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ASIAN DILEMMAS

THE most exciting thing about Asian intellectuality is its critical grasp of the issues as well as the history and contribution of Western civilization. On various occasions in these pages we have endeavored to take account of the work of Asian intellectuals—who, as often as not, are also Asian political leaders—and to show the ground for optimism regarding Asian affairs in the fact that Asians sometimes have a more penetrating view of what is going on in the world than have Western leaders. All that the East lacks, today, in comparison with the West, is the initiative in matters of military power, and it is far from plain that this limitation should be deplored. To be without military initiative because of an incapacity to succeed in modern war may be the greatest blessing that fate can bestow upon a modern nation. To have military power, these days, is to have a talent for obsession. The modern Damocles holds in his hand the sword that hangs over his head, and how can a ruler so situated exercise wisdom in difficult decisions?

This is not to suggest that the course of Asian decision is easy to determine. In *Thought* for Nov. 26 (1955), an Indonesian writer, Takdir Alisjahbana, said to be his country's leading novelist, examines the dilemmas of Asian intellectuals. The Asians of our time have the double task of "catching up" with Western civilization and at the same time of dealing intelligently with the problems which the West has created for itself and the rest of the world.

Gandhi was the first to wrestle with this situation, and for many he seemed to succeed only by grossly oversimplifying the issues. What we ought to take note of, however, in relation to Gandhi's judgments and actions, is that he was determined to be effective at the level of the Indian masses, and that as a result he entered the arena of national decision with a mind blunted to all but ultimate moral questions. He could have moved the hearts of India's millions in no other way. But because he was successful—at least, relatively successful—he left the real problem of synthesis between Eastern and Western culture to his successors. His own synthesis appeared to be an Alexandrian one; he cut the Gordian knot with a dramatic stroke of rejection of the West, on virtually a religious basis. He did not reject the West as a vast complex of human beings, but as a cultural invasion of his own country which was unprepared to assimilate Western civilization without mortal hurt to itself.

The fundamental need of every human being, and every culture, is for self-respect. A people without self-respect is invariably a vulnerable people. Arms and technology will not help the culture which seeks outside for psychological security and reassurance. For Gandhi, the spinning wheel was a symbolic as well as practical means to self-respect. Sophisticated Westerners might laugh, and vulnerable Indians might echo their amusement, supposing Gandhi's educational tools to be ridiculous substitutes for modern technology, but Gandhi did not care about that. He did not care about technology or the West's version of "progress," because he saw that progress of this sort, however dramatic, would be useless to people who had been unable to regain their sense of independent dignity. The role of Vinoba in contemporary Indian history may be to continue the educational process begun by Gandhi, although at a somewhat different level.

But Gandhi got his message across to intelligent Asians. They see that the basic problems of their new countries are psychological problems, having to do with understanding and synthesis of widely separated cultural traditions. Mr. Alisjahbana points out that these countries have for centuries been in a "defensive" position in

relation to the West, and during this period of subjection have sought comfort in the riches of their ancient, traditional culture. This habit of finding security in the past has not been suddenly reversed by the attainment of political independence. So, a certain ambivalence characterizes the aims of the people of these lands. They want to stand equal to the West, in terms of Western achievement, and to stand equal, also, or even superior, in terms of their own national culture. The Indonesian writer sets the problem clearly:

> From this point of view, Asian intellectuals face a dilemma. On the one hand, in consequence of their education they are plunged into the modern age; on the other, in consequence of their birth, they live in an under-developed community, where the majority of the people are in the grips of national culture. Indeed the Asian intellectuals are in a difficult position because they belong to a land of contrasts. It can be said that even now Asia is living in thirty centuries at one and the same time. The stone-age runs parallel to the machine-age, feudalism and mysticism of the middle ages mix with democracy and rationalism of the new era, and communalism is to be found side by side with the economic planning of today.
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> It is the dualism of this situation which has made the position of the Asian intellectual so difficult. He participates in the modern progressive and international era which demands a broad vision. At the same time, he belongs to an underdeveloped nation of which the greater part is upholding the old values.

Now comes a perception of great importance:

> In addition the Asian intellectual is fully aware that the modern world is itself facing a crisis, that its values are menaced by a tide of secularism, scepticism and relativism. No wonder he vacillates between two crises: the crisis of the Asian community and culture as a consequence of the impact of the West which has not yet ended, either in his surroundings or in his own soul; and the other crisis, the crisis of the modern people, embracing the whole of mankind.
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> The criticism of Western culture by Western scientists naturally finds a ready audience among Asian intellectuals. It reinforces their inclination to remain within the sphere of old traditional culture. The knowledge of the West's criticism of its development is very useful to them. But however great the difficulties and problems of modern culture may be at the moment, can they escape them by going back to the past?

We interrupt Mr. Alisjahbana at this point to remark that the important thing about "going back to the past" is why you go. Gandhi went back to the past to find the roots of self-reliance and self-respect. But to go back to the past for reasons of rivalry with the West, or for psychological solace or reasons of national pride—this is a very different thing. The question is really, what is meant by "the past"? A man may find inspiration and courage in the past, but in this case the past will never isolate him from either the present or the future. To learn the lesson Gandhi was endeavoring to teach, the East must go forward into the future *while* it honors the past—not the static past of ceremony and traditionalism, but the past of ennobling conceptions of the nature and potentialities of human beings—*all* human beings.

Mr. Alisjahbana observes:

> Asia has after all to master modern science and technique in order to achieve prosperity, health and all the benefits of life which one finds in the West. The problem of traditional and modern values is in point of fact that of a new determination of the meaning of life, paralleling a re-interpretation of the whole history of mankind.

This writer now offers an analysis of modern Western culture which is deeply suggestive of how such a "reinterpretation" may be begun:

> About 500 B.C. in several areas tremendous progress had been made: In China lived Confucius and Lao-tse; in India appeared the Upanishads and the teachings of Buddha; in Iran Zarathustra taught about the struggle between good and evil; in Palestine the great prophets preached; in Greece lived Homer, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Plato, Thucydides and Archimedes. It is in these that all existing cultures have their origin; nations which had no connection with any one of these four cultures are still in a primitive stage. What we now call the modern world is the synthesis between the Greek-Latin and the West-Asian cultures, which after the middle ages and the renaissance gradually diffused itself over the

> world, simultaneously enriching itself with the contributions of the Indian, Chinese and primitive cultures. The heritage of our forefathers has thus returned to us through modern culture together with cultural values which have been created and gathered by the West itself.
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> The cultural history of man is growing not only in time but also in space. At present, in the sense of cultural history, all mankind of the past have become our forefathers. The young Indonesians were indeed justified in issuing a manifesto some years back, declaring themselves the legal inheritors of the entire world culture.

Mr. Alisjahbana is telling his readers that the age of nationalism is dying, and that cultural nationalism has no more virtue or survival value than Western nationalism or imperialism. The ancient forms of national culture no longer have the same significance. He writes:

> Dances expressing religious and social feelings of the past have become individualistic dances of modern men. Parallels can be found in the field of religion, philosophy and ethics. Everything has to be revalued. The Islam propagated by Iqbal and Syid Ameer Ali is a part of modern thought and culture and is far different from the thought and culture of Islam of 1000 years ago. In Burma, the doctrine of Buddha has acquired a new meaning with its permeation by the theory of Marx and under the influence of modern science and technique.

Interestingly enough, while Western intellectuals—many of them—are urging their compatriots to re-examine ancient philosophies and religions, particularly those of the East, this Asian thinker is calling upon his contemporaries to stop their attempt to perpetuate the old forms of Eastern traditional values and to adopt an open-minded hospitality to Western achievement:

> As a group which has enjoyed the benefits of the modern world's progress, the Asian intellectuals cannot escape the responsibility of helping to build up this society and to raise the material and spiritual standards of their people to the level of the modern era. In order to succeed in this task, they have seriously to face existing traditional values, because the education of our people must start with them. Only with the knowledge of old values and, if necessary, by utilizing them as educational means will we gradually succeed in liberating the Asian peoples from conservatism and introducing them to modern ideas—and thus avoid the spiritual vacuum into which they might otherwise fall. In this sense the traditional values have an educational meaning.

We can hardly quarrel with the mood of this discussion, since it is by no means a naive acceptance of Western civilization, but a measured appreciation of the roots of Western genius in the same soil that has nourished the East. Nor is it a culture-proud disdain for Western achievement. "It is no use," says Mr. Alisjahbana, "blaming modern science and technique for the troubles in politics, economy and ethics in the world of today. . . . the unity of the world, secured as a result of the progress in science and technique, will bring about a widespread and comprehensive culture capable of breaking through the walls erected by politics, religion, and modern ideologies."

But let us be sure to acknowledge that science has no more access to magical powers than ancient tradition. From the viewpoint of humane world culture, science has imposed a *time-table* upon the entire world, but it affords no guarantee that the universal civilization Mr. Alisjahbana anticipates will develop as a by-product of scientific advance, within the time allowed.

Nor can there be much doubt of the fact that already the uses to which the West has put its technological skill have made of Western man a captive of numerous neurotic compulsions which are rapidly moving him toward self-destruction. Man, and not technology, ought to establish the time-table of human development. It was Gandhi's idea that the East should adopt the methods of technology only as they can be assimilated in ways that supplement and fulfi11 the dignity of man. This is still the crucial aspect of any successful synthesis of East and West.

REVIEW

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

IT will, we predict, take but ten minutes of a MANAS reader's time to decide that Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's *Recovery of Faith* is a book he would like to own. The Indian philosopher-statesman has managed to make each paragraph of his two hundred pages count. Here we have an analysis of the meaning of religion which avoids the cliches and over-simplifications of so many works in the field, demonstrating, therefore, the essential difference between wishful thinking and philosophy. *Recovery of Faith,* incidentally, is part of a series entitled, "World Perspectives," bringing to the public short books in a variety of fields by the most distinguished of contemporary thinkers. Among present and future contributors we note the names of Niels Bohr, Crane Brinton, Brock Chisholm, Erich Fromm, Paul Tillich, Edmund Sinnott, and Gardner Murphy. Since most of these authors have been often quoted in these pages, "World Perspectives" is apparently edited by a group in general sympathy with the outlook of our own brief "Books for Our Times" series.

An introductory essay of Dr. Ruth Nanda Anshen illustrates this point. While considerably more than a defense of the profundity of "the ancients," Dr. Anshen's discussion does call attention to the most vital elements of Eastern philosophy, linking them to currents of Western inspiration. There will in time, we think, be few dissenters from the view that ancient philosophy and metaphysics encompassed fundamental truths which have become obscured in the intervening centuries. In Dr. Anshen's terms: "In accordance with the ancient view, man could himself become a god, could assume the identity of the great cosmic forces in the universe which surrounded him. He could influence this universe, not by supplication, but by action. And now again this consciousness of man's just relationship with the universe, with society and with his fellow men, can be actualized, and again not through supplication but through action."

But this is not to be taken to mean that modern man has only to immerse himself in *The Upanishads, The Bhagavad-Gita* and the writings of the most profound Greek philosophers. Apparently the attainment of each level of maturity—each ascent of understanding—must be preceded by an evolutionary task which confuses us with the complexity of new problems, both psychological and physical. What has happened in science, particularly in physics, is gradually compelling a fundamental revaluation, and, while we may see only the complexity at present, a new simplicity and directness of understanding can eventually be gained as a result. Dr. Anshen continues:

> The specific modern emphasis on history as progressive, the specific prophetic emphasis on God as acting through history, and the specific Christian emphasis on the historical nature of revelation must now surrender to the new history embracing the new cosmology—a profound event which is in the process of birth in the womb of that invisible universe which is the mind of man.
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> This is the crisis in consciousness made articulate through the crisis in science. This is the new awakening after a long history which had its genesis in Descartes' denial that theology could exist as a science, on the one hand, and on the other, in Kant's denial that metaphysics could exist as a science. Some fossilized forms of such positivistic thinking still remain. However, it is now conceded, out of the influences of Whitehead, Bergson, and some phenomenologists, that in addition to natural science with its tendency to isolate quantitative values there exists another category of knowledge wherein philosophy, utilizing its own instruments, is able to grasp the essence and innermost nature of the Absolute, of reality. The mysterious universe is now revealing to philosophy and to science as well an enlarged meaning of nature and of man which extends beyond mathematical and experimental analysis of sensory phenomena. This meaning rejects the mechanistic conception of the world and that positivistic attitude toward the world which considers philosophy as a kind of mythology adequate only for the satisfaction of emotional needs. In other words, the fundamental problems of philosophy, those

problems which are central to life, are again confronting science and philosophy itself. Our problem is to discover a principle of differentiation and yet relationship lucid enough to justify and to purify both scientific and philosophical knowledge by accepting their mutual interdependence.

Dr. Radhakrishnan undertakes polite but incisive criticism of all religious orthodoxies. Religion, in his view, attains high meaning and purpose only when it is seen to be, above all else, an act of discovery. Religion must be turned inside out, so to speak, so that its symbolic values are seen to relate to the emergence of man as a creative God. For otherwise, both from religious orthodoxy and from the influence of scientific determinism, man's capacity for freedom *through* discovery is obscured. Dr. Radhakrishnan writes:

> Determinist views of history do not have an adequate idea of human freedom. Their vision is lacking in depth and dignity. They have no perception of the struggle of man under the shadow of necessity. Without faith in the free spirit of man we will become to ourselves what nature and history have become to us, a wilderness, a chaos. Karma can be overcome by freedom. Historical necessity can be overcome by a free act of spirit. "God has decided to destroy the Temple. In the name of God, rescue the temple from the wrath of God." Man has to travel the path which leads him from the basest in his nature upward to the noblest that raises him above his animality. The human individual is not a mere object among objects, a thing among things, without meaning for himself. He is not a psychological process which is completely conditioned. He is a victim of karma or necessity, if he is objectified and deprived of his subjectivity. It is possible for man to escape from the objective happenings. He can be himself. The whole history of mankind is a continuous endeavour to be free. The great lights in human form, the Buddha, Socrates, Zoroaster, Jesus, reveal to us the divine possibilities of human nature and give us the courage to be ourselves.
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> The great religious teachers of the world preach something different from the traditions they inherit. The seers of the Upanishads, Gautama the Buddha, Zoroaster, Socrates, Jesus, Mohammed, Nanak and Kabir had to undergo in their lives an inevitable break-away from the traditional views. Even as the seers of the Upanishads and the Buddha protested against Vedic ceremonialism, even as Jesus denounced Rabbinical orthodoxy, we have to protect the enduring substance of religion from the forms and institutions which suffer from the weaknesses of man and the corruptions of time. We must get away from a religion which has lost the power of creative expression in conformity with the needs and demands of our age. Kalidasa in his *Malavikagnimitra* says: "Everything is not good simply because it is old; no literature should be treated as unworthy simply because it is new. Great men accept the one or the other after due examination. (Only) the fool has his understanding misled by the beliefs of others." We must preserve the precious substance of religious reality by translating it out of the modes and thoughts of other times into terms and needs of our own day and generation.

By reinterpreting Christian symbolism in terms of the philosophy of the *Bhagavad-gita*, Dr. Radhakrishnan demonstrates that the most important emphasis in Eastern religion is the value placed upon experience, in contrast to reliance upon authority. "He who has succeeded in attaining the aim of religion has an illumined mind, a changed heart and a transformed will. A new way of life vitalises and transforms one's whole being. This is *dvitiyam janma*, the second birth. 'There is a new creation; behold all things are become new.' The lotus which is generally used in Hindu and Buddhist thought as an offering to the divine is symbolic of the effort we have to make to wrest the utmost of glorifying beauty from our chaotic passions." Thus, "true faith" antedates both the Bible and the *Bhagavad-gita*, for it has been operative in the minds and hearts of men from the very beginning. The various great religions have been rediscoveries of faith, or at least partial representation of man's faith in his own spiritual capacity.

COMMENTARY
GANDHIAN TECHNOLOGY

SOME thirty years ago, M. K. Gandhi announced through the All-India Spinners' Association a prize of one lakh of rupees to be awarded to the inventor of a new type of spinning wheel which would increase the production of the village spinner. This prize was never awarded, for the reason that none of the spinning wheels (charkhas) designed for the competition was good enough to be put into practical use. However, the Ahmedabad mill-owner whom Gandhi had appointed to be a judge in the competition, after examining the charkha which was the best of those submitted, remarked to Gandhi that if a better spinning wheel could be devised, making the experiment a success, it would mean the end of the Indian textile industry as it then existed, and lead to decentralization of cloth production.

Such a spinning wheel, it appears, has now been invented. *Harijan* for Dec. 17, 1955, reports the development of the Ambar Charkha, a spinning wheel with four spindles that will more than triple the output of the village spinner, and also produce a better quality of yarn. The income of the spinner will be doubled by the use of this machine, and the economic position of the weavers will also be strengthened.

Some measure of the new employment for Indian villages anticipated from introduction of this spinning wheel is given by the estimate of 5,000,000 people who may be occupied part or full time as spinners, with 1,271,000 weavers and assistant weavers to turn the yarn into cloth on handlooms. The manufacture of the Ambar Charkhas may give work to 72,000 carpenters and provide administrative tasks to about 20,000 more persons.

The invention of the new spinning wheel is the work of a peasant youth of Tamilnad. *Harijan* tells the story:

> About five years ago the young man began devoting his mind to devising a model of a wheel which could be employed for spinning as it is done in a textile mill. He presented the model as perfected by him to the Spinner's Association. The Association in its turn began experimenting with it and has now after improvements and additions prepared a workable model. After the name of the inventor, the model is called Ambar Charkha. It promises to prove the beginning of immense potentialities in the industrial reconstruction of India.

We have no knowledge of the economics of Indian cottage industry and are unable, therefore, to have an opinion on the degree to which yarn production by this new spinning wheel may be able to compete with or displace mass production methods. It is significant, however, that certain spokesmen for the interests of the Indian textile industry have already voiced extreme opposition to the new program of Khadi (hand-woven cloth made from hand-spun yarn) which envisions the Ambar Charkha as the principal means of primary production.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

A RECENT letter from a subscriber focuses attention on the widely remarked problem of juvenile "disorientation" by way of suggesting study of cultures in which adults and children have enjoyed constructive interdependence. Along with some other books, John Collier's *Indians of the Americas* provides excellent explanation of why the youth of Indian tribes, in both South and North America, felt true security in the "family"—because the family was itself secure in the knowledge of community function.

Mr. Collier is fond of speaking of "primary groupings" as the source of inner security in any society. The American Indian, he points out, had a remarkably well-developed sense of what "primary groupings" mean. Clans within a tribe were conceived in terms of service, and, since the performance of service, rather than self-aggrandizement, was the measure of a young man's worth, eminence came *only* through service. Meanwhile, the humbler members of the tribe, who demonstrated no particular genius for leadership, were fully appreciated. In other words, as so often remarked about the Indians, their society was an organism. The individual within the society could rarely sicken and die psychologically unless the society itself died—as it so nearly did when the White Man decided that the Indians should awaken to the glories of individual competition.

In a concluding chapter Mr. Collier writes:

> The individual fares best when he is a member of a group faring best. All human beings, in young childhood at least are members of groups. The group is the tree and they are the fruit it bears. At least up to a certain age-level, the individual reft from his group is hurt or destroyed. The ruin inflicted on Red Indians through the white man's denial of their grouphood, and his leading them to deny their own grouphood, is only a special case of something that is universal. It may be that contemporary white life is being injured nearly as much by the submergence of its primary social groupings as the denial of Indian grouphood injured Indian life. If the primary social group in white life were regenerated for full functioning, through resourceful and sustained social effort, and were dynamically connected once more with the great society, the hygienic and creative results might be no less startling than those observed in the comeback of Indian societies.

Continuity, integration and service began, of course, in the family. But the family itself was directly functional in society, so that it was not the family itself which constituted the "primary group" which Mr. Collier feels to be so crucially important, but rather something which grew out of the *relationship* between family and community. The ends and aims of the parents and children were not enough, even collectively, to provide solidarity in a sense of purpose. Our correspondent, who refers to Collier's book, emphasizes the same point:

> One major cause of juvenile delinquency is the feeling of not belonging, on the part of adolescents. The adolescent, today, knows that school-life and its problems is not really living, that being a part of the community as a working, contributing member should be his right. But he has never since birth been sure of his place in the family or the community. Since he is not needed by the community, he cannot attribute *value* to himself as a person. Without a conviction of individual worth, delinquent attitudes toward society begin.
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> Society encourages the individual, if that individual is enabled to develop awareness of self by participation as a *unique* contributor to that society's needs.

The same perspective emerges clearly in a recent *Coronet* (December, 1955) article, "Our Amazing Chinese Kids." Because the Chinese "standard of excellence" has for centuries been one of good character, developed in service to the "primary group," juvenile delinquency is virtually unknown in Chinese communities—despite their frequent locations in the "worst" areas of large cities. James Conniff, the writer of the article, indicates in what way the traditional Chinese standard of excellence is motivational and

attitudinal, having little or nothing to do with tangible posessions or eminence:

> The term "uncle" in a young Chinese mouth has a subtle double significance. It means not only that he respects you and wants your advice, because you have so much more experience than he has, but also that if you do anything unethical he may be influenced by it.
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> Thus the young, even while they are being taught to live right, in their turn help their elders continue to do so themselves. A snug system.
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> That it works is seen in the divorce rate among the Chinese which crowds zero much as delinquency does. Since the family comes first with them rather than the individual, marriage is entered into primarily to get children. The release of desire is a secondary consideration. And, while love may come last, it seems to stay longer.
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> The serenity of Chinese-American existence is reflected in other ways. Dr. Ying Chang Chu of the New York Women's Infirmary, where many Chinese mothers are treated, says that there is comparatively less high blood pressure among the Chinese, less insanity and fewer nervous breakdowns.
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> The reason for Chinatown's excellent health standing has been attributed to the profound sense of security which Chinese family solidarity provides, and the fact that they have learned to take what comes. Of the good, as well as the evil, the Chinese say without bitterness, "This too will pass."
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> But while they are here, the Chinese realize there is a life to be lived and enjoyed, a social structure which each family through its young members in particular, adds to and strengthens, or undermines and destroys.
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> For their part, they follow the way of Confucius: "When the heart is set right, then the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, then the family life is regulated; when the family life is regulated, then the national life is orderly; and when the national life is orderly, then there is peace in this world."

Certain aspects of the British "standard of excellence" in respect to education are described in an article appearing in the *Antioch Review* for September, 1955, entitled "Education in U.S.A. and U.K." The author, A.T.M. Wilson, often a visiting professor at Michigan and Northwestern Universities, is presently Director of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, London. Contrasting American egalitarian standards with those of Britain, he points out that the British criterion of highly developed intellectuality (while applicable only to the few of unusual ability) is markedly different from the general anti-intellectual tone of the U.S.:

> The local education authority differentiates between those children likely to profit from the "grammar school" type of education, which is intended to lead on to the university or professional school and, on the other hand, children more suited to "modern secondary" schools of more vocational bent and lower academic aims. This separation is undertaken by varying means, and at slightly different levels of test intelligence, by different education authorities. In London itself "places" in grammar schools—I am quoting from memory—are provided for something like one-eighth of the children, and to a quite remarkable extent this appears to provide an adequate prediction of that proportion of the child population likely to matriculate, and, if they choose to go on, to graduate, from the university or professional school. Matriculation exams are, of course, open to any pupil from any school; but the results on the whole appear to support the practice of education authorities. (I am aware of the possible fallacy about different types of education, between eleven years and matriculation, influencing the results. There is reason to believe that it does not substantially affect the general point about relatively stable differences in upper limits of scholastic potential.)
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> In the U.K., effective prognostic differences in upper limit of scholastic potential are recognized by education authorities at the early age of eleven years. British universities—however critical their attitude towards psychological assessment—in practice show that student requirements are seldom met by those below the top 10 per cent of the population, ordered in terms of test intelligence. Through the school selection program, matriculation at the university is so arranged as to be within the capacity of nearly all those who prepared for it, particularly through State education, and only in unusual circumstances by those not so prepared. Graduation follows matriculation—in at least 85 per cent of students of British universities (at Oxford and Cambridge the figure is 95 percent).

Here, then, are various "standards of excellence" in relation to the general problem of education. Even in the case of Britain, so easily criticized for snobbery, we may infer that some conception of public service is related to the centuries-old tradition of maintaining an intellectual elite. Of course, British society is rapidly changing, as other portions of Dr. Wilson's article make clear; the old Chinese ways are undergoing transformation in China, and the Indian is often transformed out of all recognition. But the point is that we still have much to learn about "standards of excellence" from the integral societies of the past.

"Integration," for Americans, is a most difficult matter. But it seems evident that, to whatever degree it is reached, the idea of primary-group participation must play a part,—itself an expression of the ideal of function and service in respect to society as a whole. Youth has the best chance to find itself in the presence of this ideal. Somewhere along the line, every human being must choose between learning by a hit-or-miss method of experimentation with life, or by the application of general principles, in which one has considerable faith, to new and confusing situations. We Americans do not, as a rule, provide much of an example to our youth of living by principle, and if there is any one underlying reason for "juvenile delinquency," this is likely to be it. The only conceptions of "excellence" worth passing on to young people are those of ethical and mental development, and since we cannot create a society to our liking overnight, there is no alternative but to become philosophical enough to make such standards prevail in our own lives—whatever our circumstances or other tangible ambitions.

FRONTIERS

Immortality of Various Kinds

THE effort of scientific writers to satisfy the human longing for immortality, without compromising the naturalist assumptions of scientific thought is an interesting phenomenon of our times. These are days when the yearning to break through the limits of conventional beliefs—even scientific beliefs—is becoming almost irrepressible. No sort of *status quo* is very attractive at present. A new political inspiration is practically prohibited by the anxieties about "security," and even if these should be somewhat relaxed, there would still be the feeling that the West has come full circle so far as political alternatives are concerned. Even an atmosphere of complete intellectual freedom might fail to provoke men of imagination to seek novelty and inovation in the political area.

The hunger is rather for creative or original activity at an entirely new level, and this, for some, is found in the region of philosophy or even metaphysics. One symptom of the interest in this direction is the increasing frequency of articles in scientific journals on subjects which were commonly ignored twenty or thirty years ago. Even skeptical writers find it difficult to leave the subject of extra sensory perception alone. Actually, the elaborate rejection of psychic wonders like thought transference or clairvoyance may be evidence of the fascination such possibilities hold for nearly all minds. The old rule, "First abhor, then endure, then embrace," probably has application to the scientific profession, so far as these matters are concerned, and orthodox scientists seem now to have reached the "endure" stage, while more daring spirits have already "embraced."

It is by such means, doubtless, that inherited and cultural prejudices are worn away. Meanwhile, other practitioners of the sciences endeavor to extend the limits of transcendentalist conviction within the scope of orthodox science. In the January-February number of the *Humanist*, James Peter Warbasse, eminent surgeon and leader in the cooperative movement in the United States, writes at some length on "Life and Death and Immortality." If ever the English language was pressed to say more than the actual words allow, Dr. Warbasse excels all previous attempts. He finds it scientifically possible to affirm three distinct kinds of immortality for human beings. First, there is the immortality of the "matter" or "stuff" of which the body is composed:

> What is presumed to be dead is life-giving, and transforms itself into other life. If a body is cremated, not one grain is lost; but all exists somewhere about the earth, in gas, in ashes, or in water, which if collected together would have the same weight as at the time of cremation. Materially man is immortal. When he dies he falls ultimately into the embrace of his mother nature who gave him birth.

The second immortality of man lies in the imperishable germ plasm. His "genes" go on forever, in endless offspring. "So long as man lives," Dr. Warbasse assures his readers, "so long as man inhabits the earth, each individual has his immortality in the existence of this humanity, this thing we call mankind."

Posterity is the third sort of immortality allowed by Dr. Warbasse to man, to which he accords a respect rivalling that of Diderot. Men leave their ineffaceable mark upon the world, and live on in their deeds. Dr. Warbasse gives this apostrophe to Posterity:

> We look upon an art gallery, a factory, or a library, and there is man immortalized in his influence upon material things. He disappears and his deeds live on, projecting him into the future life of other men.
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> A spiritual immortality, more important than all, is the immortality which every individual enjoys, be he parent or not parent. Each radiates from himself impressions which impinge upon other individuals. . . . What man does in the privacy of his chamber does something to his own character, which in time will express itself in the presence of others. His thoughts and acts in solitude influence his thoughts and acts in the company of individuals upon whom his character is impressed. Each individual

> takes something from the other; each manifests himself to every soul with whom he comes in contact; and thus, a wave which has no end is set in action. It moves around the world through all society, and becomes the immortality that is most significant to all. It is this immortality that determines the quality of people. Each individual is the nutrient medium in which immortality is making its germinal growth; and this statement is as scientific as though expressed in terms of botany or of biophysics. Science cannot ignore psychological facts. The quality of this burgeoning thing is reflected in the character of the individual. He radiates and announces the sort of immortality he is creating.

The immortality resulting from these three forms of continuity, Warbasse says, "in no wise conflicts with or opposes belief in an immortality of religious origin, or of the imagination, of tradition, legend, or superstition," and is, moreover, "an immortality which the simple mind can grasp and enjoy in its contemplation."

No one will question the nobility of Dr. Warbasse's formulation, nor deny it the dignity of its origin in Stoic and eighteenth-century liberal thought. He gives us a pantheism we are bound to honor, even if it be a pantheism of matter. But this is not, whatever he may say, "an immortality which the simple mind can grasp." For the "simple mind,"—indeed, for most minds, simple or otherwise—immortality means continuity of individual consciousness. It is for this that human beings long, and belief in this sort of immortality has long been cherished by people of every age, however flimsy the grounds for the belief, and despite, in modern times, the denials of the scientifically minded. And, if the truth be known, the longing to believe is only a little beneath the skin of even the latter. The rapidity with which the *serious* scientific investigators of Spiritualism in the last century—men like William Crookes and Oliver Lodge in England, and men of similar quality in the United States—acknowledged psychic phenomena to be acceptable evidence of a life beyond the grave, shows that within the skeptical scientist hides a human being who is vulnerable to such persuasions.

We haven't changed very much since those days. Notice the sudden widespread excitement over the mystery of "Bridey Murphy," a nineteenth-century Irishwoman alleged by a modern hypnotist to be "reincarnated" in the body of Ruth Simmons, a thirty-two-year-old Pueblo, Colo., housewife and hypnotic subject. Within a few months, Bridey Murphy has become a sure-fire feature for newspaper and magazine articles. The magazine *True*, which claims a readership of more than three million, printed a long article on the case of Bridey Murphy in its February issue. The writer, Morey Bernstein, who was the hypnotist involved, tells how he "regressed" Ruth Simmons to what he apparently believes to have been a previous incarnation in a small Irish community in County Cork, where she was born in 1798 as Bridget Murphy. The report of her life as "Bridey" was obtained by Bernstein from Mrs. Simmons by questioning her while in hypnotic trance. Bernstein secured statements from Mrs. Simmons while in this condition which he takes to be evidence that she is Bridey Murphy reincarnated. Others, apparently, think so, too. At any rate, Doubleday, Bernstein's publisher, made the mistake of ordering only 8,000 copies on the first printing of the hypnotist's book, *The Search for Bridey Murphy*, being obliged by the immediate demand for the volume to order another 75,000 copies in a second printing. Meanwhile, metropolitan newspapers, among them the Los Angeles *Mirror News*, are printing the book in serial form. In introducing the feature to *Mirror News* readers, Omar Garrison, who signs himself "Science and Religion Editor," has an antiquarian's field day, illustrating, however, the enormous potential interest of any sort of presumed "proof" of immortality. Mr. Garrison writes:

> The belief that the soul is reborn on earth in successive and different bodies is as old as the history of man. The most ancient monuments and inscriptions allude to it. Egyptian mystery schools taught it more than 3000 years ago. Following them, the Greeks wove it like an endless thread through the rich tapestry of their philosophies.

> Pythagoras, the great Greek mathematician, instructed his students in the secret art of remembering past lives. Socrates accepted the belief as fact. Plato took it for granted. There is also considerable evidence that many first-century Christians brought the persuasion over from paganism. Certainly many of the early church fathers felt the need to condemn repeatedly the thesis of reincarnation.
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> Even so, St. Jerome says that the doctrine was taught secretly in the early church to a select few and although the church in the fifth century officially declared that to believe in preexistence was a heresy, a number of prominent Christians continued to speculate on the possibilities. St. Justin Martyr, for example, said quite plainly that the soul of man occupies a human body in more than one existence. And the celebrated Christian father, Origen, raised the question (in his *Contra Celsum),* commenting that such a belief was "more in conformity with reason."
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> Gradually, however, Christianity suppressed the doctrine in the West, although it has continued to be a prime tenet of such Eastern religions as Hinduism, Buddhism and the mystical sects of Mohammedanism.

Garrison now includes as witnesses for reincarnation representatives of the metaphysical fringe of scientific speculation:

> Until recently the conclusions of science were hostile to the idea of rebirth. There was no empirical evidence, said the opponents of the doctrine. Memory in any case resided in the brain, and the brain perishes at death. So how could a man "remember" a former existence?
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> With the advances of the last few years, however, especially in physics, many thoughtful scientists now admit that their discoveries point to an idealist interpretation of the universe. While such an interpretation does not point directly to the doctrine of rebirth, it does remove most scientific objections to it.

Gustaf Stromberg, well known astronomer and author of *The Soul of the Universe,* is cited as a scientist who thinks that all memory of the past is stored in "the cosmic memory of the universe which endures," even though the physical brain of man is continually being renewed. For a thoughtful account of how the idea of reincarnation may be integrated with what we call modern knowledge, Mr. Garrison might better have suggested, however, a reading of W. Macneile Dixon's *The Human Situation,* or C. J. Ducasse's *Nature, Mind, and Death* and his *Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion.* Also of interest would be the older work, *Some Dogmas of Religion,* by John McTaggart.

In conclusion, Mr. Garrison covers himself and his paper by saying that "Orthodox Christianity still rejects the doctrine of reincarnation as untrue and no devout Christian can reconcile the theology of his faith with that doctrine." He adds that there is not at present "any overwhelming proof in science that we live more than once."

The point we are interested in making here, however, is simply that any sort of evidence of immortality, "overwhelming" or otherwise, is welcomed with enthusiasm by the general public. The orthodox faiths have little to offer in this department except their traditional dogmatic utterances. Science has practically nothing to say, unless one is willing to regard as "scientific" the speculations of men like Stromberg and a few others. The multitude of ordinary people, however, seem to feel "starved" for a viable faith which includes the idea of life after death. The number of periodicals dealing at a popular—really a "pulp"—level with supernatural and in a sense transcendental matters grows each year, and a magazine like *Fate,* which exploits every sort of psychic sensation, leaped to established success almost in a matter of months.

It is a grave question whether the matter of human immortality ought to be left to the sensationalists. Even if a peculiar sort of courage is required of serious philosophers to launch into consideration of subjects which the intellectual classes have avoided like the plague for generations, the project may be worth undertaking. The alternative is to allow the groundswell of "vulgar" interest in immortality to grow into a tidal wave, until scholars and intellectuals are swept along by the mass

fascination undoubtedly exercised by such subjects. Questioning of the possibility of immortality is not beneath the dignity of philosophers and men of learning. What could be regarded as of great importance by men like Pythagoras, Plato, and Plotinus—to say nothing of distinguished contemporaries such as Dixon and Ducasse—need not be avoided by lesser men, today.

The "search" for Bridey Murphy is a case in point. There is no sound reason for thinking that the trance revelations of Ruth Simmons are good evidence for reincarnation. A Neoplatonic thinker—even a studious researcher in the phenomena of modern psychism—could easily point out the possibility of obsession as an alternative explanation. The annals of so-called "spiritual" and psychic phenomena are filled with remarkable instances of the recall by mediums and psychics of the details of past epochs which cannot be explained except on some hypothesis of superphysical memory, made accessible to the subject in ways unfamiliar to our psychological science. Fully as impressive as the Bridey Murphy story is the case of Patience Worth, reported in a full-length book by Dr. Walter Franklin Prince. In this case the medium, Mrs. Pearl L. Curran, exhibited extraordinary literary ability and knowledge of terms belonging to long past epochs of history—matters wholly outside of the experience of Mrs. Curran.

As a matter of fact, it is extremely unlikely that serious reincarnationists will be found urging the Bridey Murphy case as proof of their belief. Rather, they will suggest that this case, like that of Shanti Devi, a few years ago, in India, simply displays some of the vast variety of psychical phenomena which are potential in human experience, and which come to light under special circumstances.

Immortality is not so mean a conviction that it needs must clutch at straws to win converts. And hypnotism, while demonstrative of certain gross capacities of the psyche, is hardly the means to evoke those qualities of the soul which belong to an eternal life. Hypnotism has been appropriately described by a practicing psychiatrist as "psychic rape." It is certainly the practice of *subjection*, and has little to do with the mood of immortality as conveyed by great religious teachers and philosophers. It seems a pity that this philosophic conception should be reborn in such trivial and irrelevant circumstances in modern times.