

# *Sketch*

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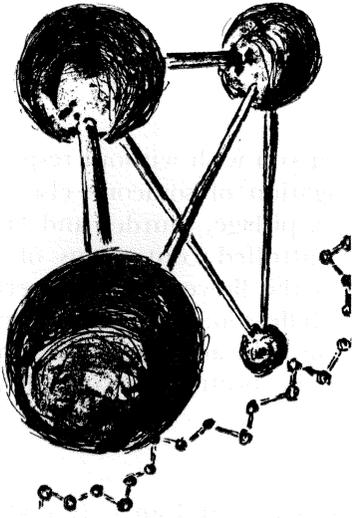
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## What

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## What

*by Duane Haack*

### WHAT is God?

God is an anthropomorphic individual who says “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not.” He is angry, good and vengeful. He is with me always, but his home is the church. He tells me what to do, but he can’t talk to me, and I can’t talk to him. He is a tree, a rock, a stream and a formless cosmos with definite bounds and characteristics. He is all-powerful and controls nothing. He is the sun and a golden bull. He is a fat statue and a skinny statue. He is my ancestors. God is a three-horned toad.

### What is love?

Love is the great denominator. It is the tingle up the spine, the knot in the guts and the lump in the throat. It is the tear down my cheek when I hold a robin with a broken wing. It is closeness, warmth and companionship. It is a new-born baby in my arms. It is that sick, wrenching nervousness in the pit of my stomach. It is the joggling exertion of propagation. It is mother, father, son and daughter. It is black, yellow, red, brown and white. It is the mother hen with her chicks. It is the Russian who stands in front of his home and kills you with his gun. It is the woman who aborts her thalidomided fetus. It is beautiful, and it is ugly. Love is hate.

### What is personal freedom?

Personal freedom is saying what you wish without respect for other people. It is the subjugation of someone else to your will. It is a bird. It is rape, pillage, murder and larceny. It is the spastic and uncontrolled contortions of a baby and the soap-box orator and the flower in the desert. It is the poet and the author and Jefferson, Churchill, Marx and Stalin. It is the farmer in the field and the worker in the factory. It is Goldwater and the beatnik's beard. Personal freedom is slavery.

What is humor?

Humor is a smile. It is an ugly face and an ugly body. It is Shakespeare's wit and a pie in the face and a person falling down. It is standing on the corner watching the people go by. It is a bawdy joke, a clown and the convulsions of a man being hanged. It is unfamiliar manners and unfamiliar people. It is life and love and ideas and remarks and embarrassment. It is the comedian and it is man. It is a raging fire and a slap on the back. It is the ungodly stupidity of life. Humor is cruelty.

What is work?

Work is hot, dirty, stinking sweat. It is walking up and down bean rows pulling weeds and riding a tractor and feeding the hogs and grinding feed and pitching manure and shovelling snow and scooping grain. It is alfalfa leaves and oat dust sticking to the skin and stinging sweat in the eye. It is building a house and laying bricks and digging ditches. It is collecting garbage and writing a theme. It is sitting behind a desk and signing papers and taking dictation and writing letters. It is training a dog and marching in column and creating an invention and discerning the physical secrets of life. It is operating on a human and using an anal thermometer and cleaning bedpans. It is changing diapers and making love and going to a dance and driving down the road. It is washing the dishes, washing the clothes and scrubbing floors. Work is myriad; it is a state of mind.

What is bravery?

Bravery is charging up San Juan hill and getting mar-

ried and getting out of bed in the morning. It is taking a test and standing up for your rights and telling someone to go to. It is fighting a bull and calling a Negro a nigger. It is reading "Finnegans' Wake" and telling someone about yourself. It is talking back and slapping a child. It is giving a speech and smoking in front of your parents and wearing "different" clothes. Bravery is compensation.

What is Nature?

Nature is the fish in the stream, little pigs, new flowers and a fresh spring rain. It is mud between the toes and thistles in the rump. It is new-mown hay and the spring thaw and six-foot snowdrifts and dust in your eye. It is the rain that keeps outside workers at home and ice that sends cars skidding off roads. It is the fog that causes shipwrecks and the geese that plummet planes from the sky. It is the tornado that kills and tears and denudes. It is the hurricane that blows from its eye. It is a walk in the woods and one raven in ten trees. It is the roar of the waterfall and the chatter of a squirrel and a bear in hibernation. It is resistance to the woodman's axe and life to the farmer and misery to the commuter. It is dirty windows and falling leaves and the droppings of a dog. Nature is the mind.

What is experience?

Experience is reading a good book. It is hot urine running down the leg and falling out of a tree and a bloody nose. It is taking a bath and having an automobile accident. It is a kiss and a caress. It is going to school and working on a farm and sacking feed and pounding nails. It is pledging a fraternity and living in Pammel and studying late at night. Experience is the loneliness of life.

What are ideals?

Ideals are the girl that says "No, no, please don't." They are a minister preaching and a very wealthy man breaking the anti-trust laws. They are living alone and they are Hitler. They are Castro with his beard and Khrushchev with his shoe in his hand. They are an ant hill and an open window and a yellow apple on a red-apple tree. Ideals are imperfections.

What is truth?

Truth is a hand on a Bible. It is the car that is stolen and the story that is told to the police. It is the knowledge of the past, the actuality of the present and the assumption of the future. It is the Constitution of the United States and "Das Kapital." It is the priest, the minister, the rabbi and the muezzin. It is Aristotle, Kant and Shelley Berman. Truth is a stinking, bloated, decaying carrion in a green grassy meadow with white daisies.

What is communication?

Communication is the meaningful exchange of personalized ideas, observations and perceptions by the utilization of general symbols called words. Communication is impossible.

## Setting Sun

*by Peter Proul*

There is the winding gravel road that runs  
 from the little town to the home and barn.  
 Its path is straight for the most part, and stops  
 only for a bridge and to reflect the sun.  
 The hills roll and stretch and streak with rows  
 that twist and turn with sprouting, glistening  
green corn.

Between the town, it holds so many things,  
 and barn, a river flows. Shallow and slack  
 water runs through an old ox bow and  
 beside tree-lined green, growing banks.

A boy and girl in the hay strewn loft — how young,  
 but old — feet hanging, swinging, swaying;  
 dark, sunlit bodies against clear sky  
 in the open double red doors. Watching,  
 seeing, dreaming into a setting sun.