

CRITIQUE OF "PURE" SCIENCE

IN a long article in the March *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Prof. Edwin A. Burt, professor of philosophy at Cornell University, calls for re-examination of thinking about science and the scientific method. Briefly, he challenges the assumption that science is progressively unveiling a picture of the "real" world—a world which, as its character becomes clearer, human beings will have to adjust to, whatever that character turns out to be.

This is a revolutionary challenge, and, quite properly, it is made by a philosopher. For it is the function of philosophy to look at matters which are popularly described as "knowledge" or "truth," to question whether or not they really are knowledge and truth, and to do this questioning in public, for the common good.

The familiar claim that science, and only science, provides us with knowledge of the "real" world rests on the practical demonstration that science knows how to make things work. The enormous prestige of science has grown from the achievements of technology, which have shown, in terms that children as well as gray-beards can understand, that science gives the power to control the forces of nature. And when control is not possible, prediction is taken as a quite adequate substitute proof of knowledge.

The vast optimism of the eighteenth century was largely a result of high confidence in the capacity of science to disclose the laws of nature and to place human beings in the position of knowing all they need to know about the world they live in. Surrounded by scientific certainties instead of by mysteries, human life, it was felt, could be lived without fear or hazard, and human happiness would be brought within the reach of all.

To any who might express doubt as to the

promise of certainties from scientific inquiry, the question was put: If this, that we call scientific knowledge, is not the truth, then tell us what you think is the truth; but be very careful that you state *your* truth in terms that can be tested according to *scientific* methods of analysis and verification.

This was like saying: You say this is a pink world, whereas we know it to be a blue one. If you wish to persuade us otherwise, you must find some evidence of the pinkness of the world, but be sure to dye it blue before you bring it for us to look at. Otherwise, we can't be bothered with you.

Prof. Burt builds his case against the absolute sovereignty of scientific authority on three major propositions.

First, he proposes that science is not a purely "objective" inquiry. Science has presuppositions about the nature of things. Those presuppositions grew out of the determination to free science from the pressure of theological authority. In the Middle Ages, the serious thinker was obliged to relate all theories of causation to the will of God. The Medieval scheme had the virtue of wholeness, but it also had the defect of constraint. Under this system, thought was not free. Prof. Burt's paragraph on the emancipation of science, and the later consequences of scientific freedom, is a lucid evaluation of what happened:

It becomes clear . . . in what respects the medieval conception of science was right and where it was wrong. The medieval mind was dead right in its conviction that science is not an independent enterprise, free to follow its lone course irrespective of how it affects other human values, but should be the helpmeet of that comprehensive wisdom through which men seek to realize all their high potentialities. For a time it was necessary that modern science claim this independence, since only thus could it free itself from the intolerable limitations of the medieval notion of what that super-end is—a notion which

identified it with submission to the God of traditional Christian theology. This freedom was gained, and scientific thinkers today are not likely to return to such submission. In any case, history has now reached the point at which this independence is itself intolerable. In asserting it the modern scientific West has in practice assumed something which, when frankly stated, is obviously grotesque—namely, that human wisdom as expressed through science consists merely in the irresponsible mastery of the causal links in nature, so that whatever desires happen to lurk in the mind of anyone with power at his command can be realized through that mastery. But this is not true wisdom; as long as power often rests in the hands of undisciplined and self-seeking men it is the highway to anarchy. Science is not free to pursue such an outcome, in blithe disregard of the other moral and social goods that lure men onward and claim their allegiance. It is part of a greater whole, and like every other part it is subordinate to the inclusive end progressively revealed by a clarified vision of that whole. The fatal defect in the implicit assumptions of modern science is this claim to irresponsible freedom, this blind commitment to the sole aim of accurately predicting and controlling events without regard to further considerations. In the long run, the world cannot allow science to retain any form in virtue of which it serves a less justifiable end than the impartial synthesis of all valid ends.

Obviously and admittedly, the scientists, in examining the physical world, were not studying the *whole* world. Obviously and admittedly, in learning how to control the actions and predict the behavior of elements of the physical world, they were not supplying us with knowledge of the *whole* world. But by a process of transfer of authority, it was eventually assumed that the scientists had in fact hit upon a method of research which would eliminate guesswork and speculation, so that it seemed that they would, in fact, finally gain knowledge of the whole world, through an extension, upward, of their investigations, to the phenomena of life and mind.

Accordingly, it was tacitly and then avowedly assumed that what would submit to prediction and control was real, and what would not submit was not real at all, but a species of illusion. Scientific certainty, on these terms, becomes a stupendous achievement in over-simplification.

If we allow that this is approximately what happened, during the rise of modern scientific knowledge, how is it to be explained?

The best explanation that we can think of is the presence in human beings of a great and almost invincible drive for unified thinking. Some deeply-rooted intuition moves us to long for simplicity in our account of the meaning of things. This drive is doubtless a virtue, for every explanation, of any sort, brings a measure of unity to factors which were previously diverse and unrelated.

But our virtues can be our worst betrayers, when spurred by fear or anxiety. When the mind breaks down, or feels unequal to life, it often takes refuge in a single, all-encompassing "explanation." There is one "enemy" which is responsible for all our troubles; or a simple formula, even if mere gibberish, can be held to be the magical answer to all problems. To live wisely with uncertainty, to win security despite ignorance, this is the difficult project laid upon human beings by the Nature which is mother to us all. It is when we find the suspense of having no simple answer intolerable that we succumb to the glamorous attractions of an easy, unified explanation, or formula.

During the Middle Ages, the rule of explanation was the Will of God. The rule, however, was not calibrated. It was, in other words, a purely emotional explanation which could not claim the attention of an intellect that was hungry for the raw material of particularized knowledge. It was an explanation which did not explain; instead, it *crushed* the mind of the inquirer.

In science men found a calibrated rule. By means of the techniques of science, men learned to deal with great efficiency with measurable units and measurable parts. God was the easy but fraudulent because *too* easy explanation in terms of wholeness; science is the engrossing and efficient explanation of the parts, but at the cost of neglecting the whole, and sometimes of denying altogether that there is a whole. From dealing

only with parts, science was able to develop and exhibit a magnificent precision. It is only when we try to assemble the parts; or when we find, having tried to assemble them, that they don't work very well together, that our thoughts return to the subject of the whole. And then, when we feel the terrible inadequacy of our scientifically trained minds, we wonder if with a little patchwork and improvising we can't piece out from all the parts we know about to make a whole, or a reasonable facsimile thereof.

It is at this point that Prof. Burt starts his discussion. He has no confidence that this is the time for clever improvisation. Instead, he says:

There is no guarantee that the Western world will be saved from the catastrophe that threatens it through the invention by scientists of the atom and the hydrogen bomb. But if it is saved—or if the rest of the world survives and manages to establish a social order in which scientific knowledge is used solely for constructive purposes—it will not be because of exhortation, nor because of penitence in the laboratories, nor because hatred and hostility can somehow be persuaded to forego their most promising weapons. It will be because a deeper understanding has been attained by scientists and by others of the forces revealed in the nature and growth of science, and because this insight has led to a reconstruction of the scientific community and of the assumptions and procedures through which scientific knowledge is pursued as well as used. Especially must such a reconstruction be based upon a clear realization of the relation between science and human values, and be guided by an essentially religious sense as to what the ultimate values of life are.

We have pretty well covered Prof. Burt's second proposition—that science, far from being a wholly objective undertaking, has the clear goal of prediction and control, and that this goal has the effect of establishing a scientific "highest good" which guides all research in its own direction. This goal orients research and theories of value and meaning. The world that can be predicted and controlled is held to be the "real" world.

His third proposition is that the scientist's "ulterior end" needs critical examination:

Is this aim of successful prediction and control

unqualifiedly good? Let us consider this question as seriously as we know how. Were the word "unqualifiedly" omitted, the answer would undoubtedly be yes. Is it not always an advantage to be able to anticipate as accurately as possible what the future has in store, and to bend it to our needs as fully as we may; can one really imagine any time or circumstance when it will not seem important to achieve such knowledge as gives us this advantage? The plea is very persuasive, and hardly needs elaboration. But in view of the historical and cultural differences in the aims that have dominated men's scientific thinking, we should not assume that the answer can be only yes. The question must be faced.

A clear objection to "prediction and control" lies in the application of this goal to human beings. The study of human beings ought not to be exhausted by the prediction and control of human behavior. It is even a question, remarks Prof. Burt, whether "human beings have the right to use all lower organisms merely to serve our purposes."

Prediction and control, then, while of obvious use and importance in many relationships, are not the all-important values. Taking his courage in his hands, Prof. Burt sets out to say what are the supreme values, to which all human enterprise, including science, should be subordinated. He writes:

I believe that this crucial question can be confidently answered, at least in broad terms. It would be well if a more specific answer could be given, but that is probably impossible. As a result of long experience, certain general values have emerged before man's idealizing imagination, which on the one hand are supremely important and on the other seem irreducible to each other. These include the values of artistic creation and appreciation, of moral aspiration and its progressive embodiment in social statesmanship, of mastery over the processes of physical nature, and of reverential acceptance of our modest place in the infinite universe which includes us. Now is it not clear that the wise aim of human life is to realize, not one but all these appealing values, in the maximum degree that proves possible when they are unified in the inclusive super-end which through that unification looms before the eye of the mind? As I conceive religion it has been and is the special role of its great pioneers to deepen and

clarify our vision of that super-end, and to exemplify in their own personalities both this more mature sense of true ultimate values and the way of life through which such a vision would be concretely expressed. As I conceive philosophy, it is the special task of the philosopher to be impartially responsive to each of these high values, and to show that responsiveness in his distinctive way.

This is the new hierarchy of values which Prof. Burt's proposes, to replace the over-simplified ends of science.

But, it will be asked, is science to give up its independence? The answer is, How can science give up what it never really had, but only *seemed* to have? There is no unmotivated science, no goalless research. This is the tremendously important point of Prof. Burt's article. Only the exhilarating liberation which resulted from throwing over the old ecclesiastical authorities and doctrines made science seem completely "free." Actually, science had its presuppositions about "reality," just as any human enterprise has presuppositions about its ends. Ulterior motives are not eliminated simply by insisting that they don't exist.

There is no escape from the circle of human motives. There is no magic that will free us from a life with ends, and what we claim as our ends will always assert a definition of the universe, declare a theory of knowledge and urge a doctrine of "progress."

What Prof. Burt has done is to make this confinement of man to a *human* world unmistakably clear. We cannot really think in inhuman terms. We can only pretend to do so. Only because the scientific pretense has been conducted in the grand manner has it fooled us for so long.

The point, then, is this: We must give up the vain hope of reaching a non-existent, "scientific" objectivity. The only real world we can ever inhabit is the world of human ends, of which the external world of nature forms a relatively objective part. That is the point, and the moral is

that we need to arrive at the best possible ends as guides in our science and in everything else we do, instead of taking flight from *all* ends, in the name of "objective reality."

Prof. Burt's echelon of highest values, abstractly merging into an "inclusive super-end" which is beyond definition, will probably seem vague, too general, or even anticlimactic to some. But what would you have? A statement of ultimate values attempts disclosure of the final secrets of life. It is best, at our present stage of ignorance, to exhibit a seemly modesty in all such formulations.

One pleasant consequence of these values is that they restore both power and responsibility to the individual. This is an indispensable criterion of truth. A defect of medieval religion was that it could never overcome the contradiction in assigning all the power to God, while holding man morally responsible for his actions. A defect of the absolute authority of science is that it gives all power and all responsibility to the experts in control and prediction.

It would be less than fair to the reader to omit, in this account of Prof. Burt's recommendations, the influence which brought him to a critical view of the scientific use of "cause and effect"—a use entirely devoted to the ends of "prediction and control." It was, he said, the study of Sanskrit which led him to realize that cause and effect can be thought of in an entirely different way. As he puts it:

From the Indian standpoint the matter that is of ultimate concern in human life is the attainment of spiritual self-realization, and therefore the distinctive sort of causality which must be taken into account in that process needs to be distinguished from other causal situations, for this reason it is referred to by a distinctive word [Karma], so that it can be emphasized in the way a matter of ultimate concern should be emphasized, and its specific features kept clearly in mind. And if one accepts this answer he will be ready to turn back to scientific and philosophic thinking in the West and ask: Does our familiar conception of causality also reflect certain basic and pervasive concerns, which we have

ordinarily failed to recognize because we have so completely taken them for granted? If the answer is yes, what are those concerns? Have they remained the same throughout the history of Western thought, or have they undergone important changes? Are the values presupposed in our present idea of causality ones that deserve to be fully accepted, or is it the responsibility of scientific philosophers to criticize them and to show that true wisdom requires their more or less drastic modification?

This is an invitation to break out of the straight-jacket of habitual thinking about causality. We are so used to supposing that the chains of cause and effect originate somewhere outside of us, and wholly shape our lives, that there is an extraordinary liberation in learning that another and more ancient culture has an entire philosophical vocabulary devoted to a causality in which *we* are the originating causes, as well as the objects to whom the effects return—return as *moral* effects!

If Prof. Burt's counsels should be taken to heart by the scientists, we may look for a new kind of science to gradually make an appearance—a science with room for those high qualities of mind and heart from which all religions and all sciences spring.

REVIEW

THE NEW REPUBLIC—SAMPLE ISSUE

SOMEHOW or other, this reviewer had gained the impression that the *New Republic*—"a journal of opinion"—was devoted strictly to the advancement of the Democratic Party. During the F.D.R. regime, this periodical seemed to vie with the *Nation* in producing fulsome praise of Hoover's successor. Not only that, the *New Republic* has been criticized for the "choppiness", and brevity of its articles—though, since MANAS has often receipted for remarks concerning its voluminousness and lack of conciseness, this sounds like a balancing virtue. However, a recent sample copy, courtesy of the distributors, Eastern News Co. of New York, suggests that the *NR*, like the *Nation*, is (or has been) struggling away from politics, seeking some more philosophical berth. In any case the issue presently at hand, that of March 4, indicates that both editors and readers of MANAS might benefit by seeing this paper regularly.

The featured article is Arthur Bestor's "The Education of the Gifted Child," a discussion which happily makes the theme of Bestor's book *Educational Wastelands*, seem less partisan and more intelligible. Dr. Bestor has been pilloried by "New Education" specialists, partly on the basis of an apparent identification with Albert Lynd, but in the *NR* his approach seems as impartial as the *NR* editorial perspective. Concerned with "The Worship of Mediocrity," Dr. Bestor writes:

Much of the talk about "enriched programs" for brilliant students is tainted with precisely this worship of mediocrity. Even though a particular program may in itself be sound, this label turns it into a grudging concession. A great many of the programs for enrichment, however, are basically unsound. One characteristic of the brilliant mind is that it learns quickly. It can grasp ideas after performing only a fraction of the number of exercises that are necessary to impress the same principles or concepts upon one less active and alert. What the brilliant student needs to do is to progress as rapidly as he can from one level of abstraction to a higher

level, from one difficult task to another more difficult. Far too many programs of "enrichment" propose to keep the mental activity of the able student down among the same relatively simple concepts as those with which his companions are struggling, while occupying his time with tasks that are simply more time-consuming than those assigned to the average child. This is precisely the reverse of what the situation calls for. The slow learners are the ones who ought to go through masses of material while concepts gradually take form in their minds. The brilliant student ought to take at once the next step up the ladder toward concepts more complex and mature.

What we need is not "enrichment" but a genuine program of education for the able child, constructed from the ground up, based upon the accumulated experience of all great schools of all countries. By facing this responsibility squarely and dealing with it in its own terms, we cut through at once much of the fog that envelops current pedagogical thinking.

A book review in the same issue by Richard L. Strout confirms the impression that the *NR* is presently considerably more than an unofficial Democratic Party organ. Reviewing Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.'s *The Age of Roosevelt*, Mr. Strout supplies some extremely interesting footnotes to the typical New Deal enthusiast's evaluation of Herbert Hoover. Mr. Strout points out that, in the confused era of the late 20's and early 30's, Hoover was never correctly identified with the Powers of Reaction, since in Mr. Schlesinger's account abundant evidence is supplied to qualify Hoover as an authentic liberal. Further, the first section of Schlesinger's history reveals Hoover as the most impressive personality of his epoch. In Mr. Strout's words:

It is Hoover who is the vivid symbol. I venture to guess that before long somebody will write a play about Hoover. He is one of our great tragic figures; heroic in his incomprehension. By contrast Harding and Coolidge were petty men. Harding, the successor who erased Wilson's idealism was a good-natured, handsome, small-town sport; Coolidge a bleak, self-satisfied thin-lipped little man, dedicated to inactivity. They prepared the storm and Hoover reaped it. Hoover was of larger cast, a man of capacity and noble aspirations; he was as helpless

before the fates as the Greek chained to a rock while the eagle consumed his liver.

Here we come to the intricacies of personal psychology. Despite his political inability to win the support of the enthusiastic intellectuals of the early 30's, Hoover was temperamentally very much drawn to their views. Mr. Strout's review testifies:

Hoover, with the quiet inner light of the Quaker, put aside a brilliantly successful career as international organizer of vast enterprises to undertake public service, first in Belgium and then masterfully in Washington. In 1920 Herbert Croly in *The New Republic* launched a campaign for Hoover on the Democratic ticket; it may startle readers to learn that Hoover even seemed interested in buying stock in *The New Republic*. And although Mr. Schlesinger does not mention it, Mr. Hoover in those years went so far as to speak of *The NR* as "the best-balanced organ of liberal opinion in America today." But Hoover was damned for all that.

It would be easy to ridicule the glum, gray-faced president who, as breadlines lengthened, lengthened his day's work and took an ever-stronger position for balanced budget, salestax and local relief. Schlesinger is not unkind, he lets the story speak for itself; how the Gods made the stiff-collared figure their sport while he stuck loyally to his ideals, how he let the crucial minute after the 1929 crash slip by when a relatively small amount of public spending might have checked "the cumulative forces of breakdown" and how his inward, sensitive soul recoiled at the voters' cruelty. He did not wilt, he fought bravely back, issued deeply-felt statements declaring that if America meant anything it meant individual and local responsibility. He was no more ignorant of his time than most; only a few economists like Keynes understood. The economy had got one jump ahead of the economists.

The March 4 issue of the *NR* also provides editorial advance notice of a forthcoming department of review of "soft-cover" books—evidence of the paper's determination to touch as many bases as possible. Norman Podhoretz will review currently available paperbacks "of a serious nature." The editors explain:

When the quality paperbacks achieved their first startling success several years ago, it was generally thought, even among publishers, that this success

would be short-lived. Instead of which, sales have risen steeply: from 2.8 million copies in 1954 to 4.7 million copies in 1955, and rising again to an appreciably higher but still undetermined figure in 1956. Although much has been written about the new soft-cover books, taken collectively, as a surprising and profitable venture in publishing, very little has been written about individual titles. The reasons are simple enough. First, most of the paperbacks are reissues of books that have already appeared in hard covers (although more and more original works are appearing in this form) and second, they are rarely advertised, and consequently bring little revenue to reviewing journals.

This lack of critical attention has not greatly hindered sales, as the figures quoted above sufficiently prove. But as more and more publishers issue more and more books, it becomes increasingly difficult for the general reader to keep himself informed. *The New Republic* is therefore planning to publish, once a month, critical review of current paperback titles, the first of which appears this week.

Probably because of an interest in theological debates, we also noted a *NR* reader's criticism in the letter column of Reinhold Niebuhr's approach to the Israel problem. The writer delights us by pinpointing Dr. Niebuhr's "Original Sin" perspective as it impinges on international politics:

Apparently, Reinhold Niebuhr ("Our Stake in Israel," *NR*, February 4) has not assimilated a platitude common to all theologies. Let him apply the Golden Rule to the problem of Israel *from the Moslem viewpoint*, from Israel's Palestinian victims . . . Israel's chief grace in Dr. Niebuhr's eyes is technological know-how and its influence upon the Moslem world, as if modern gadgetry is the Divine in man. Is this the motivating standard in our theological schools Niebuhr represents? If the more abundant life is predicated upon might is right, then we should fearfully contemplate our advanced ethical conceptions!

COMMENTARY

AN UNANSWERABLE QUESTION

NOT long ago, a reader put the question, "Do you think mankind can cope with its problems?"

The best answer to this question, it seems to us, is an attempt at explanation of why it cannot be answered.

There are three elements in the question. First there is the matter of the problems. What are they? Human problems can be endlessly defined, but if they are not defined in relationship to basic human ends, the definitions are ultimately meaningless. For example, you could say that one great human problem is escape from mutual destruction in thermonuclear war. But if there are worse things than thermonuclear war—and there probably are—then the solution or displacement of this particular problem might only change the focus of our anxieties.

So, while we may think we know a great deal about our problems, we may be obliged to admit that we define our problems mostly as things we want to avoid or escape from. Is this really "coping with" problems or is it evading them?

Then there is the question: What do you mean by "mankind"? Are you looking for a collectivist solution for the human species? Is biological survival the issue? Are we willing to settle for this as a solution, or is it just that we want *time*, right now, so we can think about more important things after our survival is assured?

Since death overtakes us all, sooner or later, why should we regard a guarantee of a natural death instead of death by the Bomb as having such great importance? Our natural deaths are not very natural, anyway, and if we had to plead our case before some celestial bar of justice, what would we urge as evidence that we as individuals, or we as a race, ought to be preserved from premature incineration? What do we plan to do with those extra years, that makes us so important?

Is the problem to stay alive or to be worthy of

staying alive? Which qualifies as a legitimate sort of "coping"?

What constitutes defeat for mankind? Is it death, or the condition in which death finds you? Who will argue that Socrates was a failure because he died?

Death is obviously irrelevant to the question, since it is a constant factor for all men. But the *race*—the death of the race is surely failure. Is it? Were the ancient Egyptians failures? They died as a race and civilization. Is a civilization any more immortal than an individual?

Coping, then, is a quality of living. . . and of dying. How do you get quality in living? You get it by living for something that is worth living for. The men of quality in life enriched the human race by what they did. We remember great thinkers for the dimensions they have added to our intellectual life. We remember great artists for their exquisite sense of form and the meanings they embody in their forms. We treasure genius of every sort because it extends the reach of our perceptions. It makes us more alive.

Is there any "coping" worth talking about which can not be recognized as a quality in living?

What is true of the single man must be just as true of the billions who make up the entire human race. You don't change the meaning of "coping" by talking about man as a "mass" or as a species. The problem remains the same. Actually, there isn't any "mass" coping: if the mass of mankind can be said to cope successfully, this will be because billions of individuals are coping successfully.

In any set of circumstances you can find some men who are coping successfully, and some who are not. The successful ones can't give their "success" to others. A quality in life is not like money. You can't leave it to your children. You can't hire a psychologist to build into them the conditioned reflexes that will produce the "good life." There is no vicarious atonement, no salvation by association. Coping with human

problems is strictly a do-it-yourself affair. You can gain encouragement from others, and give it, but each man must design his own life.

Did men cope successfully with human problems a thousand years ago? Or is it that the men of that time, because they lived in the past, don't really count? Are our lives, is our coping, more important than theirs? Are *we* the people selected for a destiny-making decision beyond all past decisions?

But if time and death are irrelevant to the real human problems, we have certainly been wasting a lot of time on unimportant matters. That, just possibly, is our main problem, just now.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

MORE ON DEMOCRACY AND AUTHORITY

ONE of our correspondents—we think we have heard from this one before, and on the same topic—seeks further clarity on the relationship of "democracy" to education. The occasion for his present communication is a radio broadcast by a professor of education on the subject of "classroom management." Our correspondent (who is a teacher) feels that this address illustrates how "big generalizations" mightily confuse by oversimplification. Terms such as "self-discipline" and "democratic procedure" were used in suggesting that any sort of approach to children based on Authority, is a moral transgression: "In this broadcast, the merits of authoritarian vs Democratic classroom control were to be considered. Authoritarian teaching and classroom management were characterized as being based on fear of authority, fear of punishment and blind acceptance. Democratic procedure was based on self-discipline, group acceptance, self-respect, constructive criticism, clarity of purpose, preventive rather than corrective measures, and understanding the child in terms of his unique intellectual, social and emotional character."

The letter continues:

My reaction to this statement was that each generalization is true, but still worthless. Why? Because the professor conveniently left out an analysis of what children are and what a classroom essentially is.

Why confuse the issue with generalizations such as "authoritarian" vs "democratic" when clearly the best teacher must use not only the democratic method, but instead must know the merits of each method and use it appropriately in terms of a well defined purpose, *not necessarily* understood or accepted by the children, but valued by the teacher and, presumably, by society.

With all this we agree, and have endeavored to point out. While a school may afford some experience in the workings of practical

democracy, the school nevertheless should not, and cannot be a democratic institution. But part of the confusion encouraged by the "big generalizations" about which our correspondent complains is, we think, due to failure to make a necessary distinction between the terms, Authority and Authoritarian. The captain of an ocean-going vessel does not become "an authoritarian" simply because he exercises inflexible authority in regard to the conduct of the ship. To *really* be an authoritarian means to be convinced that one should rule by dictum and force, psychological or otherwise, in all things at all times. The authoritarian teacher is the teacher who conducts all his conversation in an opinionated manner, while the most open-minded of instructors *can* believe that a firm control of the classroom situation, based upon his public appointment as teacher, is best for all concerned.

Our correspondent, we think, waxes a little too enthusiastic about his own point in the following paragraph, though what he says is worth thinking about:

Behind this pseudo-democratic appeal was an assumed authoritarianism, for in the same breath the learned professor said the child *must* accept group objectives and the teacher is to act as a "specialist" that periodically intercedes to define group objectives. He also ignored the fact that society says parents *must* send their children to school, that parents say Johnny *must* go to school and that the school system itself is authoritarian. Yet our well-adjusted professor implies that a teacher using authoritarian methods (in such an authoritarian framework!) is "sick"!

Domination is domination. Is there really a great deal of difference between group domination and teacher domination? Is this the essence of democracy? Our good professor would have us add to group priority "group understanding" and "group acceptance." But yet he says the teacher must intercede at points to define the group rules. In other words, the teacher must be *both* authoritarian and democratic, for intercession is of necessity based on force and not understanding, whether it be psychological force or brute force.

Our own preference, by way of avoiding the confusions which attend use of the word

"authoritarian," would be to regard the teacher as one who is *functionally required* to make a number of decisions regarding the conduct of his class. If he does not have enough surety of resolve and manner to undertake such decisions, he will neither feel at home in the schoolroom nor be successful in his profession. There is, however, a kind of democracy the "ideal teacher" will want to create; its essence will reside in his own willingness to *relinquish* areas of classroom decision whenever they can be adequately dealt with by his pupils.

But he, and he alone, must be the judge of the transition—no one's "system" will make clear just when the sense of responsibility which makes self-discipline possible has been adequately awakened. However, if the teacher wishes to achieve this kind of "democratization"—if he realizes that his guidance and "intercession" should always be withdrawing from some areas and entering into others—he need not be, in manner or attitude, at any time an authoritarian. Our correspondent's claim that "group domination" is also authoritarian is true enough. Part of the ideal function of intercession on the part of the teacher is to protect the independence and individuality of his pupils from being pressured into conformity; in this respect a pupil's contemporaries and the community at large are often hostile forces.

The "ideal teacher" does not begin with the assumption that *he* knows what is good for his pupils. He must believe, on the other hand, that he knows what is good in his relationship with them. He can respect honest differences of opinion and all the youthful manifestations of a capacity for radicalism—but he cannot tolerate defiance, for the teacher-pupil relationship cannot be carried on in an atmosphere of hostility. It is not his mandatory task to psychologize recalcitrant pupils into liking their school work. It *is* his obligation to see that his contract with the community and with the child is carried out.

Our sympathy with the present correspondent's occasionally vehement remarks

stems from recognition of the fact that only geniuses possessed of remarkable powers of personality can be depended upon to make practically everyone love to learn—this takes a Homer Lane, an A. S. Neill, or a G. A. Lyward. Those who glibly talk of the attitudes of mind which such men possess, as if they can somehow be adopted wholesale by the teaching fraternity, are certainly guilty of the confused "big generalizations" criticized in the first paragraph of our correspondent's letter.

FRONTIERS

America's "Public Relations"

A LETTER of some months ago from a MANAS reader in Austria reported much bitterness against the United States among Hungarian refugees, who feel that they received false encouragement from the Voice of America and other broadcasts originating in the United States. This is now amply confirmed by an article, "What the Hungarians Say about Western Propaganda," in the April *Harper's*. The writer, Franz Spelman, who lives in Munich, has talked to many refugees. One told how, on Nov. 4 of last year, he and his wife listened in rapture to the voice of the American delegate to the UN declaring that "the big United States would never let the brave Hungarian people down." They cried with joy. But on the next day, when the Russians struck. "Nowhere in this big, free world was there anyone who did anything about it. . . . How can we ever believe anything again?"

A youth who had been one of sixteen who fought the Soviets from behind a roadblock in Budapest described the wait for the Russian tanks to arrive. They listened to a radio which had been plugged in at a near-by store:

Occasionally our leader—he is dead now—turned the dials. He wanted to get any station which would tell us how bad, or desperate, our situation really was. Our own Freedom Stations were already silent; BBC was talking about Suez; and Radio Free Europe just sent out talk about how glorious we were. It was then that all of us heard it, crackling out from three spots on the wave scale, the voice shouting: "Hold out, Hungarians, hold out! Help from the West is on the way! You must continue to fight." It still rings in my ears. Believing it cost the lives of five comrades—when the Soviet tanks finally came. The people who made those broadcasts have blood on their conscience."

What is the Voice of America?

Mr. Spelman answers briefly:

The Voice of America's studios in Washington and Munich daily send out five hours and fifteen minutes of broadcasts to Hungary, three hours to

Czechoslovakia, six hours to Poland, three hours to Rumania, and four hours to Bulgaria. East Germany is served by West Berlin's RIAS, which, like the Voice, is a branch of the United States Information Service.

The Voice is, as its name implies, an official spokesman of the United States. The majority of the exiles it employs have become American citizens, and its script-writers are expected to follow the State Department's foreign-policy line. Its chief propaganda effort is constantly to contrast "the American way of life" with conditions in the target areas.

Despite the terrible mistake of American broadcasters in promising the Hungarians fighting for freedom that help was coming, the refugees do not want the American programs stopped. The broadcasts, they say, give the people behind the Iron Curtain touch with another world. But Mr. Spelman makes plain that the programs which do not try to "sell" America, but offer "straight news reports, unbiased features, vignettes of everyday life in the West," make the strongest impression.

The fondest dream we can imagine, these days, is of a world in which there is no "selling" at all. Why should it seem so necessary to persuade, to "prove," that things are, or aren't, as they are? What creates this need to *convince*?

It has taken a hundred years or so to make a world in which the idea of controlling or affecting the opinions of others has become a paramount consideration in national policy. Nor is this true only in relation to foreign affairs. Determined efforts to influence opinion are evident on every hand. In the movie version of Charles A. Lindbergh's historic flight to Paris, the propaganda of Piety causes Robert Hatch, *Nation* film reviewer, to say:

It will come as no surprise that, blinded by searchlights over Le Bourget, exhausted, confused, unable longer to control his plane, Lindbergh calls on God for help and immediately finds himself safe on the ground. Divine intervention is now so deeply-engrained in the Hollywood credo that I would expect a screen biography of Mencken to disclose that he asked—and received—supernatural aid in editing *Smart Set*.

Basically, the longing for agreement seems to grow from the belief that what we want to do—or what we think *ought* to be done—cannot be done except by large numbers of people who are all in agreement. A man fears to be satisfied with the religion of one—he wants to have a religion of millions. With millions on his side, salvation seems more probable. Politically, there is an obviously practical motive. We want the oppressed peoples of Europe to admire America and the American Way principally because we'd rather have them fight with us than against us. We seek allies. But think of the immeasurable energies that must be continually expended in order to assure ourselves enough "allies." We are continually "selling" the advantages of being on our side. And the selling, for the most part, various critics tell us, is poor. We don't think about the objects of our appeals as human beings, but only as allies or "customers."

If our international "sales effort" is ineffectual, we may console ourselves that we are not very good Machiavellians. But the important question to ask ourselves is whether the people who are always expected to have anything worth selling. What about a "way of life" that has so little independence that in order to survive it must continually seek a multitude of "friends"?

In private life, the people who are always "selling" are annoyances and bores. The people whose company one enjoys are the people who are content, who don't want to persuade you, one way or the other. The same thing is true of parents. An undercurrent of anxiety afflicts the parent-child relations of families in which the mother or the father worries about *convincing* the child that it must be "good," or of anything at all.

The man who is always selling is a well of discontent and insecurity, while the man who feels no need to sell anybody anything is the kind of a man you can trust and depend upon.

This "Voice of America" which is so professionally produced, which beams the splendor of American life to countless millions—

what does it really tell about Americans?

A listener might ask himself if the Americans are sending these programs to people from whom they don't want anything, as might be the case if the broadcasts were a simple expression of national pride. Better still would be uncalculating and spontaneous expression—the sort of expression which commands respect without seeking it.

Years ago, in a lecture to Japanese students, Lafcadio Hearn spoke of the transforming influence of Russian literature on public opinion in other countries:

When I was a boy the public knew absolutely nothing about Russia worth knowing, except that the Russian soldiers were very hard fighters. But fighting qualities, much as the English admired them, are to be found even among savages, and English experience with Russian troops did not give any reason for a higher kind of admiration. Indeed, up to the middle of the present {nineteenth} century, the Russians were scarcely considered in England as real kindred. The little that was known of Russian customs and Russian government was not of a kind to correct hostile feeling—quite the contrary. The cruelties of military law, the horrors of Siberian prisons,—these were often spoken of; and you will find even in the early poetry of Tennyson, even in the text of "The Princess," references to Russia of a very grim kind.

All that was soon to be changed. Presently translations into French, into German, and into English, of the great Russian authors began to make their appearance. I believe the first remarkable work of this sort directly translated into English was Tolstoi's *Cossacks*, the translator being the American minister at St. Petersburg, Mr. Schuyler. The great French writer Mérimée had already translated some of the best work of Gogol and Pushkin. These books began to excite extraordinary interest. But a much more extraordinary interest was aroused by the subsequent translations of the great novels of Turgeniev, Dostoievsky, and others. Turgeniev especially became a favourite in every cultured circle in Europe. He represented living Russia as it was—the heart of the people, and not only the heart of the people but the feelings and manners of all classes in the great empire. His books quickly became world-books, nineteenth-century classics, the reading of

which was considered indispensable for literary culture. After him many other great works of Russian fiction were translated into nearly all the languages of Europe. Nor was this all. The great intellect of Russia suddenly awakening, had begun to make itself heavily felt in the most profound branches of practical science. . . . After having read these wonderful books, written with a simple strength of which we have no parallel example except in the works of a few Scandinavian writers, the great nations of the West could no longer think of Russians as a people having no kinship with them. Those books proved that the human heart felt and loved and suffered in Russia just as in England, or France, or Germany; but they also taught something about the peculiar and very great virtues of the Russian people, their courage, their loyalty, and their great faith. . . . And what has been the result? Total change of western feeling toward the Russian people. I do not mean that western opinion has been at all changed as regards Russian government. Politically Russia remains the nightmare of Europe. But what the people are has been learned, and well learned, through Russian literature, and a general feeling of kindness and of human sympathy has taken the place of the hatred and dislike that formerly used to tone popular utterances in regard to Russians in general.

This Russia, it may be said, is now in eclipse. But that voice of America which has qualities like the Russia of Dostoievsky and Turgeniev—if it exists—may be jammed out by all the "commercials" concerning the American Way of Life. The argument that we do not have "time" to wait for the subtler aspects of American culture and literature to find their way abroad is not an important argument. If we continue to drown the voice of the America that does not want nor have to "sell" itself, we shall gradually stop its heart. If we cannot have a life without all this tiresome "selling" and the elaborate conversion techniques we think necessary to making "friends," we cannot have a life with self-respect.