

gateway features

YOUR UNIVERSITY

On these pages we touch on morality and religion, atheism and agnosticism. (Your Editor is gratified to find that the latter two by no means need exclude the former two.) We do not pretend to present all sides, or to speak with a note of finality. We hope some of you will disagree with our tentative conclusions, and will let us know about it.

This is the first of a several-part series examining various aspects of university life, and leading up to the overall query "WHAT IS THE IDEAL UNIVERSITY?" You wonder how many aspects and I reply, "At this point I don't know." The limit will be not of ideas but rather of the endurance of your Feature writers.

WE ASKED YOU . . .

by Penny Meisner

Quaecumque Vera — whatsoever things are true. But whatsoever things are true, we ask ourselves. Is there really any complete or satisfactory answer to our questioning of politics, sex, or religion? Questions, discussions, debates, opinions, on the inevitable conversational triumvirate—over innumerable cups of coffee. Today Gateway Features leans forward over its coffee cup.

"Do you believe in God?"

This was the first of three questions asked of 125 persons last week. Eighty-three of these replied yes, 14 no, and 28 replied that they did not know, or qualified their answers. Some qualified answers were:

"God? It's a name I guess. I believe in a superior power. If you want to call it God, okay."

"In a superior being, yes, but not in a creator."

"Not as taught by any perscribed religion."

"I believe in a superior power, perhaps resting within man himself."

"Do you believe that university fosters atheism and agnosticism?"

Fifty-two of the 125 disagreed, 18 did not know and 12 offered qualified statements. Some felt that science courses, particularly physics, lead to substantial re-examination while others felt the questioning attitude of arts courses results directly or indirectly in acceptance of atheism or agnosticism.

Opinions ranged from "Only those with weak minds are affected" to "People have to think a lot about religion to be true agnostics or atheists, and the ones who like to

proclaim that they are one or the other, don't. It is just the thing to do!" And from "University fosters thought. It does not foster acceptance of dogmatic principles," to "No, it fosters apathy and religious indifference."

"Has your life on campus affected your religious beliefs?"

Fifty-three said it has, 67 said no, and 5 were not sure. Some tended to deviate from the doctrines of their church while others established a firmer basis for their beliefs. Two words—re-evaluate and re-examine—were reiterated with surprising regularity.

These two words—re-evaluate and re-examine—are the keys to the attitude towards religion maintained by most students. We have a curiosity amounting to an almost insatiable hunger for answers to our questions. "Curiosity is a major instinct, and it can drive men to endure hunger or put love aside." (Carl Van Doren)

One other common element was that of scorn and concern for the hypocrisy of people professing to be religious. A truly picturesque illustration of this is John Betjeman's *In Westminster Abbey*.

"Although dear Lord I am a sinner, I have done no major crime; Now I'll come to Evening Service Whensoever I have time.

So, Lord, reserve for me a crown And do not let my shares go down."

But this whole topic of religion must not appear on the lectern. We must each be lecturer and student; the lounge, smoking room, and coffee shop our lab;

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AN AGNOSTIC SPEAKS

by Don Wells

The following is a personal point of view, not necessarily common to all agnostics.

What is an agnostic? An agnostic is a person who has, as honestly, logically, thoroughly as possible, investigated both the positive and negative response to the question: "Does God exist?" and has come to the conclusion that there is no real answer. An agnostic is neither theist or atheist, because both views hold there is an answer. It is all a matter of a personal faith, that is, a matter of believing without conclusive evidence, in the existence of a super-natural entity. An agnostic does not have this faith.

Then how does an agnostic live in a society based on religious teachings? Does an agnostic have morals? If the teachings of the Old Testament and those of Christ are studied from a sociological point of view, all, except those referring to the worship of God, will be found to be common sense rules on how to get along with our fellow man. Most of the Ten Commandments can be included. For example: "Thou shalt not kill!" I don't want anyone to kill me, so it is illogical that I should kill someone else. Besides, if I were to kill someone, I would have to be punished by the society I live in. So in order to live in this society, I must obey its laws. If morals can be considered social laws, then an agnostic has morals.

Many people have told me they know God exists because they have "felt" his presence. Maybe they have, but I would tend to accredit this "feeling" to a surge of emotion, at a time when the emotions are at a high pitch. I have experienced something which may be similar in listening to a particularly beautiful or moving selection of music.

I have often been asked; "If there is no God, where did everything come from?" One explanation could

be: if the universe (everything) is both infinite and eternal—and it must logically be so, for "nothingness" is inconceivable—then it has no temporal or physical end, and thus no beginning. In other words, there was no creation and there will be no dooms day. The universe has always existed and always shall—changing yes, but existing.

Then where does the order come from (the "Mother Nature concept")? Ah, but is there an order? Evolution, which I think can, in an extended sense, be applied to the non-living as well as the living, is not necessarily an order. Evolution is a chance! Living matter changes by mutations, interbreeding, survival of the fittest and so on, while the non-living changes due to circumstances of position, time, physical make up, etc. What is the "spark of life?" That's a rough question, but I could say it is possibly some kind of chemical reaction or electrical charge in living things, which science has not been able to pin down, yet. Questions like these are the reason why I call myself an agnostic rather than an atheist.

What about after-life? I think a belief in after-life, that is in heaven and hell, depends upon the belief in God. Since I question the existence of God, I must also question the existence of after-life. However, this question is one of the main causes for a belief in a God and in religious doctrine. Most people feel that this life-being as short and at times unpleasant as it is—cannot be a finality. They feel there should be something more, something greater to look forward to and to work for.

For an agnostic or an atheist there is nothing beyond this life to look forward to, and therefore we must make the most of what we consider a good aim in life. This "aim in life" varies with almost everyone, so I can

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ARE WE MORAL? SCM panel, Thursday, October 6

photo by Carl Nishimura

PROVOST A. A. RYAN

A university cannot avoid "explicitly or implicitly" expressing its moral values—it would be paralyzed without a "sense of direction."

MODERATOR -- SCM

GENERAL SECRETARY
GORDON WEESE

REV. REX TAYLOR

Universities are failing in their main responsibility. Educate a man without redeeming him and you only increase the possibility of a "cultured degradation."

PROF. E. J. ROSE

Should the university inculcate moral and religious values? Yes, indeed! But how can it when its very existence, which its instinct for survival obeys, is dependent upon an economic and moral structure that is immoral?