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CULTURE AND HUMAN GREATNESS

WHEN it comes to examining our civilization—and ourselves—in a way which attempts to avoid the familiar forms of analysis and criticism, concerned with the decline of "individuality," the blindness of "scientism," the "failure of nerve" in the return to supernaturalism in religion, or the excesses of hedonistic materialism, we are brought up sharp by the realization that all these strictures are no more than clinical reports on the symptoms of human failure, giving little or no positive guidance. What, indeed, is the "matter" with us, that we see so clearly in terms of diagnosis, yet have only tiresomely familiar and notably inadequate remedies to propose?

It seems quite possible—a likely speculation, at any rate—that we are subject to some profoundly distorting misconception about the nature of things, and about the nature of human life, which, in turn, produces all these disheartening results. And if we were obliged to offer an account of this misconception without invoking any typically religious insights (of which some might apply), or even the judgments of the new psychology, we should say that, as a matter of tradition and in conformity with "modern progress," we avoid the difficult and shun the hazardous, and teach our children the creed of security and safety first. We hedge both the individual and the collective paths through life with all the guarantees we can devise against danger and uncertainty. We do not "trust life" at all, but buy as much insurance as our bank accounts will allow. It may be a piece of real estate to retire to in our old age (and *what*, we can say, is wrong with that?); or it may be a new battleship or a cloud of jet bombers; it may be a membership in a fashionable country club (for the sake of the children), or savings religiously set aside for Johnny's education; it may be the election of a safe and conservative president, or the retention of the services of a doctor or a lawyer who is costly but eminently successful in his field. Or, to look at the matter in another light, it may be joining the Communist Party to assure (as many of those who join suppose) social and economic justice to future generations, or giving sizeable contributions to benevolent foundations devoted to medical research. It doesn't make much difference where you turn—people are buying insurance of one sort or another, and feeling rather virtuous as they make their purchases, whether in terms of sound investment of their funds, or in terms of humanitarian effort.

These activities, "different," to be sure, in certain obvious respects, are all the same in one respect—in respect to the meaning of human life. They all are attempts to hedge and fence in the future to make it "safe," or as safe or safer than the present. Even the man who joins the church of his choice because, as an honest believer, he wants to get to heaven, and to get his loved ones there, too, is concerned with easing or guaranteeing the future. Church membership is other-worldly prudence, when it is nothing more, and prudence, after all, is not to be disdained.

We don't propose to argue these points in a spirit of Bohemian antagonism to the bourgeois virtues, although this might be done, as the French Existentialists have done it, or as the Nazis did, with a fine neurotic frenzy. It is foolish to make a direct attack on such obviously sensible institutions such as insurance and all its psychological parallels in our civilization. We propose, simply, that the concentration on these many guarantees of security of one sort or another, amounting, in sum, to the main driveshaft of motivation in modern life, may cause us to ignore entirely the purpose or purposes of life itself.

The proposition, then, to be offered, in contrast to the drive for security, the quest for safety, is that human life attains its full development only through some climactic struggle, some alchemical refinement of the texture and field of consciousness. According to this view, education, in the highest sense—which ought to be its only sense—is a preparation for this almost fabulous change or transmutation. The idea may seem a bit romantic, due, perhaps, to the words we have chosen to approach the subject, yet it is far from new. This is the theme of the *Upanishads,* of Plato's *Phaedo,* and the *Imitation of Christ.* The pyramids of Egypt testify to a transcendental aspiration, the wanderings of Ulysses pursue its goal, and the Norse saga of Siegfried embodies the same drama of human longing and striving as the quest for the Holy Grail.

In the *Mahabharata*, Krishna, the embodiment of eternal truth, addresses Arjuna, the symbol of struggling humanity, beginning with the salute, "O best of the Kurus." In this wise he invites Arjuna to accept his high destiny without further evasion. And at the heart of every great religion we find this challenge of ultimate trial, with the promise of new opportunities after each relative failure. O *best* of the Kurus. So is a man helped to think of himself as the very flower of nobility. For the Kurus are the resources of mankind, and an Arjuna rests in the inner being of each one of us. The ancient mysteries gave this invitation to trial by initiation, from which a man might know himself.

It is this spirit of an awaiting destiny which has been lost to our civilization. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? We have not taken this question to heart, for the excellent reason that we have misinterpreted it as intending a mere reproach to those who reject the true faith. We know better than to think that the soul is saved by adopting a belief. And because of the folly of this interpretation, we have neglected other possible meanings.

Conceivably, "saving one's soul" is but an expression to signify the process by which the human intelligence flowers into full self-consciousness. What, after all, would be the *flowering* of a human being? Surely, the fulfillment of his biological role—to reproduce his kind—is but the least part of a man's expression.

> Consider the lilies of the field; how they grow
> They toil not, neither do they spin:
> And yet I say unto you,
> That even Solomon in all his glory
> Was not arrayed like one of these.

What prudence is here? Surely Jesus and Whitman are fellows in their neglect of security, their indifference to guarantees. It was Whitman who spoke across the centuries to Christ, saying:

> We hear the bawling and din, we are reached at by divisions, jealousies, recriminations on every side,
>
> They close peremptorily upon us to surround us, my comrade,
>
> Yet we walk upheld, free, the whole earth over, journeying up and down till we make our ineffaceable mark upon time and the diverse eras,
>
> Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and women of races, ages to come, may prove brethren and lovers as we are.

What have these lonely voices been saying to us? Is there a gospel within the word, a secret hidden by apocryphal utterance, not meant to be understood, but to beckon toward discovery?

We, of all people, can reveal no secrets to our young. We, of all people, have no ready inspiration to transmit to coming generations. But the least that one generation can do for another is to surround its childhood with the atmosphere of the quest. No father need turn to his progeny the bowed gray head of failure, so long as he believes that life still contains unsolved mysteries that must be pursued. The only real failure is to give over and abandon the search—to set loose in a world without vision, or even memory of vision, a generation of spiritual orphans, the young who have never heard related the story of the hungers of the heart.

Here, then, is the meaning of culture. The role of culture is to act as the matrix of human greatness, to shield the dreams and foster the hopes of the human soul, and point forever to the golden horizons marked out by the aspiring imagination. Every culture, to be worthy of survival, must address each youth, O *best of the Kurus*, and open the portal of the challenge of life. It is this doorway into discovery that we must preserve, whose ideal existence we must guarantee for those who are to come.

This done, and we may rest content, finding, perhaps, that all the other securities we prize take on a different meaning and a truer proportion. We would find, perhaps, that we then need no screaming terror in the skies to preserve our hopes of a better life, and that the angry dissonances of the hungry and the dispossessed of the world will turn into cries of fellowship, uniting with our own strong voice. We may not know the secret of life, but we can know, surely, that it must be sought; and that, both strangely and truly, it cannot be told. This is the religion of the best of men, wherever and whenever they have lived.

Letter from
CENTRAL EUROPE

INNSBRUCK.—The results of the Feb. 22 Austrian elections for Parliament created no sensation. The two coalition parties—the Austrian People's Party and the Social-Democratic Party—remained without difficulty the strongest groups. The People's Party lost some of its seats, while the Social-Democrats won a few. The new legislature will have 75 representatives of the People's Party and 74 of the Social-Democrats. That the Independents (made up of former National Socialists and critics of the coalition) did not achieve a greater success came as a surprise. The fiasco of the Independents—their representatives went from 16 to 14—was analyzed by the press as due to the fact that the voters approved the Two Party System.

The election results must have been disappointing for the Communists. Labeled as Communist Party for Austria, they had in 1945 won four seats. Seeking further advantages, in 1949 they amalgamated with some left-wing Social-Democrats, calling themselves the Left-Bloc (the word Communism is rarely used, any more), and gained five seats. This time, they campaigned under the name, People's Opposition, but in spite of an extensive and expensive propaganda, they dropped to four seats again.

This result is remarkable in that the Russians still occupy the strongest industrial section of Austria, where they have offered advantages to all labourers who work under Soviet management; and since for eight years they have controlled all possible means for planting their ideology in the minds of the inhabitants. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume from the election returns that Austria is wholly free from danger of turning Communist.

In Austria, the Russians have developed quite another attitude than that shown in Germany, where they have converted their occupied zone into a *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* and try—sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly—to drive the Western Powers out of Berlin. Here, the Council of the Four High Commissioners (including the Soviet representative) is still functioning, and not the slightest attempt has been made, so far, to take the control of Vienna out of the hands of the Westerners.

But while the surface events remain smooth, there are cross-currents in the depths. All the world has learned about the flight of thousands of Eastern Zone inhabitants to West Berlin. A similar process in Austria has been as evident, except that it proceeds more slowly and under different auspices.

Thousands of Viennese men, women, and children left that capital during the first months of 1945, when it became obvious that the German armies were not strong enough to keep the Russians away, and these people have not returned. After the war was over, thousands more left the Soviet-occupied zone of Austria and turned to the West. And this migration has never really stopped, although few have left their homes because of a feeling of being pursued. Nor does their going away resemble a flight. They often first make sure of getting a position in a Western district. But there are fewer Austrians in Vienna and Lower Austria than before, while the Western territories of the country are packed with inhabitants. One by one, industries have moved away from Vienna, as they found opportunities; and while—until 1945—it used to be a much-sought goal to get a call as professor to the University of Vienna, in recent years Viennese professors have been accepting employment at Western provincial institutes. There is no difficulty in getting accommodation in the Soviet-occupied sections, whereas the shortage of apartments in Salzburg and Innsbruck has been alarming for the past eight years.

It is by these methods that the Soviets gain territory without war. They have settled Greek and Yugoslav partisans and even Chinese in those parts of Germany which have been deserted by the Germans. And they would probably do the same in Austria, when the time seemed ripe. Experience has taught that if one part of a country is in the hands of the Communists, the danger for the other part to become a "People's-Owned Republic" becomes graver, even when (as in Austria) 95% of the population has declared itself against Communism in any form.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
HARIJAN, 1953

WHILE we have often quoted, here, from the Gandhi-founded Indian weekly, *Harijan*, it occurs that our readers might find interesting a brief "issue-survey" of *Harijan's* contents. *Harijan*, incidentally, is one Gandhian project which has lost nothing in vitality through the years; it may today be considered as among the most provocative publications of our time, and this not alone in the "Indian context." (The generalization to the effect that "the Western world" has much to learn from the type of philosophical reflection for which Indians are famous is substantiated by many Western *Harijan* subscribers.)

First item for discussion (in the Jan. 10 issue) is an editorial, "Planning for Basic Education," which recalls the depth and maturity of philosophy embodied in Gandhi's initial experiments at Sevagram, where "Basic Education" was born. This article deals with problems presently encountered by those who seek a national application of Gandhian educational theory. Last year, we learn, an invitation was extended by the Government of India to the Unesco Regional Conference on Free and Compulsory Education in South Asia and the Pacific, suggesting a meeting at Bombay. The Conference accepted, meeting from Dec. 12 to Dec. 22. In this setting, Indian representatives of Basic Education had a fine opportunity to explain Gandhi's integral philosophy—which is at the root of B.E.—and to describe practical planning efforts designed to promote the cause.

Some of the conclusions of the Unesco conference clearly reflect Gandhian influence. For instance, the delegates favored:

> The guiding principles of simplicity, coordination of subject matter among the different fields of study and elasticity which would enable the teachers to organize instruction in terms of local, group or individual needs also recommended.
>
> Local freedom of initiative to encourage teachers, inspectors, etc. to adapt curricula to particular needs should be permitted. In the earlier stages of education, the curriculum should be largely visualized in the form of units of activity based on projects, life situations and practical constructive work. The curriculum should be linked with social and economic conditions and problems of environment.
>
> Particular attention should be paid to health education, to the provision of work, experience of a pre-vocational character as well as other cooperative recreational activities. While the curriculum should be based on the child's environment and involve locally useful skills, it should also lead to critical thinking and exercise of imaginative powers of the children.
>
> The curriculum should be orientated towards making students good citizens conscious of the best national heritage but willing and able to assess it critically to eliminate intolerance towards racial or religious groups and disrespect for manual work. It should also lead to the concept of the nation as an integral part of the world community of people.

Gandhi sought to make his people self-sufficient, to elevate their material and mental environment at the same time. Foreign exploitation had impoverished India to such a degree that the help of children was actually needed in increasing the productivity of village economy. It was a Gandhian determination, moreover, to make sure that neither the villagers nor their children were precipitated into the confusions of a vast centralized program of production. Gandhi also wished to see each village able to support itself, according to the type of farming and home industry best suited to its region, and felt that the education which was *basic* in each community would be that which contributed to improving local conditions. No child, it was held, should miss participation in and understanding of whatever activities were necessary in his locality. Whatever he studied in school should have some organic relation to social improvement—not the social improvement of "social studies" courses in America—but in terms of what needs to be done from day to day for the immediate improvement of one's own and nearby villages.

Some passages from Gandhi's own writings, collected in the Jan. 10 issue, correlate with these ideas. "Civilization," Gandhi wrote in 1930, "in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases capacity for service." He continued:

> A certain degree of physical harmony and comfort is necessary, but above that level, it becomes a hindrance instead of help. Therefore, the idea of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a snare. The satisfaction of one's physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one's narrow self, must meet at a point a dead stop, before it degenerates into physical and intellectual voluptuousness. A man must arrange his physical and cultural circumstances so that they may not hinder him in his service of humanity, on which all his energies should be concentrated.

A subsequent Gandhi quotation is especially worth attention for the way in which it demonstrates that the great Indian leader was not a fanatical cultist or utopian. Though he passionately wanted to see men make themselves capable of the "simple life," Gandhi knew this could not be accomplished by formula. In the *Vishva-Bharati Quarterly* he cautioned his students:

> As long as you desire inner help and comfort from anything, you should keep it. If you were to give it up in a mood of self-sacrifice or out of a stern sense of duty, you would continue to want it back, and that unsatisfied want would make trouble for you. Only give up a thing when you want some other condition so much that the thing no longer has any attraction for you, or when it seems to interfere with that which is more greatly desired.

We cannot help but think that if such counsel had been available to and understood by the votaries of Western religion, there would be a great deal more tolerance in the world, a great deal less false piety and moralistic preachment, and much more of psychological simplicity—which in this case means simply the capacity for honesty.

A letter to *Harper's* editor relative to a previous discussion of birth-control ethics and sexual morality gathers quotations from Sarvapelli Radhakrishnan's *The Future of* Civilization—quotations which must do a great deal more for Indian readers than bright sayings in the *Reader's Digest* do for Americans. Again, in Radhakrishnan, we can see capacity for measured psychological evaluation:

> The modern emphasis is wrong in its exaltation of the ecstasy of the flesh. Action which proceeds directly from the springs of emotion without passing through the discipline of reason is a return to the beginning, the animal and the brute. Passion should not usurp the seat of control which belongs to reason. Self-expression is not synonymous with sensuality. While it is theoretically quite correct to hold that we must be free and accept no restraints which do not spring from within, it is disastrous to allow young immature minds to practice it. Inner sanctions spring from outer ones and freedom to disobey belongs only to those who have risen above the need for external sanctions. Before the individual acquires freedom, he must be assisted to discipline himself. The young and the immature cannot become a law unto themselves, contracting relationships according to the dictates of their immediate desires.

Like Gandhi, Radhakrishnan refuses to oversimplify the psychological dimensions of any problem.

Another interesting Harijan feature is a compilation of excerpts from the speeches of that remarkable revolutionist, Vinoba Bhave, who has been securing the voluntary cooperation of large land owners in turning back a sufficient amount of workable land to village communities in the interests of rural self-sufficiency. Shri Vinoba has original ideas on almost everything—profoundly good ideas, even when at first glance they strike the reader as bordering on the ridiculous. For example:

> I once told my companions in the jail that it was not right to take food without doing work. I said whether it was laid down in the Jail Manual or no, it certainly was the law of man's life on earth and the law of his inner being. They agreed and though many of them were not required to do so under the

rules, all of us voluntarily took up the grinding of all the flour for the jail.

If we refrain from Karma, *i.e.*, productive labour, we make of ourselves a burden to humanity. Those who live by exploiting the labour of others cannot be happy, because the money they make breeds greed and consequent rivalry and wrangling among the members of the house, and they who earn cannot get inner satisfaction. The tragedy, however, is that even the workers do not realize the inherent value and importance of work. They work under compulsion and feel pleased if somehow they are able to avoid it. They do not experience the delight of Karma, because they are denied the fruit of it. The physical labour is held in disrespect and it is not paid adequate wages. This is very wrong. Labour must be restored to its just position of honour.

One reason, perhaps, why Vinoba has been successful in his one-man campaign to reform the old land-holding system is that *he carries the principle upon which he bases his reform to its final extreme in his own personal life.* Not even in jail did he feel that the cosmos had excused him from being productive. Who, then, can understand the "dignity of labor," a phrase often mouthed emptily by ethically empty men, better than Vinoba?

The Indian mind is remarkably penetrating at times, and at most of such times the surprises it holds in store for us are gifts worth receiving. A subscription to *Harijan* appears to be one of the better investments, and may be obtained from the Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad 9, for two dollars per annum.

COMMENTARY
REQUIREMENTS OF PEACE

No one can read the *Christian Century* from week to week, these days, without recognizing that the continuation of the war in Korea is profoundly painful to the Christian conscience. Letters from readers bespeak deep sorrow for the sufferings of the Koreans. Summarizing many of these letters, an editorial in the *CC* for March II reports: "The strongest point of agreement is that we have a duty to rebuild Korea and rehabilitate its people." Concrete proposals for aid to Korea are made by those who write letters to the editors. The correspondents also largely agree that diplomatic doors to negotiation should be kept open as widely as possible.

The *CC* candidly admits, however, that while the church may speak to the conscience of the nation, it has remained for Christian pacifists to speak to the conscience of the church, "demanding in Jesus' name that we stop the shooting, end the bombing, bring our soldiers home, end conscription and disarm." Without adopting the pacifist view, the *CC* editorial rejoices that the pacifists are making themselves heard, and "that nonpacifists have not only the forbearance to listen but the courage to insist that others listen too." The editorial further declares:

> We can recall no time in the history of our country when the spirit of Christians was so deeply disturbed, when self-questioning was so continuous and unrelenting, when the old answers were advanced with so little conviction, when the new seemed so elusive.

We cite this editorial in evidence of the integrity of liberal Christian thinking, of which the *Christian Century* is a lucid representative.

Meanwhile, in the correspondence columns of the same issue appears still another comment, which is perhaps of greater pertinence than anything else:

> SIR: I think it is futile to look for a solution to the war in Korea, or anywhere else, that is peculiar to Christianity. Is it not significant that the plan to secure an armistice in Korea that met the widest approval was presented by a non-Christian power? Universal peace must be founded on universally accepted principles. This being true, it follows that the solution which you so anxiously seek cannot be based on uniquely Christian principles.
>
> This is not a complete answer to your question but it may be a preliminary condition for the answer. The best answer I have seen is that of Arnold Toynbee, in the January issue of the *Atlantic*, and it is based on "the progressive unification of mankind" to be patiently striven for, but this is not a uniquely Christian answer.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

FOR some time we have been attempting, in this department, to suggest ways of bridging the gap between embattled schools of pedagogical thought, at present still eyeing each other over the "progressive education" barrier. Controversy in any domain of theory or opinion tends to generate stereotyped epithets, and we have noted an unfortunately large number of these being pinned upon educational leaders. Take either John Dewey or Robert Hutchins, for example. Dr. Hutchins is sometimes called a "reactionary," whereas actually, and demonstrably, he has been one of the most radical and revolutionary forces in university circles. Even the term, "neo-classicist," is very wide of the mark, for classical education, at least in the medieval sense, insisted on remaining entirely theoretical, while Dr. Hutchins has a penchant for probing vital ethical and social issues of the day by means of philosophical analysis. John Dewey has also been called all manner of things entirely irrelevant to his contributions to the science of learning, or to himself as a man. Dewey was not, for instance "anti-religious," unless one insists upon a narrow definition of religion. He was not a pedant, either, nor a "theoretician" who knew little about children.

The best brief appreciation of Dewey's lifework we have seen is provided by Max Eastman in the *Saturday Review of Literature* for Jan. 17, under the title, "America's Philosopher." Eastman, in this case, at least, was not just putting an article together. Dewey offered Eastman unusual opportunities in his own youth, inspiring a gratitude and personal affection both sensible and sensitive on Eastman's part. Some of the paragraphs from "America's Philosopher" we are particularly anxious to quote, although, in this case, we think that the Jan. 17 *SRL* ought to be purchased and the piece read in its entirety.

It seems obvious that a teacher's attitude toward his pupils is the great criterion in education. Dewey's attitude is clear in Eastman's description of his own meeting with Dewey, and of how Dewey avoided red tape in the selection of Eastman as a teaching assistant:

> It happened because an instructor under him had died suddenly in the middle of the year. Although I was just out of college and knew almost nothing about philosophy, Dewey satisfied himself that I was capable of knowing something about it; and as he said, "There is one kind of coeducation that everybody believes in—the coeducation of teachers and pupils." On that theory he lifted me out of a hall bedroom in Greenwich Village and set me down in an office adjoining his at Columbia University. For four years he was my closest intellectual friend.

The following portrait of Dewey, working in the classroom, is unforgettable. Here is the other side of the man who seldom "wrote one quotable sentence," whose hair "always looked combed with a towel," and whose lectures were labelled extremely dull by many experts:

> He would come in through a side door, very promptly and with a brisk step. The briskness would last until he reached his chair, and then he would sag. With an elbow on the desk he would rub his hand over his face, push back his hair, and begin to purse his mouth and look vaguely off over the heads of the class, as though he might find an idea up there along the crack between the wall and the ceiling. He always would find one. And then he would begin to talk, slowly and with little emphasis and long pauses, and frequent glances up there to see if he was getting it right.
>
> The process was impersonal and rather unrelated to his pupils—until one of them asked a question. Then those glowing eyes would come down from the ceiling and shine into that pupil, and draw out of him and his innocent question intellectual wonders such as he never imagined had their seeds in his brain.
>
> Drawing out was never better done than in Dewey's classrooms. His instinctive deference, and unqualified giving-of-attention to whatever anybody, no matter how humble, might have to say, was one of the rarest gifts of genius. He would conduct long correspondences with obscure people—carpenters, plumbers, cigar-store keepers—from all over the

> world, discussing the problems of life with them as though they were the heads of universities. Pecking away with two fingers on a worn old portable typewriter, he seemed to me to embody the very essence of democracy.

Eastman is especially interesting in regard to what is often thought to be Dewey's rigid scientism. In fact, he allows us to believe that underneath it all John was something of a mystic. When he first began teaching high school in Oil City, Pa., Dewey had what he called a "mystic experience." Eastman recalls his diffidence about it, for, according to John, "it was not very dramatic":

> There was no vision—just a supremely blissful feeling that his worries were over. When he tried to convey this emotional experience to me in words, it came out like this: "What are you worrying about, anyway? Everything that's here is here, and you can just lie back on it."

"I've never had any doubts since then," he added, "nor any beliefs. To me faith means not worrying."

If one inclines to believe, as we do, that profound intuitive insights—or "mystical experiences," if we prefer—have a way of reaching farther toward the heart of reality than intellectual analysis, one can also wish that all men impressed by their own visions could be as unobtrusive as Dewey consistently was in regard to his own. He apparently never felt that any of his flashes of illumination entitled him to claim stature as a "great man" or a "great thinker." He was simply glad to have had them, and glad to make use of them.

We seem to be straying rather far from the sort of material usually discussed in "Children . . . and Ourselves," but in the case of Mr. Eastman's article we like the idea of attempting to accomplish two things at once—first, softening up the prejudices held by some parents and teachers against a great educator and a great man because of the many things they may not like in "Progressive Education" developments; and, second, because Dewey, right or wrong, was a great teacher, and the qualities of a great teacher are worth reflecting upon. We have a particularly enjoyable quotation for our conclusion. Long before Dewey was supervising an experimental school, he conducted worthwhile educational experiments in his own home. Social equality, for Dewey, obviously began each day over the breakfast table, and continued uninterruptedly:

> There were five children romping around the house during the most creative years of Dewey's life. They did not disturb his meditations in the least. Indeed, Dewey was at his best as a logician with one child climbing up his pants leg and another fishing in his inkwell. He had a way of doing two things at once without getting nervous that was almost like a parlor trick.
>
> He encouraged his children to cope with difficulties created by their own activities. In his house at Ann Arbor, Dewey's study was directly under the bathroom, and he was sitting there one day, absorbed in a new theory of arithmetic, when suddenly he felt a stream of water trickling down his back. He rushed upstairs to find the bathtub occupied by a fleet of sailboats, the water brimming over, and his small boy Fred busy with both hands shutting it off. The child turned as he opened the door, and said severely: "Don't argue, John—get the mop!"

FRONTIERS

South African Religious Politics

THOSE who interest themselves in the strife and unrest in South Africa today are likely to find themselves submerged under a mass of factual material, all of it important, yet peculiarly complex in content, just as the situation in South Africa is confusingly complex. In the first place, there are five more or less distinct cultural communities in South Africa. (1) the descendants of the original Boer settlers; (2) people of British origin; (3) native Africans; (4) the "Coloureds" (people of mixed African and European blood); and (5) Indians. At present, political power is in the hands of the National Party, which represents the traditional Boer attitude toward the racial question—one of uncompromising white supremacy, with scarcely concealed contempt for any other viewpoint, together with a feeling of being supported by the religion of their pioneer forefathers—the Calvinism of the Dutch Reformed Church.

The tensions in South Africa have grown out of the struggle for survival of the non-European racial groups, which number about ten million people in all, in contrast to the two and a half million Caucasians. The great majority of white citizens of the Union of South Africa live under a cloud of constant fear that the non-whites will gain power, and in consequence of this feeling have either supported or refused to oppose legislation oppressive to the native Africans, Coloureds, and Indians. In the Cape Province, for example, where English influence prevailed, Africans enjoyed citizenship rights on a relatively equal basis with other segments of the population from 1854 to 1936—the year when they were deprived of the vote during the regime of Prime Minister Smuts. Since gaining power in 1948, the National Party, headed by Dr. D. F. Malan, has written into law measures designed to wipe out entirely the political rights of the non-white population. (Some of these measures were described in MANAS for Jan. 21, in a discussion of E. S. Sachs' *The Choice Before South Africa.)* The response of the Africans and Coloureds to these laws has been well described by John Hatch in *The Dilemma of South Africa* (Dobson, London, 1952):

> It is an axiom of any democratic society that the law must be formulated and approved, not just by a bare majority of the people, but by the vast majority, if it is to be valid. Unless the people feel that they are participating in the lawmaking, confidence in the equity of law will always be absent. When the people know or believe that regulations are being made without consultation, or against their desires such regulations cease to be law and become tyranny.
>
> This is precisely the situation which has arisen in South Africa. Whatever the solution may be, the fact is that nearly ten million out of twelve million inhabitants know that they have no control or influence over the political institutions and the laws which are passed. They, therefore, regard the law as invalid and its officers as tyrants, and where possible avoid or break it with a feeling of virtue. In this situation it is not simply the present holders of office who are brought into disrepute, but the very conception of law itself. In the same way, the cynicism and disrespect which is felt for the present parliamentary institutions, because of the fact that they represent only a small minority of the population, is cast upon, not only the parliamentarians of today, but upon the institution of Parliament itself. A nation which suffers from the evils of disrespect for the law and cynicism for its political institutions is undermined at its very foundations.

The present government of South Africa has, in short, created a revolutionary situation, and what is remarkable about the South African scene is not the occasional disturbances expressive of non-European distrust of government, but the moderation that has been shown by peoples who have known little but injustice throughout their entire lives. For example, the resistance movement sponsored by the African National Congress, which began in June of 1952, is a *nonviolent* Campaign Against the Unjust Laws. At the outset the Congress called for 10,000 volunteers to demonstrate against the laws segregating the races from one another, by

disciplined violation of these measures. By November of last year, more than 7,000 Africans had been arrested, with thousands more of volunteers ready to take their place. The riots reported in the press, despite the claims of the Nationalist Government, were not provoked by the nonviolent defence program, but in almost every case by the aggressive action of the South African police. Commenting on the defiance of the laws requiring segregation of the Africans, Manilal Gandhi, son of M. K. Gandhi, said last October: "I am simply amazed at the non-violent spirit and the discipline the Africans in the present struggle are showing. No one had dreamt that they could keep so calm, cool, and collected. Father's spirit seems to be watching over and guiding them."

It is notable that at the trials of African and Indian leaders of the Campaign in both Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth, witnesses for the prosecution admitted that the Campaign was conducted in a disciplined manner, that it was not aimed at the Europeans, but at unjust laws, and that it was a peaceful protest without any encouragement or suggestion of violence. In Port Elizabeth, after listening to a preparatory examination, a magistrate refused to indict the accused persons on a charge of incitement to public violence. He said that the evidence presented satisfied him that the campaign was peaceful and nonviolent.

The Port Elizabeth riots which occurred soon after this hearing resulted in the death of a number of Africans, all shot by the police. An investigator (using the pseudonym, "Harry S. Warner") reports that several Europeans were killed by rioting Africans, some of them real friends of the Africans, causing dismay among Europeans and Africans alike. As to the origin of the riots, Warner explains that while Mr. Swart, South African Minister of Justice, blames the leaders of the Defiance Campaign for these outbreaks, the true facts are beginning to be known, being dug up mostly by lawyers engaged in defending individuals facing charges in connection with the riots. This investigator, "Warner," says in *Bulletin* 9 of Americans for South African Resistance (513 W. 166th St., New York 32, N.Y.):

> They [the facts] reveal an appalling state of affairs: that the police on the direct instigation of Mr. Swart, their Minister of Justice, have been firing on the slightest provocation, killing innocent people, stirring up riots by indiscriminate shooting, then justifying the shooting as being necessary to put down the riots. These are grave accusations, but they are made with a realization of their gravity, the evidence leaves little doubt that they are true.

In support of this contention, Warner offers a series of quotations from the public statements of the Minister of Justice:

> *Nov. 2:* "The Police have instructions to take drastic action where there is a threat of a clash between Europeans and Non-Europeans. They will strike when necessary and they will shoot when necessary. So-called innocent bystanders should get out of the way when there are signs of trouble. . . . The organizers of the Defiance Campaign should heed this warning.
>
> *Nov. 15:* "I have instructed Police Officers not to wait until their men are killed or wounded in riots before they fire. They have been told to shoot first."
>
> *Aug. 6:* "If the Police go beyond their powers in isolated cases, they should not be condemned in view of their difficult task. It is just too bad if people get hurt."
>
> *Sept. 19:* "Only the police can save South Africa from chaos."

Warner concludes his report by calling attention to the fact that the Government refuses to allow responsible African leaders to remain in leadership of their communities, denying them permission to attend "any gathering." As one of these leaders said: "The Government are putting the *Tsotsis* [youthful slum-bred gangsters] in the leadership of the African people." Warner comments:

> This is not as far-fetched as it sounds. There are other signs that the Government do not wish a responsible leadership to develop. In the Western Native Areas of Johannesburg, where a gang of hooligans have dispossessed two hundred law-abiding

> families, forcing them to live on an open square, no action whatever has been taken against the hooligans. It is the Government's policy to create as much unrest as possible and then to shoot down all signs of it. There is no other explanation for the events described. . . . The Passive Resistance Campaign, peaceful, disciplined, and non-racial was something it could not handle by ordinary means. It has decided to convert it from a passive into a violent campaign.

These, then, are some of the disheartening realities of the struggle for power and the struggle for justice in South Africa. However, if one attempts to go beyond the surface of events, by reading carefully, say, Mr. Hatch's excellent book, the power struggle, while remaining to be considered, is gradually overshadowed by the psychological aspect of South African politics. The real forces behind the drive to wholly disenfranchise and control as an apolitical "mass" the non-white population of South Africa are the forces of prejudice, fear, and self-righteousness. In particular, the Nationalist community, inheritor of the Boer tradition, seems possessed by well-defined schizoid delusions. To begin with, the thinking of these people, or of many of them, at least, is unmistakably theocratic in character. In 1942, for example, a draft for the Constitution of a proposed South African Republic, published with the permission and authority of Dr. Malan (now Prime Minister of the Union), provided for the head of the State a President who would be "directly and only responsible to God, over and against the people, for his deeds in the fulfillment of his duties. . . . " Something of the temper of the Afrikaners (descendants of the Boers) is conveyed by a statement concerning a secret organization which has played an important part in shaping the thinking of the National Party. "The Afrikaner Broederbond was born out of the deep conviction that the Afrikaner nation was planted in this country by the hand of God and is destined to continue to exist as a nation with its own character and own calling." There can be little doubt that many Nationalists would be delighted at an opportunity to drive out the English and to make South Africa over into an Afrikaner-ruled theocracy.

Already, by passage of the Group Areas Act and the Suppression of Communism Act, the South African Government has placed itself in a position to regulate, control, or imprison practically anyone of whom it may disapprove. The Group Areas Act gives authority to declare a region restricted exclusively to either Africans, Coloureds, Indians, or Europeans, in furtherance of the declared policy of *Apartheid*, or separation of the races. Mr. Hatch reports interviews with Nationalist intellectuals who seemed honestly persuaded that complete separation of the races into separate areas—with sacrifices involved for all racial groups—would be the only just and workable solution of the racial problem. South African politicians, however, while using this argument in their loftier moments, undoubtedly recognize and on occasion plainly admit that there is little likelihood of the Europeans being willing to give up the advantages of African labor, on which much of the South African economy now depends. One cabinet minister Hatch talked to was disarmingly frank on this contradiction:

> He [the cabinet minister] countered my question by saying that perhaps in three hundred years South Africa would be a coffee-coloured nation with complete equality for all its inhabitants, but that over such a period, no one could forecast the future. He and his colleagues, he said, were concerned with the situation of the present generation, their children and grandchildren, and they saw the very grave dangers with which they were faced by the increasing numbers and demands of the Non-Europeans.

The long-term "tolerance" of this minister, however, is somewhat marred by the fact that he belongs to a government which only lately passed a law prohibiting mixed marriages and made punishable by imprisonment any sexual relations between Europeans and non-Europeans. That there are already in South Africa more than a million offspring of such unions did not, apparently, deter the legislators at all in this regard. "One almost gets the impression," Hatch comments, "that the enforcement by law of this

rigid sexual separation comes from minds beset by a guilt complex." Administration of this law, he notes, has promoted a peculiarly revolting sort of police activity, resulting in "a tremendous vulgarization of the whole social atmosphere of the country."

Under the Suppression of Communism Act, a communist is anyone who says he is a communist, or who is deemed by the Governor-General to be one, "on the ground that he is advocating, advising, defending or encouraging, or has at any time after the date of the commencement of this Act, advocated, advised, defended or encouraged the achievement of any of the objects of communism or any act or omission which is calculated to further the achievement of any such objects." Since "the encouragement of feelings of hostility between European and non-European races of the Union" in connection with aims of political, industrial, social or economic change is said to be evidence of Communism, it is quite clear that the South African authorities now possess the power to brand as a communist almost anyone at all, and to prosecute and punish him to the full extent of the law!

What permits men, many of whom are apparently quite sincere in their claim of high purposes, to acquire tyrannical power over other men by means which are utterly repugnant to those schooled in the liberal democratic tradition? It seems fairly clear that it is the sanction of Calvinist religion which lies at the root of Nationalist self-righteousness. As Hatch puts it, after describing how the nationalists broke their promise to the Coloured voters by attempting to take them off the electoral roll—"The God whom the members of the National Party worshipped was a God with two sets of subjects—the elite white man and the lesser beings, the descendants of Ham, cursed for eternity by a darker pigmentation."

Religious motives, then, combined with fierce pride, and the obvious economic reasons, are back of the tensions in South Africa, and nothing, so far as we can see, will relieve those tensions short of the gradual processes of enlightenment growing out of a better and wiser religion—unless it be some terrible explosion of social forces, whether in Africa or elsewhere. Is it too much to say that medieval social conditions are the outcome of medieval religion?

Correspondents sometimes ask why MANAS interests itself so much in questions of religious thought—in particular, the God-idea—when there are so many social problems in the world that press for attention. Religious thought, it seems to us, cannot be separated from social considerations. What man thinks of man depends in large measure on what man thinks of the world, of nature and of deity. A god who deals in privilege and special "destiny" has been behind some of the most brutal conquests of history. "He" provides injustice with the highest possible authority. We need to think of such things, lest the "God" who has so many "chosen peoples" make atheists of us all.