

ESPRIT

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The opinions expressed in this
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ESPRITORIAL

The response to my first experimental issue has been very pleasing. Though not exactly overwhelming in quantity, the letters have all been of high quality, the senders giving their frank opinions on the viewpoints offered. As you will see, I have classified the letter column by subject matter and I would like to hear your opinions on this manner of presentation. I think if I were a reader, I should like to read viewpoints in this way but you, as letter-writers, may object to seeing your letters appearing piecemeal like this. I don't know.

I have been trying to define to myself exactly what my policy is with regard to subject matter but it is not by any means easy. My main feeling is that I do not want us to start on such big, never-ending subjects as (say) politics and religion. Those are better done in professional journals by experts. I should like us to keep to things which are still of a speculative nature, the sort of ideas which are generally behind science-fiction stories.

You may well point out that almost any subject, these days, has been gone into, or is being gone into, by experts. For instance, there is a piece in this issue concerning education, which is certainly a 'big' subject and one on which a great deal of research has been done. But this particular piece of writing is in the form of an essay; it is the writer's own experience and personal conclusions. So, in fact, it is not so much the subject matter that is the criterion as the attitude with which it is written. This is what I meant last time when I said I wanted material of a "personal and philosophical nature". I was a bit dubious about using that word, "philosophical" because I think that, to most of us, it tends to bring to mind heavy, dusty tomes containing even dustier and heavier contents, but I hope you will see now that I am using it an everyday sort of manner.

The same applies to the article on religion - one of the subjects I have just said that I wanted to avoid. And so I do. But this article is of a purely 'science-fictional' type - not one such as is likely to be argued about by church dignitaries! The remaining two contributions concern respectively science fiction and fandom; two subjects which, I hope, need no justification in the pages of a fanzine!

I had intended to print a few biographical lines about each contributor but, for various reasons, the only one I have any information on at present is Jack Wilson. Jack has been in fandom since 1952, when he attended the convention that year, and has been to every con. since (except one). He was one of the first BSFA

members and has done art work for Nebula and one or two fanzines. His preferred subjects in s-f are astronomy and the physical sciences and ancient history. His other hobbies are 'railway matters' and listening to symphonies. His pet dislike is modern literature; novelists today, he says, "seem to go for their material to the lavatories. We know all that filth is there so why bring it out into the fresh air and spread it around?" I'm inclined to agree with him. The usual justification given is, of course, that if people are given the facts, they might be impelled to get up and do something about it, but it seems to me that most of the effect is to make people think that now that standards are so low, they might as well all join in. Putting things in print somehow gives them the appearance of being approved.

But enough of this digressing. One reader said that his copy of ESPRIT had arrived, stamped, "5d to pay. Letter rate". I do hope this happened to no one else. Perhaps I should not have stapled the ends up. Any tips on this matter from other faneds (English not U.S.) will be gratefully received!

Talking about faneds, will any who notice the name of Laurence Sandfield in the letter column and promptly decide to send him their own 'zine, please note that he is now, he says, gafia and does not guarantee to acknowledge any, though he still likes reading them.

One message I am pleased to pass on to you is that FEMIZINE is not going to expire after all but will be taken over by Bobbie Gray. We wish her good luck.

For the next issue, I have in hand the second part of Nan Gerding's essay; this time she will say what she thinks about the modern student. Prepare to do battle, you students who are reading this! John Rackham offers speculations about the Garden of Eden which, although in the form of an article, read as absorbingly as a good SF story; and I have an account of an experience from Jim Norrie which he claims to be telepathic. But there is still room for more contributions for No.3. I have tried, on the previous page, to give some idea of what I would like but, as I've said, it's difficult to explain. But if you keep science-fiction (pure s-f, I'm not interested in fantasy) in the back of your mind, you won't go far off the trail.

Most of those who wrote to comment on No.1 expressed the same attitude to the idea behind this magazine, namely, that they themselves welcomed it but they were sure hardly anyone else would! It was rather amusing at this end as letter after letter came saying that the writer had been waiting for something like this and then going on to express grave doubts as to whether fandom would respond to it. But, as I said then, I do not aim for ESPRIT to be a popular fanzine - others can do that much better than I can - all I want is to read interesting things from those people who do get fun out of using their minds and to put them in this zine to stimulate others to write. You've heard of fanzines which have been called 'letter-substitutes'? Well, count ESPRIT as being a 'conversation-
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THE FUTURE OF S.F.

by John Rackham

One of the big bogey-men in the SF world today is the idea that science-fiction, as such, no longer has a future, that it has outlived its usefulness. Like all bogeymen, this one can only be seen if viewed in a dim light.

Take this statement, for instance...you'll hear it quite a lot, or something like it: "I used to read SF for the science in it. Now I can get all the science I want from the many excellent articles in regular journals and magazines." That usually comes along with the speaker's opinions as to why SF is losing its circulation and its mass appeal. It sounds plausible, until it is examined.

To begin with, SF never did have any great mass-appeal. It may seem trite to repeat the reasons why this was so, but they are important enough to be worth thinking about. SF was never popular, because it was always 'difficult', and it was, and is, difficult for the average reader, because it deals with new and unfamiliar ideas. Not, may I stress, new scientific gadgets, theories or advances; nor yet new scientific ideas, but 'new ways of thinking'. And these are much more difficult than you may at first imagine.

Let's take an example...television. Now, you may think I have backed a loser, here. Television is no longer 'new'. But wait a bit. What do we get, from the magic box? From the comfort of our armchairs we see, largely, material designed for the stage, screen and music-hall; reporting-plus-pictures in the style of a cinema news-reel; talks that are nothing more than radio with pictures...and there are discussions, interviews...all good interesting stuff. But what is the basic point of television? It is, surely, that you and I can sit here, and see and hear something that is happening there...miles away...while it is happening! See-it-now!

We have the facilities and the technical skills to do this, right now. But it doesn't happen, apart from the exceptional event, such as a Royal wedding. And it doesn't happen, we are not getting this, because there isn't any large-scale demand for it. Because the public at large hasn't absorbed the 'idea' yet. In fact, the general public has a great deal of difficulty in keeping up with ideas in the here and now. It feels a lot happier living in the recent past. Study the current television, cinema and book business for evidence of that. So it is

only to be expected that SF is too difficult for mass-appeal. The very fact that, in our modern world, new ideas are being promulgated at an ever increasing rate, only makes this worse.

But let us turn, now, to that bit about 'Science in SF'. It is undeniable that we are being hit by science-fact articles from all angles. There is hardly a newspaper, weekly or monthly journal, that doesn't carry a regular department purporting to 'explain', describe and simplify the latest thing in science. The strictly scientific journals, once obscure and little known, are doubling and trebling their circulations. New journals are being born. Publicity men and advertisers are using the word 'science' like a talisman. Even television, again, is following the trend, and both channels are putting out some excellent material. This is a two-pronged thing. On the one hand, business people are falling over themselves to cash in on the new fad...and, on the other, the public-at-large is becoming 'science'-minded. And this is a good thing. But let's stop a bit, and take a closer look at what we mean by 'science.'

Strictly speaking, science isn't an 'it', at all. It's a way, a process, an attitude of mind. Furthermore, in and by itself, it is not exciting, marvellous or wonderful, but the most natural thing in the world. Louis Armstrong, the well-known trumpet-player, was once asked to 'explain' rhythm. He told his questioner that it wasn't something you could explain. Either you've got it or you haven't. If you've got it, there's nothing to explain. If you haven't got it, then no power on earth can explain it to you. And if you asked a scientist to explain just what the scientific attitude is, he might well make the same kind of answer. With one crucial difference. The scientific attitude is something we all had, at one time, but many...most... of us lose it, as we grow up.

Let's take another example...say, evolutionary theory. That's something we have been hearing a lot about, just recently, because it is just a hundred years ago that Charles Darwin put it into words that everyone could understand. Just as it might do today, it became popularised, and a catch-phrase grew up. 'Survival of the Fittest'. It was such a successful phrase that there can be very few people indeed who haven't heard it, used it, and firmly believe they understand what it means. It sounds good. It carries with it a sort of overtone of purpose and objectivity, as if evolution was something fine and noble. After all, here we are, at the top of the tree, aren't we? Splendid!

But, in fact, the phrase is almost completely meaningless. What does the word 'fittest' mean? It can only mean 'fittest to survive'. So the phrase is another way of saying that those organisms survive which are best fitted to do so. Well, naturally, but that doesn't tell us anything we didn't already know. If we weren't able to survive, we wouldn't be here. And

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this completely obscures what Darwin was trying to say, and why his fellow scientists were so excited when he said it. He claimed, and produced evidence, that the Universe, as a whole, was strictly scientific. If a thing fits into the general scheme, it survives. If it doesn't fit, it dies. That's all.

And this is something we have all done, from the cradle up. We try something. It works. We say 'good', and we keep it. We try something else, and it doesn't work. Depending on our intelligence, we try it again, and again, until we decide it won't work at all. And we throw it out. And this is basic science. This is the mechanism which lies at the base of every scientific advance Man has ever made. This is also part of the business of growing up. It is inherent in human nature, yet it took us until halfway through the nineteenth century to bring it to a deliberate and conscious technique...and call it 'science'.

We all do it, until we grow old enough to become lazy. Or to have built up a set of beliefs that we are fond of, because they are comfortable. Or until we surrender our birthright to some authority, and let it tell us what is right or wrong, good or bad. And we cease to be scientists. It's too difficult, too wearing, for most of us. But a few persist, clinging to the right, as St. Paul might have said, to 'try all things, holding fast to that which works'. These are the real scientists, and this is the scientific attitude; a combination of restless curiosity and ruthless scepticism.

From this simple, instinctive way of thinking, once recognised and used in an objective manner, has come the whole of our present civilisation, bursting at its technological seams, and breathless to keep up with itself. And there is nothing inherently wonderful in any of it. The wonder comes in when we are able to feel the truth, to see the obviousness of the new things, and to appreciate the test that we all know is valid, that these things work. This, incidentally, is why science can shock us too. This is why it comes as a shattering blow to learn that some other nation, whose way of life we have been taught to regard as 'wrong' and 'evil', can use science just as skillfully as we. It seems all wrong, to the man in the street. He feels betrayed. Yet, to the scientist, it is the most obvious thing in the world. Because science is neither good nor evil, but as impersonal as water...absolutely essential to life, but too much of it will drown you, unless you can swim.

But what is happening here? All these words (a thousand or so) about science, and never so much as a mention of any specific marvel, or wonder, or gadget. Not a drug, machine, force or theory...not one, apart from television! And this is because these things, wonderful though they may be, are not 'science', but the fruits thereof. These are the evidence that it works. 'By their fruits shall ye know them'. But we have been so busy looking at the fruits that we have lost sight of the

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thing itself.

And this applies to those articles, and the books, and the journals, that I mentioned earlier...the popularisations. Their appeal lies in the fact that they show us the fruits, the goods.. and they encourage us to wonder, and to marvel, and to argue among ourselves, often heatedly, as to whether these things are good or bad. And what will they think of next? It is quite true that it was for this kind of treat that many people used to read SF. They would marvel...and skip the 'thinking' part. It is also true that a lot of those oldtime stories were largely taken up with breathless descriptions of incredible gadgets, but there was always a substratum of conjecture as to what effect these things would have on the people exposed to them. That was where the story came in.

Naturally then, those readers who wanted to be thrilled with technology have now turned to the technological magazines. No criticism is here intended. If they prefer to look at pictures of, and read all the details about, radio-telescopes, electronic computers, genuine satellites, super-rockets and the like, who can blame them? Gadgets and devices have an appeal. But it is only fair to point out that these readers are missing the main point of SF. As a society, we get the gadgets we crave, just as we get the government we deserve. Almost anyone with a grasp of basic science, and a fair knowledge of human failings, can predict the kind of gadgets that will come. But it requires a completely different kind of thinking to estimate how those same gadgets are going to affect us.

As an example, let's take a real bogeyman, the current 'population explosion' that is frightening the life out of governments all across the globe. Scientific gadgetry, of many kinds, did that. Gadgetry, vigorously applied, without the restraint of informed thinking. Gadgetry, we hope, may be able to correct it, but a lot of high-powered thinking will have to be done, first, and it will have to be scientific thinking. It is only just beginning to be done. It will be painful. It will be faltering, and incompetent. Sociology, the baby of the sciences, has yet to break free of ideology and politics, and nothing 'scientific' will be done until sociology is completely free. It's a mess, in fact.

Yet this problem, its causes, effects, and possible 'solutions', has been foreseen and discussed many times in SF. And long ago. And never in any fact-article or popularisation, then or now. Malthus stated the problem, yes. Darwin was inspired by that statement. Gallons of learned ink have been spilled in many arguments as to whether it will, or will not, happen. You will find plenty of mention of contraceptive pills, even. But where, in any factual journal, will you find a rigorous examination of the steps that led to this state of affairs, or any analysis of

what is likely to happen if those pills become commonly available?

What is likely to happen, anyway? That question can only be properly explored in fiction. There are plenty of scientists ready to give an opinion, but such statements are made in the most guarded terms, because each one of these learned gentlemen is trained to deal in facts, and has a reputation to lose. And this is where the other great function of SF comes in. Specialists, it has been said, are those who know more and more about less and less. That's not true, but it is close enough to be causing a considerable amount of anxiety among scientists, themselves. A liaison service is badly needed, to keep scientists in touch with one another, in differing fields, and to keep the layman informed. There are a number of integrating links, already, supplying data. But where, outside of SF, can you find an integrating service which deals in ideas?

There are no specialisations in the real world. Physics overlaps into chemistry, into biology and medicine, with physiology, psychology and economics sifting into the cracks, and mathematics welding them all into a composite mass. It is our way of talking, and thinking...and science itself... which has created the divisions, has taken the natural world apart. The SF writer, free to speculate widely, can try to guess how it will look after it has been put back together again. He can give an estimate, an impressionist sketch, rather than a detailed blueprint. A guess, certainly, but a 'whole', nonetheless.

In this aspect, SF is not just unique as a literary form. It is unique, period. It is the only research laboratory free and open to anyone with ideas and willing to air them, where such ideas will be scrutinised by thousands of others of like mind, to be evaluated, criticised and discussed. And this happens. There are more 'letters to the editor' in SF than in all the other fiction fields put together. Everyone is free to join in.

And let's see you get that from a technical journal!

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ESPRITORIAL (continued from page 3)
substitute'.

One last word. If you are one of those who did not acknowledge the last issue, then this is your last copy unless you acknowledge this one! If you are one of those who has written, you have my grateful thanks for taking an interest. Frequency of future issues will depend on what funds I have to spare so, much as I hate to say this, subscriptions would be very welcome. STOP PRESS. Have just received most fascinating account of experiences in solitude from Ray Nelson. No room left this issue. Look forward to it in number three. DPB.

HISTORY IS NOT BUNK

by Nan Gerding

(Originally, parts of this were published in NANTZ, the author's OMPazine, but it has since been expanded and written up specially for this magazine).

Ever since I started back to school last fall, I've been aware of an undercurrent of unease, of problems, and difficulties. This is not abnormal, since this is an inherent part of any enterprise. Nonetheless, I've noticed several trends which are evidently tied in with a new administration. Two of them are rather predominant; one is the number of students not maintaining adequate learning and the other is IBM testing.

I've watched the students in my classes, talked with them, tried to discover objectives, motivations, goals, etc. I haven't been able to talk to enough of them so that what I have discovered would represent (mathematically) a genuine segment of opinions and attitudes. Yet three items have become obvious and seem to be consistent.

One is what I call the great American vice - the lack of any desire to learn in its largest sense - learning and application of same. These young students have not been taught to want to learn. Their motives for being in college are varied but the majority do not seem to be in school because of any authentic desire for self-improvement. What little they do learn, they do not seem to wish to apply to living. 'Tis merely something to be learned in order to obtain a passing grade. There are always, exceptions, of course, but the above seems to be the rule. In short, attitudes are playing hob with their learning.

Two, is a matter I call the great American sickness: they have absolutely no sense of historical values. This is a sickness that may well be the basis for the downfall of our country and our democracy. Without a valid understanding of the entire range of history, no person will be able to cope adequately with life today, or any day.

Without an historical sense of values, no person can hope to understand current trends; political, social and economic developments, their own government, themselves and their motivations. With our own government shoving toward complete sovereignty of the masses and full political democracy, it's a little frightening to contemplate the masses of Americans running this country with nothing but ignorance and their emotions to guide them. The oft-repeated remark, "history bores me" is one of the most tragic statements of ignorance I have ever heard.

An historical sense of values has been thoroughly instilled into me through twenty four weeks of a survey of civilisation. I think this particular course has been the most exciting thing that has ever happened to me. Even in twenty four weeks, I have learned a great deal which I could apply to myself and my own life; to my attitudes, to my reading; it has clarified many matters that puzzled me in the past. It has helped me in many instances with my other courses.

The way it was taught to me included all aspects of history and man - we had a taste of all areas and all fields. And we were offered this taste in the light of trends, cycles and practical application, to the past, to the current and to the future. We were taught no dates, no statistics - and if, for example, we studied a war, we studied it, not in the light of its generals, soldiers and battles but as an overall picture: what caused it and what its effect was on the humanity that followed in its wake. We started with recorded history, its very beginning as we know it and threaded our way down to the present time. It was truly a story of mankind.

A survey like this one covers everything - man and his institutions from the beginning to current times. There is nothing that is not touched in the process, briefly perhaps, but still tangibly. And these brief touches are enough to inspire one to further investigations in various fields. History is humanity and the study of humanity is all-important.

We learned the origins of our language which is the same, for example, as the Russian language. We learned the origins of the so-called varied races and learned that even some dark-skinned peoples are Caucasians. We learned the origins of the various religions. We learned the origins of our present-day prejudices, boundaries and attitudes as they developed down through time. I learned enough to realise what I had always thought - that there are no barriers or boundaries except those that exist in the human mind and these are without logical or real basis in fact. I learned that people think with their solar plexus (the emotions) rather than with their heads (logic). I learned why we have politics today, why it is in the form it's in, how international politics came about, why it is played as it is. I learned about the development of art, of learning and of literature. And of the development of mental institutions and hospitals and of medicine.

But what made this course was its instructor. That was the way he believed in teaching history; from the human angle, from a viewpoint which we could understand and apply as individuals. There were other history courses in the same school which were all dates, names, etc. Needless to say, I steered clear of them. There was no end to what I learned from a few short weeks in a tremendous history course. I've never been so grateful

for anything in my life as I have for this particular course.

My only recommendation would be an enlargement of the course. I can hear the screams of horror from some students if I ever said this out loud. I think history should be at least a two-year required course and, if I had my way, it would be a four-year required course. In any circumstances, it should be required in high school as well as in college. The reason I would like to see this course extended is relatively simple - in that manner all institutions, trends, etc. could be thoroughly explored, emphasised in order and not just touched. I hope I'm not unique in believing that history is all-inclusive - how could it be otherwise? But it should be studied not merely in an academic manner; it needs to be applied as well.

I'm not saying that this course was easy for me. Like the majority of students, I had no background in history. I did have U.S. history and some did not even have that. When I mentioned the screams of horror, I was thinking again of the cry of the ignorant, "History bores me". Well, I believe these students should have history shoved down their throats until they begin to realise its significance. Some of it will surely rub off, I say with my usual optimism. (Part 2 next issue)

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SPEAKING FRANKLY...

by BILL GRAY

Let's start right away by saying that it's about time fandom grew up. Perhaps ESPRIT can help the process by pioneering a mature thought-stream. There must be quite a number of us who get terribly bored with the everlasting "fannishness" going on. Why not frankly admit that there are other things in life than artificially sustained adolescence?

Fandom starts in the enquiring schoolchild mind. It's a good thing; a useful thing; a thing to be encouraged. BUT must it be kept at schoolroom level all the time? Why not recognise first of all that the underlying factor that makes a fan is a mind which reaches beyond orthodox thought? What makes anyone interested in SF? It is because they have found a field of thinking which should have no hidebound limits and they hope to meet others with similar mental ambitions.

What has happened, in fact, is that SF fandom has built up an orthodoxy of its own. So far we have not reached the stage of appointing a Committee for the investigation of Unfannish Activities but the awful possibility lurks in fiction if not in actuality. There is already a sort of code for fannish behaviour and the whole thing is coalescing into a hardening format. Fandom is rapidly becoming futile.

Put bluntly, SF has the greatest appeal for the juvenile male. As a one-track subject, SF has narrow literary limits and

not enough material to hold an adventurous mind captive for a whole lifetime. Nevertheless, the majority of fans are likeable people and it would be a heartbreaking thought to visualise all the many friendships fading into oblivion. What is needed, especially at the present time, is a broader basis of association.

Try this angle. Fandom is fairly modern, and grew up with us. We have continued to grow older (and, it is hoped, wiser) but Fandom, as such, remains a youthful activity of mind. We need a more adult approach to the subject which would satisfy deeper levels of thinking. There are other things to do besides read SF and many more subjects in life to think and talk about. Why exclude them?

The real value of Fandom is that it brings a lot of people together who are interested in each other and believe in the great adventure of thinking. This is a very worthwhile object but people won't stay together unless they are able to share mental levels that are agreeable to all parties.

Now I've got to be personal and make myself a guinea-pig. When did I last read an SF story?...I can't remember. When will I read another one?...I don't know. WHY? Honestly, because they have begun to bore me so stiff that I can scarcely turn a page without screaming. I am sick of SF's hackneyed, worn-out, wearisome and threadbare literary situations. It neither amuses, cheers nor even interests me any more. There is no motive left for reading it. It neither inspires nor encourages. It simply depresses and sickens. With monotonous regularity it harps gloomily away on future or faraway states of being that are frightful to contemplate. It pictures Man as less than a machine. Yes, I know there are exceptions to this, but too seldom and too difficult to find.

Why not encourage an entirely new school of SF writing? Let authors visualise a better, instead of a worse future. For Heaven's sake, let's have more cheer and less gloom, more laughter and less horror. SF has certainly sponsored all the loathsome imaginings of human minds. What about the other side of the picture for a change? We've had all the Hells; now let's have some of the Heavens for a while.

The situation is as simple as this. When I pick up a book I've paid money for, or borrowed, I want to feel the value of reading it when I've got to the end. Otherwise, why bother to open the thing? If, at the end of all the mental exercise in following the author's mind, I feel tired, depressed, ashamed of being human, or in a lower state of mind than when I started, then the book has done me harm and not good. There is too much of this kind of thing in SF and I, for one, am fed up with it.

By all means let's use SF fandom as a common meeting ground but why not develop it so that one could be sure of meeting intelligent
(continued on bottom of page 16)

Heavens Above!

by Jack Wilson

I suppose that at some time or other all of us have had discussions about the "afterlife" to which we hope to pass when our span of life here on earth has run its course. And each one of us has, no doubt, expressed his or her own personal views about the form or shape this other life will take.

A remark that is often made during such discussions is, "Well, I believe one makes one's own Heaven and Hell." This remark has now become something of a platitude, I think, and it is usually used to wind up the discussion. It is generally made with such an air of finality about it as to suggest that the last word on the subject has now been spoken.

But I think there is a lot more truth in this remark than is imagined by the folk who utter it. I propose briefly to explain what I mean by this.

It has been accepted, now, for a long time that the human mind has powers that can make it wellnigh omnipotent. Rightly directed, these powers can literally be made to work miracles. Man has not yet, however, brought his mind to that state of development, but he is on the way to it.

Even so, much can, at the present stage, be accomplished by the power of concentrated thought. A thought or an idea, if it is strongly and continuously held for a long enough time, will get through to the subconscious mind which will accept it as truth and, in due course, bring the thought or idea to fulfilment. Though this process of concentration is not easy and requires a strong effort to maintain it, it can, I think, in some particular ways or circumstances become automatic. It thus becomes an ever-present and ever-constant part of one's daily activity, like breathing or walking or focussing one's eyes on distant objects.

One sphere in which this auto-concentration could operate powerfully is the religious one. Religious ideas and beliefs are very strongly held by almost everyone, and chief among these are the ones which have to do with the life-after-this. We have been taught from childhood that this earthly life is only a series of stepping stones to much better things. Religious instruction, Bible-reading and attendance at church or chapel have given to each one of us his own ideas about eternal life in the future. Could it not be, then, that over the years, this individual picture of the after-life becomes so much a part of a person's daily life, as to form, within his mind a very real, living, representation of what he hopes his future existence will be? The image will become so strong,

persistent and unvarying that it will surely have a most powerful effect on the person's subconscious.

The subconscious, being what it is, will eventually be moved to work on this train of thought, in order to bring the ideas to fulfilment. After all, it is a known fact that a strong imagination can cause a person to develop a disease of which he is mortally afraid, if he worries and thinks about it long enough. Or, at least, he will develop the symptoms, even though the disease itself is not actually present. Could it not be then, that the same process could be applied to this process of Heaven-building? Not only do most people imagine and think strongly about their future life, they have implicitly believed in it for years and are firmly convinced, beyond all doubt, that such bliss will be theirs when their life on earth is done. And nothing can, or will, shake their faith in this belief.

This being so, what, then, is more likely than that the subconscious, accepting these ideas as reality, without question proceeds to build an individual Heaven for each particular person, and according with each person's ideas on the subject? It will, of course, receive constant impetus from the unending stream of thoughts and ideas being sent down to it, all of which will cause the building to proceed apace.

The accepted fact that this Heaven will not be entered into until death takes place probably accounts for the fact that no indication of this building ever becomes apparent to the conscious mind of the individual. He or she will be completely unaware, in most cases, that such building is taking place! But the person's death will trigger off the final act and, hey presto! the departing spirit finds awaiting him his own particular Heaven - or Hell - just as he imagined it would be.

There are reports from time to time of persons being on the point of death being able to see a vision of the heaven to which they are about to go. Some of them have been able to describe what they saw. And, as far as I am aware, no two of these reports are alike. In principle, yes, but not in detail.

If it should be that these ideas of a personal heaven are indeed factual (though how proof could be obtained I don't know!) it would seem likely that outer space will be populated by myriads of spirit entities, each inhabiting his own thought world. I say "outer space" because when one thinks about Heaven one's thoughts instinctively turn upwards and outwards towards the stars. That, we were taught in our youth, is where Heaven lies.

Perhaps, then, some of these mysterious rays and signals that have been puzzling our astronomers and astrophysicists will turn out to be attempts by these entities to communicate with the world they have left. And perhaps, also, this theory might account for many of these earthly hauntings that we hear and know of. The ghostly visitants' former ideas of Heaven might

have been centred so strongly on the places they frequented when in the flesh, that their unconscious minds accepted them as being a true picture of the Heaven that was desired and proceeded to build accordingly.

But what kind of a Heaven or Hell will be in store for a person who has not for a long time held any definite ideas or views on the subject, I don't know, though I think it can be safely assumed that the subconscious will provide one of some kind.

I happen to be one of this class of people and so far I have been unable to find any firm foundation on which to build. Personally, I think I would be content to be able to roam at will, effortlessly and untiringly, throughout this vast universe, visiting nebulae, star-systems, galaxies and all the hurly-burly of space. One would then have the whole of the cosmos for one's own Heaven and surely Eternity itself would not be long enough to see all of it!

This, I think, will be the only way by which Man will be able to travel into the depths of the Universe - in the spirit and not in the flesh - for all of his rockets and satellites and guided missiles and suspended animation.

END

How Are Your Perceptions?

Daphne Buckmaster

We all like to think that our judgement is good, especially in matters where we have had a great deal of personal experience and it comes as something of a shock to find out how easily our senses can be fooled.

Take, for instance, the sense of taste. A year or two ago, one of our prominent lady politicians stated that she couldn't tell the difference between butter and margarine. This caused a good deal of laughter and even contempt among housewives, all of whom were quite certain that anyone who could not distinguish between these two entirely different tastes must be very lacking in judgement. Since then, we have read of tests being carried out which showed that not only the courageous M.P. (you have to be courageous to make a statement like that!) but the average housewife herself could not tell the difference.

Much of the deception lies, as always, in the appearance. In America where, I understand, margarine looks like lard because there is a law against it being artificially coloured, the test consisted in distinguishing margarine which had (for the purpose of the test) been coloured yellow, from butter which had been made very pale (or perhaps even white). Most of the guinea pig housewives were deceived by the colours into giving the wrong answer although they believed they were judging by taste alone. In England, similar changes in appearance also successfully fooled the tasters

but here it was the butter that was coloured dark yellow to imitate margarine. It is noticeable nowadays that many of the more ambitious margarine manufacturers are turning out margarine that is pale yellow and selling it for quite a high price. On the other hand, there is another brand of margarine that is very dark yellow and this is universally regarded as "only for cooking" - it sells at just over half the price of the more expensive ones!

Then there were the detergent tests. Three samples of detergent were put into separate packets. One packet was red, one yellow and the other blue. A number of housewives were given the three samples and asked to try them out in the normal way on their washday, afterwards giving their opinions. The result was that a majority said that the one in the red packet was far too harsh for normal washing; that the one in the blue packet was very mild and that the yellow one was a nice average. (I may have the colours mixed up but the idea's the same.) You will have guessed, of course, that in fact the three samples were identical.

Another experiment in judgement was done to find out whether mothers could tell whether a baby were crying from fear or from anger. A number of films were taken each showing a fear or anger stimulus (e.g. a loud noise being made) and the resultant crying baby. The frames were then shuffled so that any one stimulus was not necessarily followed by its true result. The mothers seeing the films were easily deceived by this mix-up into misjudging the reasons for the baby crying in any particular case.

Then there was the one where a number of people were given one of those optical illusion tests - the details don't matter but it was of a simple type such as being asked to say which of two straight lines on a patterned background was the longer. First the test was done with a number of people individually to find out what percentage of normal people got the right answer. Then it was done with a number of people together. This time they were all put into one room and allowed to discuss it before answering. Unknown to them, two persons were among them who had been instructed to circulate and confidently suggest the wrong answer. The effect was the an overwhelming majority put down the wrong answer, thus showing that most of us are willing to believe what another person says rather than the evidence of our own eyes.

So - next time you feel tempted to pronounce judgement "from my own experience" - think twice!

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(continued from page 12)

adults with wide interests in life beyond a strip-cartoon mentality. Why not cater for all kinds of thought-streams? It appears that **ESRIT** has this idea in mind. Good luck to it and those associated with it. Let's hope enough people are forthcoming to get it going. END

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L E T T E R S

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It is my plan to put the comments under subject headings, partly so that readers can turn to the subject that interests them most and partly so that all the different viewpoints on each subject can be seen together. It is easy to do this with the present batch because there were only a few subjects; whether it can be done when discussions begin to branch out, subdivide and overlap I don't know but I'll try. That is, I will if there is no great objection to this way of doing it. There is the disadvantage that it breaks up each reader's letter and the continuity thereof, of course. Let me know which you prefer, please; this type or the usual type of letter column.

A LETTER TO JOE

JACK WILSON The first item to come in for comment is friend Sydney's "Letter to Joe". The special feature which drew my attention chiefly was his reference to the 'Golden Section' reputedly used by the old masters when setting out their paintings and drawings. I recently attended a course of illustrated talks on the history and development of Art, sponsored by our local Arts & Crafts Society. In these talks, the speaker dealt at some length with this 'Golden Section' theory, though he didn't tell us that it's working was derived from observations of the then-known Solar system. We were also told that the old masters built up their pictures by means of triangles of various shapes and sizes and fitted the various masses of their composition into them, always, of course, conforming to the over-riding importance of this mysterious 'Golden Section'. What a mechanical and laborious process this must have been! As tedious as superimposing triangles onto copies of these old boys' masterpieces in order to illustrate and clinch the argument! With Sydney's kind permission, I am going to assert that this Golden Section business is all ballyhoo and that, in fact, the old masters used neither the 'Golden Section' nor any system of triangles in their picture making. They were masters of balance, symmetry and composition, talents which they were born with and which they used instinctively. I do not know of any of the present day painters of note who, in their teachings, have ever mentioned such a cumbersome method of picture making. And I know personally a number of really good artists whose work leaves little to be desired from a technical standpoint and none of 'em had ever heard of this 'Golden Section' theory. A good artist knows instinctively when his painting is right or wrong. If it is wrong, he will do it again, correcting the faults which a study of the failure will have shown him. He doesn't need triangles and comes and squares

and rhomboids and sections and what-have-you. He just lets himself be guided by his artistic instinct backed by what skill and knowledge, he possesses. Yes, Sydney, I think this Golden Section is a lot of hogwash.

Spalding, Lincs.

A. VINCENT CLARKE. Sid's article is fair enough, providing you have the opportunity and the time to attend one of the County Colleges for Further Education. I would have said that Evening Classes at LCC institutes were more in line with the average fan's opportunity and even that can present difficulties. I attended half a session of a series of anthropology lectures about three years ago but was prevented from continuing by pressure of work and illness at home. So many things can delay and hinder the adult seeking enlightenment outside the pages of books and magazines...or fanzines. And the gap between experiences in the present instance is shown by the fact that Sid talks of his sense of wonder being revived by something he'd never seen before...the dawn rising in a lunar crater - an experience I underwent when I bought my first telescope with a birthday present £1 when I was ten years old. Yet Sid must have had experiences which I have never shared...every individual is unique.

London.

LES GERBER As usual, Sid Birchby's writing fascinates me but this time for quite a different reason. I have now started college and, although I've been here only three days, I have already been horrified at the attitude of the pre-med student who said he liked good music, naming two composers whom he knew by one or two works only, and, rejecting all my other suggestions, finally admitted that he hadn't had much time for music in the past few years because he'd been busy with such things as (he said) memorizing the 800 muscles in a cat's body. When I told him that what I wanted to do was to create fiction of artistic merit, he tried to hide his contempt/lack of comprehension but he wasn't terribly successful. I spoke to him further and was finally able to draw out the admission that he was unable to understand how one wrote, and why. This boy is intelligent but he's the victim of an attitude which may make him less than a full person, no matter what good he may do, for the rest of his life. For his sake, I hope he outgrows it, but I doubt that he will.

The thrill of discovery, of comprehension, which Sid describes, is very real to me; it is probably my greatest joy in life, and something which many great poets have done their damndest to describe, yet I doubt that anyone who has not had the experience will comprehend it. The best way to describe it is by analogy; it's similar to the feeling you get when you solve a murder case before the private eye in the book does, but on a higher plane. I feel it when I comprehend what an artist, a composer or a writer was trying to say, and how he said it; and also when I can understand something which makes people tick and put it into a piece of writing. However one may get this feeling, the reaction Sid describes, curiosity of the highest order, should be a part of

every person, and I can't agree more that it should be every person's objective to make it just that. Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

CHRIS MILLER When I read Sid's description of a first-fanzine producer, I realised how right he was. This was precisely what my idea of a fanzine was. Ech! I think that a faned starts with three things. As well as the two Sid lists, he also has the urge to communicate. Often he starts off by wanting to write SF - I know I did, when younger, and once produced an SF type English essay for my homework! I later, at the age of twelve, started a story but it never got anywhere - and then he wants to discuss ideas, StFnal, (like I hope ESPRIT will) then, when he finds faanish fiction, conreps, etc., to be the vogue, he turns his yearnings to these and another mediocre fanzine is born.

I see Sid mentions Leonardo. He is one of my favourite historical characters...He had the nerve to go to a mortuary at night and cut up the corpses to see how they worked - how the muscles and sinews ran in the body. I can imagine him, working in the flickering candlelight, over the pale, white body of an old man..knowing it would be death for him if found out. Barrow-in-Furness, Lancs.

BOB COULSON In regard to Birchby's article, I suppose I'm a freak; as a fanzine editor, I started off with neither a duplicator nor a sense of wonder. The mimeograph is Juanita's and my sense of wonder was pretty well faded by the time I discovered fandom. (I was 24 by then you see, and the sense of wonder is pretty well restricted to teenagers...a few people retain it well into adulthood but not many). YANDRO, of course, isn't Sid's typical fanzine..but then it isn't exactly his idea of the ideal one either. I'll go along with him in his point..or what I think is his point..that editors shouldn't worry about pleasing their readers. If they publish what pleases them, then readers who enjoy the same things will eventually show up. Wabash, Indiana.

PETER MABEY Sid Birchby's 'Letter' is excellent, though I don't think the Golden Section was based on observations of the planets: the actual origin is more likely to be purely geometrical, though it does tie in with the spiral of the seashell, and also with the interesting series: 1,1,2,3,5,8,13,21... where each term is the sum of the two preceding, and the ratio of successive terms approaches nearer and nearer to the ideal Golden Section ratio. If I remember rightly, D'Arcy Thomson discusses this relationship - along with much else of fascinating interest - in his great book "On Growth and Form". Cheltenham, Glos.

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** I was sorry to see that Sid's article on wonder and discovery drew less comments than those on status-seeking and advertising. Does this mean that readers are more interested in things concerning the community than in things concerning the individual? I hope not. Much as I enjoy any type of discussion, I shall always tend to give preference in these columns to comments such as have appeared on these last three pages. DPB.

STATUS AND JOBS

JULIAN PARR As regards the Status Seekers, I recognise the type but suspect that many of them conform consciously as long as they are ambitious and seek further promotion - with the idea of achieving eventually a position in which they can be really independent, or at least much more so than those whose lives are their own only during their out-of-work hours. Many status-seekers might be conscious of the drawbacks their way of life might have, but may imagine that since these often arise from the need to submit and pander to superiors, the best way out is to climb as high as possible and thus reduce the number of superiors one has, in the hope of reaching a level at which they can relax, rest on their laurels and enjoy a considerable degree of both comfort and personal independence....not to speak of power and influence. Naturally enough, many falter and fail, and those who rest on their laurels soon find rivals and competitors anxious to prise them out of their positions. It is the failures and the deluded who make the most pathetic picture, and a novelist's description of how easy it is to fall by the wayside might serve as a warning to optimistic youngsters.

Whether the system (of encouraging initiative and ambition by means of social, not only financial, incentives) is a "good" or "bad" one is quite a different matter. A so-called "beat" who rejects it as inappropriate for what he considers to be his own personality still has to consider the question: is it not good for society?

Cologne-Rodenkirchen, Germany.

JIM GROVES I seem to be in the middle of Ron's scale as far as my job is concerned. I like it but I still like my free time. It doesn't make too many demands on me since I'm at the bottom of the pyramid and fairly determined to stay there; I've seen how it can obsess you if you get too high up. It forms a facet of my life, a minor one to be sure (in terms of its interest, that is) but still a facet. I don't want promotion since that would put me in the British equivalent of the 'status seeker'. London.

ARTHUR R. WEIR. D.Sc. As regards the "status seekers" type of society taking root in England, I don't think you need worry, since, in the first place, the British Isles are too small for people to move easily right out of touch with one another (a U.S. worker may easily move from, say, California to Maryland, about 2,400 miles or so, simply on a new assignment from his firm) and, secondly, the hierarchy system in houses or cars hasn't spread to this country yet and, with the strongly based family system of social organisation that we still have, and the number of eccentrics and individualists that prefer freak houses or "vintage" cars, it won't make head here easily. Tetbury, Glos.

ARCHIE MERCER The set-up which you mention as being described in "The Status Seekers" is, it strikes me, essentially military in nature, with the difference, if I understand

aright, that although it may be a class system, it is at least fluid, not a rigid caste system. The services, of course, have two pretty rigid castes and a fluid class system within each. I haven't read the book but I gather from the articles that the American system does possess the saving grace that, by it, the lowliest employee can ultimately aspire to the highest circles. Contemplation of it still depresses me, but it might be worse./North Hykeham, Lincs.

KEN CHESLIN It sounds like America is well on the way to turning into a glorified ant-heap. I've noted the class restrictions in many an American film - usually the class theme isn't there deliberately, just as part of the normal background.

The trend seems to be frightening in its forcing of uniformity not only on actions but also on thought. It looks like an irresistible trend, too, rather like a wall of gas steadily overwhelming everything, absorbing. I can't see any solution to it - unless everyone wears a Status Badge ; and I can't see what good writing about it will do - true some interest may be aroused - but the tendency is always to sit solid and wait for someone else to do something. It's like trying to hold that gas cloud together with a wire mesh fence. Stourbridge, Worcs.

GREGG CALKINS I do think Vance Packard is full of you-know-what - this is one of the things that helps Americans to be so misunderstood throughout the rest of the world. It contains a number of half-truths and statements that may or may not concern certain cities or their environs and then makes it seem as if the whole country is that way. For instance, I've lived in several different parts of the country during my short life and I've never encountered any of the status seekers or status symbols that you describe on page three...and this business about the constant striving to get 'one-up' on the neighbours is so much baloney as far as I am concerned. I couldn't care less about what my neighbours have and I'm sure they feel the same about me.

Salt Lake City, Utah.

BETTY KUJAWA Oh, my yes!!! You betcha I read the "Status Seekers"!! And, oh, if you could only live here and know how very accurate most of it is! Of course the book is a wee bit one-sided and overdone (that's what sells books) but much of it so true if exaggerated. Of course, not all of us here are striving to get 'one-up' on the neighbours...tho' it can be fun, too, and not all grim and degrading. Right now round our place all the husbands seem to be jr. Churchills...out painting landscapes on the patio. Another new acquisition too is every family buying a darn, big, good telescope - supposedly for the kiddies - Echo satellite possibly helped sell this item. Seems we all got them now - tho' at the time none of us honestly knew the others were buying one. Am enjoying ours immensely.

Re the desirability of social classes - we are gonna have 'em no matter what type of society it is...just look at Russia with its really rigid caste system!! I see no evil in them if one

can rise from level to level...I firmly loathe and hate the older British one of "I know my place"..where each group..specially the lower middle..is all too happy to be safely stratified so that they can grovel to the ones above and sneer and abuse the ones below them.

South Bend, Indiana.

BOB COULSON Status Seeking seems mostly confined to the larger cities so far. At least, in our office, the newest and biggest cars are driven by the youngest draughtsmen and engineers, mostly because they aren't married and have more money for that sort of thing. In clothing there is a definite division between draughtsmen and engineers; the latter wear white shirts and ties while the draughtsmen wear sports shirts. However, it isn't a rigid division and engineers who occasionally wear sports shirts aren't ostracised socially or denied promotion. They aren't too sure about me; technically, I belong with the engineers since I'm now a technical writer but, in summer, I wear t-shirts and slacks and I haven't had a tie on since I was married.

Wabash, Indiana.

A.VINCENT CLARKE. Ron appears to forget that the pressure towards social status and a 'good job' can come very sharply to the individual by the demands of a wife and family as well as by the more depersonalised cultural pressure. The need of a 'steady job', 'security' etc., is a very powerful one to anyone with responsibilities outside his own pleasure seeking. The tendency is towards employment of a static nature where an individual can grow old in a single company's service and die on their pension... and obviously the company where the staff is comparatively static ...each individual waiting for 'dead men's' shoes' fosters the status seeking mentality. I see the problem as being linked with the growth of the megalithic corporations...as I note Ron says "the majority of them...employed by the large companies" and it's difficult to see what the answer is...outside of government limitations.

London.

PETER MABEY I haven't read "The Status Seekers" so can't comment to any great extent - I must say that although I've drifted up to Assistant Chief of my department, I've not had much difficulty with status-symbols; I do now have to wear a tie to work, no matter what the weather, but otherwise I still have the feeling that I can do more or less as I like. Of course, in the aircraft industry the set-up isn't so rigid as elsewhere!

Cheltenham, Glos.

CHRIS MILLER America is a cash-conscious country. Everything revolves around your wealth - life, even, is subsidiary to earnings - way of life is decided by income, as you point out. This presumably implies that they do not live according to as strict a moral code as we do (or are supposed to!) since we are supposed to live not by worldly values but by spiritual ones. So presumably the Americans are more worldly than us.

Anyway, what, apart from loss of practically non-existent spiritual values, do we have to lose by becoming more like the U.S.? Heck, the Russians manage O.K. with very little spirituality. They are all materialists...or so we are led to believe.

I remember reading a book about "personality-testing"

that all the big U.S. firms do nowadays, with stock questions to be run onto computer cards. The employees, when answering these, decide what personality is best for them to show, considering their job, position, etc., and then answer the questions to show this! The author even included an appendix showing just how to do this,

picking the answers (the questions were of the type where you select an answer from those supplied) so as to show steady personality, no great world-shaking ambitions etc. Horrible I think. But they are safeguarding their jobs thinking they may be moved if they don't show the correct results on the test. Barrow-in-Furness.

** Some of these tests have built-in verification questions. Unknown to the one who is answering them, some of the questions are "catch" questions and act as an indicator as to whether the person is telling the truth. I answered one of these tests myself as a guinea pig when my firm was trying out a test from U.S. to see how it could be used in England, and, believe me, I for one could not tell which of the questions was which! The score must come within a certain range - if you get a figure outside that then they know you have not been telling the truth.

DPB.

BILL DONAHO I don't think that "The Status Seekers" is a particularly good picture of American life today. It is a true picture but only of the hierarchy of executives which are, after all, only a small part of the population. Like many books of this type, it exaggerates and extrapolates for effect. In most respects it is harder to tell the classes apart than it ever was before...there have always been classes in America in spite of what anyone may say. On the job there is still status and in small towns there is still status, but in the cities there is still anonymity and most of the population still lives in the cities, although in the 1960 census, for the first time in history, the metropolitan cities showed a small net loss of population. People are moving out to the suburbs. And the suburbs, unless they are company towns, judge almost solely on how much money a man apparently makes. In this sense the book is right, but again the word is apparently and certainly most suburbanians don't have to worry about the effect of their suburban symbols on their jobs.

Again, the competition is not so much to get one up as to remain in the swim, to conform. In fact, getting way out is heavily frowned upon. We aren't in the situation described in "The Status Seekers" yet, though I am afraid that things are pointing that way. But it is a true picture today for administrative personnel.

A recent sociological survey said that there was a direct correspondence between class and who is boss in the home. In the lower classes, the man is, but as the classes get higher, the woman emerges more and more and in the upper classes the woman is boss.

Probably the main thing about classes in American society today is that they are solidifying. They existed before, but were highly fluid and it was possible to rise and fall with great ease. Today most people continue in the class that their parents belonged

to. Most wealthy families have had their money for at least three generations. And one point not brought out by Packard is that status is mostly one's position in his own class...at least the type of status Packard is talking about. But again the classes are looking and sounding more alike and it is difficult to tell, just by seeing someone on the street or in a restaurant, just what class he belongs to. Of course, a few minutes' conversation will tell as attitudes on several questions are different even if accents are not.
Berkeley, California.

LES GERBER Is status seeking as bad in the U.S. as Packard says it is? Hell, yes! And worse! The reason for it is that people in general are so inferior to what they should and could be. Why I myself am so superior in this respect to so many people that it makes me shudder, and I don't think I'm anything great. Unfortunately, I don't think anything can or will be done about this until the human race improves tremendously, and at the rate we're going, I don't know if that will ever happen; right now it seems that we are going backwards. The only solution I have is a completely selfish one; I try to associate only with people who aren't handicapped by the moronic viewpoints of most of the people in this country.
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

LEN MOFFATT The class system, it seems to me, is dependent on money. With the current easy-credit system, it is easier nowadays for folks to live beyond their means. They are always in debt, but as long as they can keep each creditor reasonably well paid, a bit at a time, they can step up a class without actually having on hand, at any one time, the amount of money that would previously have been required to admit them to said class. I would say that the easy-credit economy combined with the faster pace of living today makes the race for status more noticeable, more obvious. But I think it is the same race that has been going on since Og decided that he too wanted a stone axe with a longer handle just like Ug's. Nope, status-seeking is an ancient human occupation; it's just faster nowadays.

Those of us who try to pace themselves, avoid ulcers, getting overloaded with too many bills, etc., like to think that they will get the things they want, not because the Jones have them but because they really need or desire them. For instance, we do not own a TV set. We could buy one right now - easy credit - but there are other things we'd rather have first. Naturally, just about everybody we know has TV sets. We know there are some worthwhile things on TV and are reasonably sure that we wouldn't let ourselves become so hypnotised by the thing that we'd give up reading books etc., but we'd rather have a good FM radio and record-player.

Anyway, I know I'M One Up on my next door neighbour. I have about 15 fanzines here to acknowledge and I bet he doesn't have a single one!
Downey, California.

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Thank you, everybody. I am sure all my English readers now have a clear and accurate picture of the U.S. social classes. DPB.

A D V E R T I S I N G

JOHN PHILLIFENT I want to take you to task about your comments on THE HIDDEN PERSUADERS. I haven't seen such naive casuistry as this in many a long year. I can give you quite a few reasons why your defence is mistaken. First and easiest, it can never be defensible, on any grounds, to practise deliberate deceit, on any scale, or for any reason. The psychological damage it does to the operator, alone, is enough to rule it out. Only the highest integrity can withstand the knowledge that "here I have a trick whereby I can kid people into buying anything". And neither sellers nor operators are famous for their integrity.

Secondly, wherever did you get the idea that they are only making us change brands? The profits of soap-powder makers are soaring every week. They aren't doing that on a change of brand, but because people are buying more and paying more for less. Millions of cash money are being spent on illusions. Half of that devoted to expertising the function of the product and the other half on educating the public into some acuity of judgement and we'd all be better off.

Then you say that to the poor an appearance of luxury, however spurious, is very important. Agreed, but why spurious? With the technology we have to hand, such pitiful deceptions are not necessary. Genuine and solid luxury, meaning dependability and long wear, is possible..at the same price we are paying for junk. //But as I tried to point out, people do not want long wear, etc. Sometimes I have tried to tell girls I have met that good clothes are cheaper in the long run than cheap ones because they can last ten years or more, only to get the same reply time after time: "But who'd want them to last ten years? I'm tired of them after two and throw them away and get new." And housewives say the same, in effect, about household goods. They all want change, change, change, because their lives are dull. DPB// And the so-called educated and thinking minority are no special case. They aren't immune, by any means. They can be got by a snob approach. They pay more for the same things wrapped up different. DPB → //They buy what they want of their own free will. The wrapping is obviously important to them. Take lipstick as a good example. I doubt if any woman thinks an 8/6 lipstick is a different sort of stuff from a 1/- one but the fancy case gives her money's worth in 'poshness'. Most girls will not be seen using a cheap lipstick in public because it would make them feel inferior. And it is no good suggesting that the same fancy case could be supplied cheaply because then, such is human nature, that the thing would lose its value. We must also take into account that people with different types of lives necessarily have a different scale of values. To you and to me and, perhaps, to most of the people reading this, household goods, clothes, etc., form only a background. We should like to buy each thing once and for all so that it could quietly perform its function of feeding, clothing or warming us, giving us no trouble while we got on with our "real" life of reading, writing, talking, stamp-collecting or whatever we like doing. DPB
butting
in here

(DPB continuing)

But to the average housewife, it is very different. She chooses things with more than their main function in mind. They have to make her home look nice; the cleaning and polishing and looking after them is her "real" life; she likes to discuss their price and looks with the neighbours; she takes pleasure in deciding whether they shall go here or there; when the fashion changes she wants to buy new things. And she doesn't mind if things break down occasionally because this introduces a bit of adventure into her humdrum life; gives her something to talk about over the garden fence. In fact, if everything she bought were cheap, durable, efficient and simple the housewife would be bored so stiff that she'd be a burden to herself as well as her family.

I'm not suggesting that I like this state of affairs any more than anybody else does. I think it is deplorable. But my point is that we should not blame it on the advertisers. In this "buyer's market" that we have today, it is the buyer who dictates how things shall be and if there is to be any change, the initiative must come from the buyer. By all means, let us educate the next generation into wanting the better things in life so that they shall not have to turn to everchanging frills and appearances in order to retain any interest in life; let us even, if we think it can be done, try to change the present adult population; but let us stop wasting our time making a scapegoat out of the advertiser (and maker) who, after all, is in no position to dictate to people. DPB//

(Sorry - I digressed there more than I meant to. Back to John's letter:) But your piece on cosmetics was the best. If a middle-aged woman seriously believes that anything out of a bottle, jar or tablet will restore her 'bloom' then she is, per se, insane. If she believes that it is important, at that age, to have a bloom then she is psychotic. //Oh, come now...DPB// And what could be more disgusting, in every sense of the word, than to see a middle-aged woman, with her face plastered, firmly believing she is running competition to a nineteen-year-old? You say she feels better? So she would if she got plastered in the usual way. Does that make it good? //Maybe you'd like us all to wear the veil and burqa, too? DPB// Got me right. I'm not blaming her. She has been conditioned by the 'sell' boys, into believing that one bath in ----- will set the men whistling. Before that, she has been conditioned into thinking that this is desirable, that it is a worthwhile aim. By euphemism. Be the belle of the ball, the cynosure of every man's eye, make their blood-pressure rise. Go on! For what? It's nothing more than plain, old-fashioned sex....//Disgusting! DPB//

I would pick you up //I'm beginning to need it. DPB// on one last item of dream-wish thinking. You say the more dangerous of advertising excesses are the subject of preventive laws! What on earth have you been looking at? Where have you been? May I list you a few? Faster, more powerful cars and better pulling-power petrol...so that every cluck in Christendom can become a highspeed lethal weapon? Alcohol, in every shape and form so long as it is blessed as being good for you, body-building, health-giving, stimulating, or anything else except what it is, an inhibition-relaxing

drug. Other drugs in fine profusion touted as digestion-settlers headache-killers, pain-relievers...to say nothing of the quite superfluous 'vitamin' junk. Never be one degree under..fortify the over-forties...have indigestion but don't feel it. If you think these aren't dangerous, you haven't looked at the road-death figures or the hospital records of dead and dying from stupid living. //Here I agree; people shouldn't be allowed to buy dangerous drugs - but remember I was defending a method of advertising, not which things should be on sale and which shouldn't DPB// London.

PETER MABEY On motivation research, I think you've taken up an untenable position; admittedly, on things like tooth-paste, where all brands are equally capable of performing the ostensible function, the only way to sell one against another is to appeal to irrelevant considerations. (I but Colgate because I prefer the taste, not because of all that rubbish about 'lasting protection' - or is that some other brand?). The position is worse with detergents, where the washing powers of foam (on the similarity to soap, no doubt) have been sold so vigorously that every manufacturer has to put foaming agent in his detergent, with the result that the rivers are polluted because the sewage plants can't cope with the stuff. In fact, foam hinders washing power, and where serious washing has to be done, foam-preventing substances are invariably used! //In fact, as I said before, it is the buyer dictating to the maker and not, as everyone seems to fear, the other way round. DPB// But detergents, again, are more or less the same: worst of all is the way in which such things as refrigerators can be sold on appearance to such an extent that the ignorant public can be gulled into buying shoddy equipment which performs worse in its intended mode than other, cheaper makes. You say if that pleases them, why not leave them to it? - the answer to that is surely that if the stuff is worse-made, and presumably sells in larger quantity, it must, in fact, really be cheaper to make //cheaper than what? DPB// and hence the manufacturers must be making wholly disproportionate profits. If people want cheap and flashy things they ought not to be made to pay more than for good ones, solely for the benefit of unscrupulous manufacturers. // It seems to me that there are more factors than quality which decide the price of anything at any time. Unfortunately. DPB// Cheltenham, Glos.

BOB COULSON As to The Hidden Persuaders I will agree with you with a couple of reservations. I have no objection at all to advertisers selling the public what it really wants, even if what it really wants is an automobile that looks like a rolling phallic symbol...as long as the manufacturers also produce at least something in the same line that I want. I have no objection at all to the makers of various brands of aspirin trying to outshout each other on television; I go right ahead and buy a small local brand of aspirin at 19¢ a hundred tablets while the suckers pay 75¢ or so for the same amount of an advertised brand.

But occasionally the manufacturers get so carried away

with their own advertising that they neglect me and then I begin to feel abused. A prime example would be the auto industry of a few years ago...there was no make of auto available in this country which appealed to anyone who wanted economy, good mileage and reasonably good workmanship. No American car offered any of these qualities and European imports were available only in large cities.

Since then, the European autos have expanded their markets to include the smaller midwestern cities, the American-made Rambler has appeared with a relatively good product, and the big makes have come out with their "compacts". (This last is a fleeting market though. Already they're advertising bigger compact cars, with more horsepower, more chrome, etc.) But for several years the small car market was completely neglected and the very success of Rambler and Volkswagen proves that the neglect was not due to the lack of a market...the makers believed that there was no market for small cars, but they've been proved wrong. That's one of the sins of big advertising; that the manufacturers will begin to believe that everybody wants what the advertisers say the "average" person wants.

Second reservation concerns the "subliminal advertising" techniques which amount to a poor grade of hypnotism, and are direct descendants of the old patent medicine technique of putting a bit of opium or other habit-forming drug into the product to ensure repeat sales. This is not giving the public what it wants; this is blatantly forcing the public to buy something that it doesn't give a damn about. Fortunately, subliminal advertising hasn't proven much of a success yet, but sooner or later the techniques will be improved. //In this country, the advertising profession decided that subliminal advertising was unethical and its use not approved. DFB // Wabash, Indiana.

ARCHIE MERCER I agree that the toothpaste example you give seems harmless enough - in fact if it can get one person to look after his or her teeth that wouldn't otherwise have done so, it's actually beneficial. I clean my teeth strictly as a matter of hygiene/appearance. If other people clean them rather because they like the taste of the toothpaste, one would expect them to start buying toothpaste simply to eat, instead of going through the time-consuming and slightly revolting ritual of brushing it into their mouths.

And I agree it's not morally wrong to offer people what they want. To delude them into thinking that what one has to offer IS what they want is something else again. Where this "motivational advertising" definitely is anti-social is - same as the status-seeking set-up - in that it exerts a powerful pull towards conformity. And as the conformity advocated by the typical advertisement is on the lowest common level, this is definitely a Bad Thing. North Hykeham, Li

LES GERBER Frankly, your defence is more logical and intelligent than I thought possible, but it still doesn't begin to convince me....Sure MR isn't hurting people; but it isn't helping them either and it is hurting them in the sense that it helps and almost forces them to remain at their present level.

Perhaps I have no right to expect businessmen or advertising agencies to help mankind, but I do; and I think the attitude that I have no right to expect philanthropy from businessmen is another of these moronic viewpoints our culture holds. I very firmly believe that no man has the right to better himself at the expense of others as firmly as I believe that every man has the obligation to try to better himself and those around him. The method I have chosen is to write fiction; others might want to become doctors or teachers or cab-drivers; but I want this to be the attitude of everyone.

Business, through advertising, is taking advantage of the faults of people, and I don't like that. I'd rather see a businessman sell the best product he can at the lowest possible price than have him accumulate a fortune for his descendants to give to charity. A Jewish philosopher once said that giving money to the needy is the second greatest form of charity; the greatest is giving money to prevent people from needing charity. I believe this very strongly.

//Teaching people how to look after their money would also be pretty useful.DPB//

One thing which has disturbed me very much was something which happened in advertising very recently. The American Dental Association endorsed.../for the first time/...a particular brand of toothpaste as an effective decay preventative. This news was carried in the Indiana University daily newspapers, because the toothpaste's most important ingredient, stannous fluoride, was developed at I.U. I expected to see this blasted all over their advertising but, instead, they have kept on with their idiotic "Look, ma, no cavities" campaign. In other words, their agency is afraid that the ADA and IU would scare off the general public which recoils at anything more scientific than, "Notice how concentrated stomach acid can burn a hole in this handkerchief." Brrr!

Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

A. VINCENT CLARKE. The major complaint I have against advertising is that you are paying a certain percentage of the buying price of an article for the privilege of being persuaded to buy the article. //I suppose if it weren't advertised they wouldn't sell half so many and the price would be higher, so it works out the same in the end.DPB//

But the arguments you use seem to beg logic somewhat. If we are to be guided by the principle that a thing is acceptable because the masses like it, let's bring back Roman Circuses and crucify someone (preferably an advertising executive on an expense account) every so often.

Advertising claims debase the language. It's getting to the point where I experience the same reaction to adverts as that character in FIRST LENSMAN...do you remember the hero Virgil Samms is riding in a ground car in telepathic communication with the driver and keeps getting blanks in the other's visual perception of the scenery? The blanks are blanked out adverts. This is a nuisance as it tends to make me blank out all large and exclamatory headlines. I often finish a newspaper and then realise I haven't even looked at the front page No.1. news story - because it was too prominent!

London.

JULIAN PARR You do not even touch upon the objection that most of the large sums spent on advertising which "merely" seeks to make people change brands - i.e. harmless advertising - is wasteful. The danger presented by 'hidden' persuaders (the wellknown example of slogans or trademarks being flashed onto a cinema screen at intervals during a film unknown to and unnoticed by the audience) is that of enforcing involuntary and unwitting submission to persuasion.....the question being, is this ethical? In fact, of course, there are already many forms of advertising which are already involuntary on the part of the subject - i.e. he cannot avoid exposing himself to it (for instance, posters) - but at least he is conscious that the attempt to influence him is being made, and by whom. One sometimes sees advertisements in newspapers which are camouflaged as news items but the publisher is obliged to make it clear to his readers that the item is, in fact, an advertisement. Do you think this precaution is really necessary? This is the type of question which arises when one considers hidden persuaders. The fact that these problems can rarely be broken down to plain questions is made clear by the fact that the owner of the newspaper himself can seek to persuade his readers in the text of his news items, but at least, the reader is (or should be) aware of this fact! This is thus the vital point. Germany.

CHRIS MILLER I can't see any solution short of re-educating the masses, and that leads to arguments about educational systems, what you expect education to do and the like. A world-shaking discussion that I'll steer clear of unless you want me to try and go further into it.... Barrow-in-Furness.

BILL DONAHO The trouble with finding out what the masses want is that as soon as the manufacturers find out they start making it and stop making the things that sensible people want. Sure let the masses have all the frills they want..if it doesn't interfere with sensible products. Unfortunately, it does interfere and one may confidently expect that things will get worse as motivational techniques get better. Even if some manufacturer wanted to manufacture sensible products, his volume would be so small that the price would be prohibitive.

And if he tried to make a sensible product disguised with the wanted frills his costs would be so much above his competitors that he would not survive. Frills are cheap. Fortunately there are a few products this picture does not apply to, but, in general, things look pretty depressing. I believe it is Gresham's Law which states: "With mass-produced items, the bad always drives out the good."

//Perhaps the time is ripe for those who do want to manufacture sensible things to form some sort of association, have their names advertised in "Which" and other magazines read by more sensible people and make these things for that particular section of the public. After all, even if we are in a minority there must be a good many of us, all the same. DPB//

ARTHUR R. WEIR. D.Sc. "Selling to the Subconscious" - I think this title was a mistake; //it was factual.DPB// it's simply selling to the ignorant and/or lazy. I, personally, don't like this sort of salesmanship and don't think it ought to be encouraged simply because it panders to mental laziness, which also ought not to be encouraged, either!

The most of this type of salesmanship is based upon the psychological rat-race known as "keeping up with the Joneses", and I don't think that should be encouraged either; the people don't get the pleasure out of the appearance of their TV set, fridge. etc. but out of the idea that they've wiped the Jones' eye! This is what Ted Carnell calls "unethical"! Tetbury, Glos.

KEN CHESLIN Anybody who buys anything without first finding out whether it is of good quality, or shops by looking for a nice colour packet, deserves all they get.

Stourbridge.

JIM GROVES I am not particularly worried about the present day advertising - just about what it may develop into. It's only a short step from selling to the subconscious to outright compulsion. // Surely, it's the very opposite? With persuasion it's what the buyer wants that counts. We speak of the salesman "wooing" the housewife. And, ironic thought, if there were compulsion, which Heaven forbid, presumably there would then be only 'sensible' goods, for there would be no need to add the frills, etc. to "persuade" people to buy them!! DPB// London.

MAL ASHWORTH On the whole, I agree with your conclusions; while there might conceivably be some danger in the subliminal techniques which came briefly into prominence a while back, I see nothing at all sinister about motivation research and its applications. It seems to me simply a scientific way of doing what any good copywriter or visualiser has been doing instinctively since the beginning of advertising anyway - appealing to peoples' deep-seated wants. Furthermore, since anyone with a degree of semantic training or who has made a study of MR and its applications can pretty well immunise themselves towards its subconscious hooks, it can't be all that bad.

Another point is that MR is still in its infancy and capable of being misinterpreted and misused by the admen themselves greatly to their detriment. One bad mistake, it seems to me, is applying the results of a motivation survey too widely - geographically, that is. One thing I am waiting to hear about is the faceflop I am sure some campaigns are in for through trying to use in Britain techniques which may have succeeded in America. "You're never ALONE with....." may be all right for a sociable and together-ness oriented people but how will it go down against the traditional British 'reserve' (which isn't all myth)? I shall be interested to know. Bradford, Yorks.

S O L I T U D E

BOB RICHARDSON I was most interested in "Solitude and the Human Mind", especially Mal Ashworth's paragraph on the "unseen companion". I have experienced this (most deep divers have) to the extent that my unseen companion saved my life!

Altho' this phenomenon isn't common, it isn't exactly rare. A good contemporary example is Donald Campbell. Those people who can explain this are at a loss to explain the classic example of Shackleton's 600 mile journey through the Antarctic seas in an open boat when each of the men with him, collectively and individually, were conscious of another person, unseen and unheard but very real; so much so that rations were put out for him. It is worth noting that one of the crew was an atheist. I sometimes wish I had the guts to go out into the desert or up a mountain and fast like the old holy men, just to see what visions or hallucinations I'd get. Perhaps I might even be lucky and find, if I may use a bullring phrase, but in its literal sense, - "the moment of truth".

//Asked what he meant by saying that his unseen companion saved his life, Bob replied://

In August 1950, I had been sent down to recover a lost hurricane hawser dropped by HMS PHOEBE while berthing at PARLATORIS wharf, MALTA. Now the bottom there is covered with a fine silt, which is easily disturbed by a diver's movements, so the time-tested procedure, when making a search, was to stop on the shot-rope just before reaching the bottom, have a good look in the direction of search, hit bottom, and then walk blind, as the silt swirled up like a thick fog, for as many paces as feet of visibility, then stop and wait for it to settle. When the water had cleared enough to see a few more feet, the procedure was repeated ad infinitum along the line of search.

On this particular dive, I had done two walks like this and was on my third in nil visibility, when I felt something hit my helmet on the left side, quite sharply. I instinctively started to turn towards it, when I heard a clear voice say in a tone of authority "STAND STILL". I did just that and waited for the water to clear, thinking as I did so that it was a damn fool thing to do - turning quickly like that, when I couldn't see. When it was clear enough to see a few feet, I slowly turned my head to the left and felt a scraping alongside the helmet.

So I stepped back a little and continued turning and came face to face, right in line with my front glass, with a length of 6" x 6" girder, sheered off at the end to an unpleasantly sharp point. It was coming out of a mass of wreckage (which I learned later was all that remained of an oil tanker, the BRAMELELEAF, sunk by bombing in 1941). Had I turned quickly, as I had started to do, it would have smashed in my front glass and I should have drowned or, at least, if I could have held my breath long enough to untie my boots and lead weights and floated up, had a punctured head.

I was called to the surface shortly afterwards and, while getting undressed, said to the Diving Officer, "That was bloody clever of you - telling me to stand still - but how did you know I was close to the wreck?" He said, "What are you talking about? I didn't know you were near the wreck and, as for speaking to you, you didn't have the phone connected. In fact, it isn't even in the boat."

It was quite some time before he convinced me. In fact, I wasn't really convinced until I returned to the diving store and saw the phone box still on its shelf. It was then that I realised that it could not have been anyone up top on the surface so it must have been someone down there with me. But who?

Certainly not another diver; I can swear to that. The only explanation (if it can be called that) that I can give, is that it was my sixth sense - and what that is is anybody's guess! I sometimes wish I were religious so that I could put it down to my guardian angel. Fortunately I'm not so it still remains a mystery to me who said "Stand Still" to me that day.

Bishops Cleeve, Glos.

PETER MABEY This problem of the psychological effect of isolation has several times been mentioned as a hazard of space travel: there is the "break-off" effect experienced by the US passengers in the high altitude balloon flights that have been done during the past few years. There is a mention of the phenomenon in Guignard's article "Spaceman Overboard" in "Spaceflight" July 1958, p.284. The relevant sentence is "There is already a fair amount of evidence that when a man is largely cut off from the frame of reference of normal sensation (as in the stillness and silence of balloon ascents or the monotony of high altitude straight and level flight) he tends to become "abstracted", or withdrawn from his surroundings, and may report a loss of his sense of time and space."

In addition, with completer sensory deprivation, hallucinations tend to occur. Some time back, there was a fictional version of possible effects of isolation broadcast one Saturday afternoon: the play was called "Up Here" and was one of the BBC's better efforts in the field of s-f - though there was the old, audible meteor shower again! (radio noise, due to isolation, perhaps?)

Cheltenham, Glos.

LES GERBER Complete solitude is contrary to everything in human nature. Notice how a baby, when left alone for a few minutes while awake, will become extremely unhappy - and babies typify most human reactions in their most elementary form. With anything for companionship, the baby will be content. My parents found, when I was an infant, that music on the radio gave me the feeling that I was not alone. (It also helped me acquire my taste for classical music which I am very glad I have.) But eventually being alone will start to get on anyone's nerves. I can remain in complete solitude for hours as long as I have a book to read.

a record, a radio, or even (choke!) television - anything to keep me occupied. But not for days! I think I'd go nuts.

//In any case, that isn't the same sort of solitude - alone in a house, you are aware that at any time you have only to walk through the front door in order to be among people again. Any experience, I think, can be put up with for longer if one has the power to end it at will. Up a mountain, you can't!) DPB//

Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

ARTHUR R. WEIR D.Sc.

I suggest you read Captain Slocum's "Voyage Round the World" (he was the first man to sail round it single-handed). Also, a very interesting point about hallucinations of the solitary comes in Alexandra David-Neel's, "With Mystics & Magicians in Tibet" (Penguin 68) pp 227-234, 258-260, and 284-285. Also, you will recollect that in "Out of the Silent Planet", Dr Ransome, on his first night alone on Mars, said to himself, "We'll look after you"!

Smythe's mountaineering experiences and those of other climbers are interesting but, I should say, inappropriate, since under such conditions of extreme cold and lack of normal oxygen supply, the mind is likely to play tricks, anyway. I may add that this was Smythe's own personal opinion, also. (I've met him several times.)

Tetbury, Glos.

BOB COULSON I really should get completely alone sometime and see if it affects me as it affected the authors quoted. I doubt that it would. I don't have that much regard for companionship and I've been emotionally alone for most of my life. But you never know until you try it.

//Seems to be physical rather than emotional - but I suppose the two interact.DPB//

Wabash, Indiana.

CHRIS MILLER

When I'm alone in the house, I have the radio on, with bright, cheerful music blaring out and type dozens of letters. This way, I feel I'm not alone. When younger, I used to have "waking dreams" which I called "thinks" (the ones which can be controlled) in the third person, tho' they were about me! And now, when I'm by myself I occasionally find that I'm verbalising - talking or thinking to myself. This, I think, is the effect of having no one to say the things to, except self; and the only person who can comment on something is again self. Most peculiar but true. //More reasonable, really, than inventing another person as the other accounts have done - at least you know that you are a friend! DPB//

Barrow-in-Furness.

SID BIRCHBY

Now as to this question about the effect of loneliness and high altitudes. I was very interested to read Mal Ashworth's remarks. I've often speculated on the peculiar feeling one gets on high mountains. Or, come to that, on comparatively low ones. It's not, I am fairly sure, merely the effect of oxygen starvation, because I've had such feelings on quite low, sub-Munro heights (a 'Munro' being a mountain less

than 3,000 feet above sea-level).

Nor is loneliness the only factor because I've had feelings of quite unusual exhilaration, or awe, or alienness or what-have-you when not alone. The highest I've been is about 21,000 feet on Kilimanjaro and I had a guide with me all the way. On that occasion I had certain subjective sensations from, say, 16,500 feet to the top, but so I did this summer in the Dolomites at about 7,000.

I'm inclined to think that some hill-climbers have temperaments that respond to the sort of gestalt that one obtains on ridges, hills and mountains and that that is why they climb hills. Just as some people respond to opera, jazz or the sound of bagpipes.

Manchester.

* * * * *

The following letter does not belong in this section but, being received at the last minute, is being put here, unclassified, because I have this space left.

WALTER BREEN When I read your editorial, I regretted making TESSERACT into as fannish a thing as it has turned out to be. I believed at the time that there was little or no place in fandom for anything really intellectual. Harry Warner and a few others are accepted because they present unique personalities. Now I know better and I can and will emphasise the more intellectual aspects.

There are other fan clubs beside the White Horse in which one can hear the kind of discussion you welcome; the NY Futurians are such a group. Anything from anarchism to Reich or the Hapgood theories or Heinlein's conception of a non-aristotelian language is grist for our mill. But this kind of thing too rarely gets into fanzines. As for Sid Birchby: Though he obviously isn't addressing me (mainly because I would not be one to put him down for going to night school) I feel the necessity to answer some of his points. I doubt whether the type of fan he is castigating is even 80% of fandom. Though my own zine has the fannish touch, it is not devoid of intellectual content as was "Joc's"; and I have these "flashes of exhilaration" at new ideas fairly often. I have studied ecology and painting and have explored the similarities of form he refers to. D.L. Whyte's "Aspects of Form" is one of a very few books that go into this problem in detail; and every time I hear of another such, I read it. The spiral he speaks of (based on the so-called Golden Section) is one of the basic natural units of construction; and a whole book has been written on the weird properties of the number $1/2(\sqrt{5} - 1)$, sometimes called tau or theta, which is essential for that spiral as well as for the golden section.

Your critique of "hidden persuasion" is familiar enough but your conclusion is dreadful. I get the horrors from thinking that the choice of consumer goods available to me and the quality of these will be based on the emotional responses of some ignoramus of a housewife who doesn't know how to tell a good loaf of bread from a bad (i.e. typical American white bread). Planned obsolescence and the disappearance of quality in favour of appearance and packaging - these I look on with unfeigned alarm and horror. It cannot fail to harm people in the long run and surely does not make all the people happy even most of the time.

Berkeley, California.

CATS, DOGS AND PORPOISES

JIM GROVES I've seen that info. about porpoises in The Listener recently and I can't say I'm surprised. In the book "The Silent World" by Cousteau and Dumas, they mention having seen octopus cities built of debris. They even had roofs (page 108). He describes one situated N.E. of the Porquerolles. "A typical home was one-roofed, with a flat stone two-feet long and weighing perhaps 20 pounds. One side of the stone had been raised eight inches and propped by two lintels, a stone and a red building brick. The mud floor inside had been excavated five inches. In front of the lean-to was a wall of accumulated debris..."

Trouble is we would have difficulty in recognising intelligence that was not manifested like ours - by physical control of the environment using some sort of hand. //The usual criterion seems to be getting through mazes! After all, most forms of life build a home of some sort. DPB// London.

LAURENCE SANDFIELD The thing that particularly interested me was Betty Kujawa's comments on cetean intelligence. This comes as no surprise to me for I've long known that whales and porpoises have large, deeply convoluted brains. Intelligence seems to be related to the degree of convolution of the cerebral cortex, and the fact that porpoises have a brain quite large in proportion to their size makes it obvious that they must have a higher brain power. The brain bodybulk ratio is as high as ours, and the lack of manipulatory organs is a barrier they can't overcome.

All this gives rise to the thought - could the cetaceans, who are in danger of extinction at the hands of man, have a world-wide telepathic culture? Those great, brooding, deeply-wrinkled brains must have some function other than motor-relations, surely? London.

BOB RICHARDSON I know what you mean about cats. I have a Siamese and, if I never knew before, I know now, why the cat was one of the 79 gods of ancient Egypt. I'm still trying to figure out how he can be evil in a nice way!

Bishops Cleeve.

KEN CHESLIN I had heard that porpoises are, in fact, more intelligent than dogs but I'd no idea that their IQ was suspected to be higher than man's. Looks like our successors are already here. Cats, I saw in a list recently, rate next to dogs as the second most intelligent animal. I guess I'm just stubborn in thinking that dogs got a higher rating because they co-operated more. Pigs have a high IQ too, higher than a mere chimp. The humanoid shape maybe makes a chimp seem brighter than he is.

//Yes, I was reading a cat book the other day and the author pointed out that we are inclined to think that dogs are more intelligent than they actually are because we are flattered by their willingness to obey us; and that dogs learn only what they are taught by us whereas cats solve problems of their own accord.

She mentioned the case of someone who had two dogs and a cat and when the dogs needed a door opened they would go and fetch the cat to do it for them. DPB//
Stourbridge, Wores.

JACK WILSON I liked the bit about communicating with the porpoises but I can't quite make up my mind whether or not someone is trying to pull my leg! //Happy now? DPB//
If, though, it is genuine, then the possibilities are immense. If ever intelligent communication is established between man and porpoise, the last unexplored regions of this old planet of ours, the depths of the oceans, will become as an open book. For the information that could be given us by the porpoises would be priceless. More than what millions of bathyscaphes could bring us
Spalding.

BETTY KUJAWA I'm always getting into hassles over the IQ's of animals. I read once where cats rate higher than dogs and horses are way down low - this has caused ill feelings among friends. In those days (before this thing on porpoises), outside of the ape/monkey family, the common old pig was the most intelligent; people seem to anger easily at the thought of a pig being intelligent. Foxes were way up there too //Is cunning the same as intelligence? DPB// Cats, as I recall, came about 5th and dogs 8th. Knowing my cat and dog, I can well believe this.
//Animals' intelligence always seems to be judged by how quickly they can learn to do something which will reward themselves. Surely, the unique characteristic of human intelligence is that we can use our minds in a detached fashion? DPB//
South Bend, Indiana.

LES GERBER I can't believe that any animal has a higher IQ than man. The porpoise may rate highly but a parrot can imitate human sounds too. And although I have a fairly high regard for cats, I don't think their intelligence is that high - at least not the cats I know.
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

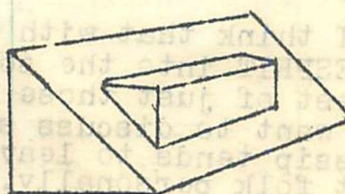
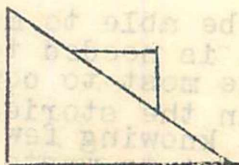
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VISUALISING THE OBJECT

Several of you made an attempt at the problem in the last issue, but only three people sent in the right answer: Peter Mabey, Bob Coulson and Jim Groves (who said that he and Ted Forsyth and Joe Patrizio battered it out between them at a party.)

Here is the end view:

And, to make it clear, the perspective view:



M I S C E L L A N E O U S

(Being, for the most part, reactions to the editorial but also other things.)

A. VINCENT CLARKE. The first thing I want to say about ESPRIT's new editorial policy is "Good Luck" and the second is "You'll need it". For although fans like to exercise their intelligence and imagination on the humorous and the whimsical, the discussion of "new ideas about the human race and the universe" is, as you have noted, shunned.

The situation arises from a sense of personal inferiority on the part of the fan...and, ghod knows, there are enough reasons for any introspective human to feel inferior these days. First of all, you have the reluctance of the younger fan to show his presumed ignorance in the face of older and more experienced people. (This was probably the chief reason why I was not an active fan in pre-war days.) Secondly, in the older fan, the assumption that it's no good arguing on philosophic or "unexpected appreciation of art, science or life" as it's all been done before between hard covers by Bertrand Russell, Schopenhauer, Kant, Aristotle and that crowd. If he wants that, the older fan will look at the Dewey decimal classification system at his local library and not at the Don Day index.

Well, on the question of the ignorance, H.G.Wells made a remark that he didn't consider anyone reached mental maturity before the age of thirty (a statement that has seemed the quintessence of wisdom to me since I was thirty one years old), but anyone who is afraid to ask questions at any age is a fool. It's better to get your questions on the universe hammered out in the company of lively minds than to be handed the dry dust of decades of research and told that someone else has settled your doubtings in 975 pages of fine print.

And has it all been done before? The general overall experience repeats, yes, but the individual patterns of response can alter and produce an answer that makes you different from every other individual in the universe. If you stand outside the crowd, refuse to accept the accepted pattern until you have examined the problem yourself, even if it's only the way to button up your coat, then you are showing yourself a human being and not a herd-animal. Someone once looked with fresh eyes at the way that coats were buttoned and invented the zip fastener...and, more important, showed himself a unique human being. Whatever answers are handed to you on a plate, you should only accept them with the proviso that you are relying on someone else's knowledge and that they, like you, are fallible. London.

PETER MABEY I think that with some luck you'll be able to make ESPRIT into the sort of 'zine which is needed to hold the interest of just those fans whom I'd like most to contact. Like you, I do want to discuss sf ideas, more than the stories; and fannish gossip tends to leave me rather cold, knowing few of the relevant folk personally. Still, I don't want to waste time

just saying again what you've already put in your editorial so well!
Cheltenham, Glos.

SID BIRCHBYAs you know I am 100% for it. Now that you've started it, I hope it gets all the great success it deserves and lots of support. The only uncertainty is whether there are enough fans with the interest to support such a venture; we'll just have to wait and see.

...I have been doing a rush job at work and one which is quite novel in character, at least for me, being a study of noise made by jet aircraft landing at, and taking off from, airports. All sorts of fascinating odds and ends of information have turned up which I didn't know before. For instance, the definition of noise is sound which is undesired by the percipient. In other words, accoustic garbage. And that leads to the thought that one man's sound is another man's noise.

I also like the concept of 'white noise'. This is a noise composed of a number of different tones all of equal intensity, (I am not quite sure I've got that right) so that you get a blending effect, like 'white light'. Loudness, too, is a physiological concept very difficult to measure in objective terms, rather like the concept of brightness in optics. Everyone has a different idea of what constitutes 'loudness'. There is also the fact that there is no known objective measure of nuisance value of noise, which doesn't help very much if one is trying to grapple with the problem of noise abatement. Manchester.

// I seem to remember reading somewhere that noise is also defined as "random sounds" (as opposed, presumably, to those which have a pattern). New concepts are things I like. More please? DPB//

ANN CHAMBERLAIN I have just finished reading all thirteen pages of your new-born zine...taking into account that it will, of course, grow and develop a format and a policy. You see...this is what we humans do to everything that comes under our hands...we must put fences around our thought, lest we envision more than we can act upon...we do our best to catalogue everything and provide a range within which certain subjects may be safely dealt with...and our new generation comes along and seems to live for the moment when they can throw their parents into a state of complete awe or shock. It would seem that each trade or profession or school of religious thought tries to put their certain brand of personality upon...their trade, profession or school of religious thought.

We perfect a protective chrysalis or personality mask and think we're safe within it, and someone or some class of ideas are suddenly born in upon us and our chrysalis is shattered, and instead of finding ourselves woe-begone as expected...we find ourselves born anew...which is quite a surprise, to put it mildly.

Los Angeles, Calif.

//Well, it's the chrysalis-breakers this magazine wants to hear from. DPB//

JOHN PHILLIPENT I want to warn you that, in my opinion, you will encounter apathy, at least, if not downright

opposition, in trying to run a fanzine on the basis of ideas and discussions. May I add that I have never produced a 'zine, that I know very little about them and that I could be wrong. In fact I wish you all the luck in the world....this is one of those times when I would be glad to be proved wrong.

...I've been reading SF for thirty years, avidly, under the impression that here was a fine form of literature, willing and able to stare life in the eye and see past the sham and the hypocrisy, and to drag a bit of hard truth out into the light. I believe that is what it does, now and again. I used to believe that all...or most...SF readers were keen on this, and alert, sane, progressive thinkers. How wrong I was. I have since learned that all they wanted was to go "Whee!" over the rays and rockets, and "Oooh!" at the BEMs and bugs. For the philosophy and the thinking, who cared for that? It was only a story, wasn't it? Campbell was dead right when he made the point that the atom bombs went off, the sputniks and rockets went up, and SF fans in their thousands recoiled in horror because "THIS WAS ALL COMING TRUE!" and they fled the medium like the plague, back to their comfortable illusions.

Which is why we are sitting right on the edge of World War the last, right now, holding our breaths and wondering what the hell to do. The final verdict looks like being "Drunk in Charge". Still, never mind. We'll all go together, when we go, as Tom Lehrer sings.
London.

JULIAN PARR Your editorial description of the fanzine of your dreams applies perfectly to my own preference.

You can gain some idea of my delight at the appearance of your fanzine from the fact that it is now several years since I last wrote, never mind subscribed, to a British fanzine (or American for that matter), having been lounging in the glades of gafia for ages now. I still remember, however, how much of value I derived from another Scottish fanzine of the type I think you have in mind - Doug Webster's "The Gentlest Art". I must, in fact, confess that this letter is not only one of appreciation to you, but also a gesture of nostalgic tribute to the fanzines of my youth: Fay, Fido, Zenith, etc. I hope you don't mind my dragging them in to share the limelight with you! // On the contrary, I'm flattered. Except that I am not Scottish. We just happen to be stuck here temporarily and the sooner we get back to London the better I shall like it. D2B// Germany.

JIM GROVES If your magazine develops in the way you state, then it's what I've been waiting for too. The sort of material you mention has appeared in the other fanzines, but only rarely, and then it's not pursued very far. I don't know about anyone else but I've a tendency to take a subject and milk it down to the dregs before leaving it for something else. Mostly the fanzines tend to scratch the surface and move on.
London.

KEN CHESLIN ...As to this about standing aside and observing life rather than being an unthinking part of it.. sounds introverted... tho' I've heard/read many times that most fans are inclined to be introverts. Myself, I rather favour the

idea that they're suppressed extroverts, coming out of their shell when they can find someone to communicate with who can understand them. Hence the fanzines and conventions too - I should think you find little sign of withdrawal there. This standing aside looks very like lack of ambition, drive or what-have-you from the other side of the fence. I think that most fans are in jobs where they do much less than they are capable of because they view work as a necessary evil which has to be done just so that they can live, while the main thing in a fan's life is his seeking, his curiosity; he places more value on the mind than on the body and most fans are easygoing people with the view towards money that enough is sufficient. Simple ambitions, quiet tastes... recognising, in fact, that no matter if you have everything in the world, you still have only one stomach to fill.

Of course, there are the great fannish ideals, like the Tucker hotel, magnificent clubrooms, superb conventions, beautifully constructed and working printing devices and the like but I think that these come under the heading of things to be dreamed of and everybody is pretty satisfied with their lot right now.

IF...I think, is about the most important word in a fan's mind. When you sort everything out, it is practically the basis of all SF and it illustrates to a large extent his mental attitude, his curiosity. I don't remember ever having thought about it before, but my interest in SF is basically in the wonder of it all. The space travel, time machines, aliens, psi, social trends and, from there, on to my own thoughts and speculations and an interest in the hows, whys, and wherefores which led me on to the point where I'm interested in the science information, dealing in what is now factual.

And here, too, I find the sense of wonder I get from the fiction. The cries of despair like: "Now space travel is fact, how can we keep on writing/reading SF" - Ghod! We've barely scraped the surface of ANYTHING. I believe that SF will always be a few jumps ahead of science fact; by the very nature of SF, we build on what we know and leap out from there into the realms undreamt of in the mundane world. Maybe it is true that the SF of today will be the fact of tomorrow, but the SF of tomorrow will be the fact of the day after, and again and again as long as man has a spark of imagination or curiosity.

Stourbridge, Worcs.

JACK WILSON The copy of ESPRIT came as a pleasant surprise...I myself have wished for the publication of such a magazine and I'm very delighted to learn that there are others of like mind. So here and now I would like to express the hope that ESPRIT will prove to be a success. But if you are expecting adequate comment and discussion on all the articles you publish, if they are of the kind appearing in this first issue, then you will need as many pages as there are in the British Encyclopædia! ...Altogether then, Mistress Editor, I think your brainchild is a very worthwhile youngster. I hope it will grow up into a sturdy entity. At least it has got off to a very good start.

42 MAL ASHWORTH I enjoyed ESPRIT enormously; I have high hopes for it and I shall be most interested to know what sort of reception it gets. It is the sort of fanzine I have always thought should exist somewhere (Arthur Cook had one called WHY about six years ago on similar lines but I don't think it lasted long); the only thing I have doubts about is whether it will meet with the response it ought to. I don't really know why I have doubts about it but I hope that they are unfounded. Bradford, Yorks.

BOB RICHARDSON I've been waiting for something like this since I entered fandom. I'm cursed/blessed (take your pick) with an enquiring mind. ESPRIT held my interest all the way through and I was sorry when I finished it. Bishops Cleeve, Glos.

ARTHUR.R. WEIR. D.Sc. Like yourself, I find the usual 'fanzine' non-sustaining, though I wouldn't say that the other kind is exactly indigestible. As regards wanting material that provokes thought and argument, I'm with you all the time. Tetbury, Glos.

BOB COULSON ESPRIT seems as though it will be an interesting fanzine if you can keep it going, but there are so many promising fanzines which somehow peter out after a few issues that I'll be suspicious until your next issue, featuring forty pages of idea-filled letters, arrives. //Will these twenty six pages of letters do for a start? DPB// Wabash, Indiana.

LES GERBER Your editorial has, I think, finally given me the reason why I read SF so enthusiastically for several years and why I now read it seldom if ever. Aside from the enjoyment I usually get from escape fiction (which, although I hate to admit it, SF usually is), I got ideas from SF. It presented me, in reasonably concise form, with concepts which were largely new to me, even if they were only scientific concepts. (Not that I don't respect science; I just think that the study of people is more important and I am more interested in it.) Today, I find very little new in SF and when the excitement of new ideas is stripped away from SF, all that remains is a type of escape fiction which is usually inferior to the mystery stories which I now read so frequently.

Why don't I find these new ideas in SF now? I believe it is only partly because I have read so much of it and am so familiar with the stock of SF ideas. A large part of the reason is that modern SF, or what I've read of it in the past year, just does not have any new concepts in it. Nobody seems able to think of anything new; the stories change, the characters and plots change, but the concepts don't. I think that Isaac Asimov is now writing science articles and books instead of SF for the same reason; and I enjoy reading his science articles almost as much as I once enjoyed SF. SF has become, for me, just another type of escape reading and that's unfortunate. But what can anyone do? Pennsylvania.

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