaning in all lands and ages. The Preface to *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* indicates that part of the author's inspiration grew out of a desire to contribute to the reconciliation of the world's great religions; he also reveals his belief that psychoanalytic training affords a common ground for bringing order out of the chaos of religious ideas:

> "The truths contained in religious doctrines are after all so distorted and systematically disguised," writes Sigmund Freud, "that the mass of mankind cannot recognize them as truth."
>
> It is the purpose of the present book to uncover some of the truths disguised for us under the figures of religion and mythology by bringing together a multitude of not-too-difficult examples and letting the ancient meaning become apparent of itself. The old teachers knew what they were saying. Once we have learned to read again their symbolic language, it requires no more than the talent of an anthologist to let their teaching be heard. But first we must learn the grammar of the symbols, and as a key to this mystery I know of no better modern tool than psychoanalysis. Without regarding this as the last word on the subject, one can nevertheless permit it to serve as an approach. The second step will be then to bring together a host of myths and folk tales from every corner of the world, and to let the symbols speak for themselves. The parallels will be immediately apparent; and these will develop a vast and amazingly constant statement of the basic truths by which man has lived throughout the millenniums of his residence on the planet.
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> Perhaps it will be objected that in bringing out the correspondences I have overlooked the differences between the various Oriental and Occidental, modern, ancient, and primitive traditions. The same objection might be brought, however, against any textbook or chart of anatomy, where the physiological variations of race are disregarded in the interest of a basic general understanding of the human physique. There are of course differences between the numerous mythologies and religions of mankind, but this is a book about the similarities; and once these are understood the differences will be found to be much less great than is popularly (and politically) supposed. My hope is that a comparative elucidation may contribute to the perhaps not-quite-desperate cause of those forces that are working in the present world for unification, not in the name of some ecclesiastical or political empire, but in the sense of human mutual understanding. As we are told in the Vedas: Truth is one, the sages speak of it by many names.

Campbell's central thesis is that the core of religious affirmation is the story of the Hero, and that whether portrayed as Prometheus, Buddha, or Christ, whether the struggles of the Hero be symbolized by physical or spiritual effort, the Hero story is always the same. Further, it is intimated that the yearning of all men to become Heroes themselves has given perennial interest and eternal validity to this "Monomyth":

> As we soon shall see, whether presented in the vast, almost oceanic images of the Orient, in the vigorous narratives of the Greeks, or in the majestic legends of the Bible, the adventure of the hero normally follows the pattern . . .: a separation from

the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return.

The Hero, whether accorded religious veneration or simply deep popular respect, portrays "the destiny of Everyman," first, by "the call of adventure." It is the vocation of the Hero to pass beyond "personal, local and historical limitations,"—the conventions of his age—to some deeper glimpse of reality, through devotion to a higher form of soul-striving. Thus Theseus, like Buddha, undertook the most difficult of journeys to find the most difficult of rewards—self-submission. This "self-submission" involves the mystery of one's total environment in life, through the acquisition of wisdom. Nearly all men, we can say, begin such a quest at some time in their lives, but only the genuine Hero perseveres and penetrates the veil. And, afterwards, only the very greatest of heroes are willing to return to the ignorant world as teachers. Buddha, Campbell recalls, experienced great difficulty in determining whether "the word" of "the Law of Life" *can* be comprehended by those who suffer in ignorance:

> This brings us to the final crisis of the round, to which the whole miraculous excursion has been but a prelude—that, namely, of the paradoxical, supremely difficult threshold-crossing of the hero's return from the mystic realm into the land of common day. Whether rescued from without, driven from within, or gently carried along by the guiding divinities, he has yet to re-enter with his boon the long-forgotten atmosphere where men who are fractions imagine themselves to be complete. He has yet to confront society with his ego-shattering, life-redeeming elixir, and take the return blow of reasonable queries, hard resentment, and good people at a loss to comprehend.

But this "Crossing of the Return Threshold," as Campbell puts it, is always possible. No man is without the stuff of which heroes are made, and all are potential sharers of comprehensive wisdom. All have the power to help create a just society on earth. The Great Teachers and Heroes, then, will always have a sufficiency of prompting for the impulse to "return to the world" after illumination, and, conversely, the average man can, however dimly, perceive that he may always be offered a helping hand by those who have progressed beyond him in inward evolution:

> The two worlds, the divine and the human, can be pictured only as distinct from each other—different as life and death, as day and night. The hero adventures out of the land we know into darkness; there he accomplishes his adventure, or again is simply lost to us, imprisoned, or in danger; and his return is described as a coming back out of the yonder zone. Nevertheless—and here is a great key to the understanding of myth and symbol—the two kingdoms are actually one. The realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know.

Mr. Campbell sees the normal activity of dreaming as often representing, even if only vaguely, the will towards a higher and nobler form of life. Dreams, like the often shadowy resolves of waking consciousness, are always with us. We do not necessarily need the great religious and hero traditions of the past in order to hear and answer a similar call from "mystical" planes in ourselves, yet the Hero tradition, in its purest forms, may serve as corroboration and encouragement for solitary striving.

Campbell is really writing for the present, despite the content of *The Hero With a Thousand Faces.* He places no hope in the conventional religions of our day, since they have so obviously "become associated with the causes of the factions as instruments of propaganda and self-congratulation." But these religions are presently but that empty shell which once embodied living psychological and moral seeds. The young sapling of heroism has always pushed away from the solid ground of the ordinary toward fructifying sunlight—a sunlight of inward aspiration which can never be measured nor bounded by formality of doctrine:

> Man, understood, however, not as "I" but as "Thou": for the ideals and temporal institutions of no tribe, race, continent, social class, or century, can be the measure of the inexhaustible and multifariously wonderful divine existence that is the life in all of us.
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> The modern hero, the modern individual who dares to heed the call and seek the mansion of that

presence with whom it is our whole destiny to be atoned, cannot, indeed must not, wait for his community to cast off its slough of pride, fear, rationalized avarice, and sanctified misunderstanding. "Live," Nietzsche says, "as though the day were here." It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse. And so every one of us shares the supreme ordeal—carries the cross of the redeemer—not in the bright moments of his tribe's great victories, but in the silences of his personal despair.

COMMENTARY
SCIENCE AND GOD

ACCORDING to current press reports, Pope Pius XII has declared that the "daring genius" of science has proved the existence of God! This will be interesting news to those who feel that science, if it has proved anything on this subject, has proved exactly the opposite.

Not that science has anything specific to say on metaphysical questions. Science deals with the relative realities of the physical universe, and to take the word of a scientist in the matter of whether or not there is a transcendental power, force, or intelligence ruling over the universe would be like accepting the judgment of the anatomist who, after dissecting a human cadaver, announced that he could find no evidence of a "soul." As Ortega y Gasset once pointed out:

> Scientific truth is characterized by its exactness and the certainty of its predictions. But these admirable qualities are contrived by science at the cost of remaining on a plane of secondary problems, leaving intact the ultimate and decisive questions. . . . Yet science is but a small part of the human mind and organism. If the physicist detains, at the point where his method ends, the hand with which he delineates the facts, the human being behind each physicist prolongs the line thus begun and carries it on to its termination, as an eye beholding an arch in ruins will of itself complete the missing airy curve.

Scientific opinion on the subject of God is as variable as the opinion of poets. Lecomte du Noüy takes one view, Albert Einstein another. And in both cases, it is the human being behind the scientist, and not the scientist, who arrives at the conclusion. Speaking before the first Conference on Science, Religion and Philosophy in 1940, Dr. Einstein made this clear. After asserting that "The main source of the present-day conflicts between the spheres of religion and science lies in this concept of a personal God," he added:

> To be sure, the doctrine of a personal God interfering with natural events could never be refuted in the real sense by science, for this doctrine can always take refuge in those domains in which scientific knowledge has not yet been able to set foot. But I am persuaded that such behavior on the part of the representatives of religion would not only be unworthy but also fatal.
>
> For a doctrine which is able to maintain itself, not in clear light, but only in the dark, will of necessity lose its effect on mankind with incredible harm to human progress.
>
> In their struggle for the ethical good, teachers of religion must have the stature to give up the doctrine of a personal god—that is, give up that source of fear and hope which in the past placed such vast power in the hands of priests. . . .

"Science," as Dr. Einstein points out, does not say this. It is only the most eminent living man of science who speaks. But, human authority for human authority, we prefer his judgment to the Pope's.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

FOR the second time in many months we recommend the reading of an article appearing in a popular magazine. "There Are No Sissies at Frontier College," by William Stephenson, in the Oct. 27 *Saturday Evening Post*, will be of especial interest to any who admire the Gandhi-type, work-while-you-learn idea of education. Frontier College has no campus and no undergraduates. It is the headquarters for assigning "sixty-five back breaking, unglamorous, poorly paid jobs in the Canadian wilds." Those who sign up for the unpaid work camp teaching jobs, which are the essence of the Frontier plan, are required to give their free time to teaching impecunious backwoodsmen who often have no other opportunity for learning.

> In an average year, Frontier College's objective is to have seventy-five Laborer-Teachers out in camps, 3000 men enrolled in formal classes, another 12,000 in discussion groups. Twenty thousand hours of instruction are given in an average year, and more than 200,000 books and magazines supplied. Everything is given free, of course, Frontier considering this attention as only the interest on a debt long owed to bush workers. Frontier supplies books and magazines even to camps not staffed by L-T's, has provided over 4,000,000 pieces of literature for lonely men since 1900.

Although none of the ordinary incentives exist for seeking a position with Frontier, last year more than two hundred students, many at the head of their classes at such universities as Queens, Harvard, Princeton, London and the Sorbonne, competed for the sixty-five available jobs.

How did this happen? Apparently many things are involved here besides the great enthusiasm of Dr. Edwin Bradwin, seventy-three-year-old President of Frontier College. When President Bradwin appeals for volunteers, he gets a lot of response, probably because all teachers realize that they can never fulfill their own highest standards until they have acquired both thorough-going self-reliance and a knowledgeability about non-citified basic labor. Dr. Bradwin typically speaks thus to prospective recruits:

> The frontier always has been and always will be a part of our precious North American heritage. In the cities you may be big noises, but the real test of your manhood is this: Are you big enough, humble enough, to take your college education and culture to men on the frontier in the one form they can most readily assimilate—that is, on the end of a pike pole, a tamping rod or a mucking machine? If not, you're no leader and never will be. You're just a hollow shell with a sheepskin.

The Frontier College experiment, then, enables us to learn a great deal about human beings, and many of the things we learn are not easily learned elsewhere. We discover, for instance, that there is tremendous appeal in the idea of teaching even when it is stripped of all financial emoluments and all hope for scholarly or worldly prestige. We also discover that *learning* has a similar elemental attraction, since the backwoodsmen who tax their brains after a hard day of manual labor will never receive diplomas or honors.

Some of the Frontier College laborer-teachers, too, have left good jobs in college communities, principally because of the pressing need for men to carry out the Frontier program. This would indicate that part of the passion to teach is the passion to serve a need.

The *Saturday Evening Post* story also gives abundant and colorful illustrations of some of the unique psychological values involved. Most of the teachers who have taken on a summer's work with Frontier have applied to come back again, at least partly because they themselves benefited immeasurably from close contact with different ethnic and labor groups. Teachers probably know that if they had come as "sociologists," to make a "study of backwoods conditions," any data accumulated would have included little of human comprehension or sympathy.

There seems to be a great deal of obvious truth in Dr. Bradwin's contention that no one can

truly understand North American history or culture unless he has directly participated in something analogous to frontier life. Each sort of work environment creates its own psychological atmosphere, and it is out of this atmosphere, more than from anything else, that ethics, or culture, grows. Gandhi maintained that the simple Indian village was an ideal educational unit because its very simplicity made it possible for even the youngest of children to participate in and comprehend the village economy. Similarly, the city college graduate who works as a pipe man, pulp loader, fisherman, or at any other kind of basically productive labor, establishes some kind of rapport with all of those men throughout our history who have similarly been engaged.

Finally, we can see that the lure of the wilderness atmosphere, which unquestionably plays its part in attracting L-T candidates, is of itself representative of an era of learning. Not only is the wilderness symbolic of a brave new world simply because it is untouched, but also it seems to be intuitively felt that a quality of mystic serenity and self-reliant strength often awakens in this sort of primitive background.

So, while we may never journey to the Canadian forest to be an L-T teacher, we can be grateful for much that Frontier College has disclosed about the will to learn and the will to teach. The following incident indicates the central spirit of successful Frontier work. A young infantry veteran from Montreal, a McGill University graduate, took on an L-T post last summer. He found himself surrounded by a hundred displaced Poles who knew practically no English and seemed "a spiritless apathetic lot." Yet after a summer of Herculean labors, including finding and equipping a classroom, the young teacher found his efforts well repaid, not only by increased literacy but by heartfelt appreciation:

> Before he left, Robbie had the extreme satisfaction of seeing every man in his large class attain the 850-word Basic English vocabulary on which he had set his heart. His last sight of the camp showed him the entire gang out on the tracks, most of them in tears, waving furiously while the Polish chorus he had trained put everything they had into a soulful version of Goot Nide, Leyties, Ve're Going to Leafe You Now.

FRONTIERS

Sidney Hook Rides Again

NOT long ago, a reader complained of certain articles in these pages on the ground that they made it difficult to introduce MANAS successfully to friends who felt disturbed by the "Communist menace" and regarded almost any criticism of the American business community with considerable suspicion. Particular reference was made to a MANAS Review which spoke deprecatingly of advertisements which orate impressively on the "freedoms" exercised by Americans, but which never undertake the championship of unpopular causes.

Interestingly enough, we now have for review a copy of *Fortune*, the deluxe magazine of business,—Big Business,—in which this criticism, or something very like it, is the theme of an entire article by Sidney Hook. What is more, Prof. Hook—who is chairman of the philosophy department at New York University—quotes Karl Marx to prove his point, and apparently gets away with it.

The *Fortune* article, "Bread, Freedom, and Businessmen," is interesting on another important count: Prof. Hook calls attention to a curious similarity of underlying outlook between businessmen—or many businessmen—and the communists. Even to propose such an idea is probably enough to make a true believer in Free Enterprise quiver with indignation, but Hook's discussion makes the conclusion difficult to evade.

His argument is squarely based on the fact that the business community has shown virtually no interest in any of the "freedoms" save "economic" freedom. Much more important than the freedom of private enterprise, so highly cherished by champions of the "American Way," are what Prof. Hook calls "the *strategic* freedoms," some of which have explicit formulation in the Bill of Rights. These strategic freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of the press—are the means by which all other freedoms are preserved. When these are lost, the free political action of the community is stultified. Only free expression of opinion makes it possible for citizens to fight for justice in particular cases, to seek redress for wrongs, and to marshal evidence of the abuse of power before the people. As Prof. Hook says:

> That is why every group which wishes to see conflicting interests resolved reasonably, or which is wise about the conditions under which it enjoys its own freedom, must be profoundly concerned with the state of freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of inquiry and teaching, freedom of the press, freedom of cultural opportunity and development. For intelligent moral choice depends largely upon them. (*Fortune*, September.)

While in recent years both religious groups and organized labor have begun to see the importance of the strategic freedoms, among businessmen there has been a tendency to ignore them "unless a direct relationship of a most immediate kind could be demonstrated with the narrow group interest." Thus:

> There is no record of any large business having evinced a concern for freedom of speech and press until some NLRB decisions limited the right of companies to distribute literature to workers on the eve of representation elections. Indeed, efforts by some companies to prevent the distribution of literature by unions outside factory doors have not been unknown.
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> . . . Why is it that the fight for civil liberties, for academic freedom, for minority rights is left largely to bishops, lawyers, and professors?

Prof. Hook takes note of the exceptions to this rule, among publishers, for example, who have a natural interest in a free press; and, among large concerns, he mentions the leadership of International Harvester in opposing discrimination against Negroes. In general, however, the judgment stands, that businessmen have "contented themselves largely with renewed affirmations of faith in free enterprise—despite certain difficulties entailed by their acceptance of tariffs and in some instances of government loans

and subsidies—as if this constituted the alpha and omega of the American faith in freedom."

Prof. Hook's prose is so smooth, so uninflammatory and serene in mood that we suspect that many *Fortune* readers will not quite realize the devastation left by his quiet remarks. The import of the next passage, however, is unmistakable:

> If we judge the American businessman not by what he says but by what he does and fails to do, then it sometimes seems as if he shared a common premise with his bitterest enemy—the doctrinaire, orthodox Communist. Although they differ about what constitutes an economically sound basis of society, and in their conception of economic freedom, they both believe that once an economically sound system is established, cultural and political freedoms will take care of themselves. They regard freedoms as byproducts of, or superstructural additions to, the economic foundations. Both are caught up in a kind of historical automatism from whose implications the businessman releases himself only by abandoning, rather inconsistently, the casual monism that rules out the role of ideas and ideals in redetermining the direction of history.

The virtue of inconsistency, then, is what the communist lacks, making him ride his theory of economic determinism to the bitter end of enforcing the particular system which he regards as "sound."

While apparently not himself a believer in the doctrine that freedom depends upon "bread," that "right" economics is the cornucopia from which all other blessings flow, Prof. Hook points out that even within the implications of this dogma, freedom remains a practical necessity:

> For believers in free enterprise, a welfare state, collectivism, and a mixed economy are equally convinced that only through the systems they espouse can bread be produced and distributed most effectively. Unless one is to make a claim to infallibility, the right of the people *to choose freely* which economic system shall minister to their material needs cannot be abridged. And this right to choose carries with it, as we have seen, a cluster of other rights that, if embodied in practice, constitute a considerable part of what we mean by cultural and intellectual freedom. . . . The profoundest lesson of our era is that without political freedom there can be no other freedoms, but only an uncertain and uneasy exercise of privileges that may be terminated abruptly without anybody having to account to those who are affected by these decisions. . . .
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> There is an irreducible quality in the experience of uncoerced choice, which leads men to risk their very lives in its behalf. Whether our choices are good or bad, wise or foolish, we feel diminished as human beings if we are prevented from making them. Denied freedom to make choices, we are denied responsibility, and to deny our responsibility is to deny our humanity. It is the unique glory of man that although he hopes and works for an abundant life, he is prepared to die to prove that he is human.

There is hardly a need, now, to praise Sidney Hook's qualities as thinker and writer. His is possibly the most incisive serious prose being written today. It may be said, also, that Prof. Hook is at his best as a controversialist, and that, back in 1934, in the *Modern Monthly* for April of that year, he wrote just about the most brilliant analysis and criticism of the Stalinist regime in Soviet Russia that we have ever read. He dealt in terms of principles, illustrated by facts, as he does in the *Fortune* article. The irony of all this is that in 1934 Prof. Hook wrote as a Marxist, a non-organized Marxist, continuing a tradition which is present, though somewhat weakly, in the works of Marx—this tradition being the Renaissance ideal of free human beings. And now Prof. Hook writes with equal brilliance on comparable Capitalist delusions. Whatever else it suggests, this versatility of critical viewpoint proves that, whatever a man is labelled, the label is not important so long as freedom remains his paramount ideal.