Book Reviews

Science and Liberal Education. Bentley Glass. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1960. x + 115 pp. $3.

These three essays, originally given as lectures before a lay audience, are a credit to the profession. Scientific principles are explained with simplicity and accuracy, and the importance of science in liberal education is well argued. References to many artists and scholars from "the other side" are wisely utilized. The historian Carl Becker figures prominently.

Bentley Glass insists that science must become the core of liberal education, but aptly reminds us that "The core of the apple is certainly not the whole apple—not even the most beautiful or delicious part of the apple. Yet the core gives the rest of the apple meaning—here lie the seeds without which, in a state of nature, there would be no more apple trees and no more apples" (page 63). That portion of the educational core that we call genetics is discussed at length. Radiation problems are admirably summarized.

Evolutionary and genetic theory are serious challenges to traditional ethics. The author points out how well-meaning tenderheartedness with respect to animals has frequently led to actions that are cruel because they are based on insufficient information—for example, when man removed such "cruel" predators as wolves and coyotes, he made it possible for their ungulate prey to multiply to the point where they can enjoy the delights of mass starvation. In the human species, medicine, attempting to save all life by correcting for individual "inborn errors of metabolism" without removing their genetic causes, raises the potentiality of increasing the total amount of suffering as harmful mutations are summed, generation after generation. Glass rightly asks if traditional medicine is not acting in such a way as "to damn the future for the selfish interest of the present?" (page 113). Yet, so difficult is it even for biologists to keep in mind the dilemma in choosing between present and future evil that even our geneticist, in speaking of the consequences of shifting from exogamy to endogamy, says that if we should revert to the earlier breeding pattern the result would be a "disastrous increase in the proportion of hereditarily afflicted persons" (page 44); he says this in spite of the fact that on the preceding page he had admitted that "inbreeding does not of itself change gene frequencies, but it brings the recessive genes out into the open and allows selection to be exercised upon them." Is this "disastrous"? I do not want to be cited as a proponent of cousin-marriage, but as scientists we must insist that *as concerns society* there is, perhaps, as much to be said for inbreeding as against it, since it results in paying off genetic debts early rather than late; only the individual parent benefits by exogamy, since he thereby shuffles off his genetic debt onto a later generation. Ethics is a difficult discipline.

Nevertheless, there are no important objections to be made to Glass's presentation, which contains much that deserves praise. His book well merits wide reading among the general public. It should be particularly effective in arousing the interest of high-school students in the social implications of science; it should help to bring together what C. P. Snow has called the "two cultures" of science and the other humanities.

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Political Man. The social bases of politics. Seymour Martin Lipset. Doubleday, New York, 1960. 432 pp. $4.95.

This book is a collection of Lipset's essays, selected by the author to illustrate "the contribution the sociologist can make to the understanding of democratic political systems." It is an interesting demonstration.

The successive chapters present a series of major hypotheses, of which the following examples may indicate the intellectual problem of the book. (i) Democracy requires institutions which support conflict and disagreement as well as those which sustain legitimacy and consensus; (ii) the social situation of the working class predisposes the class to the development of authoritarian attitudes and to a preference for extremist and doctrinaire political movements; (iii) recent fascist movements have represented an extremism based on the political center and the middle class, rather than on the right or left; (iv) in every modern democracy political parties basically represent a "democratic translation of the class struggle."

The method by which Lipset undertakes to establish the validity of these propositions is that of comparative analysis. He has assembled a formidable array of evidence regarding voting and other political behavior, using election statistics, sample survey data, and other records from a dozen different Western democracies. The many regularities he finds in these cross-national comparisons are impressive. His positive style of statement may occasionally imply a clearer order in his evidence than someone else might find, but this is, perhaps, inevitable in an attempt to organize a range of events as broad as he deals with.

Lipset is explicitly committed to the premise that democracy is not merely the means through which different groups "seek the good society; it is the good society itself in operation." He feels that in the West the fundamental political problems have been solved, that the ideological class struggle which formerly divided intellectuals into right and left has lost its driving force. The argument now is over adjustments within a rather narrow range of alternatives. He ends his books with an expression of hope that his attempt to outline the conditions of the democratic order may help "men develop it where it does not now exist," specifically in Africa and Asia.

It is easy to share Lipset's concern that, in this country's attempt to foster the growth of democratic political forms in the so-called underdeveloped nations, those individuals who make our national policies should have some understanding of society and of democracy. There is some question, however, about how well we can understand political man in these countries