

ONE of man's first accomplishments was the perfection of a simple, sure-fire, almost fool-proof method of building his ego. Often known as the "better-by-comparison" method, it has seen no improvement since Adam claimed superiority over Eve because she ate the first apple.

The beauty of the "better-by-comparison" method of boost-

ing one's ego is its simplicity of operation. First, you make a statement that, being true, would give you an edge on someone. Next, you assume the statement is true and up goes your sagging ego. Don't ever, under any circumstances, try to prove the original assumption. That's not in the game, although it is quite often true.

All races, creeds, and colors, as such, are egoists. Many races built themselves up in their own esteem for hundreds of years by calling the Chinese heathen, while



## EVERYONE'S FAVORITE GAME

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dozen branches of science and bursting their laurel leaves over new explorations. It is difficult to visualize the heights Greek culture might have attained had they been able to confine their ego-building to other races in general and women in particular. But this "better-by-comparison" game is a growing thing. When Greeks began to apply the formula to other Greeks of another city, the end of Greek leadership was just around the corner.

Early Semitic civilization went down the same drain. The Jew had a natural ego-builder because of his unique position in relation to

the Chinaman smugly fattened his own ego by claiming to have cooked his meat long before other men quit eating theirs raw.

Hellenic women enjoyed little of the glory that was ancient Greece. Because of Pandora's alleged curiosity, Greek women were kept at home while the less curious men went about marking the beginnings of a few

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God; but this alone was not sufficient to satisfy him for long. Tribe after tribe was expelled so that the remnant might feel "better-by-comparison," to the end that this remnant fell easy prey to the enemy from without.

Each Germanic tribe fattened its ego by playing the "better-by-comparison" game at the expense of other tribes of the same origin. They, in turn, provided ammunition for the conquering Roman ego.

### ***Racial Pride and Prejudice***

Thus it has been from the beginning and quite likely will be until the end. By far the greater part of racial tension in the United States today stems from this same source. Negroes are able to get a boost by feeling "as good" as whites. Segregationists build their ego by feeling better than Negroes. Integrationists feel better by comparison because they claim to believe all men are equal. Segregationists pump their balloon even larger by calling the integrationists hypocrites who don't practice what they preach; and so it goes. The present Supreme Court may feel it has rendered a decision more in keeping with the spirit of the Constitution than any like court in the past (and possibly get a large charge from so believing), but it appears

doubtful that any such decision can separate man from one of his oldest and most cherished motivations.

The same game is played quite extensively on a person-to-person basis, especially among children. Most adults, in a more subtle vein, use the "left-handed" method. This method gives the same results but leaves no grounds for legal suits, hair-pulling, and right hooks.

To begin with, Smith, an architect, will agree Schweinsty, also an architect, is one of the best; but,—well, who wants plans drawn by a man with a name like that? Blabberwise, the salesman, is quick to pass out orchids to a fellow craftsman, but Old Slowpoke just can't close one out, implying that he, Blabberwise, is a sure-fire closer. Hammermore, the contractor, builds his ego by believing he's the best there is, but he doesn't come right out and say so—that would be childish. To hear him tell it, Plumblin, the most persistent competitor, is a fine man, four square and all that, but—those mechanics of his—why, even his crew leaders can't read a square.

Inkwell, the writer, keeps his ego on the summit by believing Blotter owes his success to an "in" with assorted editors. Circulation may sag but not the edi-

tor's ego. He blames the distribution agency. Distribution blames the editor. The publisher calls both to account—the publication may fold, but everyone's ego is preserved.

No profession is above or below playing "better-by-comparison." People who do manual labor are especially adept at the game. Pete, the shovel operator, admits George can move more dirt; but look at the equipment he fouls up. This without thought of the cables he, Pete, breaks by crowding too fast. Bill, the carpenter, swells his ego by telling how Jim fouled up cutting a set of jack-rafters, while Jim takes pride in relating Bill's inability to fit a joint.

No one gets a larger charge from playing "better-by-comparison" than the gals. Their scope is extensive (most of which would seem unlikely material to a mere man). It includes color of hair and eyes, height, weight, walk, talk, personality, clothes (and how they are worn), profession, running a home, children, family, men—considered personal property as a hat or bag—driving, and a hundred other things too numerous to list.

Nowhere is the game played with greater enthusiasm than in the field of religion, recent gains in religious tolerance notwith-

standing. True, we no longer burn heretics at the stake, and there is a commendable feeling of tolerance among most Christians, but that does not hinder the game. Every member of an "ism" feels strongly that he and the members of his "ism" alone are practitioners of the "true way." The Orthodox Jew is quietly dignified in the certainty that his is the only way. Roman Catholics take pride in belonging to the oldest Christian religion. Protestants of different denominations are firm in their conviction that the church of their choice presents the more clearly defined road to heaven. In a matter of such prime importance, mankind longs to be part of a group capable of instilling such a feeling.

So popular is this game of comparison, so deeply imbedded in man's subconscious self, so important to his ego and necessary to his general well-being that families who might defend each other to the death are unable to resist playing the game at the expense of brother or sister, mother or father, wife or husband.

### ***On the Other Hand***

No one could deny that much of man's uncomplimentary nature surges to the fore in the process of playing "better-by-comparison." Many complimentary attributes,

however, owe their origin to the game. Indeed, it is quite difficult, and not at all pleasant, to contemplate a world without the influence of this most popular game. The exalting feeling known as pride would cease to be. No person would value country, race, color, class, religion, political belief, or school of thought above another. Among other things of greater magnitude, this would mean all Frenchmen would agree. No longer would all good Irishmen have cause to kiss the Blarney Stone. The Scots would cease to be conservative, and Englishmen would have no preference between coffee and tea.

Germans would no longer brag that the Fatherland produced the world's greatest scientists. Spanish boys would have no reason to dream of becoming great matadors, and Italian chefs would serve French fries with great gusto. There would be no motivation for Americans to boast of their country's ingenuity. Sons of Eli would not feel superior to graduates of Harvard, Brown, or Princeton. Lower class would have no cause to fight for middle ground, and middle class would no longer strive for a foothold at

the top. Southerner would love Yankee, Yankee would respect Southerner, Westerner would feel no better than the rest, and Texas products would decrease in size at an alarming rate.

Women would cease to indulge in all the little tricks of the trade that make them more alluring. There would be but one political party, one way of life, one religion, one school of thought—the zeal to live, create, achieve, succeed, accomplish the near-impossible, build a better home, and furnish it better would be buried in one great abyss. Man would find small incentive to provide more abundantly for his family. Women would not deem it important to appear beautiful.

It is extremely doubtful that any normal adult ever lived who did not play this ego-building game to some extent, although few will admit participating. As a matter of fact, many people believe they are above playing this game—and get quite a charge from so believing. In any case, if you should chance to meet a teetotaler, no one will have to acquaint you with the fact. You will recognize the bum at first glance. ♦

HISTORY SHOWS that whenever people collect in groups, there must exist two factors if they are to rise above the level of animal conduct. These are leadership and law. Admittedly, both leadership and law can foster evil and pre-

## LEADERSHIP

dation instead of ethical, tolerant, creative, and peaceful conduct. And though leadership quickly rises among groups, the law it produces can vary tremendously in quality. Yet the fact remains that human association in groups, communities, or nations cannot last without these two factors.

People gather in groups mostly for two reasons: (1) for the destructive purpose of plunder or warfare; and (2) to pool their skills, their assets, and their labors in the endless struggle to wrest from nature the material necessities of life. Our purpose in this discussion is not to foster warfare but to concentrate upon creative and peaceful endeavor.

If there exists a choice of good or bad leadership and law, there

must also exist a choice between two types of society. But the understanding that everyone must constantly make this choice seems to be a missing link in the voting public's field of political knowledge. All too few perceive the nature of this choice and how it affects their actions and their lives.

The alternatives are these: On the one hand, a society where all responsibility for human endeavor is vested in central authority—government—be it the crown or a political party or any other form. On the other hand, a society where people accept personal responsibility for their own affairs. This is the real issue, and it is relevant to everything people

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## RULE OF LAW

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do, in work and in pleasure, in the most obvious and in the most intimate of human affairs. We can no more escape choosing than we can escape the consequences of our choice.

Many people fall into the error of thinking that the choice is between communism (or socialism) and some vaguely understood conception of freedom—between government control and private con-

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