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SECTARIANISM IN RELIGION AND SCIENCE

IS sectarianism possible among scientists? The answer, of course, depends upon whose definitions of sectarianism and of science are used, for no scientist—and no religionist, for that matter, except a defeatist in religion—can ever think of himself as being "sectarian." By definition, science is hospitable to the facts of experience in all its forms, so that a scientist must at least lay claim to open-mindedness. A scientist may dispute the reality or the interpretation of a given fact, or he may ignore it as irrelevant, but he cannot, without losing his standing as an impartial observer, refuse to explain on rational grounds why the alleged fact seems to him to be nonexistent or unimportant.

The religionist, however, is under another sort of compulsion—which explains why the term "sectarian" is commonly used to describe the adherents of organized religious groups. An illustration is provided in the *Christian Century* for Sept. 21, where a writer deplores the fact that "paganism" remains unshaken by the Christian missions in Japan and proposes what he hopes will be a program for more effective conversion of the Japanese people. He concludes with a note of exhortation: "Above all, Christianity should not forget that it alone has the divine promise."

The obvious difference between science and such religion is conveyed by the contrast of this writer's attitude toward religious truth with that of an American scientist who might go to Japan to teach, say, chemistry. The latter would probably go with the expectation of being able to teach more about chemistry to the Japanese students than he would learn from them about his subject, but he would readily admit the possibility that some Japanese chemist might at any time announce a discovery which would make him learner rather than teacher —and an eager learner, at that. Science, in other words, looks to *human* sources for its knowledge, and scientific investigators expect to have everything they do and say subjected to the review of rational criticism and practical experiment.

A great protection is afforded by the criterion of reason. So far as we know, there has never been a war over a question of scientific fact—a fact, that is, which is capable of experimental or observational testing. The wars of religion, on the other hand, have been among the bloodiest and most vindictive of history, and there is little evidence to persuade us that they are all in the past. It may be argued that religious truths are more important than scientific truths, and that they are, therefore, "worth fighting for," but against this contention is set the strange anomaly of "Christian" wars, in which the combatants furiously slaughtered their enemies in the name of the gentle and forgiving Jesus.

Why might not religion as well as science be subjected to rational review? One possible objection would be that religion has a super-rational origin, and ought not to be interfered with by the plodding intrusions of merely human reason. But in this case, if granted immunity from rational criticism, the religious communities making this claim ought to agree that the immunity applies only so long as the true believers avoid subrational behavior such as wars. A religion which is supposed to be "better" than anything which reason can produce should not lead to conduct which even the lowliest common sense can legitimately condemn.

Reason, in other words, while never a source of religious inspiration, may be the best possible critic of religion. Man's love for his fellows may arise from feelings which are prior to intellectual judgments, but the forms of conduct taken by that love may certainly be judged. And if the moving gospel of a revelation from on high does not issue from "empirical research" or from "logical" thought processes, intellectual comparison and analysis seem entirely competent to decide that one revelation is as good as another—or even better.

About the best discussion of the sectarian spirit that we know of appeared in the Autumn 1941 *Humanist* in a review by E. A. Burtt of Reinhold Niebuhr's Gifford Lectures (first series), *The Nature and Destiny of Man.* Prof. Burtt seems to put his finger on more than one of the psychological roots of sectarianism. He writes:

> Confident of the ultimacy of his religion of universal love, the believer in the special revelation of Christianity unwittingly substitutes a local and historical doctrine about love for love itself. In the presence of a Buddhist who finds salvation in Amitabha, he cannot allow that such an experience is on a par with his meeting the divine in Christ, and be ready to pool in friendly mutuality the distinctive greatness in each of these exalting transactions; his impulse to love without qualification is rendered subordinate to his devotion to the particular religious tradition he has inherited. And because of this primary commitment the Jesus in whom Christ was historically revealed is idealized beyond all that the evidence of the gospels can possibly justify, with consequent injustice to other great religious founders.
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> And the champion of such a special revelation falls into self-deception. Uneasily aware that no group pretension of this kind can be valid, he zealously seeks escape from this condemning consciousness. Here is the explanation of the irrationalism accepted by the leaders of Neoorthodoxy. Being keen thinkers and cogent reasoners, they cannot avoid a lurking realization that the norm of reason is impartiality and therefore that no form of group egotism can be rationally defended. Hence they must affirm that ultimate truth is irrational, discontinuous with the normal operation of man's cognitive faculties. This is self-deception, however, because they are surely aware, at times, that whenever anything is said about God, Christ, revelation, or anything else, the canons of human reason must be obeyed, under penalty of collapse into meaningless and total failure to communicate any idea. The rejection of reason cannot be quite sincere; it is a protective device needed to cover the anxious sense that the claims involved in the theory of special revelation are intrinsically incapable of justification.

This is a serious charge, but it applies, we think, to all forms of denominational religion in which historical events such as the coming of Jesus—or Mohammed—are given greater importance than metaphysical principles. The single historical event always defies impartial philosophy, reason, science and common sense, for all these modes of knowing rely upon the determination of *order,* of natural law, for the gaining of certainty; but a *single* event has no place in any order—is, in fact, the enemy of all order, and almost always, therefore, is made the foundation of dogmatic, irrational religion.

What, then, maintains the hold of unreasoning religion upon reasoning men? In the religions of which we have some knowledge, fear plays a dominant role for many, with which is combined the emotional security afforded by ritual. Ritual is so omnipresent a feature of both dogmatic and undogmatic religion that it needs more than casual examination. The function of ritual seems to be to give the devotee a sense of relationship, of participation, in a larger unity. It establishes and elaborates the *feeling* of belief. Another quality of ritual is that it may either oppose or illumine the rational understanding. A chant declaring the great confraternity of Nature is a ritual, but so is a war dance or a military parade. More broadly, ritual means the fusion of religion with *culture,* the transformation of earthly activities into symbols of the transcendental or "divine."

In *The Bhagavad-Gita,* Krishna makes this simple injunction to Arjuna:

> Whatever thou doest, O son of Kunti, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever mortification thou performest, commit each unto me. Thus thou shalt be delivered from the good and evil experiences which are the bonds of action, and thy heart being joined to renunciation and to the practice of action, thou shalt come unto me. I am the same to all creatures; I know not hatred nor favor, but those who serve me with love dwell in me and I in them.

This conception of ritual is further developed in one of the *Puranas,* where the disciple is urged:

> While taking medicine one should think of Vishnu or the all-pervading; while eating, of Janardana, the All-Giver; while lying down, of Padmanabha; while marrying, of Prajapati, the Lord of Creatures; while fighting, of Chakradhara; while traveling in a foreign land, of Trivikrama; at the time of death, of Narayana; at the time of reunion with friends, of Sridhara; after dreaming bad dreams, of

> Govinda; at the time of danger, of Madhusudana; in the midst of a forest, of Narsingha; in the midst of fire of Jalasai, of the one lying on the water; in the midst of water, of Varaha; on the mountain, of Raghunundana; while going, of Vaurana; and in all acts, of Madhava.

Ritual, in this sense, means the recognition of a symbolic meaning in all everyday acts. It is a little complicated, perhaps, from the Western point of view, yet by such ideas as these great civilizations are formed and cultures made to flower. From these roots have grown beautiful lives for countless millions, in all parts of the world. In *Man on a Rock*, Richard Hertz amplifies this theme, drawing on numerous cultures for his material.

> Karl Buecher [he writes] collected hundreds of songs echoing the divine animation that springs forth daily under a thousand different skies—songs which people used to sing during the ceremony we call work. Chinese peasants, moving into the mountains every morning to gather tea, sang a hymn in honor of their enterprise, which they compared to a pilgrimage to the Western paradise. The Volga boatmen "accepted the universe," and the women of Madagascar acted, when they cultivated the ricefields, like bayaderes trying to please a god.
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> Miguel Covarrubias, in his book on Bali, describes the bandjars, or co-operative societies as we would call them in our dry idiom; they watched the magic of work unfold with proper art and majesty in their Indonesian eden; when night fell they sent the arpeggios to their tireless orchestras through fragrant vales. . . .
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> The medieval fraternities of workers in Flanders and Lyons, toiling in the frozen music of crepuscular cities, rolled the stone from the tomb of their narrow space; their triumph over the refractory material of the world was not mere routine, but was understood by them in its vast metaphysical connotations. Work interpreted as spiritual discipline gave these people a superhuman patience, detachment from results.

These are uses of ritual with which modern man is not very familiar. To them might be added the custom of the American Indian hunter of centuries ago to "apologize" to his "brother"—the animal he was hunting— for taking his life. This was a rite which his sense of the universal fraternity of nature impelled the Indian hunter to perform—an attitude which would only evoke laughing scorn from a modern sportsman. Nor would the communicant of a contemporary religion which lays great emphasis on ritual be able to participate with sympathy in the nature-worshiping ceremonies of the "heathen." The symbolisms he knows are badges of a religious ideology, involving acts which ostentatiously separate him from his fellows of other faiths.

All ritualism, it seems, has the same bipolarity as the emotional energy which supports it. While philosophic pantheism may gain from ritual the intenser feeling of reality which reason is incapable of imparting, the sectarian exclusiveness of dogmatic religion may be made to seem a form of religious "virtue" by supporting antirational articles of belief with the reason-effacing flow of ritualistic feeling. For feeling, regardless of its quality or the objective of its devotion, is always *alive;* it is the principle of union between thought and act, between belief and practical allegiance. It is this which intellectual reformers and scientific sociologists seldom take into account in their plans and programs, leaving the field of actual leadership wide open to the demagoguery of politicians and priests.

Sectarianism in religion, then, means the conscious or unconscious exploitation of the emotions, through ritualism, for partisan ends. And the ends *are* partisan whenever the review of reason is rejected by the sectaries.

Sectarianism among scientists is much more difficult to identify, for the reason that the principal merit claimed for science, as distinguished from religion, is its avowed rejection of sectarianism in any form. Those scientists who regard their activities as a kind of "creative" technology cannot be termed sectarian at all, so long as they honestly avoid making any philosophical judgments on the basis of their technical specialties. It is when the techniques of scientific investigation are made into an exclusive theory of knowledge with assurance as emphatic as the claim that "Christianity alone has the divine promise"—that science becomes sectarian. Already, we have witnessed two great epochs of scientific thought in Western history, during which such claims were made by scientists. The time from Galileo until about 1900 was spent in developing the thesis that unless a natural happening could be made

to submit to the analogy of the machine—could be broken down and "explained" in mechanical terms—the happening must be judged "unreal" and unworthy of scientific investigation. The second epoch is represented by the now prevailing scientific "climate of opinion," under which mathematical formulas have taken the place of the machine.

Within these frameworks of assumption, scientists have been as impartial and non-sectarian as—overlooking the defects of human nature—anyone could desire. But suppose the validity of some other assumption about the reality behind natural phenomena: suppose for example, that the universe is a great cosmic organism and that both the mechanical and mathematical analogies describe only subordinate modes of vital activity, which ought, instead, to be understood according to more comprehensive analogies of living processes—processes in consciousness as well as in organic forms.

If this were indeed the reality behind the workings of nature, then the limitation of scientific inquiry to the scope of narrower assumptions would be a sectarian limitation and a confinement of the human power to know.

A proposal of this sort remains incomplete without the further suggestion of a theory of intellectual evolution. The ancient Greeks, or some of the principal thinkers among the Greeks, believed the world to be a living organism. As a result of the psychological dominance of the medieval Church, the vital energy of the universe was transfused into the being of a single, extra-cosmic "creator," and the moral energy of mankind was localized in a single individual—Jesus Christ. There was left only the inert "matter" which the Creator molded into form, and the human beings which were made from matter according to His form—in the "Image of God." Then came the great scientific heretics who accepted from the Church the doctrine of lifeless inert matter, but, after a time, rejected the idea of the creator entirely. Their theories were devoted to the proposition that there was nothing that a supposed creator could do that their machine analogy could not explain, so that the creator was not needed at all. Finally, at the dawn of the twentieth century, the machine explanation gave way to the mathematical one. But while the mathematical theory has greatly advanced our practical knowledge of the forces of nature, philosophically, the gain has been either negligible or non-existent.

Conceivably, future science will move in the direction of a science of universal life, and so unite the religion and the science of tomorrow with the religion and science of antiquity. This might mean the end of sectarianism in both religion and science.

Letter from SWITZERLAND

GENEVA.—The first session of the *Conférence diplomatique* which has been sitting in this city since last April has ended. Its purpose was to bring together not only delegates of the International Red Cross, but also diplomatic representatives of the governments concerned in an attempt to work out the details of the four great projects of last year's Stockholm Congress of the Red Cross. Under the leadership of the late Count Bernadotte these conventions had sought not only to regulate the conduct of war, but to *humanize* it! The conduct of war rather than the maintenance of peace filled the agenda of the Genève *Conférence.*

The delegates have laboured night and day revising the Stockholm Conventions "article by article, phrase by phrase, and often word by word." The result is that the final decisions are less revolutionary. For the sake of international solidarity, humanitarian interests have been made to play second fiddle. The experience of this last war has made it patent that the existing conventions relative to the sick and wounded, as also to the prisoners of war, needed both modification and enlargement. The most important new venture had to do with the protection of civilians. In the words of Monsieur Petitpierre, Chairman of the Conference: "It is urgent that the civil population as well as the wounded and the prisoners of war should have their charter assuring their protection." The charter provides against the taking of hostages, against deportations of individuals or of groups of individuals, and against torture, and provision is made for proper feeding of the captured civil population.

Monsieur Petitpierre defended this charter with these words:

> There may be those who will reproach this new convention for not going far enough, for not being sufficiently bold. They will criticize it for containing too many reservations and restrictions. We have had to strain ourselves to establish an equilibrium between the inevitable cruelties of war and the ardent desire which has been ours, to humanize it. But even if certain criticisms are justified and cannot be denied, this new convention for the protection of civilians is a document whose essential value cannot be questioned.

The Swiss press notes with especial regret that among the seventeen states which signed this civil charter on August 19 , the name of the United States did not appear. This is a dark shadow cast on the hopes which had attended the rest of the Conference. Of all the charters passed or adopted, this is the only one whose utility is considered as threatened by the failure to secure the backing of all the Great Powers. The United States, willing to implement conventions caring for prisoners, for the sick and wounded, yet does not interest itself in civilian populations. The impression made is not a happy one!

The texts of the Conventions are printed in French and English, either of which is considered legal, though in translation, there are obvious possibilities of different interpretations. These, the Swiss point out, are made use of by the Russians who have adopted now the French, now the English version, according to their present interests!

Whatever may be the practical results of the Conference, certain conclusions are unavoidable: war victims can count on protection by governments whose demands will compel respect; the necessity of maintaining certain neutral areas where disputes might be settled impersonally is generally admitted.

The work of this Conference has involved the consideration of very delicate questions. But the determination of the delegates to arrive at their goal has gained them widespread commendation for "the essential element of the success of the Conference." I will close with the suggestive fact that out of fifty-nine delegations participating in the meetings, ten took virtually no part in the debates—yet it was precisely these ten which voted for every convention!

SWITZERLAND CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
A CRITIC OF GANDHI

QUARRELS with the Freudian school of psychoanalysis are easy to support on various grounds. The difficulty is rather in being just to Freud, in view of the guilty emotionalism which surrounds the region of experience which he, rightly or wrongly, attempted to evaluate and in some measure to explain. Freud undertook to dredge deeps which many people prefer to have remain unexamined, and the simplest way of disposing of their embarrassment is to accuse Dr. Freud of having an unclean mind. It is possible to call this reaction unfair without agreeing in the least with either Dr. Freud's methods or his conclusions. And possibly, too, if people were more inclined to search their own feelings for canons of behavior in human relations, instead of accepting the "rules" of tradition, they could not be made to suffer psychological discomfort by anyone's psychoanalytical probings.

The Freudian approach to the emotions seems to cut two ways. It threatens exposure of hypocrisy, but it also violates an intuitive sense of reverence for the act of procreation, and as the response to both these tendencies may be inarticulately expressed in terms of feeling, criticism of the Freudian psychology has not been particularly luminous. In general, it may be said that the attacks upon and the defenses offered of Freudianism have been aridly sectarian, and that—in the view of this Department—far too much has already been written on the subject of sex in the form of quotation from "authorities." One would think that "sex" was as remote from ordinary human experience as the North Pole, needing an Admiral Byrd to supply charts and instruction on the subject.

But there is a phase of the Freudian influence which will bear examination—the tendency to sum up a man or a life in terms of some pat cliché of psychoanalysis. For example, in a review of Gandhi's recently published *Autobiography*, the English essayist, Herbert Read, has this to say:

> . . . Gandhi's attitude to sex was not rational, and certainly not humane. It was a revulsion unconsciously motivated by his early association of love and death. In fact, the death-wish, as an underlying motive, is probably a key to all Gandhi's actions. His fanatical vegetarianism (which did not stop at risking the death of other people), his fasting, his will to chastity—all can be interpreted as unconscious opposition of life. (The *Listener*, July 21.)

Mr. Read finds the *Autobiography* "banal . . . colorless and often tedious," having "neither fire nor force" and "unredeemed by the remotest breath of poetry." While Gandhi is admitted to be a "great humanitarian," his love for his fellow men is judged by Mr. Read to have been diluted by "an element of compensation for his feeling of inferiority." The "explanation" continues:

He [Gandhi] became a typical "agitator"—he was not content to do good within his own competency—he sought instruments of power to redress wrongs. He knew that power corrupts, and he tried to avoid that corruption by blunting the edge of the sword—by the strategy of nonviolence. He was repeatedly involved in compromise (and confesses: "All my life through, the very insistence on truth has taught me to appreciate the beauty of compromise"). His organised campaigns, by the very fact of organisation, became factors in power politics.

Gandhi, in short, was a heroic altruist guided by the death-instinct and his reaction to an inferiority complex.

Let us begin by making concessions to the "truth" in Mr. Read's analysis. On the whole, the autobiography seems the least interesting of Gandhi's writings. Mr. Gandhi, apparently, took himself very seriously when the bulk of this volume was written—a long time ago— and its bald recital of certain incidents of the marriage relationship forms no necessary part of his story, nor even of the exposition of his principles concerning marriage and sex. Details about the

practice of asceticism can be quite as oppressive as details about the art of love-making. But what of that? The important point is that everything that Gandhi believed in, talked about and taught was in some sense a personal discovery of his own. He was a man who seems to have rejected by instinct every outside authority—or rather, outside authorities simply made no impression on his consciousness. The moral facts of life, so far as he was concerned, were for him the facts of personal experience. Consequently, they seemed to him of tremendous significance. The man of genuine integrity lives a peculiarly isolated life. He has a natural immunity to the rule of conventions. He makes his own rules. And Gandhi's sharpened conscience gave the rules he made for himself extraordinary importance, so that he felt impelled to write about them and about his failures and successes in living up to them. Many people think he went "too far" in personal self-denial. How do they know? Perhaps they feel that Gandhi's rules are some sort of moral reproach to themselves. In this case, the weakness is theirs, not Gandhi's. A man who is seriously vulnerable to a moral reproach from someone other than himself is not really grown up as a human being.

There is the possibility, of course, that Gandhi did go too far, with respect to the tendency to direct the lives of other people. Krishnalal Shridharani reports in *The Mahatma and the World* that when a young man and a young woman among his disciples expressed a desire for marriage, there were times when he would say to them, "You will have no children," which amounted to a strenuous injunction to celibacy. We believe Gandhi was a wise man, but not *that* wise. On the other hand, the rigors of life at Gandhi's ashram, his vegetarianism, the basic rule of poverty—these are external disciplines eminently suited for the training of men and women who are to serve as teachers to the peasant masses of India. But even if celibacy is a key to all the higher mysteries, turning the key should still be a personal decision—like that made by Gandhi himself.

In justice, it should be said that there is no parade of "virtue" in Gandhi's discussion of the ins and outs of his strivings toward the ascetic ideal. He seems rather constrained by his obligation to "truth" to acquaint the reader with his shortcomings and failures in this direction. His campaign against birth-control is another matter. Here, the issue really turns on one's basic philosophy of nature and sense of the fitness of things. The economic argument for birth-control—and we know of no other—has great persuasions for those who are convinced of the primary importance of Economic Man. Gandhi, however, had other views of Man, and they are, we think, worth listening to.

Mr. Read seems to have a distinct distaste for nearly everything Gandhi stood for. He may, perhaps, find tiresome the ecstatic adulation of the Indian leader, but that adulation cannot diminish Gandhi's greatness, nor does an exaggerated critique of Gandhi's personal idiosyncrasies add to the stature of Mr. Read as an essayist and educator. Finally, the attempt to sum Gandhi up according to Freudian formulas is far more harmful in principle than Gandhi's occasionally ruthless moralism. No doubt neuroticism will account for the small fry who haunt the fringes of humanitarian movements, but to say that Gandhi became an "agitator" for Indian freedom because he felt "inferior" is degrading, not merely to Gandhi, but to the entire human race.

COMMENTARY
THE PRIVATE CITIZEN'S VOICE

LAST week, note was taken here of how newspaper reviewers in general have ignored Paul Blanshard's volume, *American Freedom and Catholic Power,* and readers were reminded that the *Nation,* in which portions of Mr. Blanshard's book first appeared, is still banned from the libraries of New York's public schools. Now comes information from the *Nation* (Oct. 1) that, according to available evidence, two thirds of the hundred or so newspapers which customarily print Eleanor Roosevelt's column, "My Day," excluded a recent column in which she wrote on the banning of the *Nation.*

Legally, these publishers were within their rights. So long as they pay for the syndicated column, they may publish it, or not, as they please. But the right of the public to consider the issues in such a controversy—or even to learn that the controversy exists—was certainly ignored. It was really the *fact* of the controversy that was suppressed in this case, for Mrs. Roosevelt's mild reproof of the "undemocratic procedure" of banning the *Nation* without a public hearing, coupled with her judgment that Blanshard's articles were "decidedly prejudiced," could hardly be called an attack on the Catholic Church. Her main point was that "both sides" of an issue need to be heard—a shining platitude for all except the totalitarian-minded. Yet this statement was deemed too hot to handle by even the large metropolitan Scripps-Howard daily, the New York *World-Telegram.*

When the advocacy of hearing both sides becomes a "dangerous thought" for the public press, the time has come to evolve new channels of public communication. In the May issue of the *Education Forum,* Judge Florence E. Allen proposed a revival of the pre-revolutionary Committees of Correspondence as a means "to educate the public not only to understand its needs but to realize its responsibilities." The Committees of Correspondence were first proposed by Samuel Adams in 1772, and in a few months eighty or more Massachusetts towns had local Committees. Similar groups were soon formed in the other colonies. The local Committees held regular meetings and informed the other Committees of their deliberations by letter. All the Committees were unofficial bodies, created by popular impulse, but such events as the Boston Tea Party and the calling of the Continental Congress were the result of their work.

Judge Allen writes broadly of the need for channels of communication which will give expression to the private citizen's intelligence—the bulwark of genuine democracy. The timidity of the press in the instance of the banning of the *Nation* is evidence of a more general weakness which could prove far more disastrous in other connections. In fact, that weakness is itself the disaster, could we but recognize it. Some sort of reincarnation of the Committees of Correspondence might be one way of recreating responsible public opinion in America.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A READER whose interest has been aroused by our sketchy comments on Gandhi's Basic Education for India has asked us to "write more about the system of discipline in the Gandhian schools." Those who have read this Department in the issues of July 13, 20 and 27, will probably recall that Gandhi's "discipline" was always regarded as a by-product of cooperative work rather than as a "system." The same principle applied to all of Gandhi's political endeavors, for he held that only the social order founded upon self-control would be able to sustain itself in the face of the inevitable struggles for power associated with political and economic life.

Even the rigid training provided by Gandhian leaders during the non-cooperation struggle against British rule made no attempt to force new converts into line by any form of pressure. Gandhi did stand at the head of a sort of army, it is true, but every member of that army had voluntarily sought membership in the ranks. The work of the leaders became one of organization, coordination and integration rather than wielding the fear of punishment for deviation.

This background is necessary if one is to understand the psychology inherent in Gandhi's idea of "Basic Education." Moreover, neither Sevagram nor any of the other training centers for Basic Education were compulsory. All of the teachers were present because they knew something of the philosophy and the objectives of the work of the school and wanted to be a part of it. Then, such was the "atmosphere" of the school that even illiterate peasant children at least *felt* they were approaching something new and valuable.

While Gandhi and many of his educational associates desired to introduce a system of compulsory education in India as soon as this proved feasible, we have been discussing only the results obtained in a non-compulsory system, and are not obligated to explore the possibilities of what may happen when and if compulsion is nationally adopted. We can say, though, that the Indian idea of "compulsion" is considerably different from our own, since the Hindu tradition infuses an idea of *cultural* "dharma" or duty. Then, too, the work of the Sevagram schools has been an integral part of general rural rehabilitation, planned autonomously by villages, leaving opportunity for voluntary acceptance of a broad national program of which Basic Education may be regarded as a part.

In turning through the pages of the various Sevagram reports so far compiled we were unable to find any advocacy of "discipline" in the systematized Western sense. In every instance where discipline is mentioned, the reader encounters a repetition of the article of faith already mentioned—that discipline is *not* a thing in itself. In a foreword by Gandhi to a report of the Zakir Husain Committee, he expresses the conviction that it is necessary to "educate village children so as to draw out all their faculties through some selected village handicrafts *in an atmosphere free from super-imposed restrictions."* (Italics ours.)

> Even the best of curricula can be made mere dead letter if the method of teaching and discipline adopted are not inspired by the spirit of activity. If subjects such as Social Studies and General Science are presented by the teachers as catalogues of facts to be passively accepted and learnt up by the children, the whole object of the syllabus will be defeated, and they will entirely fail to appreciate the real nature of the correlation amongst the various subjects.

This is to say, in effect, that unless the pupil is encouraged to develop general abilities of correlation between subjects, no *single* subject can be approached with enthusiasm, and no *real* discipline can emerge.

A commentary by A. J. B. Kripalani considers Basic Education's contribution to discipline in this way:

> When a handicraft becomes the method, medium and the language of instruction, not only will the child's capacities be brought out, but he will find joy in his work, his school, his companions and teachers, which he lacks today. The teacher will no more be the harsh taskmaster that he is, but an elder playmate, friend, guide and leader. The active, the energetic, the refractory, the mischievous and the turbulent, the bad material of the school of today,

those who are constantly subject to the rebuke and the lash, will under this system of education, come to their own and enrich society with their peculiar gifts.

If self-discipline and self-government in educational institutions are not to degenerate into mere forms and if we are to be saved from witnessing the farce of legislative assemblies and parliaments, caricatured in schools and colleges, there must be some real problems which the pupils have to solve. There must be some kind of genuine organized society in the school itself.

Kripalani also suggests that the usual methods of attempting to instil "discipline" on the basis of religious commands is unsatisfactory:

Apart from purely political and civic virtues the labour school encourages the cultivation of moral virtues. The morality of today may not be based on religious dogmas, specially those of a revealed religion. . . .

Current morality cannot be cut off from the sum total of life as it is lived in the complex world today. It must also periodically change with the advance of knowledge. The basic principles, for instance, of truth, justice and non-violence must remain the same, for they are at the root of the social order. Without them no organised life is possible. But these principles have ever to be introduced in changing forms and institutions. Today we may not mould our morals and embody them in institutions of a bygone age, historic and prehistoric. We may also not buttress this kind of morality by the idea of the fatherhood of God and his real or supposed commandments. We can only build morality on the actual fact of the brotherhood of man and his consequent equality and liberty.

A further report produces specific evidence that Gandhian discipline, though seldom talked about, works. One committee, replying to the question, "What has been the reaction of the new type of education on the children?" reported as follows:

In basic schools there are clear indications that an all-round development of children's individuality is going on. Thanks to the "free discipline" which obtains in these schools, children are joyfully active, flitting about like busy bees in their pursuit of creative activities. They look upon their teachers not as forbidding warders but as friends to be trusted. There have been occasions when some pupils of the first grade felt hungry and did not hesitate in the least to demand something to eat from their teachers. They have been able to rid themselves of their traditional shyness and timidity. They are decidedly neater, more active and smarter than their fellows in other schools. There are marked signs of an awakened sense of responsibility in the manner in which they discharge their many-sided activities in the school.

The cases of truancy have become rare and the average attendance in basic schools has shown a marked upward tendency. In self-expressional activities they have done more than was expected.

It is natural to hope, therefore, that those interested in making Indian education "compulsory" will remember that the greatest value of the Gandhian program has come from its *decentralized* and *self-energized* genius.

FRONTIERS
Other-Worldliness

A VOLUME like *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*—now issued in its second edition by the Oxford University Press—designed as a guide through the maze of illusions said to beset human beings after leaving the body, is not a book likely to turn the footsteps of the wayward Westerner to the intricate pathways of Buddhist theology. Mr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz's compilation of an English rendering of the *Bardo Thödol is* doubtless a contribution to modern knowledge of Buddhist metaphysics—or, more properly, Buddhist psychology, for it is doubtful that there is a Buddhist metaphysics apart from psychology—yet there is something repellent about these minutely detailed directions on how to avoid the Buddhist purgatory, or, at any rate, how to get through it as soon as possible. Mr. Evans-Wentz notes that the Buddha wrote nothing down. There are moments when one wishes that his disciples had followed his example. But then, why should we demand of Buddhists a restraint that no followers of other religious teachers have observed? Without the Bible, there would have been no Bible history, no Bible criticism, higher or otherwise, and countless theologians would have lacked employment through many centuries.

It is not that *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* holds no interest for the human hope of immortality. Rather, it is the almost fanatical grip on the details of immortality which offends. A man who is in such extreme fear of the bite of Cerberus somehow deserves to be bitten, and we suspect that neither Gautama nor Plato—who wrote a much sketchier if similar work in the tenth book of the Republic—would give much time to a study of the *Bardo Thödol.* They had more important things to do.

Mr. Evans-Wentz's long introduction, as a comparative study of religious beliefs about death, conducts the Western reader to a world with which he has had little or no contact—a world of thought devoted to the Art of Dying. A shuddery sort of subject, one might suppose, but the author thinks otherwise. He finds such of the ancient Mystery teachings about proper preparation for death as have been borrowed from pagan religions by the primitive Christian churches to be "in outstanding contrast, sociologically and culturally, to an Earth-limited medical science which has no word of guidance to convey to the dying concerning the after-death state, but which, on the contrary, frequently augments rather than ameliorates, by its questionable practices, the unfounded fears and often extreme unwillingness to die of its teeth-bed patients, to whom it is likely to have administered stupefying drugs and injections." Here is a writer who feels that death, like birth, may be aborted by malpractice, and who urges that the departure from this life, instead of being dreaded and hated even in thought, "can and should be accompanied by solemn joyousness."

There seems little doubt that his claim of the superior technical knowledge of the Tibetan text over Western treatises on the subject of death can be vindicated. What, at the outset, appears to be an unbelievably fanciful work becomes, through this comparison, an extraordinarily detailed study of psychological states of being, making it quite improbable, on internal evidence, that the *Bardo Thödol is* the product of the over-heated imagination of oriental priestcraft. Instead, one is led to feel that its Tibetan authors had too much "knowledge," rather than too little, and that its excess of detail has held in bondage the more generous and spontaneous aspects of the human spirit. Here, perhaps, is our principal complaint. The Tibetans—and in this the Hindus might as well be included, too—are heirs to an incalculably ancient store of psychological and religious tradition, brought to so high a degree of minute development that what living truth may have been present to support this wild proliferation of mysticism is now so smothered by scholastic elaboration as to be continually out of proportion to normal human comprehension. That truth was there, and still is, in some shape or other, seems

impossible to deny. The parallels drawn by Mr. Evans-Wentz between Tibetan, Indian, Greek and Egyptian wisdomism are too plain to be ignored, and unless the reader is ready to abandon the greatest philosophers and religious teachers of history as a set of fools, inventors of impossible theologies, it must be concluded that some deep current of verity is represented, if only obliquely, by such works.

But it is this obliquity with which we are presently concerned. Mr. Evans-Wentz came to his study of Tibetan after-death doctrines from similar activities in Egypt, so that his comparison of the *Bardo Thödol* with the more famous Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, from which he borrowed his title for the present work, may illustrate our criticism. Both Books of the Dead describe a scene of Judgment in which the soul of the deceased is conducted before juries of deities who interrogate him as to the morality of his life. And in both ordeals, the soul on trial is supposed to plead perfect innocence. But, as H. Frankfort points out in his *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, the intelligent Egyptian had little fear that the forty-two judges of the court of Osiris could bring him unmerited harm. The Egyptians believed that the judgment would be in accord with their own lives. "The old inscriptions are in keeping with the general conviction that the gods insist upon Maat—order, justice, truth—and that those who move against it are doomed." The identity of the presiding deity—Ra or Osiris—mattered little. As Frankfort says:

> . . . just because the Egyptians believed justice and truth to be part of the cosmic order, there could be no question of a judgment of all the dead in the sense which biblical religion gives to that conception. For the Egyptian, the righteous man was in harmony with the divine order, and there the matter ended. This view, which does away with a formal judgment altogether, has great dignity. . . . I merely mention the judgment here because many scholars, in their anxiety to make the ancient Egyptian appear like one of us, have laid great stress on this "judgment of the dead" as evidence of his advanced standards. As we have seen, the Egyptians were firmly convinced that one should live according to common human decency and that those acts which we too call evil lead to disaster. But his fear of the forty-two judges of the netherworld is in line with his fear that he might forget his name or that he might have to walk upside down. . . .

The ceremonial part of Egyptian religion, in short, was not the heart of the matter. Nor are the ceremonial aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, although apparently much more sophisticated than Egyptian religion, essentials of Buddhist philosophy. The psychological incantations of the *Bardo Thödol* it is true, are directed at liberating the soul from the bondage of illusions. He is to understand that the states and conditions of the soul after death are the creations of his own mind, and the formulas are intended to assist his concentration on this emancipating idea. But, somehow, we remain unconverted. It's just too much trouble to go to to get into heaven—or out of it, for the severe Tibetan religion seeks no illusions at all, not even heavenly ones. We don't say that *Bardo Thödol* won't work, but only that it doesn't seem worth while to try to *make* it work. Perhaps you could call it a scripture devoted to the Higher Escapism.