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AN ESSAY ON COURAGE

The purpose of an essay is not to display whatever meagre virtues one possesses as a writer, but rather to set forth a thesis and proceed to prove it. Therefore, this essay intends to ignore the amenities of composition which dictate the necessity of a flowery beginning, gradually and by natural process leading into a specific point, and complemented by a cleverly constructed finale. My thesis will be: That the quality of courage can arise only out of a prior fear; that in such cases where the consequences of a particular action are not feared by the individual undertaking it, the action may in no sense be termed a courageous one.

The majority of persons who have given any thought to the concept would probably disagree with the definition of courage which is implied in my thesis. Insofar as courage is ever specifically and consciously defined by the greater mass of humanity, the definition is probably similar in spirit (if not necessarily in terminology) to this: An act may be said to be courageous when it is undertaken by an individual without regard to his or her personal safety, which has been momentarily subverted to the needs of another individual or group (family, class, nation, etc.). Webster's New Practical Dictionary clarifies the fundamental distinction between my thesis and the hypothetical definition tendered above by defining "courage" in this extraordinarily concise manner: "valor; fearlessness". I believe this definition to be in error on an abstract plane because it attempts to define in objective terms that which is fundamentally a subjective quality, and in doing so complicates the problem by identifying "courage" with "lack of fear". It is this latter unfortunate practice with which I take issue. It must be recognized, of course, that the meaning of words is determined by usage, and if sufficient numbers of people consider "courage" to mean fearlessness, it will eventually come to have precisely that meaning. This process has occurred, in fact. But in discussing "courage" as an abstract quality rather than merely as one word among many in the English language, it is my belief that a distinction ought to be made between "fearlessness" and "courage".

Such a distinction is recognized by many persons, if only subconsciously: courage is admired by nearly everyone, but fearlessness, despite the respect it often garners, is commonly equated with foolhardiness. The courageous man is one who is not greatly unlike the majority of individuals, except that he is occasionally called upon to act in an exceptional manner; he is the fire-fighter, the police officer, the school teacher ushering children from a burning building. The fearless individual is aloof from the general populace, respected by them, but just as often considered a fool; he is the lion-tamer, the

test pilot, the man who crosses Niagra Falls on a tightwire.

Such is the distinction as it exists within the minds of a majority of the inhabitants of this country (and probably the rest of the world as well). Does the distinction exist objectively?

I submit that it does. The fearless individual commits what would appear to society to be a "brave" action against dangerous circumstances and possibly dire consequences because those circumstances and consequences are not meaningful to him. Precisely because he is "fearless", because the danger inherent in a given situation means nothing to him, it cannot properly be said that such an individual shows courage. The courageous individual is one who is frightened of the situation in which he finds himself, who recognizes and fears the possibly disastrous consequences of his action, but who nevertheless undertakes the action--in spite of his fear--to serve the greater good of another individual or group.

Discussing courage in such broad, all-encompassing terms may be unwise, however, for we are all conditioned to some extent by the mores and beliefs of our society. Courage wouldn't seem to be subjective to most of us, and arguing in such abstract and general terms that it actually is may not be particularly productive. The point I am attempting to make can be more readily understood if expressed in the narrow context available to us through the existence of "phobias", i.e., neurotic extremes of fear of certain objects (or classes of objects) and actions (or classes of actions). Since these phobias are many and varied, they can easily be utilized as examples of the subjectivity of courage. For example: Let us suppose that individual A has the misfortune to be afflicted with arachniphobia, a fear of spiders extended to the point of neurosis. Individual B, on the other hand, feels absolutely no discomfort in the presence of spiders, and handles them with impunity. If individual B allows a spider to crawl over his hand, it would not occur to anyone to term this irrelevant action an act of courage; but if individual A were to engage in precisely the same act, it would certainly constitute an act of monumental will power and--in a very real sense--courage. Yet the action, objectively speaking, is the same in both instances; the sole difference is in the subjective qualities of the two protagonists.

This particular case in point is only partially relevant to the present discussion, however, since the act of allowing a spider to crawl upon one's hand is not generally accorded admiration as a "courageous" one. The phobia analogy can be rendered more applicable to the abstract argument in which I am engaged by the use of another specific example. Individual A, let us say, possess a neurotic fear of drowning, a phobia which is so powerful as to preclude the possibility of this individual visiting the seashore, taking an ocean voyage or even observing motion pictures dealing with swimming or sailing. Individual B is of a type which is the direct antithesis of A; he is a superb swimmer, completely at home in the water, and is so confident of his own physical prowess in the medium that the possibility of drowning has never occurred to him. Fortuitous circumstances have placed both of these individuals on the scene of the developing tragedy when an infant somehow tumbles into the deep end of a swimming pool. If individual B has the presence of mind to jump into the pool and rescue the child, he will certainly be accorded the honors of a hero; the parents of the accident-prone infant will applaud his courage, and his photograph will appear in the newspaper as "Hero of the Week". There are certainly few people who would deny the bravery of his action. But I submit that this act does not deserve to be termed "courageous" at all. It is certainly admirable, and the individual richly deserves reward and praise for his effort in saving a life. His deed was in no sense "courageous", however, since the

consequences of his action were not considered; because he is perfectly at home in the water, because this individual thinks no more of jumping into a swimming pool than you or I would think of walking down the street, his action does not deserve to be termed courageous. His lack of fear prevents the action from being exceptional; when he demurs in the face of grateful compliments by the beneficiaries of his deed, saying "I didn't do anything anyone else wouldn't have done," he is not bragging in false modesty--he means it. He cannot conceive of anyone failing to act as he did under the circumstances.

If individual A were to engage in this rescue, however, it would be an act of monumental courage; the fact that he is terribly frightened, under normal circumstances, of even so insignificant an act as standing near the edge of a lake, lends a degree of courage to his act which it is difficult to properly appreciate.

I have, I believe, adequately covered the point. To reiterate: The truly courageous individual is one who engages in a given action in spite of his fear of the consequences of that action, for the benefit of another individual (wife, child, close friend, etc.) or group (family, nation, ad infinitum). The quality of courage can arise only out of fear.

"The fact that a proposition cannot be proved does not detract from the firmness of men's faith in it. Men do not fight about the provable assertion that the sun will rise on the morrow, but they beat each other to death in defense of particular economic and political doctrines that follow logically only from an acceptance on faith in certain undemonstrable premises." --Howard R. Penniman, in the introduction to "A Letter Concerning Toleration".

ENID JACOBS DISCUSSES ARTISTIC APPRECIATION AND ETHICS

"I found your seemingly-unaccountable reaction to certain works of art very interesting. I too react--or over-react--in a similar way, affected by various passages of music, certain paintings, lines of poetry, or even certain organizations of words. It's a heterogeneous collection, varied and eccentric; everything from the finest art to the lowliest garbage. The reaction itself varies from a mild inward tingle to quite a powerful visceral situation. Walter Breen's explanation probably applies to these reactions (and accounts for their unevenness). If I want to auto-analyze, I can usually trace the stimulus itself back until I find some association, often quite remote, with some experience or concept that has affected me in some way in the past--or still does affect me, more directly than the work of art that recalls it. Sad to think that it is inherent egocentricity, not inherent good taste, that lies at the bottom of my 'artistic appreciation'.

"Midge West brings up the whole battle-torn subject of ethics in religious debate/discussion/attitude--how much is it permissible to criticize those beliefs which you personally do not hold? (Since you don't hold them, you obviously find something to criticize in them.) She seems to take the cautious, I'll-respect-your-beliefs-and-you-respect-mine-and-we'll-avoid-controversy approach, as opposed to the wild-eyed down-with-all-heretics-that-disagree-with-me attitude. Both can be extreme, and as such are often not very constructive, for they are too broad in their application. I prefer a more compromising approach. True, the individual who practices any given religion should be respected; he has made his choice because, for some reason, that was the one he thought best. Remarks of a personal, name-calling nature are both disrespectful and pointless. But, in this far-from-perfect world, there

are aspects of all concepts, theories, beliefs, etc., which are capable of being improved, which could benefit by reform, which are unnecessary, illogical or harmful. These aspects don't deserve respect, and certainly invite criticism. As long as this criticism is reciprocal (and not blatantly undeserved--but then, who's to say if any particular criticism is or is not deserved?), I find nothing objectionable in it. I feel I have the 'right' to show my disrespect for certain key points of theism; and theists, of course, have the right to criticize any or all aspects of agnosticism--mine or any other agnostic's. (I have never known two agnostics--nor two Christians, Jews, Unitarians or atheists--to have precisely the same viewpoint.) Thus we check and balance each other." (3914 Brookhill Road, Baltimore 15, Maryland.)

"The study of the history of ideas shows that when a novel theory is first born, it is judged not so much on its own merits as it is on the basis of its supposed association with other ideas already well known to us. In other words, we judge unfamiliar ideas as we judge unfamiliar people--by the company they keep. But there is this difference: the idea doesn't really keep any company; we assign it its associates. The greater part of the rejection or acceptance of a new idea proves on close examination to stem from judgments of 'guilt by association', or innocence by the same means." --Garrett Hardin, in "Nature and Man's Fate".

DAVE HULAN HAS A FEW WORDS ABOUT INTEGRATION AND RELIGION

"While I can understand the reason why the Negroes in Birmingham (and since then in many other places) are rioting, and can sympathize with the reasons, I still don't approve of the rioting. I very rarely approve of rioting. Peaceful demonstrations, certainly; rock-throwing, knife-wielding riots, no. (Certainly no rational individual "approves" of rioting where another course of action exists; but it is hardly our prerogative to condemn the Birmingham or Cambridge disorders. Who are we to advise the Negro to be patient? We who can don the proper attire and be promptly served in any restaurant in the nation; we who can sit where we please on any bus, vote in every election, attend every theatre, concert hall or baseball park--we who, indeed, take these things for granted--who are we to say to the Negro, "Yes, we realize that you are denied these exercises of freedom, but, after all, don't get mad about it..."?)

"John Boardman claims that the recent interest in civil rights after demonstrations vindicates his policies. I submit that (a) it is far too soon to determine whether the ultimate result will be good or bad, and (b) there is a difference between a group of Negroes defending themselves from a white lynch mob as in Lexington, N.C. (an action of which I personally approve), and Negroes and other integrationists forming lynch mobs and going after conservatives, which as I understand it is what Boardman advocates. (In the latest issue of the Pointing Vector, John advises that instead of arguing with a conservative who defends segregation, we ought to simply kick him in the teeth...) If this is not a correct statement of his views, I apologize for some of the nasty things I've said about him. I still don't like him, but maybe he's not a reverse-English Klansman after all. If it is a correct statement, then he is a Klansman at heart; it's just that his ends are different. And that is something that makes little difference, in my book.

"The point I was making in (a) above is one that doesn't seem to have occurred to most Negroes and liberals, as yet. It had better, and

soon. So far, so good--a little violence may be necessary to convince people they mean business. I don't really approve of violence, but must admit that so far the result has generally been good. But--this isn't Africa. This is not the case of an oppressed populace striving to throw off their masters. It is not a damn bit analogous to the American Revolution. The Negroes are a minority group--not only a minority, but a relatively poor and powerless minority as regards material strength. They cannot force the white majority to give them anything; they can only persuade. I don't care what you say about moral rights and wrongs; a moral right has never enforced itself and never will. You may at will dispute the dictum of Thrasymachus that 'Justice is the interest of the stronger', but you cannot deny that what is enforced is the interest of the stronger. The majority of the population is not extremely interested in civil rights, one way or the other. As long as they are indifferent, the political power of the Negro blocs in large Northern cities makes their influence felt. But violent demonstrations are going to awaken the populace more and more--and, in my opinion, the attitude of the majority will be 'They can't make me do that!' Americans are as notoriously hard-headed when you try to make them do something as they are sheeplike when you play on their emotions. A continuation of violent demonstrations will lead to a reaction, mark my words. I consider the residential segregation almost universal in the North to be ample evidence that the majority opinion is for some kinds of segregation if it is aroused; the best hope of the Negro is to avoid arousing this part of the populace and hope that the more enlightened legislators in Congress will act quietly to secure them some of their demands.

"I do oppose public accommodations bills (where they refer to private property). You say that one man's right to wave his hands in the air stops where another's nose begins. Precisely. And one man's right to go where he pleases ends where another man's private property begins. It can be looked at both ways, you see. And when it comes to the point of deciding, I prefer to place emphasis on concrete material damage rather than possible psychological trauma. That is, after all, where the nose begins--by your own analogy, it's okay to swing at someone and scare him as long as you don't touch. (If not, change your analogy.) (Your literal-mindedness is fantastic, though I suspect that my use of the hoary old bromide invited such an interpretation.) What material damage will be done by failure to serve a Negro? (I would not object to a public accommodations law including a clause 'if comparable facilities open to the individual concerned are not available nearby', or something to that effect.) (Such an ambiguous clause would be unenforceable. What is a "comparable facility"? And what is "nearby"?)) On the other hand, it would decrease the merchant's business, if history tells us anything--eventually it would recover, but there would be a real loss of material advantage to him. Ergo, the civil right of the merchant has priority over the civil right of the Negro. (If, as you admit, the situation may be looked at both ways, why do you assume the right of the property owner to take precedence? Is it because he stands to lose money, whereas the only loss to the Negro will be in terms of dignity? If I attempted to balance these qualities in order to determine whose right ought to take priority, I'm not so sure I'd so casually arrive at your conclusion. But a public accommodations law need not be defended on that basis. It is the purpose of law, in my view, to establish justice, to promote that which is right. You may play Thrasymachus for me if you wish, but for the moment I will assume that you agree to the proposition that equal opportunity, equal treatment before the law, and equal treatment by society are both right and just. It is true, as President Kennedy observed, that law alone cannot make men see right; it can assist in this direction, however, and should be utilized to do so

at every opportunity. A proprietor should retain the right to select his clientele on the basis of relevant qualities. A restaurant owner may demand that those who seek to enter his establishment be properly attired in order to conform to the general atmosphere of the restaurant, possess sufficient funds to pay for their meals, and not be obstreperous or otherwise disorderly; but discriminating on the basis of irrelevant qualities (such as skin color, ad infinitum) is unjust. You will agree, I am certain, that any given Caucasian is not superior (or inferior) to any given Negro because of that racial difference. I therefore feel that the law should attempt, insofar as it is capable, the implementation of justice. If this moral argument doesn't impress you, let me add a pragmatic one: Despite your claim above, I do not believe that proprietors, except in certain special cases, would suffer much--or any--material loss as a result of public accommodations legislation. In the past, desegregation has led to economic reprisals because only one or a few establishments undertook the step. If John Doe's hardware store begins to cater to Negroes, a substantial number of John's white customers may go elsewhere. But what if all hardware stores begin to cater to Negroes? This is why a comprehensive public accommodations measure will not entail the difficulty you mentioned, for if all businesses are integrated, the segregationists among the clientele will be unable to economically boycott such establishments unless they are willing to do without the products or services being sold. Somehow, I cannot envision even the most avid white supremacist allowing himself to starve to death solely because all of the food retailers in his state began catering to Negroes...))

"Of course, the above argument is based on your premise that such things as absolute right and wrong exist--a premise which is not, to me, self-evident. In fact, I don't accept it at all. But you'll not get such a law through Congress, because too many Congressmen will argue as I have argued, and will be just as reasonable as those who are for the bill, if not more so. So even discussing it is sort of silly.

"I am enclosing a sermon which my father preached last Sunday at his church in Jackson, Miss. The Sunday before, two Negro girls had been turned away from the church door against his wishes and without his knowledge.

"I have read in many issues of Kipple scathing indictments of religion, especially the organized churches (mostly by the letter writers, not you). Certainly many wrongs have been done in the name of religion, as I would be the last to deny. I am not an especially religious person myself. But my father and brother are both ministers, and I know too what they have done for good. You once announced with pride that one of the things you felt you had done worth living for was that you had convinced a small number (two? three?) of people that segregation was wrong. ((I should mention for the benefit of those who stand aghast at the size of my ego that I took special pains at the time to note that this "achievement" was of less than microscopic significance. The matter was brought up at all only because it had some particular relevance to one of Kipple's discussions at the time.)) My father has done as much for 20 times as many, and more. And this is only one small part of what he has done.

"Do you have any idea of the sheer guts it takes to stand up in front of a group of 500-odd people, 90% of them segregationists, and deliver a sermon like the enclosed? Can you imagine the sort of abuse that he has had to endure since then? I know Mississippi and the people of that church, and I know I wouldn't say such things to most of them in a private conversation, much less from a pulpit. And I don't think many of the professional carpers-at-religion among your readership would, either. Until they do, I have no respect for their alleged liber-

alism and anti-religion.

"I have known many intelligent and interesting agnostics and atheists. I have known many who were likeable and moral. I have known many who professed all manner of concern for humanity. I have never known or heard of one who has done as much for as many people as my father, or as a number of other ministers of my acquaintance. Until I do, I see no moral superiority in irreligion such as most of its advocates claim, and I smile up my sleeve at their posturings. (Great good has been accomplished by individual theists throughout the course of history; and I have immense respect for men like your father, or the clergymen who were arrested recently at Gwynn Oak Park in Baltimore County. But organized religion (as distinguished from religious individuals) has done immeasurable harm and relatively little good, and it is this about which some persons "carp". (The trend seems to have reversed itself in this century, with the organized sects doing a great deal of good and relatively little harm--which is encouraging, to say the least.) As re the alleged "moral superiority" of irreligion: I don't believe that I have ever made this claim (and I realize you didn't say I had), except insofar as I have alleged that the holding of an unshakeable opinion on a still-unresolved subject, combined with a refusal to subject that opinion to the light of reason, is immoral. Certainly atheism is not morally superior by this criterion, although agnosticism may be. But even if the existence of God were proven beyond doubt, this fault would continue to exist in most theists, since they would all continue to feel that their particular sect was unquestionably Right and all opposing sects unquestionably Wrong. I happen to believe such dogmatic assertions to be basically immoral in and of themselves; however, as long as they remain mere opinions of individuals, this is a matter for the individual and his conscience. When a given sect attempts to enforce its private beliefs by the use of the law, however, I most eagerly join the "carpers" at organized religion. It is in this area that my opposition to religion (i.e., the organized churches) primarily lies. I do not speak against the right of any individual to hold a religious opinion, to adhere to a form of worship, to seek "converts" or to exercise his freedom of religion in any other ethical manner; I do oppose, most strongly, the interference of a religious sect into civil law, by the banning of books or motion pictures, outlawing of alcohol, contraceptives, etc. I am equally appalled by Madalyn Murray and her cohorts, and by the hard-core of Fundamentalists which is still attempting to crucify Darwin. Where this puts me in the spectrum of irreligious individuals, I know not. (And how this brief reply to your last paragraph became a statement of my beliefs as an agnostic I also do not know...))

"And I'm disappointed that you still haven't apologized to Bill Mallardi, or defended your failure to apologize. He was guilty of no more than fuzzy communication, and did not deserve to be excoriated as a racist. He apologized for anything he might have implied that he did not mean, or facts that he might have had wrong--I don't see how in good conscience you can do less than either apologize or defend what you said." (If I was wrong in calling Mallardi a racist, I most sincerely apologize. Nothing Mallardi said in subsequent issues of Double Bill served to alter my opinion radically, however. His plaint that poor communication was responsible for the tone of his remarks did not impress me. Statements such as "...negro girls, generally speaking, have just about the lowest morals (in the U.S.) than the white girls would ever have..." are certainly incredibly atrocious writing, but they are not ambiguous statements: they can mean only one thing, and the inept writing does not affect their interpretation. The statement that Mallardi is "not too keen on" mixed marriages and other "drastic measures" is also not subject to misinterpretation. I am quite willing to believe

that the overwhelmingly unfavorable reaction of his readers caused Mallardi to retract his statements; but I am not yet willing to accept his claim that he is as broad-minded "as he or anyone else could possibly be concerning the rights of the Negro."?)

"A citizen is one who shares in governing and being governed. He differs under different forms of government, but in the best state he is one who is able and willing to be governed and to govern with a view to the life of virtue. If, however, there is some one person, or more than one, although not enough to make up a whole class in a state, whose virtue is so outstanding that the virtues or the political ability of all the rest admit of no comparison with his or theirs, he or they can no longer be regarded as a part of a state. For justice will not be done to a superior man, if he is reckoned only the equal of those who are so far inferior to him in virtue and in political ability. Such a one may truly be deemed a god among men. Hence we see that legislation is necessarily concerned only with those who are equals in birth and in ability; and that for men of extraordinary virtue there is no law. They are themselves a law. Anyone would be ridiculous who attempted to make laws for them: they would probably retort what, in the fable of Antisthenes, the lions said to the rabbits ('Where are your claws?'), when in the council of the beasts the latter began haranguing and claiming equality for all." --Aristotle, in "Politics".

BILL CHRISTIAN HAS A FEW WORDS ABOUT "ARTISTIC APPRECIATION"

"As usual, I find myself disagreeing with an avowed liberal. I assure you that I am not doing this just to be annoying, but after due consideration I have come to the conclusion that your "hypnotic trance" brought on by various musical performances, works of art, etc., is unfortunate. Sometimes I let myself get carried away by the 'high-priest-musician'; sometimes, after hearing Gobbi sing Cortiani vil rannza from Rigoletto, I find myself with tears in my eyes. Listening to O paradiso from L'Africana fills me with heroic pride, and Beethoven's Ninth, of course, impresses me with the greatness of man. However, if you allow yourself to be entranced by the music, you cannot pass an objective judgement. Whether it was well or ill performed is beyond your scope, for you have let go of your reasoning faculty (a thoroughly shocking thing for a liberal to do). Are the singer's breath control, enunciation, emotion good? Does the conductor balance the orchestra properly? Does he play it as you feel he should? If you have been entranced by music as you say you have, then you can answer none of these questions honestly. (My mental state was termed a "hypnotic trance" in the very broadest sense of that term, probably inaccurately. The point was made that what actually occurred was a concentration on the object (musical performance, motion picture, etc.) to the exclusion of extraneous stimuli. This ought to assist, not impair, objective judgement. You are quite correct in assuming that I can answer your questions only superficially, if at all, but this is a result of our differing tastes in music. Billie Holiday's rendition of "Gloomy Sunday" and Mimi Hines' performance of "San Francisco" impressed me tremendously, but I was not at all interested in the balance of the orchestra, or the breath control and enunciation of the performers; the resultant sound and the emotion were the two relevant qualities. In blues singing, technical perfection is secondary to other qualities, prime among them being emotion; indeed, the quest for technical perfection often harms the performance, causing it to be mechanical, uninspired.)

"This is an even worse fault when you apply it to reading. I

have always felt that when you read, you should read actively, not passively; you should be constantly trying to see why the author says what he does, and whether you agree in whole, in part or not at all with what he says. If you are reading an adventure story, or a comic book, you can allow yourself to be hypnotized by the author; but these type of books are scarcely, I hope, the type that would entrance you. Therefore, I assume that you mean good literature, philosophical works and political works entrance you. But again, I feel that you might try better to question the validity of the author's statements than be hypnotized by the power of his prose." (As I took special pains to point out in Kipple #40, I receive no such reaction from the printed word. Many passages in books interest or even excite me, but not in the same manner as musical performances. I read as you do, pausing to check references or simply to argue in my own mind at intervals which vary according to the specific book. (It took me four days to read Russell's "Human Society in Ethics and Politics", simply because I so often paused to explore the various paths uncovered therein.)) (112 Birch Cliff Ave., Scarborough, Ontario, Canada.)

"Truth is great and will prevail if left to herself. She is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error and has nothing to fear from the conflict of free argument and debate." --Thomas Jefferson.

CHARLES WELLS COMMENTS ON #41

"The notion that a child should be allowed to decide for itself about religion is neither restricted to agnostics (not that Derek Nelson claimed that it was) nor is it held by all agnostics. Most Unitarians, many of whom are not agnostics, believe this way and as a result Unitarian Sunday Schools have goals other than the indoctrination of religion. The children are taught about all the religions, usually fairly sympathetically, as well as about agnosticism and atheism. The system is set up, too, to encourage the child to creative thought about Nature and about people and to free his mind as far as possible from timidity and vagueness in his intellectual processes. Nowadays a Unitarian Sunday School is a valuable addition to the public schools in the upbringing of a child, not so much because it adds religion to the curriculum--although the child will learn a great deal about religion he will never get in public schools--but because it redresses the lack of emphasis in public schools on independent thought and seeing all sides of a question.

"Sweden is a good example of a country that has been a welfare state for years but which has not otherwise markedly advanced in the direction of Socialism--there have been no major nationalizations for years, for example. The private sector of the Swedish economy occupies relatively almost as much of a slice of the whole economy as it does here, and its share is not decreasing.

"I do not understand why the right not to have to pay social security has anything to do with 'dissent'. The government cannot let you starve when you get to be 65 because you wasted your life and money on wine, women and song. It can't because public opinion would not let it. Therefore it is perfectly justified in requiring you to put something in the kitty against that day as payment for services to be rendered. There is no more loss of freedom involved than there is when you are required to pay for police protection through your local taxes. However, a system which allowed you to set up your own fund towards your retirement--which you could not touch until then except in case of emergency--rather than putting your money into the government kitty would also be

satisfactory; in fact, such a system was put into operation last year for self-employed people who are not now covered by social security. But if it were extended to everyone, the cost of administering the system and enforcing the rules would be far higher; regardless of all the conservative complaints about big government, there is efficiency in size and in this case I can see no loss of freedom in the way it is operated.

"Martin Helgesen oversimplifies when he says, 'According to Catholic theology it is impossible to be guilty of a sin unless the act in question is done deliberately or knowingly; one cannot sin accidentally or through ignorance.' You can commit a sin without knowing it is a sin, in Catholic theology. You will not, however, be held responsible for it unless you are later informed that it is a sin and refuse to seek absolution. I am aware that you can interpret the refusal to seek absolution as the only sin involved; but this gets so technical I for one would want to ask a priest. Nevertheless, if you do something Bad without knowing it is Bad and then later a priest tells you it was Bad, he will expect you to ask to be forgiven.

"In your comments to Bill Christian, you never make it clear what the basis of your moral code actually is. You deny that it is merely the community's code, but when you start throwing around words like 'self-evident' you are not presenting a basis, you are merely giving us some insight into your psychological makeup. I have somewhat the same attitude toward these self-evident things that Buckley has towards democracy, as is indicated in his quote you present us with a few pages further on." (All philosophical systems are based upon one or several premises which are not able to be proved. My assumed premises, as set forth in slightly different terminology in Martin Helgesen's letter in #41, are: (1) that justice is a desirable state, and (2) that human life possesses intrinsic value, and therefore ought not to be willfully destroyed. Both of these statements appear to me obvious; if you do not agree, we can argue--endlessly. As Joad has pointed out, "...the desirability of an ultimate good cannot be established by reason or justified at the bar of reason. An ultimate good is just seen to be desirable, or, as it is sometimes put, its desirability is intuitively perceived." Arguments of this sort can, however, be extremely interesting as a result of the side issues they explore. So I'll ask if you disbelieve either or both of my statements, and if so, why?) (200 Atlas St., Apt. #1, Durham, North Carolina.)

"One of the great rewards that a belief in sin has always offered to the virtuous is the opportunity which it affords of inflicting pain without compunction." --Bertrand Russell, in "Human Society in Ethics and Politics".

BILL PLOTT COMMENTS ON RACE RELATIONS

"I must agree with Dave Hulan's letter in Kipple #40. The racial demonstrations in Birmingham were indeed ill-timed. They never even gave the Boutwell administration a chance to act. You say that you would have demonstrated also if you were living under the rule of a government that had been voted out; well, the matter was resting in a courtroom at that time and all of the demonstrations in the world would not have affected a different or more rapid decision.

"The Birmingham demonstrations were typical of those inspired and led by Martin Luther King Jr. and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference. King and his cohorts go in and stir everyone up. They collect new funds for the SCLC and then pull out leaving the local Negroes

with only token advancements and in reality a helluva lot more prominent problems to be solved. Just what did all of the demonstrations in Birmingham achieve? Nothing much, really. The biracial conference was strictly an individual effort on the part of the whites who participated. They had no authority or political position at all. Regardless of how sincere they may have been, the carrying out of the concessions cannot be enforced. It will be strictly up to the Birmingham merchants and industrialists to accede to the points affecting them. Some of them may out of fear of more demonstrations; others may because this will give them a semi-legal opportunity to do what they have always wanted to do but could not because of possible repercussions. And there will be a goodly number who will stand in the doorways of their stores, if necessary, and maintain segregation.

"I suppose you watched the University of Alabama integration on television a few weeks ago. Wallace made his ridiculous stand, then got out of the way when the national guard was federalized. From then on there has been no trouble to my knowledge. If Wallace were really and sincerely standing for states rights in a fight against an all-powerful evil called Central Government, I could support him. But Wallace is a white supremacist of the first water and I sincerely believe that it is this and his political aspirations rather than his legal sincerity that motivates his actions. Wallace isn't worth a tinker's dam to me, but I must admit that he handled himself remarkably well at Tuscaloosa. It all went off like a well-rehearsed high school play. One sometimes wonders." (Wallace recently starred in another television drama. The absurdly pompous little man emerged as the champion of the people in the recent hearings of the Senate Commerce Committee. His magnificent ad-libs ("Some of my best and closest friends are Negroes") impressed the entire audience with his sense of humor and sincerity.) (P.O. Box 654, Opelika, Alabama.)

"We wouldn't mind the meek inheriting the earth if we could be sure they would stay meek after they get it." --Greencastle, Pa., Echo-Pilot.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE: 1963

The state of Maryland has recently been embroiled in racial disturbances to a degree heretofore unknown, particularly in the Eastern Shore community of Cambridge, where periodic riots have received national attention. In the Baltimore metropolitan area, however, the prominence given the impending hecatomb in Cambridge has, perhaps surprisingly, been surpassed by the controversy growing out of a relatively innocuous local situation. Gwynn Oak Park, the only amusement park in the metropolitan area, has for some time been picketed at irregular intervals as a result of the refusal of its owners to accept Negroes as patrons. These occasional demonstrations, conducted under the auspices of CORE, apparently failed to accomplish even the minimum goal of directing public attention toward the situation. The management stubbornly refused to consider the possibility of integrating its facilities, and business was apparently not injured by the periodic picketing. On July 4th, therefore, a more meaningful type of demonstration was undertaken: demonstrators, both white and Negro, entered the establishment and refused to leave peacefully; they were therefore arrested under the provisions of the Maryland trespass law and carried from the park premises by police officers. This demonstration was rendered especially notable by the presence of a large number of clergymen in the group of CORE activists. Representatives of all major faiths, including Dr. Eu-

gene Carson Blake; chief executive of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States, were placed under arrest and currently await trial on charges of trespassing.

The reaction was immediate and clamorous. On the one hand, there are those who, like myself, believe the demonstration to have been a thoroughly honorable course of action for the clergymen to have undertaken; we are pleased, in short, to witness a certain number of clergymen attempting to practice as well as to preach Christianity. An opposing camp decries the ludicrous spectacle of clergymen deliberately breaking a law (and hence implicitly if not explicitly encouraging others to do so), contending that the law must be upheld even when we disagree with it. The controversy between these opposing viewpoints, while enthusiastic, has generally remained calm and rational. (A third group, which will not concern this present discussion, consists of ardent segregationists scandalized at any further manifestation of "Communist race-mixing". This ignominious league of professional bigots has been roundly condemned by the responsible elements of both of the former camps.)

The controversy introduces the question of civil disobedience, which has been a thorny issue for many years, and perhaps it would be interesting to briefly explore this matter in these pages. First, however, it is necessary to define what is meant by "civil disobedience", as well as to examine the relevance of that definition to this specific incident. Ethically, civil disobedience refers to a considered transgression against a duly constituted legal prohibition where it is seen to be in conflict with what the protagonist regards as a higher moral principle. It is felt that an individual cannot in good conscience comply with legal dicta where he would as a result be forced into an acceptance and toleration (active or passive) of that which is considered by him to be immoral. The example which immediately comes to mind is that of a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses sect, to whom the ceremony of the flag salute constitutes idolatry and is thus repugnant. If the law compels his participation, he is confronted by a moral dilemma, the solution to which will depend upon the extent to which he is willing to sacrifice principle to expediency.

But civil disobedience has also quite another meaning, when its use is dictated by tactical rather than ethical considerations: it is a pragmatic device to focus attention on an unfair or otherwise improper law. This distinction further complicates any possible defense of civil disobedience, since there is an obvious qualitative difference between committing an act as a result of a moral compulsion and committing the same act for the sake of expediency. No such difficulty besets the objecting camp, however: objections are directed primarily at the first viewpoint, since it follows that if civil disobedience may be discredited as an ethically inspired action, it obviously could not continue to be defended as a pragmatic tactic.

The first objection directed at this principle may be most easily referred to as the "primacy of law" argument. The law is seen to be binding on all members of the community, regardless of their opinion of each individual law. The law is a creation of the community, designed to institute and maintain order, to implement the duly considered judgments of the community, and to protect its members. If a law is acknowledged to be a bad one, it should be repealed or amended in such a way as to correct this fault. But under no circumstances has an individual the right to disregard a legitimate civil rule merely because it does not conform to his private opinion of what the law should be.

Closely allied to this argument are the philosophical tenets of a certain minority which hold that what is legal must necessarily also be right. Even Aristotle was apparently susceptible to this philosophy,

as he held that the law perfectly administered fairness, and that legality was a prime quality by which to recognize justice. (See the "Nicomachean Ethics", Book Five, Chapter Five.)

In replying to this objection, we must at the outset formulate a definition of the law and a concept of its purpose which is more complete than that proposed several paragraphs above. Certainly, the law is intended to maintain order and to protect the members of the community, but these are only specific tasks of the law within the context of a higher definition: viz., that the purpose of the law is to enforce that which is ethically correct. Granted this definition, it therefore follows that when the law serves to enforce that which is ethically unacceptable, the law is in that case no longer binding. In postulating this definition, it is assumed that there is an absolute, objective standard by which specific acts may be said to be ethical or unethical. This assumption is by no means universally accepted. However, in applying that definition to this specific matter, I have operated on the premise that racial discrimination is ethically unacceptable to every reasonable individual. Even if some readers may contend that no objective standard of judgement exists in many cases, they would probably concede that in this particular case the ethical issue is clear: laws tending to promote racial discrimination are unjust, and hence unethical.

To the belief that law is necessarily right (that acts dictated by law are ethically correct simply because of their legal standing) it is not necessary to reply at any great length. Throughout history, various nations and groups within nations have given legal sanction to a prodigious number of differing and contradicting actions and qualities; obviously, when two legal systems dictate diametrically opposing codes, both of them cannot be ethically valid. For example, if the legal code of nation A adjudges murder a crime and imposes a penalty on the murderer, whereas the legal code of nation B decrees murder to be the duty of every citizen and rewards the murderer, it is evident that, all other things being equal, both codes cannot be equally valid. Even divine law is not exempt from this limitation. The Sixth Commandment admonishes all Christians to refrain from murder, and on the surface it appears that this dictum is observed because it is the command of God. But suppose the Sixth Commandment was "Thou shalt kill", instead of the opposite. Would we nevertheless obey it? I think not, for it is recognized by most Christians that the decree should be adhered to not merely because it purports to be the word of God, but because it admonishes us to do right.

Any given law, then, is considered valid because what it decrees is considered ethically correct, not simply because it is a law. The extermination of six million Jews during the late war was dictated by what, at the time, constituted law in Nazi Germany. But few individuals would claim that the action was morally justified simply because it was legally encouraged.

A man ought to attempt at all times to do what is right. If a given law dictates that which is wrong, that law must be opposed in every possible manner, including the breaking of it.

From this concept, however, arises the second objection to civil disobedience. Different things are taken to be right and wrong by each individual; moral codes differ among individuals as widely as do laws among nations and eras. If, then, it is the duty of each person to do what he sees to be right regardless of the tenets of the law of his community, may each individual disregard the law where it conflicts with his own beliefs about right and wrong? If each individual observes only that portion of the law with which he agrees, the result will be chaos and anarchy.

This is a difficult point to which to reply. It might be said, of course, that laws are to be subservient to conscience only when reason decrees that a wrong is being committed by the law. But this is of no assistance. The subjective element inherent in the original proposition continues to intrude, simply because it is the nature of all men to accord to their beliefs and opinions the attribute of reason. The question as relevant to this specific case then becomes: does a group of clergymen have the right to decide that a moral principle justifies disobedience to civil law, whereas a gangster would not have the right to disregard laws with which he disagreed?

There are a number of distinctions between the two matters, distinctions both of motive and of effect. First, the members of the clergy, in adjudging that a moral principle dictated the breaking of a law, were not seeking personal aggrandizement; they did not attempt to circumvent the law in order to attain some advantage to themselves which could not be gained within the law. Secondly, they did not disobey the law in the normal context of that action, i.e., with an intent of committing an act of crime and then escaping punishment. Rather, they were protesting the law in the most effective possible manner, with no attempt to evade the prescribed punishment for their act. Finally, it may reasonably be argued that their action was not harmful to another individual or group, a fact which delineates a qualitative difference between this act of civil disobedience and the normal "crime".

To make this reply, however, is to quibble about specific details and to evade the moral issue involved. In addressing the latter issue, we must at length come to admit that, on an abstract plane, the civil disobedience of the ministers cannot be objectively defended. It is, in the final analysis, a matter for the individual and his conscience; in contemplating an act of civil disobedience, it is necessary only that the moral basis for the action satisfy one's self. One must be prepared to accept the punishment prescribed for the transgression against the legal code. This will satisfy the civil community; with regard to the moral justification, it is necessary only to satisfy one's own conscience.

This, admittedly, is a dangerous concept, as it contains the assumption that any person may defy any law. Unfortunately, it is the only argument by which civil disobedience may be justified, for, in the final analysis, all concepts of right and wrong are subjective and consequently equally valid as compared to each another. (It was implied above that an absolute ethical standard may exist; this is quite possible, but it is not relevant to any pragmatic matter, since no two individuals precisely agree on its constitution, even granted its existence.) Our opinion that genocide, as typified by the Nazi extermination efforts, is unacceptable is not necessarily more valid than the opinion of a thief that laws governing theft are unacceptable, though we naturally believe it to be. Indeed, many persons would claim objective standards by which the Nazi atrocities may be said to be immoral, but on close examination it will be discovered that these criteria are not absolutes. As C.E.M. Joad has pointed out, things which are taken to be ethically good are intuitively perceived, and as such cannot be proven; that is, you either accept them or you do not, and no objective evidence exists--or can exist--to support them.

The conclusion, then, is that once an individual has satisfied his own conscience that the course of action he plans to undertake is right, it is incumbent upon him to carry out the action--even where it conflicts with civil law. We who are observers from the sidelines, as it were, possess the option of admiring or disliking him for the action, but we cannot abrogate his right to commit it.

One further point ought to be explored, although it is relevant

only to the specific case in point and not to the ethical issue. It has heretofore been assumed that the defendants in the Gwynn Oak Park case are in reality guilty of the offense with which they have been charged. This is not at all certain, as a matter of actual fact, for the law under which the demonstrators are being prosecuted may itself be illegal. On May 20th of this year, the Supreme Court handed down a ruling to the effect that any state, city or county ordinance which has the effect of promoting segregation is unconstitutional on the grounds that it conflicts with the "equal protection" clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Since the men were arrested under the provisions of the Maryland trespass act, an ordinance similar to those laws struck down by the Court, the conviction which will almost surely follow is null and void--although the case may reach the Supreme Court before such a ruling is made. While none of this has bearing on the moral issue involved, it does contribute to the position of the demonstrators in this particular case. No matter how much disagreement occurs with regard to the issues set forth in this article, it is at least apparent that a law which is itself illegal is not binding.

"It is in the yearning for freedom, the love of beauty, the search for truth, the recognition of moral law and in the awareness of spiritual forces that human nature is distinguished from all other sorts of nature. Man shares with other animals the need for satisfactory economics, for adequate food and shelter, for the goods essential to existence, but his needs transcend these physical factors because his nature differs from theirs. Probably nine-tenths of all the words that have been used since the dawn of speech in reference to 'human nature' have referred to those elements in the nature of man that are shared with other animals rather than to those that are man's unique possession. It would be far better to concentrate upon the latter and thus to distinguish human nature from animal nature." --Kirtley Mather, in "The Crust of the Earth".

CHAY BORSELLA COMMENTS ON RACE AND EDUCATION

"It seems that the local racial wrangles have knocked the Prayer Ruling right out of the newspapers, and just in time: even the Baltimore News-Post was becoming redundant in its tear-jerking protests against the Decision. So now hundreds of integrationists are picketing the Gwynn Oak Amusement Park, and are subsequently being hauled off in paddy-wagons. Getting arrested is a prestige symbol; Mrs. Coleman actually carried her five-month old baby to jail. The question here is, do the means (pickets, demonstrations, ktp.) justify the end (equality for the Negro--or, the right to ride on the same merry-go-round with the fair, golden-haired little girl).

"In this case, I think the means do justify the ends. Some of the especially inept people have said, 'Why don't we send them back to Africa?' To them I would say that if we did this, we must also send the Dutch back to Holland, the French back to France, etc. We would end up with an awfully empty country. Others say, 'The Negro must wait; all this takes time.' Wait for what? is my reply. He's been waiting over 100 years and all it's got him is second-class citizenship, second-rate restaurants and a seat in the unemployment office. Maybe his economic position is lower, maybe he has a higher illegitimacy rate. But these things are results of social ostracism, not reasons for it. The only way to correct the situation is to stop the ostracism.

"The Pauls Plan of Education isn't going to help the average child, much less the slow one. Firstly, the English classification

could be called hash, consisting as it does of reading, writing, spelling, grammar, logic and diction. Yet you have Mathematics, Biology and Physical Science as separate entries. Math is only a tool, and I hope you aren't intending to pawn off four years of algebra on everyone. More men go into selling or management than the sciences--they would profit by more English. I recommend that the conglomeration you have under English be broken into two entries, and that Biology and Physics be combined into Science. At least half of the high school girls want some sort of typist-steno training; there is hardly an item on your list that would help them. Special schools for all vocational students would cause snobbery and rivalry; already you have called them 'academically retarded'. (Dr. James D. Koerner notes in a Saturday Evening Post article that in modern educational circles, superior students are called "fortunate deviates", while retarded youngsters must be referred to as "exceptional children". I think I prefer my terms ("superior" and "academically retarded"); they are not only honest, but also comprehensible to laymen.) Schools cannot be completely geared to the young genius who knows from his eighth birthday on that he is going to be a nuclear physicist.

"Geography is as important as history, and shouldn't be dragged in via another category. (Kindly elucidate on the alleged importance of "geography".) Philosophy is worthless unless you're really interested in it. It should be an elective at best; it is completely hypothetical and unprovable. (As I pointed out in #42, the heading "Philosophy" was adopted solely for convenience. The material introduced under that heading would include not only "philosophy" in the classic sense, but, more importantly, a detailed study of systems of government, the beliefs of various groups throughout history and their relevance to political questions, the relative merits of all current forms of government, comparative religion, etc. I would say that this was the most important classification of subject matter in my hypothetical school system, for it is within the body of this course that I would seek to show the value of critical examination, instill what Sumner terms the "critical faculty", and teach liberal concepts of respect for civil liberties, freedom of speech and thought, desire to view both sides of a controversy, ad infinitum.) Besides, we develop our own philosophy of life as a result of our having lived. Parroting about the dialectic or economic determinism won't add much. However, I am completely in favor of your non-indoctrination program; objectivity is a must." (26 Cedar Avenue, Towson 4, Maryland.)

"The mass of people usually find that their own introspective judgment of right and wrong, the edicts of the authorities accepted by them, and the conventions of their society coincide rather closely. They coincide because their sources are related and because the individuals in society tend to modify them or to ignore their discrepancies so as to produce the illusion, at least, of coincidence. The martyrs who cling to a supposedly revealed ethic that is not accepted by their society and the social rebels whose introspective standards reject convention are relatively few in number--although, of course, new systems which may later become conventional arise among such martyrs and rebels." --George Gaylord Simpson, in "The Meaning of Evolution".

TOM SEIDMAN DISCUSSES PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION

"Let me toss in a comment or two on Marty Helgesen's letter and a comment you made to Bill Christian in Kipple #41. The point concerns the question of the existence of natural rights and natural law. There

are three possibilities which have been proposed and supported: (1) there is a unique standard of what is good and bad (allowing, of course, for circumstances) and this standard is knowable, is deducible by logic from 'first principles' and the (observable) nature of the universe and nature of man; (2) the standards of good and bad (again universal, allowing for circumstances) are those which have been set by God, and have been revealed (e.g., in the Bible or the life of Jesus) and are known (as interpreted by the Church for Catholics); (3) no universal standards exist, only cultural norms (subject to the restriction that certain sets of norms will be unstable, others will lead to the dissolution or destruction of the culture). An atheist will not believe in (2) but could still be moral under (1) or (3). A cultural relativist, as myself, will believe (3)--note that, since our cultural norms are those (pretty much) which the dominant religions claim were set by God, such a person would be judged 'moral' in his actions if not his beliefs by a devout 'religionist'--except that insofar as our cultural norms are inconsistent (which they damn well are) he may choose to resolve particular questions in a different way. I do not even believe that objections to genocide are qualitatively different from objections to spitting in the subway (oysters are not a matter of such cultural unanimity)--though my emotional commitment is, of course, far stronger. (It is interesting to note here a similarity between this passage and one of my arguments in favor of civil disobedience in the preceeding article; written two days prior to the arrival of your letter. The difference, of course, is that I am not a cultural relativist; I believe that an objective standard of good and bad exists, but that its application depends upon the acceptance of several premises which cannot be proven. Once these premises are accepted, the objective right or wrong of any situation may be established by logical process. But the validity of the premises cannot be proven to those who do not accept them, and thus they remain subjective value judgements whenever an attempt is made to apply them pragmatically.) I would say that it is not due to logic or to God that I believe in the 'right' of the individual (or groups of consenting individuals) to do whatever they please so long as it hurts no one else, but rather due to my own background and conditioning. Having this conditioning, I will, predictably, deduce from the premises above that, e.g., the Negro has the right to equal status before the law and to apply pressure for economic and social gains. I believe the segregationist has the legal and constitutional right to refuse service in stores, etc., but not the moral right. One can be a determinist and blame society for the existence of crime yet still condemn the criminal, asserting that society's guilt in no way lessens his responsibility for his own actions. Similarly, while understanding the man with other conditioning who, believing he is doing right, violates my moral code, I will not hesitate to condemn him nor to attempt to change his beliefs or, if necessary, restrain him from what I consider dangerously wrong acts.

"Perhaps I should leave it to Anita Simon to object, but let me cavil at your comment in re Jim. I think you missed the point completely--it is not (repeat: not) necessary to be verbally facile and articulate (or even literate) to be successful in today's world and our culture. Is a person to be considered successful if he can live on his own terms (i.e., to be capable of independence if he dislikes dependence, etc.), relate to his fellows, be self-confidently capable in the areas he considers important (whether woodworking, auto mechanics, making out, or what-have-you), have integrity of character, even if he doesn't read books or care about school or a house in the suburbs or 'respectability' (in middle-class terms)? I only met Jim once (and then briefly), but he would seem to be doing all right (and likely to continue so)--on

his terms and by his standards. (I maintain that Jim cannot properly function in this society; he can earn a living, have fun, even gain the respect and admiration of others of his own intellectual level. But he cannot properly function as a citizen of this democracy; Jim is an insufficiently political animal, unable to communicate on an intellectual plane, unable to reasonably explore and judge politically important issues, unable to articulate his views. Incidentally, people are not generally self-confidently capable in areas they consider important; rather, they are prone to consider important those areas in which they are self-confidently capable.)

"The question is--should one try to change such students into something else? I recommend to your attention the article, 'The 4 Faces of Able Adolescents' in Saturday Review, January 19, 1963, by Elizabeth Drews, who categorizes students (particularly the talented, 'able' ones) on a two-dimensional scale:

Concern with Non-Ideas	More Conformity		Concern with Ideas
	Social Leaders	High-achieving Studious	
	Rebel	Creative Intellectual	
Less Conformity			

You and I might apostrophize the creative intellectuals but insisting that that is the only worthwhile possibility is surely parochial. Jim fits more in the lower left--and why not?" (1720 15th Avenue, Seattle 22, Washington.)

 "The materialist conception of history starts from the principle that production, and with production the exchange of its products, is the basis of every social order; that in every society which has appeared in history the distribution of the products, and with it the division of society into classes or estates, is determined by what is produced and how it is produced, and how the product is exchanged. According to this conception, the ultimate causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in the minds of men, in their increasing insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the mode of production and exchange; they are to be sought not in the philosophy but in the economics of the epoch concerned. The growing realization that existing social institutions are irrational and unjust, that reason has become nonsense and good deeds a scourge, is only a sign that changes have been taking place quietly in the methods of production and forms of exchange, with which the social order, adapted to previous economic conditions, is no longer in accord." --Friedrich Engels, in "Anti-Duhring".

MIKE DECKINGER COMMENTS ON SEVERAL RECENT ISSUES

"The present educational system will continue to offer the numerous inequities you pointed out in #40 as long as we rely on the inane supposition that one teacher is capable of teaching, instructing and stimulating a class of thirty or more diverse, different and changeable personalities. The only fair method in allowing the teacher to gauge her needs and train them on the students and, similarly, permitting the pupil to assimilate a properly directed course of learning, would be the initiation of a 1:1 pupil-teacher ratio. I recall a science fiction story on this theme, depicting a future in which each child had his own individual robot teacher who was specifically geared to appeal to the

pupil's personality and rate of learning. To me, this method is the most sensible and reasonable one that could be presented, and also the least practical. I see no possible indication that we shall ever adopt a system of this sort, or one that even resembles it, outside of the tutelage set-up which is applied to incapacitated pupils unable to attend regular classes. (The various types of teaching machines which are either in use or in the experimental stage make use of similar concepts, and some of them appear quite promising. The major advantage of such machines is that each one may be geared to the learning speed of the individual child, and thus an entire class could study under the watchful eye of a single teacher, each student at his own pace. The major disadvantage appears to be the rigidly programmed and severely limited scope of the material, so that an interested child could not ask questions (as he might do with a tutor) except within narrowly-defined boundaries. This difficulty should be eased as the machines become more complicated and consequently attain broader range, and it seems by no means unlikely that such a process should eventually lead to the situation you discussed, viz., an individual robot-teacher for each child.)

"The crux of the matter rests with a teacher. It's a rare teacher who can transform a dry, inanimate discourse into a vital, lively subject, and a teacher like this is to be commended. Most teachers are impersonal individuals who look upon each successive class as one less obstacle to quitting time. Most of the students instinctively realize this attitude as well, and take steps to react with the same degree of apathy and indifference that the teacher projects to them. The end result is that they are less receptive to what they are being taught, facts fail to take root in their minds, and the inevitable low marks and failing grades occur in abundance.

"The most important metamorphosis the hypothetical student could undergo is to have his viewpoint shifted from the highly irrelevant, yet exhaustively emphasized social aspects of school life, to the more meaningful academic side. Few high schools in the country care to buck public opinion by not overplaying dances, class parties, athletic events, etc., to some degree. Most high school students compete with one another, not in the area of improving marks, to which most are indifferent, but in creating a favorable image to their classmates of the opposite sex. The boys thrust forth contrived, masculine guises, unconsciously emulating the phonies they see in the movies. The girls, returning the ball, outdo each other in assuming alluring auras which their adolescent minds tell them is sure to snag the nearest boy. But a stoop-shouldered, self-consciously overweight boy is as impressive as an over-padded, preening girl. To them the school curriculum is secondary; their social relations are foremost in their minds and they will go to any lengths to achieve the elusive signs of maturity they are completely unable to recognize.

"It's really the old case of the chicken vs. the egg. Which is more beneficial: to alter the school content in order to get the student's mind off most of the bilge he's been fed, or to put the student in a more receptive state, so he can differentiate between the important features and the worthless ones? If the students are really incapable of being taught (and I knew some in high school who were) why direct a program specifically towards these incorrigibles when with a little modification you could encompass the learning capacity of the majority?

"Re 'codes of attire': Deeming certain items of dress decent or indecent presents too many loopholes. High school students aren't quite rebellious enough in intellect or action (outside of the inevitable clowns studying to be juvenile delinquents) to grasp the significance of non-conformity as a facet of civil disobedience. I strongly doubt

whether any girl is going to wear a dangerously low-cut dress in school because of the obvious embarrassment to her, irregardless of the 'indecent' picture she would present to the rest of the student body and the faculty. The few isolated examples of non-conformist dress never exceed anything more than clashing colors, a few overly tight garments, or some ridiculous hair styles. And while the final result may not help the school picture, the individuals dressing in such a slipshod, untidy manner receive plenty of ridicule to the point that it requires an uncommon degree of bravery to go around dressed deliberately as an idiot.

"I disagree partly with Dave Mason in his remark that most children immediately realize a sense of disrespect towards their teachers. On the contrary, I think in many cases the teachers are honestly doing more for the children than are their parents. To a young child, a teacher may discipline and be strict, but he or she is also an absolute symbol of authority. The teacher knows more facts than junior will ever comprehend, and frequently displays an uncommon warmth and understanding, perhaps more than his parents, whose time is taken up brawling and drinking, ever do. The disrespect the child has for the teacher is a direct result of the resentment he feels towards the school system for its confinement and lack of freedom. He may secretly admire the teacher, yet loath the school system.

"Unfortunately, Chay Borsella is all too right in mentioning the analogy that has been established between atheism and communism. The cliché 'godless communism', which automatically implies a loyal card-carrying Communist who is an equally fanatical atheist, is used misguidedly as an attempted slur on both communism and atheism by letter writers and columnists in the newspapers (by way of killing two birds with one stone, so to speak). All they actually accomplish is to display their abysmal ignorance and lack of understanding of these issues, but they are sufficiently inflammatory to warrant inclusion in an alarming number of newspapers.

"I'm enclosing a recent clipping from the Newark News which fits in with your remarks about children commenting on the school prayer decision. The Saddle Brook school board voted to defy the ban and offer time for a silent prayer at the start of each school day. Several of the students involved were interviewed about the school's decision and their 'spontaneous' appraisals are printed in the clipping. Frankly, I thought it was hilarious and I'm heartened to see that the students display as little sense as their parents. I thought the best comment came from fifteen year old Marsha Sondej, decrying the invasion of what she terms 'alien prayers'. Perhaps this refers to reciting the catechism in Martian or something... (The clipping in question had nothing in common with the material in the News-Post. I found several of the replies by Saddle Brook students to be uncommonly intelligent. Viz: "I rather favor this silent method of prayer because it doesn't impose a certain prayer or religion on any of the minority. The basic separation of church and state is inherently right and I firmly believe in upholding it." And: "I like this system much better than the one previously used as it allows each student to exercise his individual belief without any interference. Religion is a very personal matter and I see no good reason for it to be something the entire class must conform to en masse." These replies seem unusually well thought out, and I do not share your cynical impression.))

"It seems to be one of the added bonuses of being a Kipple letter writer that you are put on the Madalyn Murray Propaganda Mailing List and thereafter the recipient of all this remarkable lady's literature. The Free Humanist was indeed a hate-sheet, as Derek Nelson called it, and a deplorable excuse for a magazine allegedly devoted to atheism.

I don't think of any atheist as being a completely passive creature, but neither do I think of him as a rabid bigot, which is what the mailing list of The Free Humanist seems to be composed of. Not only is the anti-Catholic propaganda shallow but the arguments are presented on a completely childish level, appealing more to the emotions than the senses. It's not quite as bad as the Age of Reason, which is completely and fanatically anti-Catholic, but it seems to be approaching it. This is another good example of false analogies, such as atheism=communism; here atheism is made to coincide with anti-Catholicism, giving the impression that all good atheists are anti-Catholic.

"I think Derek Nelson is misguidedly praising Engene Connor for his stifling of violence in the Birmingham riots. While it's true that his police force was instrumental in controlling the mobs and the snipers, he was doing it merely as a first step in his plans to keep the Negroes cowed under the fist of the white policemen. It matters not if dogs or clubs or fire hoses or guns are used; they are all being used to accomplish the same objective and you cannot lessen the crime by using less severe methods to carry it out." (14 Salem Court, Metuchen, New Jersey.)

"In the Neolithic the increase in the number of weapons found-- battle-axes, rapiers and swords of bronze or iron--suggests that either individuals or groups or both had made the sorry discovery that by acquiring the property of one's neighbor, one could increase one's own wealth, that war, in fact, was an economically productive activity--a totally erroneous belief which has bedeviled men down to the present day. It was in the Neolithic that man started off on the wrong foot with the discovery that the acquisition of large amounts of property leads to power, and that when one has power the only thing remaining to achieve is--more power. Food gatherers and simple cultivators don't seem to think this way--they are too busy making a living--but pastoral peoples and mixed farmers seem to hanker after the acquisition of power and of slaves. Nonliterate people like the Australian aborigines and the Eskimos do not engage in warlike activities at all. In fact, it is extremely difficult to make them understand that there exist peoples on the earth who engage in such activities." --Ashley Montagu, in "Man: His First Million Years".

RATIONAL RELIGION by Greg Benford

This article is something of a half-breed, as articles go. If anything, it is a logical exercise and a partial demonstration of the general technique of a philosophical school. In a certain sense, it is also rather naive. It is not a Castillo-like Weltanschauung, and it does not account for dozens of minor (and not-so-minor) influences on human beings and on the way in which they live. However, I think that as a statement and a rough outline, it should at least provoke comment. The assumptions made herein are possibly ones with which you will not agree, and the steps of reason probably open to doubt. All the better. The form of the "philosophy" which it represents is plastic, and imprints can easily be made.

When considering the basis to be used for the formulation of a philosophy, it is best to consider which aspect of man embodies the highest qualities of which he is capable (assuming that any particular quality is to be emphasized above all others). In light of this consideration, man's reason is all that effectively separates him from the animal (culture does also, but one would be hard put to find a culture without reason which reached beyond the most elemental). Whether or not

animals are "higher" or "lower" because of this difference is of no concern; the existence of the difference is all that matters. Since our code of conduct, or ethic, is to serve mankind, it would seem to be a natural assumption that since we are distinctive by reason of our facilities of thought, we should emphasize our distinctions rather than our similarities (such as the common bond of emotion between man and animal) since the latter are at best doubtfully verifiable.

While it may be contended that emotion forms a common ground for man, it can just as easily be said that logic and reason are timeless quantities which are absolutely reproducible. At least in one sense then, they have the same universality ascribed to emotion. Also, if it is permissible to introduce empirical observations, it would seem that the use of reason, unclouded by emotion, is responsible for a great amount of accomplishment in the history of mankind, and has thwarted the aims under the guise of religion which were intended to produce nothing but the satisfaction of sadistic emotions and the release of the emotion of hate, not love.

If the premise of logical inspection alone is accepted in this search for a philosophy, then it becomes immediately evident that we cannot reach any conclusion whatever regarding religion, which would normally occupy a major section of any philosophy. No logical proofs for or against the existence of a God are known, and it would seem that such proof is impossible. On these grounds, we cannot accept any final solution on the matter; it becomes necessary to determine whether, after all, a religion is needed. It is often asserted that every culture has experienced a religious emotion of some type, and filled this vacuum in some way. However, it must be admitted that there are some people who live by an ethic just as rigid and demanding as do those who are devoutly religious, and yet these men are, by their own admission, not religious (in the common sense of the term). They are, in short, agnostics. In the utilitarian sense, too, there doesn't seem to be any great need for a religion--only for an ethic. What is demanded in any society is an ethic, and any judgement about religion can be postponed. Religion could easily be a universally-needed mental aid which could be replaced by more self-confidence and in general better conditioning from birth regarding one's relationships with other individuals.

We are now faced with the problem of the formulation of an ethic. In general, I have concluded that the most universal condition of mankind is self-satisfaction--whether it be satisfaction of physical appetites, sense of dignity, or any other need felt by a man. In other words, the most common denominator is the quest for happiness. In applying this rule of thumb, however, we cannot think solely in terms of economic and political satisfaction. Man seems to carry with him a sense of worth and dignity. This must not be violated, or the individual is no longer satisfied. The same holds true for goals, for once they have been reached by an ambitious and inquiring mind, there is little satisfaction to be gained from them. Man needs a constant goal toward which to strive.

A few extrapolations can be made from the foregoing. The activities which place a premium on logic and reason (and the expression of these qualities) could perhaps be considered more "worthy" than other activities, for through them man is able to transcend the moment and devise systems of thought which remain true (within themselves) for all time--assuming the validity of induction and causality. Since reason is to be the basis of our system of ethics, let us cherish it. Unless it is assumed that the "spirit" of mankind is somehow endowed with the power to discern Right without utilizing reason, then we must conclude that only through logic can we reach conclusions which are valid to

others, and do not simply agree with what we would desire to believe.

--Greg Benford

"That dating is primarily a competitive game in which publicly affirmed popularity is the prize can be illustrated by considering the behavior of those who do not date, but withdraw, sometimes quite early in adolescence, to 'going steady'. For here we find two groups: young people whose stirring sexuality has been genuinely aroused so that they may be said to be 'in love' with each other, and who find the game of dating meaningless because they prefer each other's company; and young people who, without being in love, depend on each other for protection, the unpopular girl and the unpopular boy, concealing their failure in the popularity game by pretending to prefer each other. Outside the dating group are much larger peripheral groups: girls and boys who are so physically immature and dysplastic that they feel disqualified for this game where mimic physical readiness for sex is expected; girls and boys who lack the money and the clothes; girls and boys who have such a deep interest in something else that it protects them from wanting to spend their time in a game that is to them irrelevant. But for those who are allowed to play, the deep fear of deviance--natural offspring of our hurriedly assembled and slightly learned cultural patterns--keeps them in the game, demonstrating that they are successful in the way in which their adolescent social world, and every magazine they pick up, and their parents' expectation, decrees that they shall be."
--Margaret Meade, in "Male and Female".

VIC RYAN COMMENTS ON EDUCATION

"In Kipple #40, you stated that 'competition was encouraged 40 years ago, whereas today cooperation is the keynote.' This is not only a sweeping generalization--it's also fundamentally incorrect. The educational system of forty years ago, remember, was fundamentally different. A proscribed curriculum, for example, tended to favor in all areas those students high in such things as 'reason' or 'deduction'; whereas the modern system, with its diversity--good or bad--at least recognizes the fact that one person can't excel in every field; if he does, then there's something constrictive about the system. Remember, too, not to confuse the educational system with the social structure. Today's student may seem more 'conforming', but simply because his social relationships are much less structured in certain areas: he may have a greater diversity of friends, particularly of the opposite sex; and he almost certainly behaves less rigidly towards his parents. He has greater responsibilities and privileges--and all this makes it only inevitable that much of his ordinary, superficial life is highly structured by his peers--simply because life would be too complex if every little detail demanded rational thought and careful attention.

"I seriously doubt the other end of the argument, too: that competition takes a back seat to cooperation. When has competition, really, ever been so great? The better colleges and universities can accept only a small percentage of their applicants. National Merit scholarships are passed out in vigorous, state-by-state competitions as, for that matter, is fundamentally the case for most scholarships, with 'need' an additional factor. Graduate schools are highly selective. Employers judge prospective employees on the basis of competitive contests (often examinations, as, fundamentally, is the case with such as civil service) or on education--how much, where, and how well. (The attitudes compatible with the urge to conform are established at a very early age; the competition which exists to enter college comes too late to be

of any assistance. There may be many significant disadvantages to the traditional philosophy of education which stressed academic accomplishment, but there is at least this advantage: students were encouraged to be better (and, hence, different), whereas today the educational system seeks to discourage individuality. In 1925, junior was awarded a gold star because he excelled in spelling or arithmetic; nowadays, he is rewarded for "group adjustment" (i.e., the hypocritical styling of his ideas and opinions to blend with those of his social peers).)

"Since you generally try, or seem to try, to be impartial in most of your general statements, I'm sure you must have a good reason for assuming that 'logic and physics' is more valuable than 'football or tennis'. It's a view which most intelligent people would share, of course, and its quite possibly--though not necessarily--the one to which our educational institutions are attuned; but it strikes me as being a sort of sub-cultural relativism. I've been arguing the point, somewhat ineffectively, with Marion Bradley, but so far I just haven't been able to put my point across; perhaps you'd best make some sort of statement if you have any to make. Why, for any reason other than personal feelings, is a good mind 'better' than a good body? It may be a rhetorical question, of course." (Greg Benford argues in the final paragraph of his article (above) that the activities which place a premium on logic and reason may be considered more valuable than other activities because of their abstract qualities. Also, it may be argued that, given the proposition that we ought to contribute to society/civilization, it is evident that only through the development of intellectual or moral qualities may this be accomplished. The athlete may entertain, but he can never contribute in the manner of the philosopher or scientist. Finally, there is the matter of compensation--viz., that one set of attributes may be considered qualitatively superior to another when increased capacity in the former offsets a deficiency in the latter, but not vice versa. The obvious illustration is the simile of the physically weak intellectual who designs and builds a mechanical device to compensate for his lack of strength, while the strong moron is completely at a loss to alter his intellectual state by any means whatever.) (2160 Sylvan Road, Springfield, Illinois.)

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