

RELIGION AND MORALS

SINCE the *Listener*, official BBC publication, has published the series of talks on "Morals without Religion" presented to the British radio audience by Mrs. Margaret Knight, and since *Time* (Jan. 31) recently summarized the last of this series, which was a debate between Mrs. Knight and a Scottish religious leader, we now have more material for discussion of what is a practically inexhaustible subject.

As for the first of Mrs. Knight's talks, now at hand in the *Listener* for Jan. 13, it is marked, we think, by great common sense and exemplary taste. This Scottish lecturer on psychology has no interest in disturbing the convictions of deeply sincere Christians, but rather addresses herself to those parents who are uncertain as to what they believe, yet decide to expose their children to conventional religious instruction, on the ground that later on the children "can decide for themselves." She feels that a decision of this sort may be disastrous for the children.

Mrs. Knight starts out with a definition of religion, as she will use the term:

Sometimes when people say that they "believe in religion" they turn out to mean little more than that they believe in a moral standard, or that they believe there are more important things in life than money and worldly success. I need scarcely say that I have no quarrel with religion in either of these senses. But this is not really a correct use of the term. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines "religion" as "Recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny, and as being entitled to obedience, reverence and worship." That is the sense in which I shall use the term religion . . . ; and by "Christianity" I mean, over and above that, the beliefs essential to the Christian religion—that is, at least, that this "unseen power" is omnipotent and wholly good; that Christ was divine; that He rose from the dead; and that human beings survive bodily death. That is a bare minimum of Christian belief: there is

far more than that in the official creeds of the churches.

Mrs. Knight finds certain intellectual difficulties in this "bare minimum of belief," noting, also, that many of those who still attend church on social occasions, who were brought up and married in the church, make no real pretence of believing in orthodox Christian doctrines. But what shall they teach their children? "The moral education of children," she argues, "is much too important a matter" to allow it to go by default to a tradition already rejected by the parents.

She opposes bringing up children to believe in a merely conventional orthodoxy on two main counts: First, the Christian theology deals with the problem of evil in a wholly inadequate way, and this is confusing to those who cannot understand it, and weakening to those who accept it anyway. Second, there is what amounts to a routine hypocrisy in the ordinary profession of Christianity—the voicing of precepts which no one or almost no one attempts to practice or expects anyone else to practice. Mrs. Knight's generalized account of the experience of children who grow up in a conventional religious environment has much in common with the judgments of psychotherapists on the same subject. She writes:

. . . let us consider the young child first. If he is brought up in the orthodox way, he will accept what he is told happily enough to begin with. But if he is normally intelligent, he is almost bound to get the impression that there is something odd about religious statements. If he is taken to church, for example, he hears that death is the gateway of eternal life and should be welcomed rather than shunned; yet outside he sees death regarded as the greatest of all evils and everything possible done to postpone it. In church he hears precepts like "Resist not evil," and "Take no thought for the morrow"; but he soon realizes that these are not meant to be practiced outside. If he asks questions, he gets embarrassed,

evasive answers: "Well, dear, you're not quite old enough to understand yet, but some of these things are true in a deeper sense"; and so on. The child soon gets the idea that there are two kinds of truth—the ordinary kind, and another, rather confusing and slightly embarrassing kind, into which it is best not to enquire too closely.

All this is bad intellectual training. It tends to produce a certain intellectual timidity—a distrust of reason—a feeling that it is perhaps rather bad taste to pursue an argument to its logical conclusion, or to refuse to accept a belief on inadequate evidence. And that is not a desirable attitude in the citizens of a free democracy. However, it is the moral rather than the intellectual dangers that I am concerned with here; and they arise when the trustful child becomes a critical adolescent. He may then cast off all his religious beliefs; and, if his moral training has been closely tied up with religion, it is more than possible that the moral beliefs will go too. . . .

There could be no sounder analysis, we think. At this point, the young person has several alternatives. He may simply drift along without any convictions of importance, conforming to traditional forms of observance because that is the easiest thing to do, and hoping, later on, when he has children of his own, that they will do about the same thing, since this will confirm his own decision, or lack of it. Or, he may be attracted to some system of aggressive materialism. As Mrs. Knight says:

At this stage he could be most vulnerable to communist propaganda, if a communist were to get hold of him and say: "Well, you've finished with fairy-tales—now you're ready to listen to some grown-up talk." Far from being a protection against communism, tying up morals with religion could help to drive people into its arms.

This, interestingly enough, has happened in those European countries where Christianity exists in its most dogmatic form—the Roman Catholic variety—for the communist parties of France and Italy are powers to be reckoned with in both these countries.

One more alternative—and of course there are many others—is that the young person may become a humanist of outspoken conviction, like

Mrs. Vashti McCollum in the United States, or Mrs. Knight in Scotland, and do much good in awakening public interest in the problem of moral education.

One point made by Mrs. Knight seems especially important. She speaks of the feeling, often resulting from acceptance of conventional religion, that "it is perhaps rather bad taste to pursue an argument to its logical conclusion or to refuse to accept a belief on inadequate evidence." The popular response to Mrs. Knight's talks (discussed in *MANAS* for Feb. 9) illustrates this feeling with great clarity. There was much indignation expressed, but practically no honest consideration given to the force of her arguments. One may say that this could hardly happen without bringing admission that what she said is true, but this disposes of the matter too quickly. Most of her critics obviously felt it quite unnecessary to weigh her arguments. Because of their content, they were "beyond the pale." Religious matters, it appears, are always regarded as best left in a state of undefined fuzziness by all those who have, for one reason or another, adopted a fuzzy position for themselves. This fuzziness is an ancient social "virtue" which has been popular in Christian societies ever since the days of the persecution of Peter Abelard, a man who fought bravely against the conspiracy of silence and anti-intellectualism of religion so long ago as the twelfth century A.D.

The measure of intellectual fuzziness about religion today can easily be seen by a consideration of the debate which took place between Mrs. Knight and Mrs. Jenny Morton, onetime Church of Scotland missionary, presented by BBC as the final program of Mrs. Knight's series on "Morals without Religion." According to *Time*, the issue between them was handled with great "politeness," the two women often agreeing with each other. However, one "sharp, well-stated difference on the upbringing of children" is noted by *Time*, which quotes Mrs. Knight:

To the humanist, moral behavior is primarily kind, disinterested, self-transcending. . . whereas to the Christian, moral behavior is behavior in accordance with God's will. Of course, in nine cases out of ten, it comes to the same thing in practice, but the sanctions are different. And I must say the humanist sanctions seem to me much better, much more reasonable, and much easier to put across to children. If we tell a child that he mustn't knock smaller children about, that he wouldn't like it if others did it to him . . . well, that is something he can understand. But talk about the loving purposes of God is a bit beyond him. And, of course, you're sowing the seeds of all these frightful intellectual problems later on, when the child gets older and begins to think for himself, and he is confronted by all the evidence which suggests that God's purposes are anything but loving.

There is refreshing novelty in clear statements of this sort in criticism of conventional religion. One hopes that *Time* will print them more often. Since the conservative British weekly, *Spectator*, hardily argued that Mrs. Knight "ought to be promoted to television" so that everyone might learn the "barrenness" of humanist beliefs, there should be no objection to airing the latter more frequently!

Time also presents Mrs. Morton's reply to the above statement of Mrs. Knight's humanist view:

Well, I couldn't disagree more. My experience is that . . . what people like and don't like bewilders small children . . . whereas in the Christian home you're appealing from the central relationship of the child's life—his relationship with his parents—to a similar relationship, God the Father. The child can grasp the idea that God's family includes all people everywhere, and that therefore we must behave to them as to members of our own family. It does seem to me that this understanding can grow with his growing experience of life and thought. . . there may be some difficulties, I feel this is not an understanding which will be outgrown with manhood.

But I do think the central difficulty of [humanist] moral teaching is its danger of self-righteousness. You know the story of the man who set out to correct his moral slackness. He watched himself for a month, and honestly tried to be more thoughtful, more helpful, more honest and all the

rest. And then he found he was jolly well pleased with his progress.

And he thought: "Good heavens, I am becoming a prig! I must learn humility." So he concentrated on humility for a week, and at the end of it he gave himself 18 out of 20 for humility. . . . I think that if the only standards are human ones, in man himself, self-righteousness is almost inevitable.

Concerning this response to Mrs. Knight, two obvious comments occur—first, that in suggesting that "what people like and don't like bewilders small children," Mrs. Morton is belittling the Golden Rule, so effectively personified by that remarkable Christian, Charles Kingsley, in *The Water Babies*, as Mrs. Do-as-you-would-be-done-by, and Mrs. Be-done-by-as-you-did (not that we think the Golden Rule is the most elevated ethical criterion, but it has certainly served Christian and humanist alike); and, second, that there have been an awful lot of Christians—indeed, a lot of Scotch Presbyterians—who, having decided that they were "saved," never got beyond the "prig" stage at all, or even felt any need of humility. This part of the rejoinder seems very much of a red herring.

But the point that really needs developing is the one raised by Mrs. Knight and not noticed by Mrs. Morton—not, at least, in the reply quoted by *Time*—the point concerning the *sanctions* for ethical behavior. The humanist appeal, according to Mrs. Knight, is virtually that of ancient Stoicism—to be "kind, disinterested, self-transcending"—whereas to the Christian, "moral behavior is behavior in accordance with God's will."

Mrs. Morton's reply makes no mention of obedience to God's will. Actually, her argument for righteousness is founded in the idea of human brotherhood—an appeal to a relationship that "includes all people everywhere." Now this is only incidentally or accidentally a theological notion. Many, many men have believed in the brotherhood of man—even certain notorious materialists—without acknowledging or even suspecting the "Fatherhood of God." In short, Mrs. Morton's argument is religious only by verbal

derivation, and Christian only by the tint of her vocabulary. The force of her ethical argument lies in the idea of a *common human family*, which could be construed as a kind of crypto-panteism, since God, *in propria persona*, as One Who is to be Obeyed, has only the passive role of a rather abstract paternity.

On these terms, we can have nothing but respect for Mrs. Morton's argument; it is sound, reasonable, and splendidly humanistic. The only trouble with it, from a Christian point of view, is that it pares down the distinction between morality and religion, or Humanism and Christianity, to an almost negligible minimum. Christian belief means pretty much what Mrs. Knight said it means—it involves the idea of an unseen power which exercises control over man's destiny. If a Christian makes an argument for moral education without bringing in the *functional* side of Christian belief, it may be a very good argument, but it cannot claim to be a distinctively Christian argument. This, as Mrs. Knight implied, depends upon the sort of sanctions which are invoked.

The troubling part of the matter is the fact that loyal Christian listeners to Mrs. Morton undoubtedly felt that their champion had mopped up the hall—or the airways—with Mrs. Knight's argument, when, actually, there is a lot to be said for the view that Mrs. Morton was long ago converted to the principal views of the Humanists—which, after all, are but honesty and common sense—but is more or less unaware of the conquest that has taken place. What they don't like about Mrs. Knight, therefore, is not so much her views, which without realizing it they share at least in part, but the discipline of her mind, which is bound to make uncomfortable all those who have made their peace with the fuzzy-mindedness of contemporary orthodox religion.

Letter from **JAPAN**

TOKYO.—I returned several months ago to Japan after fulfilling a childhood dream of mine to travel around the world. My trip took me from Japan to the United States, England, France, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Egypt, Pakistan, India, Thailand, Hongkong and back again to Japan.

The gaunt reminders of ancient glories in such places as Rome, Athens and Cairo, of course, fascinated me. The Colosseum, the Parthenon and the pyramids took me back to the child who pored over his history books. Westminster Abbey, the palace at Versailles, the castles on the Rhine and the reminders of India's past greatness brought me dose to the flow of world events.

But my most vivid impression as I passed through one country after the other was more than a backward look at the pages of the history books of my childhood; it was the realization that the sharp contrast between the modern edifice looming over the ruins of the Roman plaza was only illusory, that the world had travelled so little in tackling the basic issues of human suffering and social injustice.

The slums in the shadows of New York's skyscrapers, the beggars in the modern streets of Cairo, the dull eyes of the people walking amidst spick-and-span, modern buildings of East Berlin's *Stalinallee*, the aimless sauntering of Parisians along the chic *Champs-Élysées*—all these were a reminder to me that man has failed man, and that the gap between man and man remains unbridged despite the outward signs of progress.

Everywhere I went, I was told of the great recovery made in the postwar period and I was invariably shown the new buildings, factories and streets. They looked fine and I was impressed. But I saw also the sharp difference between the high and the low and the rich and the poor.

Fortunately, however, this impression is not mine alone. There is everywhere a growing realization that something must be done to alleviate human suffering. But things move slowly in this fast-tempo world of ours, when it comes to social problems.

In India, for instance, it must start with the education of the masses. Premier Nehru is so far ahead of the people he rules that what he says and India's actual situation are miles apart. In Egypt, religion teaches that a man is born to his lot and cannot better himself—and

those in power are doing precious little to change this convenient (for them) state of affairs. In Italy, the trend toward communism is but a sign that the people are seeking a change. A full stomach and decent living facilities would turn the people away from communism and neo-fascism in a minute.

I am sorry my letter is so pessimistic, but I did want to convey my impressions gained in the course of my travels. I am as ever hopeful. And things, perhaps, are not as dire as they may look. I was reminded always of the way Charles Dickens one hundred years ago started his *Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, . . ."

In Japan, things have moved rapidly since the downfall of the Yoshida Cabinet and the emergence of the new Hatoyama Government. Events are pointing to a more realistic approach to Japan's international relations. While a new election is slated for Feb. 27, the moves toward *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union have advanced to a point where the new government to be voted in will most likely have no other choice but to continue.

We realize that many people in the United States may feel that the steps being taken in Japan to normalize relations with the Russians are dangerous. They may think that Japan is moving closer to communism. Actually, however, the current moves have little to do with the communist ideology. They are based simply on the desire to be on friendly terms with as many nations as possible—this, it is felt here, will certainly help reduce world tensions. Many Americans, of course, insist that we must stand up and be counted on one side or the other in the "cold war" that has gripped the world since the end of the last war. In Japan, many feel that they want to be counted among the free nations, but that that should not prevent them from exploring all the possible means of getting on friendly terms with their neighbors.

JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

THREE FORMS OF SUFFERING

HELEN FOWLER'S *The Intruder*, Literary Guild selection now available in a pocketbook edition, is a novel of unusual psychological dimensions. A month or so ago, we discussed a recent work of Fritz Peters, then recalling his "behind scenes" novel of insanity, in which the leading character experienced moments of philosophical and ethical insight which few of the "sane" ever manage. Miss Fowler apparently envisioned a similar truth in regard to temporary psychological unbalance, for "the intruder," a man pushed over the brink of normalcy after suffering years of torture in a Japanese prison camp, remains a person of remarkable sensitivity, able to see the difficulties and weaknesses of people in a light bright as day. He also has the capacity to help straighten out the entanglements of others' lives. Incidentally, like Fritz Peters' *Descent*, *The Intruder* is a portrayal of what Eastern philosophy calls "karma," though in this case the working out of destiny brings happiness and fulfillment rather than tragedy. One is led to think, while reading this book, what a powerful effect even a mentally ill man may have upon the destinies of those he contacts—even without personal involvement or mutual commitment through the sharing of crucial circumstances.

It isn't that "Paul" tries to live his friends' lives for them. Rather the reverse. It is precisely because he is so detached—partly through courtesy of his obsession—that he achieves with others a true impartiality. The uncompromising words he speaks are never deflected by concern over emotional reactions: he simply sees the truth, speaks it and acts upon it. One may find here some intimations of conclusions reached by Erich Fromm in his *Forgotten Language*, for Fromm is inclined to believe that we see less of truth in waking life than through dreams of uninterrupted sleep. In the latter state the constant roar of social influences recedes, finally almost disappearing, and the "dreamer" no longer views his desires and ambitions in the same way. We should say that Helen Fowler, like Fromm, is working from a dynamic conception of what man usually calls "soul"—the conviction that within the

"social self" there is another layer of consciousness which may more properly be called the "true" self. Paul, the intruder, has had his "social self" so blasted that, save for one overpowering delusion, his outlook is that of a saint or sage.

Among novels of interpersonal relationships, few are more provocative than *The Intruder*, not only because a plot that might easily be exploited by emphasis of violence is really an affirmation that calmness and clear vision are the birthright of every man, though often it takes the worst of circumstances for their presence to be felt.

Two other novels at hand, William Saroyan's *A Secret Story* and Mitchell Wilson's *My Brother, My Enemy*, have a less uncommon orientation. Both writers are provoked to the point of exasperation by distressing phases of the social situation, and speak out pointedly by way of reaction.

Taking Saroyan's book first, it is necessary to suggest that those who felt *Rock Wagram* to be a steep comedown from the quality of earlier works will probably not be carried away by *Secret Story* either—though it is far and away superior to the former effort. Saroyan picks up a troubling theme previously given attention by John Steinbeck's *Shining Bright*—the troubles of a man who discovers that his wife's unborn child is not his own. In both stories, incidentally, the woman in the triangle is truly devoted to her husband, save that a single complexity of circumstances alters the trend of a decade's way of life. What both Saroyan and Steinbeck were leading us to was the fact that unusual complications of personal relationships can happen to the best of men and women, and that they are troubling enough of themselves without the interferences of society's moral codes.

In *Secret Story*, the wife finally kills herself—her husband is not quite man enough to let love triumph over pride; he dwells on the matter, torturing his feelings and making that torture extend to the already anguished mother of his children. There is ample evidence of the nature of Saroyan's leanings—flatly contradicting the thought publicized on glossy covers, that the "sin" in this instance is one a man could "never hope to forgive." After the wife's

death, the realization of his own responsibility in the matter comes to the husband, and he makes confession to his brother:

She begged me, but I wouldn't listen to her. I just wouldn't listen, that's all. Who, me? Evan Nazareus? No. You just don't do that, that's all. You're a man, and you don't do that. You're the animal that lives by moral law. You kill, by the moral law. Who, me? Let a thing like that happen to Evan Nazareus? Never. That's all right for animals, because they don't know any better, but it's not all right for me. I live by the moral law. I know right from wrong, and it's not right enough to live, to give life, to protect life. It's not nearly right enough. Anybody who is mine must be mine alone, because I have pride, and I've taken a long time to establish that anything that hurts my pride is wrong. It's just wrong, that's all. I won't stand for it. I won't stand for it in my wife, in the mother of my children. I'll kill her first. I'll kill myself first. I'll kill my children first. My pride is not to be taken from me.

Mitchell Wilson's *My Brother, My Enemy*, while neither so absorbing nor so well written as his *Live with Lightning*, is another informative novel about young scientists' problems in our day, affording light on the effects of "science" on the emotional lives of its practitioners. The background is the story of the invention of television and, since preparatory work began in the 1920's, Mr. Wilson is able to evaluate trends of investigation then still in the formative stage. Here is apt explanation of why an epoch which in so many respects offered paradise to the inventor, should offer so much of frustration as well:

The old man held up his two hands outstretched. "Working with these: that's what's gone! I don't mean man-killing labor. Those days are gone, and thank God for it. I mean making things the way your hands *want* to make them. Men need that like they need to breathe. It's an instinct, that's what's gone. Even the name has gone so that when people feel it, they don't know what it is. They just feel it, they don't know what it is. They just feel as if they were being suffocated—so they squirm and lash out in panic. That's what's eating you. . . . We've invented only one thing: mass production. But if there's one place where there's no room for any one man's special workmanship, that's the belt line."

"Then there you are!" said Davy, turning away. "It doesn't apply to us. We work as far from any belt line as anyone could get."

"No, you don't. You two are engineers in the country where the belt line operates, and everybody shakes with the vibration. Maybe if you were a couple of college scientists, you wouldn't feel it so much; but then you wouldn't really be living in the America that's the rich America. You're *not* scientists the way those fellows are. They're different from you and me. They have an itch to understand something that was never understood before. The engineer wants to *build* something useful that was never built before. That's the difference. You and I aren't satisfied with just building."

"There's not that much difference between the engineer and the pure scientist," Davy said slowly. "We both belong to a certain tradition. We both feel that our work changes the world for people."

"Hell, I didn't say that an engineer was less than a scientist. All I mean is that the small difference that makes you either one of them or one of us also makes the big difference between the kinds of world you live in. If you invent something useful, it's going to belong to the belt line; and the belt line is business. So even if it's workmanship that makes your heart pump, business is the air an inventor has to breathe and the language he's got to learn to talk. Bear it in mind, boy; it's the story of your life, just as it's been the story of mine."

So two angry men and one philosophical woman further point up a case for the fact that man alienates himself from happiness by his own hand—and then fails to recognize how easily a return journey might be made. This, after all, is but another way of saying that the most obvious and helpful truths are simple, a sentiment with which we have no quarrel. The point is, though, that unless one observes and analyzes all of the complications, he can never really be sure he knows what "simple truth" is.

COMMENTARY

THE OPPENHEIMER INTERVIEW

No television program we have heard of ever created quite the stir that resulted from Edward R. Murrow's interview with J. Robert Oppenheimer on Jan. 4 at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Princeton, of which Dr. Oppenheimer is head. People kept telling us about it, and finally a friend sent a transcript of what was said. Doubtless something of the charm of Dr. Oppenheimer is missing from the printed record, but an essential wisdom remains.

They talked of many things—the people at the Institute—the fact that if the McCarran Act had been enforced, men like Fermi and Szillard might not have been permitted to enter the United States. Murrow asked about "the poor civilian" in our age of complex specialization, bringing this reply from Oppenheimer:

It isn't the layman that is ignorant. It's everybody that's ignorant. The scientist may know a little patch of something and if he's a humane and intelligent and curious guy, he'll know a few spots from other people's work. He may even be able to read a book. But—but his condition is a condition of everyone—which is that almost everything that's known to man he doesn't know anything about at all, or knows it only in a very sketchy way. . . . The problem of a coherent civilization is the problem of living with ignorance and not being frustrated by it; so that you find occasionally a man who knows two things and that intersection may be a great event in the history of ideas. . . . these are the connections these casual and occasional connections, which make the only kind of coherence we have—that and affection—that and respect—that and I suppose a kind of humanity.

One more quotation, concerning what Oppenheimer calls "the integrity of communication":

The trouble with secrecy isn't that it inhibits science—it could—but in this country it's hardly used that way. Technical things are—are really quite widely known and those at the growing tip of any science are so far from practice that the people talk quite freely about them and should. The trouble with

secrecy isn't that it doesn't give the public a sense of participation. The trouble with secrecy is that it denies to government itself the wisdom and resources of the whole community, of the whole country, and the only way you can do this is to let almost anyone say what he thinks—to try to give the best synopses, the best popularizations, the best mediations of technical things that you can, and to let men deny what they think is false—argue what they think is false, you have to have a free and uncorrupted communication. . . .

Here, it seems to us, is a man who really understands the role of science in the modern world, and how it may be used for the common good.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

A COMMUNICATION from one of our readers provides the opportunity—and something of a challenge—to consider again the importance of intense physical activity as an essential ingredient in the education of the young. The letter at hand, while generally approving an article printed here July 7, 1954, proposes that "perhaps another field [than that of athletics and physical discipline] was omitted, which has an important place in the activities of children," continuing:

The author . . . suggested athletic activity as the form which excitement and intensity should take. I feel that there are many worth-while, creative activities in which children and adults may engage with "intensity," and it seems unfortunate to limit them, or even to limit the suggestions, to athletics.

Some children have delighted in building radios, or simply electrical circuits, in constructing things from wood, clay, or other plastic media. Even spinning may be fascinating to some, introduced as the way the Indian people made their rugs. Building model planes and boats—all these are creative activities to which children can devote themselves with great energy. What child doesn't take delight in camping, really roughing it? All these activities, I feel, help the child to orient himself with respect to the things and the people around him, help him to gain a sense of security in himself and provide much of the excitement and intensity cited in the article.

In order for parents to offer these activities to their children, however, they themselves must first have experienced the satisfactions which accompany at least some of them. And for their own mental and physical health, adults as much as children need really constructive activities if they are to maintain a balance with TV.

In the first place, our hope that more rather than less athleticism would be encouraged by the schools was oriented around criticism of too much television watching and mere spectator participation. We did not intend to suggest that "physical intensity" is the most important form of intensity to encourage, but only that it is one form

not receiving the type of balanced attention accorded it by the ancient Greeks. We wrote:

A youth needs physical challenge, and if he lives in an indolent culture surfeited with pleasures and easy living, he runs the great risk of suffering psychic harm because no forms of physical testing are available. Children need this sort of excitement, at least part of the time, because such excitement, in its turn, is the simplest source of intensity.

We return, therefore, to our familiar plea for further encouragement of athleticism among the young. Increased playground facilities and additional coaches in our high schools are not enough. Parents and teachers will have to promote an atmosphere in which every sort of physical exertion is appreciated for the virtues it possesses.

Our correspondent's emphasis upon useful crafts and his contention that these can also be a "real source of excitement and intensity" is certainly valid, but it is also true that our schools have, throughout recent decades, devoted more and more attention to promotion of these latter activities. At the same time, while increasing amounts have been spent for elaborate athletic fields in secondary schools, in imitation of collegiate athletics and their spectator-glamour, the ideal of rigorous discipline for *every* youth has been seldom remarked.

Prompted by the letter received we spent some time perusing literature on Gandhi's basic education for Indian youth, and noted that, even here in what we have come to regard as one of the best balanced programs—the ideal of physical vigor was somehow almost forgotten. The following comment on physical education, taken from a pamphlet from Wardha, India in 1938, might have come from any other quarter of the globe, somehow implying that a bare minimum of activity *is* sufficient to provide the young with physical discipline. We quote:

As a further illustration of the principle of co-ordination, we should like to make a special mention of physical education. So far as the theoretical aspect of physical education is concerned, the children will gain the necessary knowledge of Physiology, Hygiene and Dietetics through their General Science courses.

As for practical training, the entire work of the school, involving craft-practice, games, gardening and active methods of learning, has been envisaged as an aid to the development of the child's health and physical vigour.

From the same pamphlet we extract an excellent proviso in respect to craft education, but suggest that much of the same devotion, though less time, needs to be given to physical discipline, *per se*, at Sevagram as well as elsewhere:

The object of this new educational scheme is NOT primarily the production of craftsmen able to practice some craft *mechanically*, but rather the exploitation for educative purposes of the resources implicit in craft work. This demands that productive work should not only form a part of the school curriculum—its craft side—but should also inspire the *method* of teaching all other subjects. Stress should be laid on the principles of co-operative activity, planning, accuracy, initiative and individual responsibility in learning. This is what Mahatma Gandhi means when he says: "Every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done to-day, but scientifically. That is to say, the child should learn the why and wherefore of every process."

Our interest in physical activity—even physical activity *per se*—does not come from the belief that any particular form of prowess is important of itself, but from a conviction that physical disciplines merit "exploration for educative purposes." The qualities of stamina and endurance, most easily learned by youth during the rigors of physical training, are important in every field of activity. This is why, we imagine, the Greeks paid so much attention to the gymnasium and to *endurance* sports in particular. The how and why of physical control are very much like the how and why of any other sort of control and are worth learning, while also intensely interesting to the young. Admiration for the heroes of legend has its root, perhaps, in an innate feeling that a thoroughly mature human being has made the most of whatever physical capacities he possesses. We should not commend the sort of athleticism which results in specialties, nor do we feel that any single prowess is important. What is important is effort expended

towards improvement, whether or not the result is spectacular in terms of anything measurable. Attempts at physical discipline, no matter how poor the tangible result, will have important psychological results—or are we repeating ourselves?

A not-too-friendly press recently poked fun at Prime Minister Nehru for his apparently childish remarks in an address on Indian education in which he "challenged" any man his age to a contest of running or swimming. Taken out of context, Nehru's words made him appear a sort of prideful Bernarr McFadden of the Eastern Hemisphere, but what we imagine Mr. Nehru to have been concerned with was an evident lack of basic physical discipline among the Indian people. Nehru knows, as Gandhi knew very well before him, that to stand successfully for the loftiest of political, social or ethical principles sometimes requires extraordinary physical resilience; there is a legitimate pride and confidence earned by possessing a body that has been taught to respond well under conditions imposed by stress and privation. So Nehru, we think, wasn't nearly as silly as he sounded, and it seems likely that whatever "intensity" one may develop for participation in the creative arts can be nicely supplemented by strenuous bodily effort.

We certainly agree with our correspondent that, if parents are to offer disciplines to children, "they themselves must first have experienced the satisfactions which accompany, at least some of them"; and we add our defense of more intense physical training because the present decade seems to be one in which such values are habitually overlooked. More physical education instructors are not the need, though; we need more philosophers and psychologists who understand how great are the benefits which may result from encouragement of a more rigorous life during youth.

FRONTIERS Cultural Tensions

Always people are being killed somewhere; the strength of our manhood is being sapped. We do not like violence and revolution. We do not want continuing political crises. But all those things are an inevitable part of the present struggle for freedom in Africa. . . .

So writes M. O. M. Maduagwu, a leader of the Nigerian independence movement, in a recent *Nation* article on the native peoples of Africa, where only three out of thirty-five countries—Liberia, Egypt, and Abyssinia—are "entirely free and self-governing."

The thing that is most impressive about contemporary expressions in behalf of oppressed non-white peoples is the quality of statements by their leaders. These men now address the West in the terms of the West's own ethical standards, showing mastery of Western literature and libertarian tradition. Maduagwu, for example, writes:

Colonialism is evil. Not liking evil, we do not choose to remain colonials forever and be forever exploited, overtly or covertly. We want liberty. Count Leo Tolstoy wrote: "I sit on a man's back, choking him and making him carry me and yet assure myself and others that I am sorry for him and wish to ease his lot by all possible means—except by getting off his back." What a fitting description of the relationship between the peoples of Africa and Europe!

What sort of revolution will the Africans have? Westerners are familiar with two sorts of revolution—the revolution for freedom, attended by ennobling declarations concerning the rights of man, which is usually underwritten by a national literature giving cultural expression to the new spirit; and the revolution for security, which does not speak, but is spoken for, and represents the rise to power of an authoritarian rule over a depersonalized *mass*. The first kind of revolution reveals the vigor of a new cycle of creativity in culture. The second produces only a monotone of enforced conformity.

Naturally enough, those wondering about the coming African revolution have asked about African culture—more specifically African literature, for it is self-conscious, articulate expression, as contrasted with unchanging folk tradition, which marks the beginning of national or cultural awakening. Our own questioning about South Africa—not very extensive, to be sure—brought the conclusion that the only publishing being done in South Africa in this direction is Manilal Gandhi's periodical, *Indian Opinion*, and this, while doubtless excellent, is hardly "African." But now comes notice (in the *Nation* for Jan. 1—a special issue on Colonialism) of an autobiography by Camara Laye, a twenty-six-year-old engineering student of Upper Guinea in West Africa. It was after a European education and some lonely years in Paris that he set down his memories of an African childhood. He writes with no special awe of European feelings and attitudes, in an effort, as he says, to capture "the face of my country in the process of change." The reviewer, John Murra, comments:

Mr. Camara is completely relaxed and non-defensive in describing his mother's magic immunity to crocodiles and his father's ability to plan his day and meet the vicissitudes to come because of his constant contact with his guardian spirit, a small black snake living beneath the forge {his father was a smith}. "I hesitate to say what those powers were. . . . Today, now that I come to remember them, even I hardly know how I should regard them. They seem to be unbelievable; they *are* unbelievable. . . . I see them again as I saw them then. Are there not things around us, everywhere, which are inexplicable? In our country there were mysteries without number, and my mother was familiar with them all."

Richard Wright, attempting to explain the absence of West African novels and drama, has remarked that these people are still locked up in a feudal society, without the adventurous spirit of a new-born bourgeoisie. But here, in Camara Laye, says Murra, "is the new African writer, the African reader, Richard Wright was looking for: his roots in the unrejected past, his future clearly in the twentieth century."

Apologists for colonialism often speak of the "educational advantages" which Western powers have brought to the invaded countries. Some comparisons by Murra of the *kind* of education offered to the Africans by European administrators may make the reader wonder whether in some cases continued illiteracy would not have been more blessed for the people whose lives were disturbed:

French education in Africa is frankly devoted to the creation of a Europeanized elite; nowhere is the African tradition so ignored as on the French side. They may not educate many, but those they do educate get the full, undiluted *Lycée*, with its emphasis on humanistic and literary studies. The British may educate larger numbers and be more sympathetic to the vernacular, but their educational system is embedded in a missionary world, with artificial, expatriated, and puritanical standards which they would never hope to impose at home. . . . The modern French novel is self-critical, realistic, universal. . . . If one writes, one is learning in a great school; one may reject French rule and admire French literature. Puritanism in colonial conditions, on the other hand, is an utter brake on the imagination. The self-hating ambivalences it creates in the colonial student go deeper, are more inhibiting of literary self-revelation.

Apparently, a French education was at least partly responsible for Camara's inner freedom to write. It is only the half-educated, whatever their color, and wherever they live, who create the literature of the unfree. Those who gain the tools of self-expression, but not the heart for it, are always wanting to be something different from what they are; if they are "natives," they give a bad imitation of the white man's ways, hoping somehow to "belong," when this hope is enough to disqualify them from a worthy participation in any living culture. Murra's phrase about Camara is one to be remembered—"his roots in the unrejected past; his future clearly in the twentieth century."

For the United States, the problem of race is considerably more confused. Not the least of the problems is explaining to other dark-skinned peoples what is being done about the practically

traditional injustice to American Negroes. American visitors to India are invariably questioned on this subject, and not always angrily, as by the communists. Often the questioners are friendly people who hope that America is making genuine progress. This, at any rate, was the experience of Roland E. Wolseley, who recently spent fourteen months in India as a Fulbright lecturer, and who writes in *Fellowship* for February on India's interest in the racial situation in the United States. The 1954 Supreme Court decision abolishing segregation in the schools, he says, was far more convincing evidence to Indians of America's good intentions than the assurance of any number of distinguished spokesmen and apologists.) Unfortunately, the delaying tactics of a few southerners who are attempting to defy the Supreme Court ruling are well reported in India.

Then there is another sort of evidence which can neither be denied nor written off as anti-American propaganda—"the content of the newspapers, magazines, books, and films received from the United States." Here is found a portrait of American race relations by implication—deduced from what we think and say and write when we are off-guard on the subject of race. Mr. Wolseley was in India long enough to make this point with some authority:

Walk around Connaught Circus, the huge circular shopping center of New Delhi, India's national capitol, and stop in at the book and periodical stores. Saunter along Queensway, the wide street that runs into the Circus and is lined on the one side by substantial office buildings and on the other by the shaky wooden structures that house refugee shops. Sold by ragged newsboys or by vendors who lay out the magazines along the sidewalk, are six-month-old issues of American magazines for Negroes: *Ebony*, *Our World*, *Color*, and others. These are proud with stories of the achievements of Americans of black skin, but the obstacles they have to meet are noted. There are also reports of the injustices practiced on black Americans.

Near them are comic books, all the worst sort we print. When people of color figure in them they usually are in debased positions; the whites are the masters. In neat lines or disorderly piles beside them

are hundreds of paper-back books; the majority are westerns, spy, detective, crime, or sex novels, cheap in their ideas, writing, and concepts. In few of these do the people of color ever figure with nobility; usually they appear as criminals or fools. Mixed with this literature are a few books by Richard Wright or one or two other recognized serious American novelists who are Negroes.

Stop at one of the few movie houses in an Indian metropolis to see one of the many American pictures. It is likely to show Negroes playing the part of buffoons: stupid people afraid of ghosts and animals, the foil for smart white men. Rarely is a Negro presented with dignity. . . .

In some ways, however, America is putting a better foot forward. Recently the State Department sent the Olympic track star, Malvin Whitfield, on a good-will junket around the world—from Iceland to the heart of the Congo. This Negro American athlete, who has two Olympic gold medals to his credit, gives the local runners wherever he goes "a quick course of expert coaching," and then runs for and with them. At Nairobi, he talked a mixed crowd of Africans, Indians and English into stripping to shorts and running around the half-mile track with him. Only in Northern Rhodesia was there any discrimination against him in respect to hotel accommodations. Less appreciated by the State Department, perhaps, but equally if not more important was Paul Robeson's decision, some years ago, never to play another "Uncle Tom" part on the stage or screen. This is a choice confronting other Negro artists and performers who want to increase the respect of other peoples for the role of the Negro in American life. That Robeson's communist sympathies may have played a part in his decision is entirely beside the point. Why should only alienated American Negroes refuse to cater to the myth of white superiority?