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EPOCHS IN CONFLICT

THE nineteenth century was a period of dramatic progress in the development of free political institutions, but it was also a period of great colonial expansion. The latter half of the century saw British holdings in Asia, Africa and Oceania multiplied by four, while French possessions became sixteen times as large. During the same period, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Japan and the United States emerged as colonial powers. (Holland's East Indian conquests belong to an earlier day. They began in 1610, and reached final consolidation about 1830.) By the time these empires were stabilized, nearly half the entire land area of the earth's surface was owned or controlled by a few major powers, and, with a few exceptions, these territories represented cultures and economies which were very different from the native countries of the colonial nations.

While social thinkers and reformers at home were busy elaborating the doctrine of human equality, the champions of Empire and Manifest Destiny were establishing new outposts of sovereignty in the distant places of the earth. In many cases, the regions so acquired became a vital part of the economic system of the colonial power. Before the last war, some 35 per cent of the total trade of Great Britain was with her colonies, and the total trade of colonial powers amounted to three fifths of the total world trade.

Naturally, a body of justifying—or "rationalizing" ideas grew up with these activities. The European empires, never having experienced the abrupt inauguration of a conscious social philosophy such as marked the birth of the United States, found less pretentious excuses for their imperialism. Britain, for example, has seldom made any excuses at all, except to point out, afterward, that British civilization has spread its influence around the world. Something of the mood of British conquest is conveyed by Major General J. F. C. Fuller, an acute and occasionally brilliant critic of modern military and political institutions. In his *Reformation of War* (1923), he described the familiar attitude of the British soldier—whether private, sergeant, subaltern or general—toward the rest of the world. He is, General Fuller wrote,

> a man who possesses such natural pride of birth that, through sheer contempt for others, he refuses to learn or to be defeated. He divides humanity into two classes: Englishmen and niggers, and of the second class some happen to be black and others white. He only condescends to differentiate between these sub-classes by calling the latter dagoes. To him, all white folk, outside of his own little islands, are such. From these he has nothing to learn, yet he is tolerant as he would be to his dog; he has, in fact, raised the vice of contempt to a high virtue and on this virtue is the British Empire founded.

Allowing for some exaggeration, this seems to sum up at least a part of the psychological side of British imperialism—British imperialism as it *was*, for today, the transformations of history are so rapid that no one can say exactly what "people think" about such matters, except that they are tremendously confused.

American imperialism, of course, has not been "imperialism" at all, but something peculiarly American and therefore peculiarly virtuous. Toward the close of the nineteenth century, enthusiasts of American expansion mixed Darwinian evolutionism with racial mysticism and American "Progress" to produce an almost cosmic mandate for extending the rule of the United States around the world—part-way around, anyway. Young Theodore Roosevelt, a particular admirer of this doctrine, and of the example set by Britain, wrote in his *Winning of the West:* "During the past three centuries, the spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world's waste spaces has not been only the most striking feature in the

world's history, but also the event of all others most far-reaching in its effects and its importance." He continued this theme in *The Strenuous Life* (1899):

> We cannot avoid the responsibilities that confront us in Hawaii, Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines. . . . The timid man, the lazy man, the man who distrusts his country, the over-civilized man, who has lost the great fighting, masterful virtues, the ignorant man, and the man of dull mind, whose soul is incapable of feeling the mighty lift that thrills "stern men with empires in their brains"—all these, of course, shrink from seeing the nation undertake its new duties. . . .
>
> The twentieth century looms before us big with the fate of many nations. If we stand idly by, if we seek merely swollen, slothful ease and ignoble peace, if we shrink from the hard contests where men must win at hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear, then bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world.

The Western nations, having managed to avoid "ignoble peace," are now confronted by the ugly fruits of their imperialism at a time when the rhetorical development of nineteenth-century liberalism has reached its peak. And this development, in turn, has itself been largely caused by the stimulus of war, for during recent years every slogan relating to civil rights and human equality has been dinned into the ears of all the peoples of the world—white, black, brown, yellow—as the means employed by the "democratic nations" to woo support wherever it could be found. This forced, hothouse development of liberal doctrine has had one good effect: it is compelling intelligent people who believe themselves to be civilized to examine their preconceptions regarding themselves and other races and cultural groups. Take for example the anomalous situation of British and American troops fighting side by side in India against the Japanese—and, theoretically, against the Nazis—while India still remained the brightest jewel in the imperial crown of England. Edmond Taylor, in *Richer by Asia*, notes the contrasting attitudes among Britishers and Americans in this situation:

> . . . nearly all the British, even those who most hated the abuses of empire and were fighting the hardest to correct them, were committed, consciously or unconsciously, to uphold the principle of empire. The most reactionary and cynical Americans held on to the idealistic bias against imperialism even when they repudiated all the ideals from which the bias was derived. The most liberal and realistic British retained the imperial approach to politics even when they resigned themselves to the liquidation of empire.

This is no attempt at a comparison of national virtues, or weaknesses, but rather an effort to assess the various sorts of moral confusion which confront the peoples of the present imperial powers—the peoples who, for the time being, at least, happen to possess a measure of historical initiative. Whether they still have sufficient *psychological* initiative, as national groups, to deal with the dilemmas created by imperialism, remains an open question; but where there is the appearance of real alternatives in national behavior, individuals can at least *think* in terms of group responsibility, whether or not they are able to affect directly the course of events. The one position which intelligent human beings cannot take without abrogating their humanity is the position of impotence with regard to the decisions of the governments under which they live. If such impotence seems to be one of the "brute facts" of life, then this creates the necessity for discovering how it became so, as a first step toward restoring the idea of self-government to the status of a realizable ideal.

Instances of the dilemma of "democratic imperialism" are numerous enough. The pattern is a familiar one, involving the disturbance and control in varying degree of other societies in the name of the highest social ideals. Wherever American military forces have established bases beyond the territorial limits of the United States, so-called "native" populations have suffered the intrusion of the ugliest aspect of Western civilization—its instruments of organized violence. What "right," actually, have we to impose these conditions on other peoples?

By what moral justification did we use a small Pacific island for experimentation with atomic bombs? What premises and what logic permit the great majority to remain indifferent to such things? During the war, the economic might of the United States was named the "Arsenal of Democracy." What about the use of this might to suppress popular movements in other lands—movements which the people in those countries may regard as expressions of the democratic spirit?

During the Middle Ages, the crusades against the infidel were hailed as righteous wars against the forces of darkness. Pope Urban II demanded an invasion of the Holy Land and the defeat of the Turks—to save Christians from "torture" and their sacred places from "desecration." Urging this pious campaign on the paladins of Europe, the Pope exclaimed that he could see before them their invisible "standard-bearer," Christ—and as a special inducement to the faithful, he promised complete absolution from sin to those who lost their lives in this holy war. While the more recent wars on behalf of righteousness have not made personal salvation one of the rewards for participation, the conditions of the agreement at Yalta, under which Soviet Russia was granted by Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill the "right" to use German prisoners of war as slave labor as a form of reparations, was certainly a species of "indulgence," purchased in advance of the war's ending. Slave labor, until the period of World War II, has been regarded as completely beyond the pale of the practice of civilized nations, but for the sake of an Allied victory, absolution for this crime against humanity was accorded to the Russians. Victory comes high, these days.

The crusades had a simple war cry—"God wills it!" —but nineteenth-century imperialism needed the more sophisticated sanction of the spread of Anglo-Saxon civilization and similar moralistic devices. The difficulty of reviving or continuing nineteenth-century slogans for future "righteous" wars, or in connection with measures of preparedness, lies in the fact that the racial thesis has already been exploited by the Nazis and thoroughly condemned by the exhaustive analysis of the democratic powers, with the result that only the purest of slogans remain for contemporary use. It is this development which has sharpened the dilemma for democratic peoples—for peoples, that is, who still think in terms of idealist standards of national behavior, and whose traditions represent them as defenders of national self-determination and other principles of the American revolutionary tradition.

We know, now—or ought to know—that there has been something profoundly wrong with the program of industrial and commercial expansion which has led us into this dilemma. Unquestionably, "something" is wrong . . . but *what?* If, as various reporters have told us, the Indonesians, in their struggle to throw off the Dutch yoke, "have been bombed by planes made in America, shot and shelled by tanks, artillery and rifles made in America, and burned by flame-throwers made in America"—and if these things are without conceivable excuse—where did we get off the track?

MANAS has a thoughtful letter from a Dutch subscriber on the subject of Dutch policy in Indonesia. This letter perfectly illustrates the peculiar difficulties which arise for a man of conscience and meticulous regard for the truth, and one who sees, also, the complex moral relationships which the modern imperialist power has inherited from its past. This correspondent calls into question the "facts" of the Indonesian revolution as reported by Robert Payne in *Revolt of Asia* (quoted in MANAS, March 16) and suggests that there is no unified revolutionary movement in Indonesia. He writes:

> For forty years we have been educating these peoples and gradually accustoming them to the first rudiments of self-government, and the ultimate end in view was independence, a United States of Indonesia. But whereas all the other peoples seem to understand that they cannot yet stand on their own legs (one of the leaders in Sumatra said that he was a nationalist and *therefore* he was determined that the Dutch

> should stay for a least another quarter of a century), and that the best form this new state, composed of all these different peoples, could take, would be that of a federation—the Republic, which is only a small part of Indonesia, not only insists on governing itself, but claims the right to rule over all the other peoples, too!

The issue of the facts, of course, must lie with whatever research is involved in determining them. We felt that Mr. Payne's book and other material we cited were reliable sources. Perhaps the facts we reported were colored by the ardor of the persons who collected them; perhaps not. But Soetan Sjabrir's *Out of Exile* is peculiarly lacking in the marks of bias; indeed, some of the things said by our Dutch correspondent have a kind of confirmation in Sjahrir's book. We leave it to Mr. Payne to defend his version of the facts, and would ask this question:

When, in human history, was it ever right for any group involved in a national or an economic enterprise to assume control over any portion of the lives of some other group, national or cultural, regardless of their attainments in "civilization" or form of government?

Obviously, this question challenges on ethical grounds the entire structure of colonial economics, and, as a result, it challenges the very concept of industrial progress, as pursued by the Western powers. But if we are going to defend our national policies on grounds of justice and human equality, we have no choice but to ask this question. If we no longer believe that the Anglo-Saxon culture—or the Italian culture, or the French culture—is destined by a wise providence to elevate all human life on earth to new heights of social harmony, then where is the moral foundation for *any* unwanted interference with the lives of others?

Doubtless, there will be critics to claim that this reasoning is a specious argument for "isolationism." We accept the charge, so far as policies of "interference" are concerned, and reply that there is almost infinite opportunity for world-wide relationships between peoples which do not involve interference with the domestic affairs of one another.

We do not see that "capacity for self-government" has anything at all to do with the right of peoples to govern themselves, according to their own customs, beliefs and ideas of authority and order. Nor is it evident that the rapacious greed with which Western traders and exploiters have dealt with more "primitive" peoples has in any way improved their lot. To become "Westernized" is almost synonymous with becoming obsessed by the ideas of wealth and material progress. That accompanying this delusion may be opportunity to learn certain parliamentary techniques by which Westerners regulate and to a small degree equalize their varying abilities in acquisitiveness is hardly sufficient compensation for embracing the delusion.

From all appearances, the East is learning Western ways all too rapidly. Probably some of the new-born Eastern countries already have tiny laboratories staffed by a physicist or two who are compiling "confidential" papers on what they have been able to find out about atom bombs. The only choice left to the West concerning the East is whether or not the East will "grow up" in political as well as psychological bondage to our industrial civilization. A measure of psychological influence is inevitable, but political release, whatever the immediate confusion it might cause, would at least hasten the arrival of self-reliance and diminish the disintegrating effects of political paternalism in combination with the insidious prestige of Western material progress.

Some day, there may be conscientious explorers who will say to one another: We have seen these beautiful islands from a distance; apparently, there are people on them. Those people may be happy as they are—and we, while we know and can do many things, have never found contentment for ourselves, nor brought it to anyone else. Let us quietly sail away.

Letter from **ENGLAND**

LONDON.—The world-wide Co-operative Movement has already been referred to more than once in MANAS**,** and it may be worth while to note the present position here, with special regard to political affiliations. The importance of the subject may be seen from a recent survey of Co-operative politics made by *The Times* (May 2 and 3, 1949). The movement entered politics in 1917, because of its treatment by the Government of the day in the first world war. It became a junior partner in an alliance with the Labour Party, which, by 1917, was becoming a national party, staking its claim to the loyalties or self-interest of "the working classes." It may be asked why such a powerful group as the co-op movement, with its own parliamentary candidates, should occupy a minor place in the larger field of left-wing politics, despite an affiliated membership of more than 8,500,000, as against a total membership of the Labour Party of about 5,000,000 and with assets of the retail co-operative societies amounting, at the end of 1947, to nearly £400,000,000, as compared with the total funds of trade unions of about £50,000,000. The reasons are these:

Not all the members of the Co-operative Movement are interested in its political activities, notwithstanding the fact that a half-penny a year for each member of an affiliated society goes to the political Co-operative Party. There is not the same loyalty to the co-operative shop as the trade unionist has to his craft organization. The party is still only a department of the Co-operative Union, an association of retail societies. (If similar conditions applied in the case of trade unionists, the Labour Party executive might only be a committee of the Trade Unions General Council). It is practically impossible to secure a coordinated and uniform policy throughout the movement, retail societies insisting on their individual sovereignty:

> The chief weakness of the party, however, which contributes to and is contributed to by the others mentioned, is the lack of defined purpose. The Rochdale Pioneers in 1844 still cherished, in spite of the repeated failures of earlier experiments, the ideal of "self-supporting home colonies of united interests," independent communities in which the members would build their own houses, till their own soil, and manufacture and distribute their own requirements.

Modern economic developments have dispelled this dream, more is the pity, and the programme of the present Labour Government, with its many nationalization projects, threatens two long-cherished co-operative principles—"the voluntary principle, and the principle that the interests of the consumer are paramount." There is a vast difference between the boards of nationalized industries, and collective ownership established by voluntary means. Co-operators have had their collieries taken over by the State, and the Government are now proposing to take over their great insurance business. No wonder that a speaker at the annual conference of the Cooperative Party last April emphasized that every new measure of nationalization was a bar to the future progress of the movement, and another speaker said that they were in danger of being "legislated out of existence."

The problem before the co-operative movement is clear. It believes in collective ownership; but it also affirms the supreme importance of the voluntary principle. How is it to combine the two? The president of the Co-operative Congress (representing the whole movement, and not only its political side) declared in May, 1949, that no co-operator would be prepared to submit to the conception of an all-powerful corporate State. He wanted the movement to function and develop as a "way of life" which people could adhere to of their own free will.

It is only necessary to state the problem to see the distinctive contribution that may yet be made by cooperators to the developing social pattern of this country. But what are we

supposed to understand by a co-operative system? Members of the Co-operative Party are asked to sign a declaration of belief in the "Co-operative Commonwealth," but opinions differ widely as to the meaning of the phrase. Certainly, the Communists who have infiltrated into the movement have long ago turned their backs upon anything so "metaphysical" as "the voluntary principle." As a simple contribution to present discussion, one would like to hazard the thought that the co-operative movement will find its true significance only when it remembers that co-operation is a law of life, not a mere question of buying and selling, and that the Labour Party itself, if it is to achieve true greatness, will have to retrace its steps and resume the idealism of some of its early pioneers in their refusal to look upon wealth, individual or national, as merely the equation of productivity in an acquisitive society.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
SYMBOLS OF THE TIMES

IF the prophets and soothsayers of our time are right—if we do in fact live at the end of an age, the age of separate, acquisitive ambitions, of competitiveness and individualism—and if a cycle of unification is upon us, then what forms may this unification take?

One thing that the psychologists and the political propagandists have left without doubt is the fact that no effective unity among human beings is possible without the integrating power of symbolism. All previous schemes of social or cultural unity have been dominated by characteristic symbols—the cross and the flag are familiar in the West—representing a common religious belief and the heritage of national sovereignty. Less obvious types of symbolism pervade literature and the arts, providing a vocabulary of special meanings within the more mechanical vocabulary of words, forms and sounds. The "purges" and "directives" administered by the Nazi and Soviet governments to the writers and artists of Germany and Russia were attempts at conscious control by the State of the prevailing cultural symbolism. The actual working of literary censorship is illustrated by comments in *Pravda Vostoka* on the works of a Russian poet who had written the verse:

> The morning breeze
> plays with her,
> And scatters on her face
> her unbound hair.

This simple scene, apparently, betrays "romantic" tendencies. The censor observes:

> Such a metaphor is not worthy of a proletarian poet. It is too sentimental and describes nature in too superficial a manner. A soviet writer, faithful to the method of 'socialist realism,' must be inspired to the rattle of machinery and tractors which plough the land of the kolkoz, to the whistling of the sirens of the busy proletarian foundries.

A sample verse is provided by the censor to show what he means:

> Tears descend from her eyes,
> Slowly, like a tractor.

That the effort of the Soviets to control even literary metaphor has reached this ridiculous extreme may be a source of amusement to the rest of us, but its real importance lies in the confession that a military autocracy feels the necessity of support from popular attitudes of mind. It knows that the symbol is finally all-powerful.

There has been surprisingly little analysis of popular symbolism in countries which are as yet free to evolve their own. The "Popular Culture" series of articles in *Politics* examined the modern detective story, and the English poet, W. H. Auden, conducted a similar investigation in *Harper's*, but on the whole, symbolism, as the common denominator of cultural and moral unity, has seldom received more than passing academic attention.

There ought, for example, to be some discussion of why writers like Wodehouse, Damon Runyon and John Steinbeck come very close to being the best storytellers of our time. Why should Wodehouse's silly-ass Englishmen, Runyon's light-hearted cut-throats and Steinbeck's *paisanos* be so fascinating? Apart from the manifest talents of their creators, there seems to be some basic attractiveness in these characters who move in orbits so different from our own—whose worlds are eccentric by-products of the froth and backwash of the main currents of human life. Apparently, readers feel a genuineness in the hopes and loyalties of people who live on the fringes of conventional society, and their freedom from a host of minor compulsions has a pleasantly exhilarating effect. In any event, the art of the writer is most likely to be successful, today, if he avoids the main-current problems of human existence and places his characters in some half- or quarter-world of special circumstances—a relatively simple "frame of reference" which his readers may hope to understand without too much intellectual effort. The popular heroes of today are athletes, actors and gangsters, and it is

possible to write about them as individuals without invoking the dread insolubles. We have workable, half-serious symbolisms for literary usage in these fields, but none that people respond to for the larger struggles of human life.

Effective symbolism—which means acceptable symbolism—probably needs to work in two ways: both for the individual and for the group. Symbolism which works only for the group is totalitarian symbolism, involving the suppression of meaning for individuals as individuals. it presents pageantry rather than drama, for drama always touches the feelings of the single man. A pageant portrays the movement of groups; it is a play of color and action, but only a pattern, a background, against which some more particular action is to be imagined by the spectator. If the possibility of individual movement within the pageantry of collective life is suppressed, then the symbolism of the pageant becomes an emotional threat to human individuality. Totalitarian symbolism faces the problem of collective life and of human destiny as a whole—the main-current problem—but meets it by eliminating the symbolism of the individual. And the only way the yearning of the individual for a personal meaning to his life can be stifled is by terrorism on the one hand, and by coarsening the emotional intoxication afforded by pageantry-symbolism on the other.

Quite possibly, human beings need symbolism in their lives as much as plants need sun and air and moisture. The symbol seems to be an essential instrument of comprehension, the means by which the processes of experience are related to the purposes of life. And cultural unity is always in terms of a general acceptance of basic symbols having to do with various categories of human experience. The difficulty with "basic symbols," of course, is that the ones we are familiar with have been either instruments of psychological oppression or have been twisted to the purposes of religious or political tyranny. In consequence, independence of spirit, whether in science or politics, has come to be identified with a wholesale rejection of all but trivial symbols.

A further problem exists in the habitual tendency of analytical minds to wish to devise systems of belief that will be "good" for other people. The last thing we need is artificially manufactured symbols with which to integrate "the masses." The moral impoverishment of the world is as much due to condescending and Machiavellian efforts of this sort as it is to the skepticism and denials of modern materialism. What is really wanted are men and women who will take upon themselves the work of independent moral discovery—who will seek in their own lives an order of symbolism which reaches inward and upward, like to the visions of the ancient myth-makers. The great myths of the past, one may think, were at once spontaneous intuitions, cultural evolutions and artistic inspirations. They were woven from the fabric of experience and infused with essential truth, while, at the same time, they engaged the human imagination in different ways at different levels of maturity. They were cosmic and historical, personal and national—both veils and paths to human truth. And because of these various shades of meaning, they were in a measure protected against dogmatic interpretation and stultifying literalism. They proclaimed mysteries, and hinted at verities hidden within.

Not the myth nor the symbol, but the spirit of seeking in and through them—this we lack. The vocabulary of the quest shapes the grammar of aspiration and generates the mood of greatness in human life. By these means, true culture is born, coming, gradually, to pervade all ways and walks with its beckoning to higher, better things—to the fresh discoveries and achievements of a wonderful, open world.

COMMENTARY
THREE QUESTIONS

MUCH of the stimulation for MANAS articles comes from the letters of readers who comment upon or question what has already appeared. Occasionally a subscriber writes in his reflections at some length, and in this case there is opportunity to share them with others. The following paragraphs display a sort of analysis which, it seems, might be applied in many other directions besides the industrial scene—as, indeed, this writer suggests.

* * *

I have been doing some educational work in two of the factories here, with the result that I have been steadily pondering the ethical aspects of industrialism. In this thinking, many of your articles have been extremely helpful. The lead article dealing with Juenger's book in the June issue strikes close to the central points. Three questions may be asked about any enterprise (industry, school, college, labor union, church, service club) which reveal the character of its influence upon the men and women who participate in it.

First: Does the enterprise explicitly or tacitly underwrite the view that it is quite sufficient to take care of the material needs and wants of men, and that the needs of the spirit (which are quite marginal in this view) are sufficiently cared for by marginal time and in marginal activities?

Second: Have the leaders in the enterprise found an effective way of dealing with the appetite for power, of preventing the power which inevitably goes along with leadership from destroying their view of life and thus crippling the lives of all associated with the enterprise?

Third: Has the enterprise found adequate means of bringing about the highest development of all those associated with it: especially their "originality" or power of independent creative activity?

Most enterprises which I have encountered seem to fail on all three counts. Can an enterprise "succeed," in the sense of maintaining its corporate existence for a reasonable length of time, and at the same time find a vigorous method of dealing with its members which can answer these questions affirmatively? I believe that the answer is "probably yes," if the initiators of the enterprise are sufficiently vigorous in their whole attitude to life. This, again, implies that they must have vigorous minds and a vigorous philosophy of life.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

GANDHI's educational plan, like many other things which Gandhi originated, was a full expression of its creator. Sevagram's "Basic Education" became a focus for both his genius as a mystical inspirer of children and his concern for the practical needs of the destitute masses of his nation, and thus two aspects of Gandhi's idealism were fused into one in a place where all could see the stature and quality of Sevagram's creator through his creation. Or rather, all could see if they looked and studied. Sevagram has no money for publicity. The soundness of its program will eventually become the publicity of the School, as its methods continue to spread throughout India.

It should be mentioned, however, that Sevagram was not without a partial precursor. The two teachers who helped Gandhi to found Sevagram were previously associated with Tagore's Indian Center for International Education at Santiniketan. There the great poet, artist, and international lecturer conceived and brought to birth a plan of education completely shorn of the superficialities of Western pedagogy. Nothing was studied unless it contributed to the immediate extension of the humanity of the students. As described by Amiya Chakravarty in a recent *International House Quarterly* (Spring, 1949), Tagore's "Invitation to the World" was based upon certain tangible educational goals:

> First, to concentrate in Santiniketan, in the midst of the *ashrama* educational colony *[ashram* originally meant ".work" of a practical nature], the different cultures of the East, especially those having their origin in India or sheltered and fostered there.
>
> Secondly, to lay in Santiniketan and in the Rural Reconstruction Department in Surul (named Sriniketan) the foundations of a happy, contented, and human life for the villagers.
>
> In the Rural Reconstruction Institute, practical work is done in farm and field in addition to classroom training. Experiments on useful lines go on constantly.
>
> Tagore's philosophy of a complete life thus made him link up vocational training with mental development and a culture that is broad-based on the whole of human experience.
>
> Thirdly. . . . to seek to establish a living relationship between East and West, to promote intercultural and interracial amity and understanding, and to fulfill the highest mission of the present age—the unification of mankind.

Gandhi seems to have gone a step further than Tagore in the revolutionizing of educational concepts. His interest in education did not radiate from a previous passion for art or literature, but from his general concern as a human being for all other humans—for the millions of villagers whose immediate capacities were the cornerstone upon which he proposed to build. Further, Gandhi's objective was, in a fundamental sense, directly "political" rather than "cultural." He began creating the conditions under which a sense of political responsibility could most easily emerge, divining that no man can be "free" until he has recognized his part in group responsibility and has learned how to fulfill it. When the Indian National Congress moved the Quit-India Resolution and began the campaign of Civil Disobedience against Britain, the resolution was passed under the thatched roofs of Sevagram. itself. The pupils at the Sevagram school knew something of what this meant, because they had already been acting "politically" themselves in seeking application for the principles of Truth and Non-Violence in the affairs of the surrounding villages. Gandhi's combined leadership of a School and a Civil Disobedience movement did not turn the minds of the children away from the task of learning nor make them emotional followers of a Great Leader. Instead, it appears, they were able to feel that Gandhi was doing in another way and within a larger framework of circumstances what they themselves were attempting with their own lives in relation to the places of their birth.

In the Sevagram plan, which was originated for children from seven to fourteen years of age, each pupil became a productive unit in his own

village, learning reading, writing, arithmetic and history while actively serving the needs of the community. This meant developing a special sense of regional responsibility, and led also to vitalized methods of instruction. The Gandhian classroom moves around with the teachers and the pupils to whatever is the current scene for useful work—it might be the field or the spinning or weaving room. Girls and boys learn to grow, pick, spin and weave cotton into cloth, aiding considerably the family economy. They raise and prepare their food, and learn dietetics. A sense of self-reliance develops apace with a sense of responsibility, too, for the children feel that they can, if necessary, support themselves on a small plot of land without recourse to external aid.

There is a marked similarity between Gandhi's emphasis on the constant use of tools and the "learning by doing" methods of Progressive education in America, but there is also a significant difference. The emphasis of Progressive education has been on learning *how* to develop certain manual skills. Gandhi, however, was concerned with skills that could be turned to immediate benefit to the community. Instead of teaching things *that might* be done when the pupils became manually fit, Gandhi presented them with useful tasks which needed immediate performance as a part of the life of the school itself, thus making the work of the children *real* work rather than "token" work. Even the art department occupied itself with the permanent esthetic improvement of the school buildings and, beyond this, with the selection, for use in murals, of subjects immediately related to the work of the school.

This principle penetrates nearly every aspect of the school life, continuously impressing both teachers and students with the importance of always devoting themselves, whatever their special scholarly or scientific attainments, to the needs of the local community. The dietician is not so much engaged in disseminating general information about nutrition, but in stimulating the ingenuity of the pupils in devising a better diet for the noon lunch or the evening supper. Because these "Gandhian" children do nothing at school which cannot find expression in immediate usefulness, pupils are always able to feel related to the facts and spirit of rural economy.

As is so often the case when the citizen of some Western country considers Gandhian ideas for the first time, this sort of education may seem limited to the special conditions pertaining in India. Like the Civil Disobedience program, it is often dismissed as indigenous to a specific area and people. But the principle of regional responsibility is one which can be applied anywhere, at any time, in education, and is one that brings out, perhaps better than any other practical method, the feeling of *owing something of oneself to one's community.* This kind of a "sense of responsibility" is certainly one to be highly prized.

FRONTIERS

Toward Scientific Religion

PROFESSOR O. L. REISER'S "Religion and Science in Conflict," a paper which appeared in a recent *Annals of* the American Academy of Political and Social Science, is one of the few contemporary discussions of religion which deal candidly with the problems always associated with religious belief. He writes:

> Paradoxically, every religion claims to have been founded upon mystical insights; yet today each religion denies the validity of such insights in modern man. The precariousness of the churches in the United States comes from this now irreconcilable duality of attitudes: the effort of organized religions to maintain their authority, which arose primarily because of the direct cognition of some Teacher, while at the same time encasing themselves in an armored mechanism borrowed from earlier scientific attitudes which denied the spiritual nature of man and the possibility of any insights into a subjective world of authentic values.

Failure to recognize and to examine this "duality of attitudes" accounts for the futility of the "return to religion" movement, a campaign which in its practical effects really debases the language of human aspiration by having nothing of importance to say about the sort of religion that is worth going back to. One would suppose, from the billboard advertising, newspaper articles and other verbal exhortations to seek a "church connection," that the good life, here and hereafter, is largely a matter of joining some sectarian group—"salvation by association," it might be called—and that the "right" organization to join is naturally one of the existing religious institutions. Prof. Reiser has an entirely different view of the religious need of the modern world:

> If religion cannot free itself from these man-made and historically dated theological conceptions (creeds), then religion deserves to disappear. If religion finds itself unable to approach the pantheism of the Stoics, Spinoza, and Emerson, then the last chapter of the history of the warfare between the orthodoxy of organized religion and the teachings of science has not been written, and to such books as J. W. Draper's *History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* and A. D. White's *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* other volumes will have to be added to complete the finished story.

One thing that is evident from Prof. Reiser's article is the great debt of true religion to the scientific spirit. The method and ideal of science in the search for natural truth have firmly established the conception of impersonal law as the principle of *order* throughout the universe; and this, in turn, is the key-idea for the emancipation of mankind from priestly domination. Those who believe in the impersonality of the highest reality will seek knowledge of the laws of life instead of "favor" from the Deity; and when knowledge is the objective, rather than privilege or "mercy," every man naturally realizes that he must learn to be his own priest.

The fatal weakness of the radical or revolutionary criticism of religious institutions is that it stops with an exposé of the tyrannical power that they have exercised through history. This is only a partial analysis, it being necessary to point out, further, that organized religion substitutes a system of belief or "faith" for the pursuit of knowledge. The churches, therefore, are more "agnostic" than any scientist, from Thomas Huxley on, who has laid claim to that label. But ignoring the psychological frustrations in the belief-systems of religion, the radicals pressed the single charge that the churches misused their power, and then, after that power had been reduced to a minimum, they proceeded to erect "radical" belief-systems of their own, based upon the denial of any sort of religious truth.

In this historical perspective, it becomes possible to say that any movement which substitutes the idea of belief for individual search and knowledge is eventually transformed into a mechanism of control over the lives of human beings, and that during the struggle for the

authority to perpetuate this control, the objective of power acquires crucial importance. Meanwhile, the beliefs themselves, once praised and heralded as the keys to human happiness, are pushed aside as having only pretended significance—which, indeed, is a correct estimate of any collection of mere beliefs.

The same kind of a transformation seems to affect the institutions of scientific research, whenever these institutions attain what amounts to political status in the over-all organization of society. Scientific enterprise, in its institutional forms, is far from being immune to developing belief-systems of its own, complete with sacrosanct dogmas and even a species of informal "priests" or interpreters of science to lesser human kind. And here, again, the objective of power asserts itself, with the result that the great historical "conflict" between science and religion loses its meaning for such spokesmen of science, who now join in the campaign for religious revival, wholly indifferent to the betrayal of the public mind which is accomplished by this burying of moral issues.

Professor Reiser himself advocates what he calls "scientific humanism." In one section of his article he speaks of the "divinity in man," providing the most intelligible conception of divinity we know of—and while it is uncertain that others who regard themselves as "scientific humanists" would endorse this expression, or the meaning he gives it, the idea of potential human divinity seems to us to contain the final solution for the centuries-old conflict between science and religion. Briefly, for Prof. Reiser, divinity means the power to create, to originate, to grow morally into a larger life of freedom. Not the gaining of any particular altitude of spiritual or social achievement, but the dynamic process of growth—this is the human essence, and the essence of divinity as well. Prof. Reiser comes by the name of humanist with full justification, for his great predecessor, Pico della Mirandola, of the Italian Renaissance, taught precisely this idea of human potentiality in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. Echoing Pico, Reiser writes:

> For scientific humanism, "divinity" is not a "thing"—it is an aspiration toward wholeness. The "god" in humanity is simply this upward striving of man to become something more than what man now is. Man's endless capacity for self-evolution is not only the most interesting characteristic of the human being, but it is the most arresting fact in the universe. A world organized around the concept of man-at-his-best as the being of supreme value in the universe and man-at-his-worst as the most ignoble thing in nature would be a significant social experiment.

Divinity is thus a *process* rather than a state, condition or goal, or the attribute of some far-off deity. Here, it seems, is the defining of a religious idea with strict scientific precision.