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TROUBLE WITH DEFINITIONS

IN one of the new books on education—dozens of them seem to come out every month—there is a section that sounds extremely reasonable, and yet, when you get to thinking about it, what the author says is by implication profoundly upsetting. We shall not give the name of the book, since this writer is by no means the only one who offends in this way, and the volume also has a lot of good sense in it. The annoying part of the book is this: that when the writer starts out to emphasize the tremendous need for improvement in education—college education—in the United States, he makes his punch line the claim that the *nation* has a vital stake in the proper education of young men and women.

This is the sort of generalized concern about education that you hear on every hand, these days. You'd think that the young people going to school—or failing to go to school—are somehow the "property" of the State; that the State exercises some kind of proprietorship over their lives; and that, finally, the most important reason for giving them a good education is that they will be able to serve the State better if they get one.

People who write in this way have things backwards. The reason for a good education is *not* the welfare of the State. The reason for a good education is an enriched life for individual human beings, who are ends in themselves; who are precious because they are human, not because they are promising "material" for nationalists to be concerned about.

Educators do, of course, talk about the sanctity of the individual; they do say on occasion that the State exists for the sake of the individual, and not the other way around; but when they really get down to business—when they set out to win friends and influence people in their drive for better education and bigger appropriations—they talk mostly about the *national* disaster which may result if we don't do what they say. As this man puts it:

> In short, if private individuals and non-Federal agencies find themselves unable to assure college education for increasing numbers of our young people, the Federal Government will be compelled to assist. Whether or not we like this prospect, we are going to have to accept it as a possibility for the immediate future—unless we prefer to accept the prospect of certain destruction of this nation.

Behind this paragraph, of course, is the menacing shadow of Russian achievements in education, but the comparison with the Soviets only sharpens the point, it does not make it. The point is made by the assumption that the most legitimate kind of concern about education is a *national* concern. This is an assumption which should not be suffered to pass without strenuous objection.

But objection, at times, seems an empty privilege. What can a man *do* about such things? You are not dealing with a personified evil or an "enemy." There is no question, here, of throwing the rascals out. Fundamentally, the problem involves a judgment of man, what he is for and what he is good for. And this, fundamentally, is what makes the matter so disturbing. It seems that we live in a time when, despite all the rhetoric, people—or the spokesmen for people—do not really care about man at all.

How has this happened to us?

In his latest book, Dr. Carl G. Jung, the Swiss analytical psychologist, has some interesting things to say on the subject. Himself a scientist—insofar as psychology is a science—he places much of the blame for our condition on scientific assumptions about man. Early in this volume *(The Undiscovered Self,* Little, Brown, 1957) he writes:

Under the influence of scientific assumptions, not only the psyche but the individual man and, indeed, all individual events whatsoever suffer a leveling down and a process of blurring that distorts the picture of reality into a conceptual average. We ought not to underestimate the psychological effect of the statistical world picture: it displaces the individual in favor of anonymous units that pile up into mass formations. Science supplies us with, instead of the concrete individual, the names of organizations and, at the highest point, the abstract idea of the State as the principle of political reality. The moral responsibility of the individual is then inevitably replaced by the policy of the State *(raison d'état)*. Instead of moral and mental differentiation of the individual, you have public welfare and the raising of the living standard. The goal and meaning of individual life (which is the only *real* life) no longer lie in individual development but in the policy of the state, which is thrust upon the individual from outside and consists in the execution of an abstract idea which ultimately tends to attract all life to itself. The individual is increasingly deprived of the moral decision as to how he should live his own life, and instead is ruled, fed, clothed and educated as a social unit, accommodated in the housing unit, and amused in accordance with the standards that give pleasure and satisfaction to the masses. The rulers, in their turn, are just as much social units as the ruled and are distinguished only by the fact that they are specialized mouthpieces of the State doctrine. They do not need to be personalities capable of judgment, but thoroughgoing specialists who are unusable outside their line of business. State policy decides what shall be taught and studied. . . .

Apart from agglomerations of huge masses of people, in which the individual disappears anyway, one of the chief factors responsible for psychological mass-mindedness is scientific rationalism, which robs the individual of his foundations and his dignity. As a social unit he has lost his individuality and become a mere abstract number in a bureau of statistics. He can only play the role of an interchangeable unit of infinitesimal importance. Looked at rationally and from outside that is exactly what he is, and from this point of view it seems positively absurd to go on talking about the value and the meaning of the individual. Indeed, one can hardly imagine how one ever came to endow individual human life with so much dignity when the truth to the contrary is as plain as the palm on your hand.

Dr. Jung puts the matter very well. He articulates the feelings of a large number of people who feel the essences of the good life slipping away from our culture, and who would like to know what to do about it.

The problem is involved with certain subtleties. For example, if you define it in political terms, you become ostensibly an anarchist. And this, you feel, is somewhat ridiculous. Probably, the problem ought not to be defined in political terms, to avoid such oversimplifications. Instead of being an anarchist, you probably think, with Thomas Jefferson, that the best government is the least government; or, at any rate, that a culture in which the highest values are politically formulated is a culture which has lost its perception of essential humanity. This is not the same as being "agin" the government. It may not be even a political attitude, but a sense of deep concern for what is happening to one's fellows and, in some measure, to oneself.

Then, suppose you feel that Dr. Jung has put his finger on one of the principal troubles with modern education—its orientation in harmony with scientific rationalism. Well, this does not make you *opposed* to all the conceptions that identified with scientific rationalism—it does not turn you into a fundamentalist or a sentimentalist. It means simply that scientific rationalism is an intellectual attitude which has evolved in studied neglect of the subjective side of human life, and that the moral abyss that has resulted from thinking dominated by the assumptions of scientific rationalism is slowly claiming failure after failure of our society.

You want a conception of man that permits some *substance* to the idea of individuality—something to cleave to, something to honor as the root of all human excellence. Something which gives the qualities of originality, freedom, moral responsibility and integrity a foundation that can be spoken of, reckoned with, as such. Something you can talk to your children about, as being the core of their being—of the being of every human.

This doesn't mean that you want to join a church. It doesn't mean that you wish to turn your back on the magnificence of the scientific tradition. It means that you would like to approach the world of inner reality—the world of value, aspiration, and ideal conceptions—with the same spirit of adventure that the scientists of the past embodied in their encounter with the physical world.

These yearnings do not make you embittered or alienated; but they are likely to make you indifferent to many of the things which other men regard as important. You will probably lose interest in politics, as such, but this will be because of a fresh interest in *man*. You will be unable to thrill to the stimulants aimed at the mass emotions, not because you no longer have sympathy for the traditional values which these stimulants invoke, but because you are trying, however tentatively, to recover those values on a basis of more intimate relations with them—by respecting the values themselves, and not the crude mechanisms which are supposed to serve them in a mass society.

This philosophy is one of selection, not rejection. It is a practical attempt to honor the ideals that have always been cherished by the best of the human race, without allowing them to be emasculated by slogans and ostentatious public observances. It seeks the essences behind the forms in religion, the temper and intentions of science, and the respect for man that animates various and even opposing political philosophies. There will be times, of course, when an absolute stance will have to be taken; when the intolerable must be met by a refusal to tolerate. But the mood is basically one of conciliation, of patience, and of a fundamental faith in the capacity of human beings to find their own way to a better life.

Letter from **GENEVA**

GENEVA.—At the closing of the second Atoms for Peace Conference, the President of the Conference referred to its size as approaching the unmanageable. Thus the means to solutions of apparently unmanageable world problems also approach the unmanageable.

A little inquiry reveals the reasons for the President's statement. The sixty-nine participating countries sent 2,700 delegates, who presented 2,135 papers, to which, presumably, the 3,600 observers listened intently. The 900 accredited correspondents from thirty-six countries thus raised the total of visiting persons involved in the festivities to a conservative 7,200. The proceedings of the Conference were published in thirty-three volumes, and the press conferences alone were recorded on tape measuring—hold on, now!—over 200 kilometres (about 123 miles) in length!

An observer at the Conference told us of a parlor game played by a friend of his, a man employed by the AEC in Washington. At a convenient lull in a dinner-table conversation, this friend will say, "You know, of course, that I was aboard the plane that dropped the A-bomb on Hiroshima?" He says that the universal response is a blank look, an "Oh! were you?" and an immediate change of subject.

This reaction is alleged by the friend to be evidence of the general ignorance and lack of interest with which people seem to view atomic energy problems—a view that very closely conforms to the conclusions reached by a study group of the World Health Organisation on "Mental Health Aspects of the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy," which reported to the Atoms for Peace Conference. The study group included representatives of the fields of psychiatry, radiation medicine, public health, social anthropology, and science journalism—a fascinating diversity!

Familiar as we are with the threats of damage associated with atomic energy, in terms of either destruction of civilization or the build-up of harmful residues of radioactivity in our world and in our bodies, one may be surprised that the WHO skips so easily over these problems. But as the study group defines its job, its directions are the same as those presented by J. B. Priestley in MANAS for August 6, and in fact point searchingly to our basic refusal to come to grips with the problems of the Age of the Atom.

The WHO fully supports our dinner-table experimenter in his observation that we avoid the atomic problem. "In the minds of people everywhere," it says, "atomic energy remains a threatening and mysterious force, interpreted in magical rather than rational terms, and fraught with irrational fears and irrational hopes."

We are, in fact, the study group concludes, still in the "childhood of mankind," still building myths and legends akin to those of Prometheus, Pandora and Faust, still indulging in the fantasy-building of the child who comes into conflict with unexplained power.

"Even adults [*sic*], in an emergency," it continues, "can relapse into primitive forms of thought and feeling—and that is characteristic of much of the psychological reaction of people to nuclear energy."

Most interesting is the study group's conclusion that in no significant respect does the public's reaction to the peaceful uses of atomic energy differ from its reactions to the bomb itself. Emotional reactions to both matters are described as "often pathological":

> Disagreeable weather is freely blamed on atom bomb tests and the failure of the harvest likewise. Fears of the fall-out of the disposal of atomic waste, of the pollution of water and milk supplies, fears of sterility or of harmful genetic effects are direct expressions of anxiety. This is a deeper and more subtle fear than that of the unleashing of energy that might destroy the universe. . . .

It is, in fact, a fear of ourselves.

Somewhat further afield, perhaps, but equally interesting is the study group's analysis of the stresses which atomic energy introduces into the world. In advanced countries, the coming of atomic energy may be considered as not less than a second industrial revolution—for the development and manifestation of sources of power form of course the basis of an industrial civilization. Here the comment is deceptively mild: "Societies have a certain threshold of tolerance for rate of change which, if exceeded, leads to some measure of social disorganization."

But in the countries usually described as underdeveloped, the probable dislocations, as a result of swift industrialization alone, are almost limitless. It is not possible, either, to seal these developing countries off and let them have their industrial revolution in peace. It is not merely the quiet sort of change acknowledged by a social scientist recently on visiting India after a ten-year absence. Asked what seemed the greatest change during this period, he replied: "More people are wearing shoes." This is so, and this is good. But the accelerated industrial and social revolution, sparked by atomic power, brings more problems:

> Where exaggerated hopes have been aroused, there may be disappointment and disillusionment when nuclear installations do not prove feasible or do not produce at once a miracle in the form of a higher standard of living. . . . The repercussions from eventual disappointment may be severe and take the form of hostility against those populations which draw major benefits from atomic energy.

Which puts us of the West promptly back at the center of the problem. If atomic energy is allowed to divide further an already divided world, to raise the kinds of spectres already standing between the West and Russia and China, perhaps even to continue to make the rich richer and the poor poorer, we are really sowing the whirlwind.

One of the hopeful characteristics of western civilization is indeed highlighted here. That is, our ability to function as though change were normal. We no longer shoot our retiring politicians, for instance. Feather-bedding and patent-hiding to the contrary, we do introduce and employ new and improved industrial and commercial procedures. The essence of the present psychological problem seems to be that, so far, atomic change has at least proved to be too much for us.

In conclusion the study group feels that the first task of those interested in mental health is to work harder toward what it calls a "culture of change, in which change and reorientation could take place without upheaval." While our chief present effort must be "directed toward securing for adults a greater intellectual grasp and . . . better understanding," even more important is our present duty towards children, to enable them, at least, to learn "to put up with insecurity and to face reality."

It seems to me that the main virtue of this conclusion is not its Hollywood-like sweetness, but that it so defines the unmanageable problem as to give us something to work on. In essence it is "children . . . and ourselves," upon whom our efforts must continue to be expended.

CORRESPONDENT IN GENEVA

REVIEW
SATIRE AND RELIGION

BY courtesy of a review in the *Manchester Guardian* (Aug. 7), we learned that Nigel Dennis' *Two Plays and a Preface*—published this year by Weidenfeld and Nicolson of London—would contain provocative if strident material on the absurdities of the religious psyche. While Mr. Dennis strikes out with satire in all directions at once when the mood is upon him, and while consequent inaccuracies of both history and philosophy may be frequently noted, he nevertheless points up issues which are often neglected.

One of the plays, "The Making of Moo," is a fantasy dealing with the design of a religion by a civil engineer who had unwittingly displaced the chief deity worshipped by the tribe in his district. It becomes a study of how an invention may capture its inventor. Mr. Dennis distrusts all abstract thought, and hence ends with nothing more—or less—than an appeal to measure all human experience against "objective" standards. But his lengthy preface is unmerciful both to traditional religion and to the implicit religion often encountered in Freudian and depth psychology. The author's view of contemporary religion is that it has finally talked itself out of existence, save for those who still feel that the revival of Original Sin is a worthy endeavor. He writes:

> The more civilized a Church has become, the more it hurries to lock up the spoons when its doors are rushed by Original Sinners. A civilized Church, such as the Church of England, shares with the humanist a dislike for barbarism: it regards its earlier history as largely an ugly story, to which it has no intention of returning. It has matured into a friendly, helpful body steeped in Pelagianism—which is to say: it believes that men and women have an immense amount of good in them, that they are perfectly capable of helping themselves and of being helped by others. That decisive help must come from Grace, through faith in God, is still essential to Protestant belief; but most clergymen have long ceased to badger people with this conviction; they merely offer it to them on a plate. Protestantism retains its barbarities only in verbal form: worshippers still sing 'There is a fountain filled with blood' and even ask to be washed in it; but by now the blood has ceased to register as such and would create sheer disgust were it not regarded simply as a colourful word in a fanciful jug. This is civilized condition of Invisible worship—and it must pay the penalty of having its restraint and amiability denounced as 'decadence'. Revivalism and Fundamentalism of any sort can only remind such a church of the decent gap that exists between its theory and its practice and can only seem like a barked order to recapture primitive energy at the cost of new decency. Consequently, when Mr. Billy Graham comes to town, to enunciate in studied syllables messages that the Church has spent centuries growing out of, a revulsion fills the clerical air until the short-trousered apostle has gone his way and the dogs are back in Harringay Arena. When Mr. T. S. Eliot suggests, in his steady way, that tropical ants provide proper biter-bit atonement of the blue stocking taken in adultery, few Anglicans appreciate such a regression to what was deemed glorious in the reign of Nero.

Dennis' objections to Freud come in this pithy paragraph, involving enough truth to make the "depth-psychology" devotee think about the effects of some of its implicit assumptions:

> Depth-psychology has followed theology in rejecting the existence of an external world, in that all which befalls a man is his own responsibility. To the weight of pressurized iron-mongery within him, to the imposed tension which he can never support, he must add the burden of absolute responsibility: he is not merely a machine, but an inexcusable machine and, like religious man, he is allowed just enough free-will to sin with. It is his conviction of this irremediable mechanical condition that gives the Freudianized man his guilty, self-conscious stance; his shameful, self-conscious mutterings; his wry, self-conscious laughter: he cannot forget a word, blur a name, trip over a step without shame-faced, self-mocking admissions of wilful breakdown. Self-consciousness is, indeed the hallmark of the new identity: changed out of all self-recognition from childhood on, it sees its past, present and future, its whole world, simply as a series of mirrors in which its defects are precisely reflected.

It has long seemed to us that many psychiatrists and psychonalysts are fully aware of the extent to which modern addiction to

psychological authority brought the reincarnation of a good many religious attitudes. When people discuss "their" analyst interminably, they imply that this contact serves as a moral center of their personal universe. The extent to which they talk about their personality defects measures their peculiar devotion to the scientific priestcraft of our time. Karl Menninger, Erich Fromm and a host of other percipient leaders in their fields have endeavored to educate the public away from this mistaken transference of religious dependence from a symbolic faith to faith in the psychiatrist. For what is really needed, of course, is faith in one's self, and what the genuine psychoanalysts have attempted, from Freud to the present, is to encourage that natural faith to reassert itself.

Mr. Dennis examines the origin of the word "religion":

> Many scholars plump for the root of the word as the best definition of the thing itself. Religion, they say, derives from the verb *religere*, to bind—oneself in a discipline, oneself to one's articles of faith, or to fellow members of a congregation. Cicero chose *relegere*—to re-read, to uncover hidden truths. But what, then, may we ask, was religion in the centuries before there was a Latin language? Was it not what the Greeks called a "mystery"? And before the Greeks? The Latin root is not, it seems, a root at all; it is a layering, or a sucker. The interesting thing about the two Latin derivations is simply the different points of view they represent. Cicero, looking backwards over centuries of 'mysteries', took for granted that the unveiling of secrets was the essence of religion. But we, looking back over centuries of theological dogma and ecclesiastical rigour, see the 'binding' element as paramount.

Having warned prospective readers that Mr. Dennis is an extravagant critic—and an oversimplifier as well—we should at least allow him the benefit of a quoted paragraph from "The Making of Moo." Mrs. Compton, the wife of the engineer who finds himself constructing a religion for the natives and then taking to it himself, is a woman of sound, practical insight. She here explains to William, the native manservant, why it is that people turn to God when they fail to probe into their own mysteries:

> William. My husband has reached the age when a man begins to wonder why he was born. When men start wondering about this, it makes them nervous, so they bury themselves in their work, in order to escape their thoughts. Unfortunately, by overworking, they become more nervous than ever—and this is what has happened to Mr. Compton. So I want you to understand that when he talks about creating God, it only means he's overtired. Mr. Compton is a very determined, very ambitious man. When he decides to do something, like making god, it's wiser not to restrain him. Only by letting him, can you hope to stop him. You understand?
>
> One more thing, William. Practical men—engineers, mathematicians, men who always do things neatly and precisely—they are always the ones who are most upset when something goes wrong with their calculations. They don't believe, as you and I do, William, in accidents, or chance, or bad luck. So, when something unexpected happens, they are terribly shocked and conclude that the whole universe has turned upside down and that life has suddenly become mysterious. Do you follow me? Well, the unexpected is too much for my husband's sort of intellect. But let me give you an example of what I mean. Take astronomers. They are people who study the heavens for years without ever thinking of God. But a day comes when things get beyond the range of their telescope—and suddenly they start going to church. This is because they have decided that if things have become mysterious to them, only God can explain the mystery—which is why, as telescopes get stronger and stronger, getting to God takes longer and longer.
>
> Now, William, Mr. Compton is not an astronomer, but he has the same unconscious, astronomical conceit.

COMMENTARY
ADDRESSED TO CHRISTIANS

THE popular novelists keep on saying intelligent things about religion—what is wrong with it, or what it ought to be like. Our latest "find" of this sort is a passage in *Johnny Purple* (Dutton and a Zenith paperback) by John Wyllie, the story of an RAF squadron stationed in Sumatra in 1942. The real hero of the tale is not Johnny Purple, but his friend and admirer, Georges Perrier, who is a self-conscious intellectual type blessed (and cursed) by habitual introspection. Georges has made a Fundamentalist member of the crew mad at him for seeming to be so "superior," and in the following, the Fundamentalist, "Murk," is explaining why he finds Georges so annoying:

> "Well, you said that, as a Christian, I am about as good as they come—but—?"
>
> "You are very dogged. All right, if you must have it, Murk, can you recite the Beatitudes to me? If you can, don't; but tell me—do you believe in them?"
>
> Murk said, "Yes, I suppose I do."
>
> "And I suppose you don't. By being here as an air gunner, you are denying them. You hate your enemies and you are prepared to go further and even hate those who do not share your hate. Christ, as far as I know, only showed hate once—that was for hypocrites."
>
> Murk said, "It is not the fault of the religion, is it, that men do not live up to it?"
>
> Georges said, "That is a fair point—though I am not going to concede it. I would say that it is the religion's fault because it provides only half the answer. The other half is divided between mysticism and something for which there is no place now—faith. We need hope—but faith has let us down too often."
>
> "Hope, alone, would never be enough for me," said Murk.
>
> "That is because you belong to the tail end of a stage of evolution. Christianity and the other religions were an evolutionary stage—now we have to have something new which will fit into the shape of life as it is. Something that will take the place of mysticism."
>
> "You keep saying mysticism when you mean religion."
>
> Georges shook his head. "Look up religion in your dictionary. It will say something like this: religion is a belief in a superhuman being or beings. I do not believe He or They exist."
>
> It was Murk's turn to shake his head. "I am sorry for you," he said. "But I shan't be angry with you any more." He looked out into the darkness beyond the rail of the veranda and then turned back to face Georges.
>
> "Have you found this—this 'new thing' you say you must fit into the shape of life as it is?"
>
> Georges said slowly, "No. But I am still looking and though I have no faith—I still have hope."

Elsewhere, in a talk with Johnny, Georges says:

> "Religions try to help people to belief by offering opiates. Be a good boy and you'll go to heaven. It's a sort of universal laundry, now that Hell has lost its flames. And so long as it is, so long as people can send their souls away to be washed, so long will they go on dirtying themselves.
>
> "When they face up to the fact that there is no laundry, when men realize that they are not children of Allah, or a Shepherd's flock or a spirit that has only to live through various stages of sin before reaching Nirvana—then, and only then will they get down to it and find out the truth about themselves and try to face up to facts. When they take the responsibility for their own evil, instead of fobbing it off onto the devil or some other spook, then they will be forced to try to mend themselves and their ways, to justify the qualities they have that raise them above animals."

It would be difficult to improve on Georges' comments.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE BAD JUVENILES: I

JOHN DOS PASSOS once closed a fragmentary comment on juvenile delinquency by remarking that "sinister adolescents come to various ends; sometimes they grow up." When they do "grow up," today, the story is a tale of true psychological adventure. Such stories are becoming popular with a number of writers, who seem to sense that the old myths which tell of brave youths establishing their manhood by slaying dragons and other monsters have their present-day counterpart in the lives of young delinquents who win through to gain balance and purpose. However, the authentic literature on the theme of *escape* from delinquency is yet to be written. No one can be long interested in "the Beatniks," literarily or otherwise, for nothing in their outpourings or contorted actions resembles the heroic image—and it is the heroic image which stands perennially behind drama.

We have before us two paperback attempts to sort out the ingredients of juvenile reclamation, Peyson Antholz's *All Shook Up,* and Sam Kolman's *The Royal Vultures.* The Antholz book, as hinted at by its title, owes a good deal of its existence to a publisher's optimism. It is a story advertised as being about "delinquents out for kicks," dealing with "the wildest of the wild bunches," and will probably sell a fair amount of copies, so lurid is the general publicity presently accorded juvenile misdeeds. But Mr. Antholz is trying to say something of importance—trying to show how fine a line separates the sensitive and the talented youth from the emotionally disturbed psychopaths whom the former may attempt to imitate in their rebellion.

For Mr. Antholz, the most important parental factor affecting the confused young man of promise is his father's definition of manhood, as revealed by attitude and action. Alan Peerman's father (in *All Shook Up*) is a successful salesman, but a compulsive philandering husband whose progress toward maturity has somewhere been arrested. He ceaselessly tries to prove that he is a "real man," usually in the way that comes easiest and exhibits his immaturity. So Alan has been subjected, as it were, to the fanaticism of a primitive religion touched with the overtones of Christian self-righteousness. After one of the violent verbal battles between husband and wife, observed by Alan, the father repeats his justification for the hundredth time:

> When he began to talk, it was as if he were murmuring love words to quiet her, but there was nothing soothing in his voice. It came hard and uncompromising, a fanatic reciting his creed into the ear of an unbeliever even when all hope for conversion is past.
>
> "You never did understand me, and you never will. You don't know what it s like bein' a man—a *real* man. Women are the breath of life to me. I can't help it the way I am any more than I can help eatin' when I'm hungry. It's just the way the Lord made me. It's the way he made all men if they're really *men. You* oughtta understand that, Mommie, after all these years. You can rant and rave and raise hell all you want to, and you won't change things the least little bit. The only one can do that's the Lord hisself."
>
> It was The Creation, an absolution that cleansed all anger from Clyde's voice.

It is small wonder that Alan comes to doubt his own manhood, since his "manhood" is not and should not be that of his father, nor is it any wonder that he reacts bitterly against the combination of self-righteousness and cruelty he encounters among representatives of the law and influential citizens. Alan almost becomes a murderer, and as we understand the causative factors, we realize that one need not have an obviously disturbed environment in home or community to come so close to destruction.

The Royal Vultures is a slightly fictionized version of the experiences of "Sam Kolman" as a member of the New York City Youth Board. Here the emphasis is upon the corruption of environment—corruption which, in tenement areas, the present Youth Board seems to be doing more to allay than any group has ever done. Hillel Black, who collaborates with "Sam Kolman" (a pseudonym), pays tribute to the Youth Board in his preface:

> This is a story of violence, tragedy and the mute plea of youth grown old before its time. But it is also a story of hope. Sam Kolman spent almost his every waking hour with these teen-agers. He lived with them in their hangouts, watched them commit acts of terror and, in the dark moments of their fears, tried to give them love and understanding so that they could

pass over the abyss that separates adolescence and adulthood.

The pioneering that this New York City agency has done in the field of salvaging "hard to reach" youth has set the pattern for similar programs in large cities throughout the nation. However, neither the Youth Board nor the authors would contend that this program under which skilled and mature adults are sent into the streets to work with gangs is the only answer to the growing problem of juvenile delinquency. The authors, though, feel that the documented success of this program is in itself a tribute to the men who have given so much of themselves in order to help restore some hope for the youths written off by society as a generation lost to violence and their own destruction.

Kolman describes the subtlety with which the Youth Board worker must approach his often thankless task; his is the bridge between the world of law and order and the world the wandering youth inhabit. They won't stand for law and order as an abstraction, but they may come gradually to respect one man's obligation to defend its necessity, whatever its obvious corruptions at any given moment. In this instance the boys test "Sam" by letting him know that they intend to commit a robbery:

By broadcasting the crime they later intended to commit, the Vultures, in part, were testing me. The test was a conscious one. Frenchy and Lucky, perhaps on orders from Cherokee, apparently wanted to learn to what extent I intended to interfere with the gang's activities. And there was no better way of getting this information than to announce that they intended to stage a holdup and then see what I would do about it.

The gang's second reason for discussing the robbery so openly was subconscious on their part. The Vultures generally were a disturbed group of juveniles plagued by a deep psychological conflict. A good part of the adult world which surrounded them consisted of the dregs of society—human beings who were crooked, weak and erratic. The teen-agers, shaped by their environment, imitated it by lying, living wildly and stealing. But this kind of life is unstable and continually threatening. They knew that except for some freak of luck they eventually would be caught and punished. Thus, the Vultures also longed for stability and security, the kind that a strong, just and consistent adult world ought to give them. They wanted such a world to exist, even though each day of their lives had convinced them that it didn't. They wanted to be stopped from committing acts of vandalism and destruction. They wanted to believe in some grownup whom they could trust and who would tell them right from wrong. And they hoped that I would be such a person who would put an end to their life of violence. Unconsciously they wanted me to stop them from going into the liquor store, pulling out a gun and committing a robbery.

Yet I knew that I was in a spot, because not they, but I alone was consciously aware that they wanted to be prevented from committing another act of violence. There was the danger that my interference in their robbery plans could destroy all the work I had done to build up a relationship of trust between myself and the gang. Their immediate reaction could be violent mistrust. By attempting to call off the holdup, I could easily appear as a symbol of the adult world which they hated and feared, the world which never understood, but always threatened and punished. Yet I knew that I had no choice, that I had to be consistent. I had to take the risk and, at all costs, stop them before they actually committed a crime.

Neither of these books is outstanding, falling far short of the drama and pathos which are found in a book such as Willard Motley's *Knock on Any Door*, nor can these writers rival the talent of a Nelson Algren, but they do suggest that there is some hope for emotionally upset and socially displaced youngsters. For those who have had their fill of discussions of "The Beat Generation," yet still respond to the spontaneous emotion and actions of "untrammeled" youth, we might call attention to Robert Paul Smith's *So It Doesn't Whistle.* Underneath the wild doings of the period in 1941 which Mr. Smith describes, one senses a capacity for the kind of honor and decency which even a man without psychiatric training can appreciate. As a result of Mr. Smith's popularity by way of *"Where Did You Go?" . . . "Out,"* this earlier novel is available in a paperback edition. *The Royal Vultures,* the most suggestive of the three volumes, is a Perma Book original. All three sell for thirty-five cents.

FRONTIERS

A Natural Monument

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH is a civilized, unsentimental lover of nature and his books about the natural world are inevitably a delight to the reader who enjoys a measure of reflective musing to go with descriptions of the wild places of the earth. *Grand Canyon* (William Sloane Associates, $5) is his latest, a volume which tells the story of the great chasm cut by the Colorado River through a long stretch of the American Southwest.

Several things about the Canyon interest Mr. Krutch. First is the mighty spectacle. The Canyon winds for more than two hundred miles; at some places it is only four miles wide, while elsewhere it yawns to twenty miles from rim to rim. The book has plenty of facts and figures, set forth in the temper of a man who himself enjoys knowing them and relating them to other matters. The facts and figures are there because they form part of the wholeness of looking at the Canyon with as much understanding as possible, and not because giving facts and figures is a necessary convention in description.

But it is the brooding question of man's relation to nature and human attitudes toward the Canyon which pervades this volume and gives it its distinction. There is a sense in which *Grand Canyon* is a thoughtful reproach to modern man's loss of a sense of organic connection with nature. Along with the geological theories offered to explain the formation of the Canyon, Mr. Krutch repeats some others—"a whole class of new ones," he says, "which would never have occurred to the men of any age before ours and which reveal a fundamental change in man's sense of the relation between nature's powers and his: those explanations, I mean, which suggest human agency." It may seem incredible that a lot of people suppose that man had something to do with the "construction" of the Canyon, but this is apparently the case. Mr. Krutch relates:

> One park ranger insists that he was asked some years ago if the Canyon had been a WPA project. Perhaps the propounder of this question was only a satiric rogue. But suggestions almost as preposterous have been seriously made, and they are usually introduced with some such remark as, "You can't tell me it was made without human aid." Probably I should find it impossible to believe that any of the "human aid" theories were seriously advanced had I not myself once been stunned into silence by an educated woman who would hear no objections to her firm conviction that the vast sandstone buttes in Monument Valley were the remains of an ancient civilization.
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> Behind all such suggestions lies the unconscious assumption that man's works are by now the most imposing on earth and that his power now exceeds nature's. No age before ours would have made such an assumption. Man has always before thought of himself as puny by comparison with natural forces, and he was humble before them. But we have been so impressed by the achievements of technology that we are likely to think we can do more than nature herself. We dug the Panama Canal, didn't we? Why not the Grand Canyon? Actually we are suffering from delusions of grandeur, from a state of *hubris* which may bring about a tragic catastrophe in the end. And I cannot imagine how we may be cured of it if the only effect of coming face to face with the most impressive demonstrations of what nature can do and of the scale on which she operates is an intensification of the delusion that she has been conquered and outdone. When a man had accomplished some unusually impressive achievement it used to be said that he had "God's help." Nowadays we are more likely to assume that He needs ours.

Throughout the book, Mr. Krutch gets in his licks against this casual presumption and superficial egotism. While he rages at no one, he has a distinct distaste for people who live "on" the earth, but refuse to be "of" it, and who have no reverence for or innate appreciation of the endless drama of natural life. *Grand Canyon,* however, is by no means an "Oh, Ah," sort of book. The wonder felt by the writer is an emotion accumulated for the reader throughout 276 pages of measured and carefully written prose. Space is given to the geological story of the Canyon, to an account of the first (white) explorers of the

region, and to the six life-zones (out of a total of seven) which are represented and clearly distinguishable "within the Canyon rectangle." There are various sections concerned with the past history of the Canyon, one of which tells of a small, crustacean-like animal which still lives in the pools of water found near the Canyon's rim—a species which was already something like a hundred million years old in Paleozoic times. A chapter called "The Balance of Nature" exposes the follies of a too eager extermination of pests and of the sentimental partisanship which prefers, say, deer to mountain lions, among the wild life of the Canyon. Fifty years ago, to satisfy the demand of visitors who like to see deer going about, the park authorities in the Canyon launched a campaign to destroy the animals that prey on deer. "Wolves were completely exterminated. More than seven hundred mountain lions, nearly five thousand coyotes, more than five hundred bobcats and many eagles were killed." In less than twenty years, the herd of deer in the Kaibab forest region on the north rim grew from four thousand to a hundred thousand. But then the winter food supply failed and the deer died off in multitudes, while the survivors denuded the region of forage, "leaving the range (except for the taller trees and shrubs) torn, gray, stripped and dying." Meanwhile the deer, having been rescued from Darwin's law of the survival of the fittest, had become physically degenerate and a poorer breed. That was in 1930. Within the park area today, Mr. Krutch says, there are too many deer, causing the vegetation of the South Rim to deteriorate seriously, and making it "closer now to desert than it was when we began to 'protect' it." In behalf of the mountain lion, he relates:

> . . . though cougars are, it is hardly necessary to say, not vegetarians, one result of their near disappearance has been the laying waste of not only hundreds of square miles of a once flourishing plateau clothed with many different shrubs and small trees but also, in places, serious damage to actual forests.
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> In this case there is only one connecting link between cougars and trees—namely deer. There were never too many of them when there were mountain lions enough. Neither was there any danger that the mountain lions would exterminate the deer. Though they did not lie down together, they did, nevertheless, in a sense, get on very well. Nor was the vegetation which protected the soil against erosion disastrously thinned by a mounting deer population driven by near starvation to eat the shrubbery to the ground and desperately to gnaw the bark from dying trees.

Mr. Krutch allows Thoreau to represent his view of letting well enough alone, in the matter of the balance of nature. When some neighbors of Thoreau threatened to shoot the last pair of hen hawks in town, he said: "I would rather never taste chickens' meat nor hens' eggs than never see a hawk sailing through the upper air again. This sight is worth incomparably more than chicken soup or a boiled egg."

In his last chapter, Mr. Krutch returns fully armed to a favorite subject of his—conservation. He believes in respect—some would call it reverence—for the living earth, and "using" nature, he finds, is often something very different from respect. Of the artificial Lake Mead, created by Boulder Dam, he writes:

> What strikes me as the banality of its tidy shore, its speedboats and its aquaplaning bathing beauties is to others more beautiful as well as more entertaining than the natural grandeur of the Canyon or the modest man-made charm of the Havasupai's oasis. It provides a "recreational area" and to those incapable of awe, intellectual curiosity, or aesthetic appreciation "recreation" is the only nonutilitarian activity which has any meaning. That all recreation areas are pretty much alike, that swimming behind Boulder Dam is much like swimming behind any other dam, and that every landscape is much like every other once it has been thoroughly "improved" doesn't matter. The fact that at Boulder the slot machines of Nevada are within easy reach is to them uniqueness enough.
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> One of the philosophers employed by the Tennessee Valley Authority summed the whole thing up in a sentence which is a masterly example of the kind of language befitting the attitude: "We must never neglect the development of the recreational potentialities of impounded waters."

And of conservation in general:

> No one opposes "conservation" as such. But many insist upon defining it in their own way. There are always rival claims to every unexploited area, and even the parks cannot stand up against such claims unless the strength of their own claim is recognized. Unless we think of intangible values as no less important than material resources, unless we are willing to say that man's need of and right to what the parks and wildernesses provide are as fundamental as any of his material needs, they are lost.
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> Those who would cut the timber, slaughter the animals as game, turn cattle loose to graze, flood the area with dams, or even open them up to real estate subdivision are fond of saying, "After all, human needs come first." But of what needs and what human beings are we thinking? Of the material needs (or rather profits) of a few ranchers and lumbermen, or the mental and physical health, the education and spiritual experiences, of a whole population?

A rare patriotism breathes in the closing pages of Mr. Krutch's book. America, he points out, means many things, and different things to different people. To some, the New World is something out of which to make something else, something "better," perchance. But to others, the great natural wilderness of the West has been a glory in itself, and an inspiration—not for what it may become, or be made into, but for what it is. "It was what Thoreau called the great 'poem' before many of its fairest pages had been ripped out and thrown away. The desire to experience that reality rather than to destroy it drew to our shores some of the best who have ever come to them."

Mr. Krutch pleads for the mood in which a man comes to Nature, not to revise her or improve her or use her, but to comprehend and learn from her—even to "feel" with her. He has for twenty years been visiting the Grand Canyon with this in mind, and much of the ardor of his devotions throughout the years has found its way into this book.