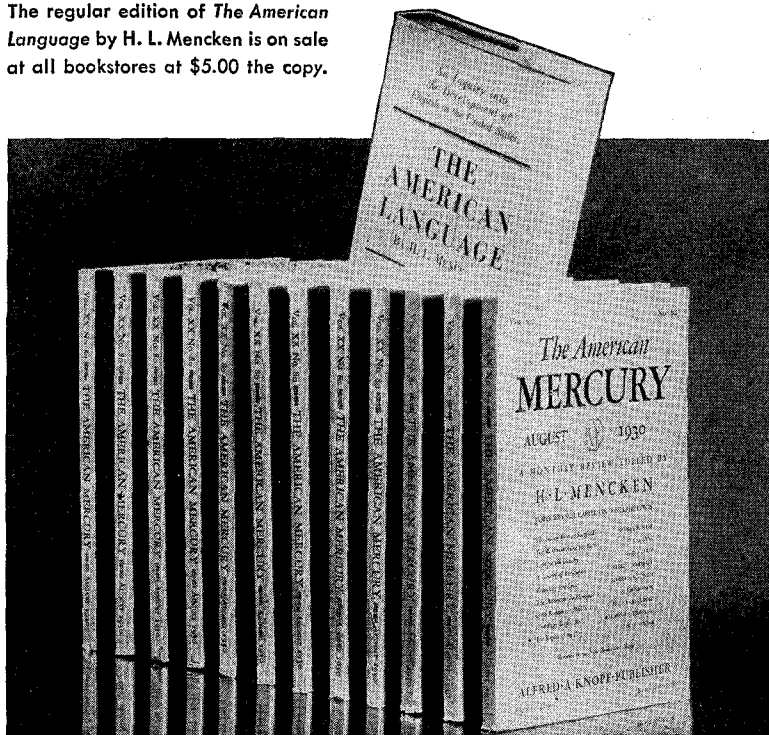


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Forum Definitions

What Is Evil?

LAST MONTH we devoted six pages to a dialogue in which Corra Harris, Hamilton Holt, Sir Herbert Ames, Irving Batchellor, Percy Mackaye, and Dr. Charles A. Campbell discussed the problem of evil. In those six pages, not one of them succeeded in defining evil to the satisfaction of the others.

"I have seen many definitions of evil," said Mrs. Harris, "but not one that defines it, even in Genesis." In the course of her own attempts to define it she stated that evil was "going contrary to the voice of conscience, whether a man is a heathen or a blind rationalist" . . . "that state of mind from which all sin is derived" . . . "mental dishonesty."

FORUM readers, however, were not afraid to tackle the problem of defining evil in 100 words. The following definitions were chosen as the best of those submitted, and awarded prizes.

1. Evil is that action or thought, the operation or advocacy of which would result in physical, mental, or moral harm either to the person from whom it emanated or to others affected by it. Natural forces cannot be either good or evil, however disastrous their effects; evil is purely a human and social phenomenon, frequently determined by time, place, and circumstances. (*Miriam Allen deFord, San Francisco, Calif.*)

2. Evil is the interpretation placed by an individual or social group on such manifestations of the phenomena of life, both human and otherwise, as appear to them to be in conflict with the individual or general welfare. Thus evil is relative. Likewise it is fundamentally dynamic; it would be hard to conceive of the existence of evil in a dead or static world. And, finally, the criteria of evil are outgrowths of the mores to which the individuals or the groups subscribe. (*Robert N. McMurry, Chicago, Ill.*)

3. Evil is that which is contrary and destructive to the conventions and morals of the group to which an individual belongs. (*Clarence L. Romrell, Sugar City, Ida.*)

4. In the older conception, evil is that which is displeasing to the Deity. According to present day views, it is whatever has as its chief consequence anti-social effects including those secret thoughts and acts which lower one's self-respect. No material thing in itself can be evil; only its misuse is evil. (*R. L. Edwards, Oxford, Ohio*)

Next: — What is BEAUTY? Definitions, typewritten and not exceeding 100 words, must reach the Editor by October 25. Prizes of \$5.00 for each winning definition.

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