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AN IMPORTANT DISAGREEMENT

A LETTER from a reader invites the editors of MANAS to distinguish more carefully in its articles between the two meanings of Idealism: (1) A statement of desirable social objectives; and (2) a metaphysical thesis which, our correspondent says, "is at least open to question and deserves explicit examination rather than implicit assumption."

We agree that the distinction is important and should be clearly made; some confusion may have arisen because of the conviction of the editors that "desirable social objectives" are literally unattainable without "a metaphysical thesis," and because discussions in MANAS sometimes shift from one of these views to the other without too much warning to the reader. The first meaning of idealism, we think, is obviously a part of the paper's policy and needs no special explanation. The second was explicitly declared by the editorial in the first number (Jan. 7), in the statement that "MANAS has adopted and starts out with the platonic principle that 'thinking is the soul talking to itself.' The fact of human egoity, of man's intellectual and moral nature, as given in experience, is the substance of the editorial position of this magazine." The lead article in the same issue referred approvingly to Socratic idealism and to "the doctrine of the human soul as an integral being of moral character and intent." We have since made plain our interest in unorthodox theories of immortality and have endeavored to provide suggestive treatments of what various ideas of immortality may mean to the individual man and to society. Such views are candidly metaphysical and we make no bones about it.

Other metaphysical principles for which MANAS stands include the general idea of moral law—as embodied, for example, in Emerson's essay, "Compensation" —and the idea of progress as synonymous with the growth of moral intelligence. These conceptions form a platform of philosophic affirmation, and the basis, also, of further inquiry and criticism in MANAS. They pervade the entire magazine and may be taken for granted unless other responsibility is indicated by the signature of a contributor.

These principles are held out of regard for their competence to rationalise and to enlarge the moral life and the vision of the individual. Metaphysics means, therefore, for MANAS, the science of *necessary* "truths" or working hypotheses of idealism—the means of arriving at the philosophy which, we find, we cannot get along without.

Returning to our correspondent's letter, there are specific criticisms of the "Frontiers" article in MANAS for July 7, "A Psychiatric Contribution," in which Origen's Neoplatonic theory of the pre-existence of the soul was preferred to the psychological doctrine of infant conditioning as the explanation of the dominant moral tendencies of the individual. We shall try to summarize the objections offered by this reader:

> 1. The "conditionings of a few short years" are in no sense miraculous, and saying "short" indicates the bias of the author rather than the child's experience. Continuous environmental pressures, the child's absorption of unverbalized parental attitudes and unanalyzed but socially approved behavior accumulates the "moral tendencies" without smacking of the miraculous.
>
> 2. You say that such "conditionings" are equivalent to "predestination": but since conditioning permits all possibilities of desirable or undesirable accretions in the individual, the outcome is not predestined at all. Man's nature (whatever it is) predestines only that some conditioning will occur, but *what* associations are formed will depend upon the particular environment. "Predestination" seems more applicable to the author's concept of "a pre-existing and surviving moral agent," which, instead of placing moral responsibility on the shoulders of the individual, very effectively hands that mantle to "pre-existing" conditions or a creator charged with supplying moral ideas. This is fatal, for it takes the building of social morality out of our hands, in favor of some mystical supernatural. MANAS cannot

seriously work toward a better social scheme and still approve this escape from the problem.

4. Our structure, bodily needs and basic reaction possibilities are outside the field of our choices, but they are powerful factors in determining them. The child's responsibilities enlarge as more and more of his decisions grow out of his unique personality, and his capacity to take into account the inner and outer determinisms sums up the degree of his moral responsibility. Thus, responsibility varies with times and individuals, depending upon inherited moral educability (comparable to intellectual educability,) knowledge of natural processes, emotional stability, etc.

5. Even if one agrees with the experimental psychologists who deny continuous personal traits and define human situations wholly in terms of behavior, it would still be possible to formulate rules of conduct—to have, that is, "conscious ethical behavior" —without a concept of the self, least of all, of the self as an entity apart from bodily existence on earth. I fear the author was given an axe, and trying to do it unobserved.

Concerning this letter—plainly an excellent statement of a point of view—we should like to suggest, first, that the ethical ground from which its analysis proceeds is identical with the ethical position of MANAS. Paragraph 3 contains the major objection, asserting that the doctrine of pre-existence "takes the building of social morality out of our hands, in favor of some mystical supernatural." The writer does not argue that pre-existence is incredible, but that its consequences, as a doctrine, are bad. He suggests that finding the origin of moral tendencies in some period of existence prior to the present life is as bad or the same as deriving them from a personal Creator.

Naturally, we agree without qualifications to the rejection of any theory which replaces personal responsibility with the "will-of-God." Historically, however, those supporting the "will-of-God" hypothesis for the explanation of human character have always been the most determined opponents of pre-existence. Origen, from whom we originally quoted the idea in "Frontiers," was grimly anathematized in 543 A.D. by a Church Council held at Constantinople and also by the Emperor Justinian, for having taught pre-existence. It seems obvious that the condemnation took place because pre-existence, as a metaphysical conception of the soul's independent and enduring life, threatened the irrational authority of God, and therefore, the irrational authority and power of the Church—His institution on earth. So, fundamentally and ethically, Origen, and many other believers in pre-existence, are on the side of our correspondent: they want a theory of the soul which retains individual responsibility. This idea is explicit in the Buddhist teaching of rebirth. As Edwin Arnold put it—

Pray not! the Darkness will not brighten! Ask
Nought from the Silence, for it cannot speak!

. . . seek
Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruit and cakes;
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought;
Each man his prison makes.

. . .

The Books say well, my Brothers! each man's life
The outcome of his former living is;
The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrows and woes
The bygone right breeds bliss.

This does not sound like an escape from moral responsibility.

We shall not defend the credibility of pre-existence, here, except on this basis of how it has affected its believers. In Buddhism, for example, the doctrine is utterly divorced from a personal God, suggesting simply the mechanism of the moral law of compensation—or "Karma," to use the Buddhist term. A similar explanation of the Orphic and Pythagorean teaching of palingenesis was provided three weeks ago (MANAS, July 28) in Fabre d'Olivets's analysis of the Golden Verses of Pythagoras.

Our correspondent thinks that there is nothing unreasonable in the theory that the conditionings of infancy and early childhood shape decisively the character of the future adult. To us, it seems self-evident that tendencies of character are rooted in patterns of motivation and in the quality of ethical awareness, both of which are in principle the result of conscious moral decision, later becoming habitual attitudes of mind. To argue that these moral

qualities are largely the product of external conditioning at an early age *is* to defend a kind or predestination by the environment, over which the infant or child has absolutely no personal control. He begins to have control, as our correspondent suggests, only as he begins to choose for himself, and even then his choices are profoundly affected by the traits of character already established. The theory of pre-existence suggests that *he* is responsible for those traits; the conditioning theory says that he is not. If one is to support the idea of moral law, it seems necessary to suppose that the individual has a rational (causal) connection with *all* his moral qualities and tendencies, for the good and evil of his existence are determined by those qualities. Any other view requires the supposition that the moral law operates sporadically, sometimes working justice and sometimes not. But this, as a definition of moral law, is a contradiction in terms.

Here, then, is the essence or our correspondent's position. Toward the prejudicial or fortunate conditions of childhood, he maintains a wholly neutral valuation: the moral situation is not present—not even potentially—in conditionings, and need not be accounted for according to the requirements of some general theory of justice. They are inexplicable intrusions into the moral life of man, creating an infinite variety of practical inequities among men by partially predetermining their future lives. They are, therefore, from a metaphysical or philosophical point of view, as unacceptable as factors of moral causation as the predestining whims of an anthropomorphic creator—or, "some mystical supernatural."

Compared with the creation hypothesis, conditionings do have the advantage of being unresponsive to prayer—you take your conditionings and make the best of them, without blaming God or asking Him for a better deal. That is why, we think, the skeptical position with respect to the nature of man is morally superior to the teaching of orthodox religion; but skepticism still leaves us with the collection of morally uncaused tendencies with which every human being starts out in life. An idealistic philosophy demands that some rational explanation of those tendencies be sought and found, and the doctrine of pre-existence, anathematized by the Christian Church some fourteen hundred years ago, is one solution for the problem. There is no plausible scientific argument against the theory, and numerous disciplined minds have regarded it with favor, from David Hume to W. Macneile Dixon. (We especially recommend a reading of *The Human Situation* by Dixon, being the Gifford Lectures for 1935-37, on this entire subject.)

One last point: In his paragraph 5 our correspondent urges that "conscious ethical behavior" may be pursued without "a concept of self, least of all, of the self as an entity apart from bodily existence." Now it is certain that ethical views may be held by men who do not believe in immortality. The Stoics are an ancient illustration, the "earnest atheists" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a modern. (See page 6 in MANAS for Feb. 18 on this point.) The "Frontiers" article under discussion said, "Without a clear and ennobling concept of the self, there can be little if any conscious ethical behavior at all." The statement, we think, stands—on the psychiatric evidence presented and on human experience generally. Aggressive philosophical materialism itself began, in the eighteenth century, with Lamettrie and d'Holbach, out of regard for the dignity of man—certainly a concept of the self. But that a particular view of the nature of man, or the self, once served to energize a liberating and revolutionary struggle against sacerdotal authority does not mean that there is no better, no more consistent and comprehensive idea of the self to be gained. MANAS aims to pursue this quest.

Letter from **ENGLAND**

LONDON.—What is this public mind which presumably has erected or permitted others to erect towering structures of governmental machinery, having power even of life or death over the individual? Is it responsible for what an English writer (Mr. L. H. Myers)has called "the deep-seated vulgarity that lies at the heart of our civilization"? Certainly, the reaction of that mind to the swift passage of evolution from 1940 to 1945 is plain for all to see. As the members of the American Commission that directed the development of atomic energy pointed out in the introduction to their report, mankind travelled from the first basic discovery in 1940 to the day of Hiroshima in 1945 as far as from the discovery of fire to the building of the first locomotive. Yet meantime religious bigotry and superstition have donned new forms of a scientific order. The public mind is not so free as we had supposed, nor is it so ready to face unpleasant facts or to accept demonstrated truth as might have been expected from the hopes placed in the emancipatory march science. In fact, we seem to be relapsing into the darkness of witchcraft and sorcery, with politicians and scientists joined in an unholy brotherhood as priests of a new dispensation!

Three main symptoms of the present situation, so far as Europe is concerned, are given by Dr. Hanns Lilje, Bishop of Hanover, in a recent English broadcast—spiritual fog, spiritual paralysis, and the loss of all flexibility of life. For him the problem is "whether we can rediscover well-springs of peace and tranquillity in this haunted world." He asks wistfully if we ever give a thought to the fact that one single human act of kindness sometimes is much more effective than all the achievements of an efficient organization. There is a profound truth in this approach to the torments of the modern world. Equally important, however, is the need of realizing that true compassion includes knowledge as well as love. Men must save themselves; there is no vicarious salvation possible. Our knowledge must be deepened as well as extended. If Communism, for instance, meant originally a free and just society in which community of property was at the service of all, we have to understand why it has become a world-wide political tyranny which threatens the very existence of individual values, and identified with a "dictatorship of the proletariat." This is not purely a political paradox. It has fundamental moral dimensions.

When Lenin wrote: "It is necessary . . . to use any ruse, cunning, unlawful method, evasion, concealment of truth" (*The Infantile Sickness of Leftism in Communism*), he was advocating the exploitation for revolutionary purposes of a historical fact. This actuality is put succinctly by William C. Bullitt *in The Great Globe Itself* (London 1947):

> Man is caught in a trap of his own invention. He has acquired and is acquiring each year, increased control over the forces of inanimate nature; but he has not acquired and is not acquiring any increased control over the forces of his own nature . . . the years from 1914 to 1946 have been a period of moral decay in international customs, a period of de-civilization.

By what process has this degradation been brought about? Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* has always been a disturbing work for the "progressive" rationalist who thinks he is a realist and writes contemptuously of sentiment and compassion. Particularly is he distressed when his attention is directed (as it was by Dostoevsky) to the fact that the advocates of violent revolution are never really the illiterates; they are the products of an educational system common to most of Europe. It is they who manipulate the public mind towards selfish and destructive aims—the end in their eyes justifying the means. "If, in moments of passion," wrote Norman Angell (*The Public Mind,* 1926), "intelligence can only operate by virtue of a certain moral discipline, then education in the sense of greater knowledge will not of itself save us . . . 'Learning' may be used to justify our passions to ourselves." In this

view, the "intelligent" exploiters and developers of immensely dangerous forces of an amoral nature are legion; in no field of human thought and action are they absent. Because of these things, and the growing tyranny of the mass mind under the impact of clever ideologies, many thoughtful people here are being driven to study again the teachings of Tolstoy and Thoreau, a great Russian and a great American. Referring to Dr. Seidel Canby's recently published selection of *The Works of Thoreau*, a leading article in the London *Times Literary Supplement* (Feb. 14, 1948) remarked that Thoreau's "solitary speculations in Concord have acquired a world-wide significance . . . 'I think we should be men first and subjects afterwards', was Thoreau's blunt way of claiming the right to free exercise of the judgment of moral sense." Without the exercise of such a right by individuals, collective judgments and public opinion become the instruments of slavery. The world needs a new Declaration of Independence!

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
THE CULTURE OF INDIA

A NUMBER of interesting things could be reported of the *Hindustan Review* (a MANAS exchange), but what impresses the Western reader most is that a periodical reflecting India's intellectual life draws upon the living stream of cultural resources flowing from a past numbering thousands of years, as well as upon contemporary thought and scholarship. To illustrate his point, a writer in the *Hindustan Review* will as easily cite episodes from the life of Krishna, India's great religious teacher, of "Christ," or describe an exploit of Hanuman, the mythological Monkey King of the *Ramayana*, as call attention to the more mundane events of Indian history.

Comparable usage in the United States would mean that a writer in the Atlantic Monthly might discuss the activities of Paul Bunyan in an article on forest conservation, or introduce a passage from Jonathan Edwards on the freedom of the will in order to clinch an argument for some sort of social legislation.

This parallel, of course, is exaggerated. The use of their wealth of philosophical and religious tradition by Indian writers is neither ingenuous nor undiscriminating, and it is the lack of a similar tradition in the West—excepting only the husks of medieval ideology—which makes a more suggestive comparison difficult, if not impossible. The question of which cultural situation—with or without a great cultural tradition—is "better" has little pertinence. The important thing is the fact of the difference and its effect on thought, on the human approach to social and moral problems.

In the United States, for example, literacy, the ability to read and write, has been the great goal of educational progress. Reading and writing are tools of communication, of mutual understanding, and in a country where the chief tradition has been founded upon the idea of a definite break with more ancient tradition—self-government instead of monarchy and the divine right of kings; freedom of religion instead of orthodox dogmas supported by the State—the practical means of communication assume more than ordinary importance. The first generation of American patriots was as seriously devoted to plans and projects for universal education in the United States as they were to winning the war for independence and formulating the principles of government in the Constitution. In other words, culture, in the United States, was to be deduced from rational principles and its meaning and implications to be spread though universal education. The past might afford suggestions, isolated inspirations, but the foundation of American culture was not to be traditional at all. It was, and was meant to be, something new.

The historic culture of India is vastly different from the European cultural pattern from which the American colonists divorced themselves by revolution. Despite the recent communal conflicts between Hindu, Muslim and Sikh, the religion of the Indian majority, Hinduism, is a broadly tolerant, philosophically hospitable faith. Affording immeasurable metaphysical profundity for the intellectually inclined, it offers also an inexhaustible diversity of allegory, symbolism and imagery, capable of multiple interpretation. For ages, through story, fable and song, through drama and dance, these basic materials have been the culturally organic environment of the Indian mind, providing illustrations for the moral educator, the political leader and the national reformer. Children in the outlying villages—and some 90 per cent of India's people live in villages—who would never learn to read and write were nevertheless schooled in the world's greatest epic literature, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* (the latter said to be the original of the Iliad of ancient Greece), gaining, thus, a cultural outlook which, although in a sense "simple," was never primitive or unrefined. Without this broad cultural unity of the Indian people, Gandhi could never have moved so many millions to act together on behalf of India's freedom. With a sure instinct as well as an obvious sincerity of

belief, Gandhi articulated the potential strength of India's religious culture and engaged it in the struggle for national liberation. He was able to relate the non-sectarian principles of the *Bhagavad-Gita* to the moral battlefield; and he became, thereby, in a very real sense, all India's *guru*, for the work of the guru, or spiritual guide, is to be "adjuster" rather than instructor or director.

Continuing the comparison between India and America, and neglecting for the moment the inadequacies and failures of both civilizations, one might suggest that while in the United States may be recognized the extreme development of the intellectual or rational faculty, as a creative, not merely a critical, power, in India resides the promise of a spiritual renaissance. The *Hindustan Review* embodies a strong current of moral inspiration, but lacks what might be termed an intellectual sophistication. At the same time, it exhibits curiously unassimilated elements of British culture: just why its editors felt it advisable to print an article discoursing on "the rich, wholesome flavour of present-day whiskey" under the title of "The Pleasures of Good Drinks," will have to remain an unsolved mystery. Probably many years must pass before Indian publicists learn to distinguish carefully between the good and the bad in Western influence—as long, perhaps, as it will take Western journalists to recognize how profoundly their own countrymen need to absorb the almost instinctive transcendentalism of the Eastern religious tradition. The East labors under the heavy burden of traditional spiritual pride and the harvest of centuries-old moral lethargy; while the West, youthful and arrogant, is only now beginning to recognize that its bonds are the self-made confinement of aggression and irresponsible acquisitiveness, pursued without the measure and restraint of such regulatory principles as the Hindu idea of *Dharma*—the factor of moral coordination between widely differing social and economic functions.

But the Hindustan Review reflects a self-conscious endeavor on the part of Indian thinkers to attain a workable synthesis between Eastern and Western ideas. Four articles in the May-June issue show the benefit of both historic perspectives and the exceptional awareness they produce in combination. One, "Congress and the Socialists," discusses the function of an opposition party for modern India, which is to offer constructive criticism of the policies and efficiency to the Congress Party. The article concludes:

> Those in Congress, if they care to penetrate the future, will welcome this new Opposition. Till very recently, if either the government of the Congress went astray or if an appeal to reason failed, the Mahatma could embark on a fast and thus bring them back. But today who can successfully resort to such moral tactics? Unless a competent Opposition, strong and effective, is now set up, sooner or later the country is bound to have rigorous totalitarianism or chaos. Thus, the quitting of the Socialists from the Congress is welcome not only in the interests of the Parties but in the larger interest, present and future, of the country. It is now for the Socialists to prove their worth.

Another article delineates "The Challenge of Independence" in terms of the duties of various communal and social groups in India, with emphasis on the peculiarly difficult situation of Indian labor and the Government's need for time to work out better conditions for both workers and peasants. "Education for Communal Harmony" deals with the inclusiveness of India's cultural tradition and calls for deliberate effort by students to break down the barriers of communal antipathies. "Good-will squads" made up of Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and Christian students are proposed to carry on peace propaganda and to stand "as a solid and united phalanx to resist any attempt at rioting and blood-shed by hooligans and goondas [gangsters]." Some American readers will recognize the similarity of these good-will squads to the CORE cells organized in this country by the Fellowship of Reconcilliation, whose efforts are directed against racial discrimination (CORE stands for Committee on Racial Equality). The fourth article deals with

India's extraordinary need for teachers and recalls C. Rajagopalachari's proposal in 1914 for the conscription of teachers—"the extension of the principle of military conscription, almost universally accepted in military service, to another profession." Readers are reminded that Gandhi himself, in 1937, supported the idea of the conscription of teachers, saying:

> If Mussolini could impress the youth of Italy for the service of his country, why should not we? Youths have contributed a lot to the success of the movement for freedom . . . and I call upon them to give freely a year of their lives to the service of the nation. Legislation, if it is necessary in this respect, will not be compulsion, as it could not be passed without the majority of our representatives.

According to Maulana Azad, Indian Minister of Education, it will take forty years to overcome the mass illiteracy of the Indian people, unless the conscription of teachers is adopted. A total of 2,200,000 teachers is needed, under the plan known as the "Sargent Scheme" for post-war education, which would mean the conscription of one out of every 108 persons of India's adult population. Gandhi's dislike of "compulsion," per se, is implicit in the passage quoted above, and one wonders about the value of coercive measures, even for education. The results of this plan, should it be adopted, will be of interest all over the world.

COMMENTARY
AFTERTHOUGHTS

AN attempt is made, in MANAS comment and review, to be accurate in the report of facts without prejudice in interpretations. Sometimes this is difficult, especially when the facts come to us from others, and when accounts of events relied upon conceal the special interests of the writer. For the most part, we depend upon what we hope is our capacity to recognize the ring of integrity in writing and reporting, making due allowance for unintentional bias.

Occasionally, we may feel that we have inadequately represented some man, situation or book, and we plan, in such cases, to share with our readers both the feeling and the reason which caused it to arise.

To date, our "conscience" is clear. We wondered a bit about the fairly rosy picture of Yugoslavia ("They Built a Railroad," MANAS, May 19), especially after reading an unsympathetic New York *Times Book Review* criticism of Robert St. John's *The Silent People Speak*, on which our article largely depended for its facts. However, Tito's revolt against the Cominform's insistence upon the rapid collectivization of Yugoslavia seemed to offer considerable vindication of Mr. St. John's trustworthiness, so we stopped wondering about that article.

Then, after giving editorial approval of Ernst Wiechert's *Forest of the Dead* (MANAS, June 30), based entirely on the internal evidence of this unusual volume, we saw a passage in *the Saturday Review of Literature* implying that Wiechert, although a victim of Buchenwald, had not displayed a properly consistent opposition to the Hitler regime. It is easy, of course, to say such things, and the quality of Weichert's writing was enough to satisfy our own minds of his essential merit, but we were nevertheless curious about what a German active in the denazification program might say concerning Wiechert. Accordingly, we asked this MANAS correspondent, and gained the following reply:

> Wiechert's name appears when the rare German literature of the Resistance is mentioned. During a recent writers' conference, the problem of whether a writer ought to be "political" or not was much discussed. It is Wiechert who answers this question by all his works and his whole life. The melancholy and mystical East Prussian writer was not a political fighter. He addressed himself rather to the single human being than to the whole society. And it is characteristic of the adulteration of all human values by Nazism that an author like Wiechert, who personally suffered so much, had to become a political fighter—quite contrary to his nature—if he wished to preserve his ideals of truth and reality. Most of all, Wiechert struggled against the moral poisoning of German youth and against religious intolerance. What he expressed clearly in his address to the students of Munich in 1934 was said as distinctly in his book, The White Buffalo, as that his recitations from this book were several times interrupted by representatives of the Nazi regime . . . .
>
> That Wiechert did not give up his belief in charity and justice reveals his inner greatness. His new book, The Jeromin Children, is full of grief and sorrow, but it will not be regarded as dull, despite this uniformity of tone. His books show the characteristic mood of the German people. In this sense, today, Ernst Wiechert is the most important representative of his country.

So, we feel wholly justified in ignoring *SRL'S* sneer at Wiechert.

Finally, we think it well to report that Richard Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequences* (reviewed July 28) is being vigorously attacked as reactionary, obscurantist and blindly medieval. What might be termed the "cleverest" of these onslaughts appeared in *SRL* in April 10, to which interested readers should refer to see how bad a very good book can be made to sound by a man who disagrees with it and is a capable writer. But the *SRL* critic, Dixon Wecter, is consistently unfair to Mr. Weaver. For example, he compares the latter, unfavorably, to T.E. Hulme, a remarkable English essayist who was killed in the first World War. Hulme, however, was a Christian who believed in the Original Sin and

Weaver is a Platonist who does not—a difference so important that if Mr. Wecter can ignore it, we shall ignore his review.

This, at the present time, is the full extent of our "afterthoughts."

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CHILDREN
. . . AND OURSELVES

WE have been thinking lately about the perennial failure of younger and older generations to respond constructively to each other's ideas and attitudes. Somewhere in the midst of this mystery, we are convinced, is something that might help considerably in the training of children. The "cleavage between the generations," of course, is not clearly delineated until children have ceased technically to be children, for only when the minds of the young gain a measure of maturity are they able to challenge seriously the views of their elders.

One of our difficulties in understanding the conflicts between generations may stem from the common assumption that extreme and therefore foolish ideas are invariably supported by youth, while seasoned knowledge is reflected in the views of middle-aged and elderly people. We are all familiar with remarks such as, "I myself, had ideas identical with yours when I was your age, and after you have lived and learned more—as I have—you will see what happens to such notions as the result of experience."

Idealism, romanticism, courage against odds, and "radicalism" are still the qualities—belonging primarily to youth—which keep humanity from the numb despair which would strike the soul if all men lived like well-adjusted vegetables. The ideals of youth, as such, may be better balanced from a human standpoint than the fears and "conservatisms" of their elders. To live without any brash, or at least fervent, enthusiasms—how sad a fate! The young think with considerable daring, are often less concerned with expediency, even if only from ignorance of the ways of the world, and so it may be that youth thinks more directly and clearly than age. (As an interesting correlation to this suggestion, some recent statistics compiled by psychologists working with various systems of mental testing indicate that the average adult of sixty has a mental age equal to that of a ten-year-old—suggesting that the adult capacity to adapt to and deal with new experiences is at low ebb at that very time of life when our savants and politicians are revered as venerable "authorities.")

Yet there ought also to be some truth in the common belief that the middle-aged and elderly often develop characteristics nearly impossible for the youthful to achieve. This may possibly be explained by the fact that while the *ideas* of youth can often be clear and admirable, the ability of young men and women to be *undeviating in pursuit of their ideals* is another matter. While youth attempts more, youth fails more often, due to something more than brashness in the undertaking: there is some internal quality which human beings seem to develop with maturity which gives them a continuity of conviction in respect to the major orientation of their lives. This continuity of conviction, we are convinced, is developed only with full maturity (not, of course, just a matter of years) and becomes either an extremely progressive force in society or a retrogressive one, according to the nature of the philosophy held. Yet the fully mature adult understands, far better than the young person, the necessity for refraining from making up one's mind until he is sure that the decisions made will be carried directly to the conclusions logically anticipated for them.

If this theorizing is in any way correct, the older generation might approach the younger with the frank admission that to the younger belong the laurels for clearest aspiration, for the fresh, creative viewpoints which are necessary to the solution of current dilemmas. (Youth is for a time free of institutionalization, and does not accept what exists simply because it exists.) Yet at the same time, elders may emphasize that nothing should be undertaken which cannot be completed, that no one should announce ideas and ideals to the world before he or she is sufficiently dedicated to fight for them, if necessary, to whatever "bitter end" circumstances may decree. This is the

potential contribution, we contend, of the older generation to the younger. The elders have learned that no ideas are of value unless supported by a sustained conviction.

Youth need never be derided for its ideas, however radical or "out of this world" they may sound. But youth should be sharply called to account for changing those ideas with rapidity, without taking the responsibility of putting them to the test of practice, and for often failing to recognize the moral obligation which falls upon the shoulders of anyone who makes a fervent proclamation of belief or who adopts a course of action for which he claims theoretical validity.

Not many adults, unfortunately, are themselves completely consistent, but we can find a few—the men who have something to teach us, whether or not we believe in what they profess to stand for in either philosophical or political terms. One of the figureheads of conservatism, for instance, Henry Ford, had a great deal to teach to fervent, liberal youth, not because Henry Ford's ideas were "right," and the revolutionary tendencies of young socialists and anarchists "wrong," but because Henry Ford lived his convictions and was a consistent man.

If this type of distinction between the generations is valid, it must be possible to recognize the importance of emphasizing continuity of motivation and constancy of effort in the very youngest of children. Respect and admire their ideas, derogate none of them, but seek to help and implement those ideas with the spirit of persistence, which is the essence of both integrity and responsibility.

FRONTIERS

TOWARD SYNTHESIS

STARTING out with what seems a brash assurance and an overweening eagerness to dispose of all dualistic and pluralistic conceptions of the universe in favor of Vedantin Monism, Prof. Wendell Thomas settles down, after a while, to give his readers a substantial and provocative book: *On the Resolution of Science and Faith* (Island Press, New York). Few of the books attempting a reconciliation of science and religion are worth serious consideration. Most of them are either scholastic or undisciplined and sentimental. Prof. Thomas is guilty of neither offense. Probably he over-simplifies, and, being remarkably sure of himself, feels justified in using a declarative and didactic form. But what he believes is certainly clear, and his desire to lead the reader to specific philosophical conclusions gives the book a power that is always lacking in indecisive thinkers.

Science and Faith might have been a much shorter book if the author had left out the long section on the evolution of modern physics, which is illustrative rather then essential to his argument. However, we know of no better rapid summary of the philosophical implications of the history of physics, with readings taken at various stages along the way. Comment is both pertinent and colorful, as, for example, in a passage on the Newtonian cosmology, where Tobias Dantzig is quoted as saying that in Newton's time, "space, geometry, and Euclid were in the same relative position as Allah, the Koran, and Mohammed, except that there were no infidels, no heretics, not even dissenters."

Starting with first things first, Prof. Thomas takes his God-idea from Anaximander of the Milesian school of Greek philosophy. Ultimate Reality, for Anaximander, was "the boundless," in which all things arise, have their being, and pass away. Space, then, as the living plenum, is the "God" of Anaximander, and of Prof. Thomas as well. After presenting the Einsteinian conception of space, the author comments:

> We see that space is not "empty": it is filled with creative waves, corpuscles, radiation. Some of the primary waves become protons and electrons; some of these particles become organized into atoms and molecules; some molecules aggregate into molar bodies [masses of matter]. Particles and larger bodies, through gravitational pressure, converge and swirl into vast spiral nebulae, or galaxies, in the "expanding universe." . . .
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> If we think of God as the boundless material space in which corpuscular worlds emerge through material waves, are sustained through the combination and separation of corpuscles, and then merge through electromagnetic waves, we have eliminated the nineteenth-century controversy between "creationism" and "evolutionism." The term evolution may be employed for God's entire irreversible time-expression, while the term creation may be assigned to that phase of evolution in which worlds are built up. In any case, we should insist that God's activity, or spirit, includes the absorption as well as the creation of worlds.

Prof. Thomas' major undertaking is to close the gap between God and man. The two are one, according to Anaximander, Erigena (a ninth-century thinker, the first and probably the greatest of scholastics), Spinoza, and George Fox. With this bold postulate, the author solves the problem left to haunt medieval and modern theology and philosophy by Boethius in the last book of his *Consolations*—for if there is that of God in man, then man, too, is a creative being, unpredestined by God's omniscience. In Mr. Thomas' words:

> . . . *a God who is boundless material space has no privileged or absolute point of view*; his perceptions have to occur through the totality of viewpoints throughout the universe. Hence there is no one absolute present, but *many relative presents*. From the earth God sees no further than man sees; in fact, man's perception is God's best earthly perception.

We confess a certain uneasiness at Prof. Thomas' use of the word "God," feeling that its retention in his argument does no one any good at all. The use of a personal pronoun in connection with the impersonal cosmic functions assigned by

the author to deity will be small comfort to the orthodox in religion, while others will regard it as an unnecessary intrusion into an otherwise philosophical development.

As a consistent monist, Prof. Thomas has little interest in personal immortality, to which he devotes a scant two pages. He mentions in passing one or two theories of soul-survival and then adopts the Averroist position that the soul, after the death of the body, is merged into the world-soul. "Immortality," he says, "lies not in the human form, but in our divine substance, or common soul. God is immortal; and we are immortal because we are fundamentally God . . . We are thus brought back to the view of George Fox that immortality is ours insofar as we experience God here and now."

It is possible to question this author's insistence on monism to the disparagement of all other views. One may, it seems to us, be monist or pantheist in his view of the highest order of reality, dualist in relation to the moral struggle that takes place in human nature, and pluralist as regards the multiplicity of natural intelligences or "souls" which present themselves in experience. Prof. Thomas seems to disregard thinkers like Leibniz, who at least faced up to the problem of deriving the Many from the One. Without the concept of individual moral integrity, the presence of the divine throughout and within all beings is emptied of significance; in other words, the unity of the world, to be morally meaningful, must be a unity of *units*, and this means a pluralistic conception of souls engaged in evolution. The ancient gnostic idea of *emanations* of the Many from the One would have helped Mr. Thomas to meet this difficulty.

However, we shall not cavil too much at a work of genuine synthesis. It accomplishes what few Western thinkers have accomplished: the replacement of a "relation," by an identity, of man with God, which leaves the way to future investigations cleared of an incalculable amount of theological rubbish.

Another work with the same general aim—the synthesis of science and religion—*The Searchers*, by Gustaf Stromberg, is not so fortunate in its conclusion. It issues in a plea for belief in a personal Supreme Being, on the ground that an "impersonal nature capable of intelligent thinking, and with a will of its own, is an absurdity. . . ." No attention is paid to the fact that the God of Western religion is always assigned the attributes of infinity, omniscience, omnipresence, etc., which make impersonality a philosophical necessity. Such contradictions are disturbing to us, if not to Dr. Stromberg, and we are constrained to report that this book confirms the impression, gained earlier from reading his Soul of the Universe, that its author's primary objective is to establish the existence of a Friend behind the cosmic veil, regardless of the cost to reason.