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THE SEA OF SAMSARA

THE yearning to be a philosopher overtakes modern man in strange and unlikely places. He may be led to search into the meaning of his life by the impact of a great disappointment; or, instead, it may be that the accumulations of distaste for a savorless existence produce in him a quiet wondering about the apparent lack of sense in what most men do with their time. The pain of a deprivation brought by death, or the estrangements imposed upon the heart by a long and seemingly futile illness may stir a man to look about for a better comprehension of meaning.

When we say "modern man," we mean the man who is free of institutional faiths or compulsions. In the past, the quest for truth or meaning has usually been guided by well-marked institutional sign-posts. A man in search of learning would go to an institution of learning. If he sought religious truth, he would enter an order devoted to a spiritual goal. If he wanted wealth or success, there were paths to follow leading to these ends. Whichever way he chose, he was shepherded by the specialists who wore the badges of their profession. There were the great traditions from which to choose one's calling, and in which to serve an apprenticeship.

Modern Man, however, to the degree that he is modern, has broken with these traditions. He has broken with them on two counts. First, his political philosophy—which is more than a political philosophy, rather a concept of human identity—declares the radical equality of all men. Even when practical experience makes the great differences among men a fact of primary observation, modern man still clings to his intuition of equality as some sort of ultimate truth, a truth which he may qualify but never abandon.

The second break with tradition for modern man has come with the all-pervading influence of the scientific method and the scientific theory of knowledge. We understand science to be defined by concepts of knowing and concepts of doing. At first defined mostly in terms of *knowing*, *sci*ence is presently conceived more in terms of *doing*, since knowing, after the first flush of practical success for the sciences, was realized to be much more difficult than was at first supposed. To say that science deals only with *doing* is to say that it is empirical—that it manages without a demonstrable theory of knowledge. This is the same as saying that science is little more than the higher technology—that truth, whatever it is, is not disclosed by science, but only the techniques of doing what we want to do with whatever materials we have learned to manipulate.

But regardless of the sophistication with which we define scientific knowledge, it remains a fact that our two hundred or so years of experience in a world progressively scientific has had an ineradicable effect upon our thinking. Knowledge, it has taught us to say, lies in *immediacy*. Knowledge is not a word or a book. It is very different from a theory. Knowledge, we say, is fact, and it is exact. Hearsay, even frequently attested hearsay, is not knowledge. Knowledge is verified and repeatable explanation of the meaning of personal experience. It is personal in the sense that the scientist does not say he "knows" until he has personally repeated the experiments or the calculation by which some other scientist has arrived at the conclusion which is called knowledge. This, at any rate, is the final test of all knowledge.

Thus, the idea of equality (any man, because he is a man, can pursue knowledge through experiment) and the idea of science (knowing is personal experience) have constituted a radical break with traditional ideas.

We are not suggesting that modern man has been eminently successful, either in his application of the idea of equality or in his use of science, but only that these two ideas have created a temper which cannot help but affect all human undertakings.

For example, when a modern man is hit hard by some personal disaster, he does not immediately respond to the impulse to go at once to a counselor provided by one of the traditional institutions which still survive in his society. Science has shaken the validity of all the traditional explanations of the human condition. He may have the impulse, but he also has a second impulse to resist the first. What do these people know? he will say to himself. What does anyone know about such matters? He may look about, listening to what others say, but it is plain that he intends to decide for himself what to think. He will not uncritically place himself under the guidance of another. The instinct of rational inquiry is bred into his mind. Even if he decides that there are cognitions which reach beyond the rational, he will draw this conclusion on rational grounds, by reflecting upon the limitations of the rational.

Today, however, it is this realization of the limitations of rational forms of knowing which is very much in the foreground of the thoughts of modern man. He has suffered a kind of fatigue of the rational process and an ominous disillusionment with certain of the fruits of rational techniques. He still has his skepticism and his respect for the ideals of the scientific method—the rule of impartiality, of overcoming prejudice, of being willing to look in all directions—but he is beginning to suspect himself of naïveté for having had faith in the predictions of the scientific utopians. They have not produced what they said they would produce. Instead, they have raised up uncontrollable monsters and armed with incredible power the irrational tendencies of human beings.

So, in contemporary thinking, there is the beginning of a passage from faith in science to faith in intuition. There is a family resemblance between scientific and intuitive cognition. Both are immediate. Both represent individual experience. One encounters material facts, the other—well, we are not sure precisely what order of facts is encountered by intuition, but the matter begins to seem worthy of investigation.

Intuitive realization brings a measure of impact to the feelings. In fact, an intuition can hardly be devoid of feeling of some sort. Scientific discovery makes its own sort of impact. It is tangible to the senses. Facts related to doing things are not a negligible part of our environment. What, however, is left out in the comparison is the theoretical work that is a part of every science. The intellectual activity which begins every scientific undertaking has only the slightest of counterparts in the new interest in intuition. We have not far to seek for an explanation of this omission.

First of all, the operations of intuition, while by no means well understood, are at least known to be inhibited by too great a reliance on intellectuality, or analytical methods. The intuition acts spontaneously. It is possible that it can be trained, but this sounds very much like a contradiction in terms. Then there is the long history of Western rationalism and its defeats and frustrations to discourage a further trust in the processes of reasoning. Finally, there is the experience of the West with theology, which is a special kind of rationalism connected with revealed religion. Modern man has almost equal contempt for theology and metaphysics, although this association fails to distinguish between the dependent nature of theology and the independent character of metaphysics. Metaphysics, like theology, is seen to involve intellectualizing about the nature of things, and is therefore without much standing for modern man.

We are now, perhaps, in a position to understand the modern interest in Zen Buddhism. Zen, at least verbally—if Zen does anything "verbally"—seems to promise a sudden break-

through to knowledge of an ultimate character. The break-through is said to be intuitive or spontaneous, a result of the elimination from one's thought of all trace of "conceptual" delusion. In general, the sudden attraction of Zen for Westerners is a favorable indication of the times, despite the frequent frothiness of this interest and the occasional vulgarization of Zen ideas. Chief sources of information about Zen in the West are the works of D. T. Suzuki and of Alan Watts, and to a lesser extent Eugen Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery* and *The Supreme Doctrine* by Hubert Benoit, a French psychiatrist.

While credit is always given by Zen scholars to the Chinese origin of the Zen sect, until recently the expositors of this school of Buddhist tradition have drawn on Japanese texts. *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po,* published in England by Rider and by Grove (an Evergreen paperback, $1.95) in the United States, now makes available to the general reader a Chinese Zen classic. The translator is John Blofeld, whose high capacities seem self-evident from the text.

Huang Po was a ninth-century Chinese Buddhist who took his name from the mountain on which he lived. He taught in sermons, anecdotes, and dialogues. This book renders into English the body of these teachings. What must be remembered in reading it is that the words of Huang Po are addressed to Buddhist monks who have steeped themselves in Buddhist doctrines. One of his purposes is to emancipate his hearers from the notion that a learned knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures brings them any closer to the realization they suppose themselves to be seeking. The contents of this book should be examined with full awareness that they stand as a psychological antidote to certain intellectual consequences of the attempt to absorb a vast philosophical literature, beginning with the Vedas and the Upanishads, and extending throughout the literature of the Buddhist reform of Indian religion.

In all these works, the fundamental inquiry is the search for the means of emancipation from the bonds and oppressions of earthly existence. The role of Zen, in this perspective, is to provide a kind of "shock" treatment to the delusions which arise in human beings during the course of the search. Assent to the essentials of Eastern philosophy is taken for granted. Briefly, these essentials are that the universe is a vast *Maya*, a kind of "constructive" illusion brought into existence by the creative activities of beings who mistake the unreal for the real. Perhaps we could say that the desire for sentient existence is responsible for the fact that we, as human beings, are here, and that we shall remain here until that desire is exhausted, by means of a more profound realization of what we are, in essence. In this sense, the universe is self-created, and the end of the great cycle of existence will be brought only by a cessation of the motives of creation. The object of philosophy or "teaching" is the instruction of men in the fact that they need not "desire," since, inwardly, they are already all that they could hope to become. Having their ground in the source of universal being, they should long for nothing other than what they are.

Oriental religion is famous for its prescription of the "techniques" of soul development or evolution. There are yogas of the body, of the mind, and of the soul. There are practices of duty and disciplines of mortification and purification. The theoretical end of all these activities is the clearing of the mind of illusion. Only in the vulgar religion of the crowd is it the gaining of reward.

Now since these various processes of emancipation fall into grades of effort and development, a metaphysic of the progress of the soul inevitably results. And where you have a metaphysic of progress, its stages are sooner or later reflected in ritual, custom, and institutional solemnities. So there are the numbered paramitas of perfection, numbered deadly sins, numbered paths, and numbered virtues; and then there are the numbered worlds of being, both here and

hereafter, all together comprising the doctrinal conception of the universe and the beings in it. The doctrine supplies the intellect with a sense of order, while the observances required of the faithful supply a sense of concrete objectives and a feeling of dutifulness and achievement. It is easy to see how, from a cultural complex of beliefs of this sort, a great and imposing conventional religion comes into being.

The teachers of Zen are the anarchists of the Buddhist system, who start by saying the system itself is concerned only with externalities—that it does not really "exist"; in fact, nothing that is real can exist, since the real is not in existence.

What is *real?* Nothing is real, says Huang Po, but the Buddha Mind. According to the translator, John Blofeld, Buddha Mind is here the equivalent of what Western metaphysicians have termed the Absolute. One might say that Zen Buddhism is Eastern philosophy expounded solely from the point of view of the Absolute. It allows validity to no lesser conception and is therefore impatient of all distinctions except the basic distinction between the real and the unreal. For example, there is the following discourse of Huang Po:

> Q: Does the Buddha really liberate sentient beings [from *samsara*—the endless round of birth and death]?
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> A: There are in reality no sentient beings to be delivered by the Tathagata. If even self has no objective existence, how much less has other-than-self! Thus, neither Buddha nor sentient beings exist objectively.
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> Q: Yet it is recorded that "Whosoever possesses the thirty-two characteristic signs of a Buddha is able to deliver sentient beings." How can you deny it?
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> A: Anything possessing *ANY* signs is illusory. It is by perceiving that all signs are no signs that you perceive the Tathagata (Buddha). "Buddha" and "sentient beings" are both your own false conceptions. It is because you do not know real Mind that you delude yourself with such objective concepts. If you *WILL* conceive of a Buddha, YOU *WILL BE OBSTRUCTED BY THAT BUDDHA!!!* And when you conceive of sentient beings, you will be obstructed by those beings. All such dualistic concepts as "ignorant" and "Enlightened," "pure" and "impure," are obstructions. It is because your minds are hindered by them that the Wheel of the Law must be turned (i.e., that the relative truths of orthodox Buddhism must be taught). Just as apes spend their time throwing things away and picking them up unceasingly, so it is with you and your learning. All you need is to give up your "learning," your "ignorant" and "Enlightened," "pure" and "impure," "great" and "little," your "attachment" and "activity." Such things are mere conveniences, mere ornaments within the One Mind. I hear you have studied the sutras of the twelve divisions of the Three Vehicles. They are all mere empirical concepts. Really, you must give them up!
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> So just discard all you have acquired as being no better than a bed spread for you when you were sick. Only when you have abandoned all perceptions, there being nothing objective to perceive; only when phenomena obstruct you no longer; only when you have rid yourself of the whole gamut of dualistic concepts of the "ignorant" and "Enlightened" category will you at last earn the title of Transcendental Buddha. Therefore it is written: "Your prostrations are in vain. Put no faith in such ceremonies. Hie from such false beliefs." Since mind knows no divisions into separate entities, phenomena must be equally undifferentiated. Since mind is above all activities so must it be with phenomena. Every phenomenon that exists is a creation of thought; therefore I need but empty my mind to discover that all of them are void. It is the same with all sense objects, to whichever of the myriads of categories they belong. The entire void stretching out in all directions is of one substance with Mind, and, since Mind is fundamentally undifferentiated, so must it be with everything else. Different entities appear to you only because your perceptions differ—just as the colours of the precious delicacies eaten by the Devas are said to differ in accordance with the individual merits of the Devas eating them!
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> *Anuttara-samyak-sambodi* is a name given for the realization that the Buddhas of the whole universe do not in fact possess the smallest perceptible attribute. There exists just One Mind. Truly there are no multiplicity of forms, no Celestial Brilliance, and no Glorious Victory [over *samsara*] or submission to the Victor. Since no Glorious Victory was ever won, there can be no such formal entity as a Buddha; and, since no submission ever took place, there can be no such formal entities as sentient beings.

This is rigor with a vengeance! It all never happened! And of course, Huang Po is right. From the stance of the Universal Mind, it did not happen. Nothing that takes place in time can cause the slightest ripple upon the untroubled calm of the Absolute. The medieval iconoclasts of Europe were the merest beginners at the breaking of images. The Zen Buddhists did not stop with stone images, but went on to destroy psychological images. They would have no form to represent the formless, no word to symbolize the wordless. They would not speak of the unspeakable, nor honor a progression which takes place in time, simply because no ultimate reality can exist in time. To speak seriously of the temporal is to endow it with a permanence it cannot possibly enjoy. To "think" in conceptual categories is to risk falling into the habit of supposing that the conceptual categories represent some aspect of the real. Even the highest virtues are misleading:

> The Eighty Excellencies belong to the sphere of matter; but whoever perceives a self in matter is travelling the wrong path; he cannot comprehend the Tathagata thus.

The Zen teachers have exactly one and only one point to make, and they make it over and over again. Philosophically, the point is flawless. But, so far as we can see, it is a point for monks.

Mr. Blofeld says in a footnote:

> The Zen Masters in their single-minded desire to lead their disciples beyond the realm of dualism, would have them abandon even the notion of compassion as such, since it leads to the dualistic concept of its opposite. By Zen adepts compassion must be practiced as a matter of course and without giving rise to the least feeling of satisfaction. Still less may it be practiced as a means of gaining some heavenly or earthly reward.

Elsewhere, he writes:

> In some Buddhist sects, the chief emphasis is placed on works of piety and charity; in Zen, nobility of heart and deed are prerequisites for followers of the Path, but they do not form part of the Path of Liberation itself.

No one can quarrel with the purity of the Zen psychology nor with the technical consistency, perhaps the final communicable truth, of the Zen tradition. But what this system seems to neglect is the vast multitude of men who are overtaken by a yearning for philosophy at some earlier way station along the path. Perhaps, in the context of Asian life a thousand years ago, surrounded by the lore of Buddhist teachings known to all—as the *Bhagavad-Gita* is surrounded by the *Mahabharata,* resting like a jewel in this magnificent setting—the neglect does not exist, or at least is not so noticeable. But as an importation into modern times, and out of its ancient context, the bare disciplines of Zen for the escape from delusion seem more than anything a manual for leaving the wicked world behind.

Without questioning the metaphysical validity of the Zen analysis, we may wonder, still, about the pain of the deluded, and whether, in the final analysis, the "compassion" which may hold a generous-hearted being upon a lower rung of the ladder, where he waits, patiently, for his fellows to wear out their delusions of name and form—whether this overflowing love does not constitute a more profound touch with Reality than the Spartan consistency of the devotee of the Zen tradition. A man who loves will by that love become a little infected with the delusion of those whom he loves, since by loving he enters into and shares in their being. So, for him, the great structured *Maya* of the world acquires the substance of human wondering, human striving, and human tears. These are not negligible matters, but the stuff of our common life. It is, indeed, a divine schizophrenia, this splitting of one's awareness between the world with its impassioned relativities and the untroubled Serene beyond.

Zen is plainly enough an undertaking for those who have had enough of this world. Mr. Blofeld renders what he calls a "curt reply" of Huang Po to a questioner, thus: "Why join this assembly to study Zen-liberation, unless the

frustration set up by samsaric life [life in the world of illusion and the round of rebirth] is painful to you?" On this basis, one can have no quarrel, but only admiration, for the clarity of the Zen teaching. Western readers in particular will find Mr. Blofeld's translation luminous, his comments pertinent, and his explanations helpful.

But what we wonder about this, apart from the light thrown on Buddhism and Oriental philosophy generally, is its general usefulness to Western man. You do not go suddenly from the profound involvements of building a civilization—one wishes it might be a better one—to the passionless quest for Nirvana. There is still work to do here, and in order to do it, some understanding of the grades of "illusion" by which we are surrounded is necessary, supposing, of course, that the Buddhist analysis is correct. And it is, it seems to us, the necessary function of conceptual—or metaphysical—thinking to set the manifested world in some kind of order and sequence. We have to put first things first, and if Nirvana is not yet first, the long spiraling road from Samsara to Nirvana needs some signposts along the way. It is as much a part of the great universe to come into being and to do its work, as it is to go out.

REVIEW
IMPRINT OF GANDHIAN NON VIOLENCE

A REPORT in the mid-summer *Unitarian Register* should be of particular interest to many MANAS readers, since a Unitarian group has now declared active support of those who choose "pacifist," non-violent approaches to international affairs. There is little difficulty in recognizing that this trend among Unitarians reflects something of Gandhi's vision. We quote:

> A return to pacifism rather than merely the promotion of peace marked the annual meeting of the Liberal Religious Peace Fellowship (Unitarian-Universalist) held May 22 in Boston's Old South Church.
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> The new emphasis resulted from adoption of a constitution which included an additional statement of purpose: "To witness personal opposition to war of any kind and be guided by a personal commitment to a philosophy of non-violent action."
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> Dr. Homer Jack, Evanston, Illinois, retiring president, told members that adoption of the additional statement would mean "a return to a basis of pacifism." The organization had made no commitment to pacifism at its founding, in 1955, through a merger of the Unitarian Pacifist Fellowship and the Aden Ballou Fellowship (Universalist). . . .
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> But last May the organization passed four resolutions:
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> 1. Urging military and political disengagement in Central Europe;
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> 2. Endorsing a proposal to establish a department to deal with international relations in the American Unitarian Association and urging that it be known as the "Department of Peace and International Relations," with a program emphasis on peace education and action;
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> 3. Urging the United States "to support representation in the United Nations of the *existing government* of the Peoples Republic of China";
>
> 4. Favoring "unconditionally" the immediate cessation of all nuclear bomb testing.

The four resolutions are proposals for concerted action, but the philosophical emphasis is revealed by the Peace Fellowship's declaration for support for any *personal* "opposition to war."

Chester Bowles, former U.S. ambassador to India, writing in the June 6 *New Republic*, notes that there was always a constructive aspect of Gandhi's campaigns:

> I should like to suggest that all of us can learn much from a study of that incredible man, Mahatma Gandhi.
>
> There were always two sides to Gandhi's program. One was direct resistance to unjust laws or practices. The other was constructive popular action to create the conditions of justice.

The *Christian Century* for July 29 reviews a new volume on Gandhian philosophy, *Conquest of Violence,* by Joan V. Bondurant (Princeton University Press). The reviewer, Allen Hackett, speaks of "essential characteristics" of *satyagraha*—non-violence, "self-suffering," and concern for the individual—adding:

> Because "self-suffering" is "obscure to the Western mind," she [the author] gives a great deal of attention to its nature and purpose, though without any reference to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. As to the other element of *satyagraha,* she cites Gandhi's life as evidence of his belief in the power of the individual and quotes his words on the subject: "If the individual ceases to count, what is left of society? Individual freedom alone can make a man voluntarily surrender himself completely to the service of society. If it is wrested from him, he becomes an automaton and society is ruined. No society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom."
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> Here is a Gandhian concept that is completely congenial to the Western mind. In so far as it has penetrated the Indian masses, it offers a bulwark against alien ideologies and practices which subvert the individual to the state. If Dr. Bondurant's book did nothing more than to bring together in orderly form Gandhi's teaching on the power he helped to unleash, it would be a valuable addition to anyone's equipment for understanding the dynamics of change in our generation.

Conquest of Violence describes five major *satyagraha* campaigns, including Gandhi's famous "march to the sea" in 1930-31 to protest the British salt tax. In the early days there were attempts at *satyagraha* which broke down into violence despite Gandhi's best efforts, but even these contributed to a deeper understanding of the

practical problems confronting any non-violent direct action on a mass basis. During the first *satyagraha* campaigns, the disciplines of non-violence could not have been maintained without the presence of the inspired Indian leader, but, as an understanding of the psychological dynamics of the movement progressed throughout the years, spontaneous organization and adherence to *satyagraha* in Gandhi's absence began to manifest. This Dr. Bondurant speaks of as evidence of an "evolving technique" which produced its own integrity and discipline, rendering personal leadership less crucial.

In the perspective of history, Gandhi's *satyagraha* seems to have become a focus for the functional unity of both ethical and socio-political ideals. An individual's determination to relinquish violence and to refuse to support either modern war or capital punishment flows from some base in man's nature which defies organization. Gandhi realized this, and was never presumptuous enough to try to persuade any of his potential followers to embrace a specific ethical doctrine. Yet the discipline and organization of the Gandhian movement was as hard-headed and practical as is the structural operation of a military force, and so long as break-downs into violence were avoided, Gandhi was content to allow the success of a venture in *satyagraha* to be judged by its tangible results.

Some who have become devotees of *satyagraha* have been attracted by the impressive record of non-violent actions in situations in which violence would have been abortive, or unnecessarily destructive of future relationships. Others who are intuitively drawn to non-violent techniques have sometimes been surprised and encouraged by evidence that *satyagraha* is more apt to work than to fail.

Most encouraging of all, however, is the emergence of the *mood* of non-violence throughout the world, sometimes in unexpected quarters. Today, in many regions, there are bitter struggles between awakening native populations and the remnants of colonial rule. So strong is the longing for a new approach to conflict situations that even popular writers portray the "imprint of Gandhi and non-violence" on both sides of these struggles. A passage from Geoffrey Wagner's *Rage on the Bar* depicts an English colonial administrator suddenly overcome by revulsion against police violence—regardless of the "atrocities" perpetrated by the enraged native population:

> "Fire into the bush again," Leone said. When he made no movement she went on angrily, "You don't believe in any of this, do you?"
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> "It's only that . . . ." He struggled with it, he felt he had to answer, but it was like mentioning an obscenity, such were his repressions. That once I was on the other side, he wanted to say. In the Resistance. The boys there were fighting for national independence, just as the Zodudu are here. I don't agree with their methods but. . . . A legion of voices sawed at the darkness. "It's *the same thing,"* he muttered inconsequentially.
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> "What is?" she said in the same hostile tone.
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> No, it must be a charade. England could not be asking him to do this. Yet if he refused, he was guilty of treason, and sudden death (a dangling noose, the drop rigged to rip off the nose, the "hot squat") attended that course.

With every promise of such dawning awareness, whether found in religion, philosophy, or fiction, the figure of Gandhi grows a little larger.

COMMENTARY
LIGHT FROM THE EAST

JOHN BLOFELD'S rendering into English of the teachings of Huang Po continues a tradition begun more than a century and a half ago by Charles Wilkins, who made the first English translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The influence upon the West of Eastern religious philosophy has come in great waves. Anquetil-Duperron's version of the Upanishads brought an early vision of the profundity of Sanskrit literature, which was given wide currency by Schopenhauer. Max Muller's *Sacred Books of the East* was another "revelation" to the West of the moral and metaphysical genius of Eastern thinkers. Both German and American Transcendentalist writers drank at fountains of Eastern wisdom, and in Emerson this inspiration found willing response. Platonic and Vedic thought merged in Emerson, truly a universal man of the West, and the result was an organic expression of spiritual philosophy in the New World. Then, with Edwin Arnold's exquisite poem, *The Light of* Asia, the story of the Buddha and the uplifting effect of his moral vision became a part of Western culture.

Gandhi's contribution to this influence is far from negligible. The great Indian reformer accomplished a wondrous cross-fertilization between Eastern and Western thought, showing that no important barrier existed between the essential moral inspiration of men like Tolstoy, Thoreau and Ruskin, and ancient Indian philosophy.

Two other men should be mentioned—Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the first Indian scholar to hold a chair at Oxford University, and Heinrich Zimmer, very nearly the first Western Orientalist for whom Eastern thought constituted a living philosophy of life.

There is appropriateness in the fact that the world owes to Western enterprise and material advancement the concept of *One World*—a contribution which may now be reciprocated by the East with its unsectarian religious philosophy and implicit yearning for recognition that there is only *One Mankind.* All that remains, now, to be realized is that the West does not give to the East, nor the East to the West, but that men give to men the wealth which their various talents encompass, and that this sharing may vary from one age to another, geographic and ethnic distinctions being of no importance.

As the psychological subtleties of Eastern thought are brought to us in assimilable form by such men as Mr. Blofeld, the stature of pioneer Western thinkers grows in our eyes. These men appear as the natural welcomers and hosts of Eastern philosophy. We are better able, for example, to appreciate John Scotus Erigena of the ninth century A.D. when we realize that here was a man, who, in almost the crudest of all periods of European history, laid the foundations for transcendental metaphysics and mysticism in Western thought, with a purity of concept strangely free from dogmatic coloring.

It is possible, now, to see in the evolution of Western ideas an irrepressible striving toward forms of thought which are devoid of "local" influence—toward unalloyed expressions of the aspiring human spirit. If we have learned to distrust what we call "speculation," and have become aware of the relativism of all conceptual thinking, we may still find reliable substance in the recurring patterns of man's search for philosophic verity, as being, indeed, a more certain guide to the nature of man than any single formulation concerning the structure and quality of his being.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

SOME quotations we have been saving for a while help to expose a serious lack in the conventional Western approach to "learning." In ancient times, with a naturalness which matched profundity, education was conceived to be the impartation of some vision of wholeness. In Buddhist countries, for example, Gotama was seen as the image of the man who had become complete—and in the atmosphere which radiated from his life and philosophy, the specifics of learning found their relative place. It was also the vision of wholeness, applied to a view of the cosmos, which led the Pythagoreans to the heliocentric system.

During the Middle Ages of the West, on the other hand, the idea of education proceeded from a rather niggardly interpretation of Aristotle, with the "wholeness" of ethics and cosmic fact founded upon theological dogma. Yet, as last week's review of Kees Boeke's *Cosmic View* indicated, the youngest of children can be assisted to a vision of the impersonal grandeur of the universe.

In a World Perspective volume, *Can People Learn to Learn?*, Brock Chisholm provides suggestions to the parent who wishes to help his child's mind "stretch"—to begin at the top with the universal ideas. Dr. Chisholm writes:

> Before school age, parents should have helped their children to explore superficially all the space of this earth, the details can be filled in by the schoolteachers later. A globe in the home is a great help for this phase of basic education. By five years of age a child can well profit by some discussion of various common theories of what lies under the surface of the earth. The ancient myth of hell might well be kept for study at university level, where it belongs in cultural anthropology and theology.
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> Astronomical space, outside this one planet, is a difficult concept for most adults, but it may be found much easier if introduced in childhood. This is a part of everyone's environment which is seen every day and night; to ignore it or to people it with magic is unfair to children, whose development is going to be difficult enough without misleading complications.
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> If this aspect of a child's development is assisted successfully by parents and teachers, he will feel himself living in a world, in a universe, not just a house, or a town, or even a country. He will be much less likely to be an ardent partisan of any one place in adulthood and will be helped greatly toward attainment of the ability to become a world citizen.

The breadth of astronomical views does not suggest any particular religious faith, certainly, but tends rather in the direction of a search for universal truth. Erich Fromm, in his *Art of Loving*, indicates the need for a universal ethical view:

> Many people have never known a person who functions optimally. They take the psychic functioning of their parents and relatives, or of the social group they have been born into, as the norm, and as long as they do not differ from these they feel normal and without interest in observing anything. There are many people, for instance, who have never seen a loving person, or a person with integrity, or courage, or concentration. It is quite obvious that in order to be sensitive to oneself, one has to have an image of complete, healthy human functioning—and how is one to acquire such an experience if one has not had it in one's childhood, or later in life? There is certainly no simple answer to this question; but the question points to one very critical factor in our educational system.
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> While we teach knowledge, we are losing that teaching which is the most important one for human development: the teaching which can only be given by the simple presence of a mature, loving person. In previous epochs of our own culture, or in China and India, the man most highly valued was the person with outstanding spiritual qualities. Even the teacher was not only, or even primarily, a source of information, but his function was to convey certain human attitudes. In contemporary capitalistic society—and the same holds true for Russian Communism—the men suggested for admiration and emulation are everything but bearers of significant spiritual qualities. Those are essentially in the public eye who give the average man a sense of vicarious satisfaction. Movie stars, radio entertainers, columnists, important business or government figures—these are the models for emulation. Their main qualification for this function is often that they

> have succeeded in making the news. Yet, the situation does not seem to be altogether hopeless. If one considers the fact that a man like Albert Schweitzer could become famous in the United States, if one visualizes the many possibilities to make our youth familiar with living and historical personalities who show what human beings can achieve as human beings, and not as entertainers (in the broad sense of the word), if one thinks of the great works of literature and art of all ages, there seems to be a chance of creating a vision of good human functioning, and hence of sensitivity to malfunctioning. If we should not succeed in keeping alive a vision of mature life, then indeed we are confronted with the probability that our whole cultural tradition will break down. This tradition is not primarily based on the transmission of certain kinds of knowledge, but of certain kinds of human traits. If the coming generations will not see these traits any more, a five-thousand-year-old culture will break down, even if its knowledge is transmitted and further developed.

Other illustrations of how education can "begin at the top" are provided by some offhand remarks of a teacher, Mark Harris *(Saturday Review*, July 18):

> I don't teach subjects, I teach what I'm thinking about, and we read what I'm reading at the moment. The main thing is to make it interesting for yourself. Have a few facts but throw them away at the end of the semester. To be knowing is to dump everything but the *feel* of things. We live in a spelling bee culture where the demand is for factual accuracy and everybody overlooks the absence of art or meaning in what's said. Well, not everybody, but too many people send letters to Nero telling him he was fingering his fiddle wrong. This passion for data is a way of avoiding coming to terms with things. What art gives us is "the felt quality of life" but I forget whose phrase that is, and I apologize.

Time for Aug. 24 reveals the successful methods employed by a Japanese music teacher. Mr. Suzuki doesn't let the young pupils near a violin, or try to "teach" by any prescribed method. His youngsters simply sit in the classroom where advanced students practice, and where they are able to become sensitive to accomplished playing. No technical terms are employed. The real commencement of violin instruction comes when the child is imbued with the beauty of the tune and wishes to reproduce it. "Never force children," says Suzuki, "for a long time." If they choose, his pupils can play entirely by ear, and they are, in a sense, "feeling" for that which the great violinists express so well. Integrated details and discipline come later. So, it seems to us, it is with all *natural* education.

FRONTIERS
Life's Religion

YOUR initial article in the June 3 MANAS interested me very much. The apparent dimming of moral values in motivations in various and important areas has concerned me a long time, and I have attributed it to what seems to me a really natural result of certain fundamental concepts of our churches and our political-economic system. The incentives offered in both are self-centered. One should be good to win for oneself the reward of heaven hereafter. We go into business, not because people need what we plan to provide, from which we would profit mutually, but into the venture from which we think we can profit the most and the fastest, without thought of possible consequences to the social or political entity. The incentive is seldom benefit to "the people"—to borrow the terms of Russia's phony but effective slogan. More often it is simply the raw, ugly, undisguised money profit for oneself alone.

As I see it, the moral quality of man is deeply rooted in the nature of the individual. However theologians may believe man came to this earth, the human individual owes his existence to other human individuals. The strongest in an animal group can reign supreme through his superior physical strength, but the individual man has all sorts of convictions and the qualities of other individual minds to cope with. It is, in my opinion, how each individual handles his adjustment to other differing individuals that creates the *medium* for moral development.

When, some months ago, *Harper's* gave opportunity to each large religious group—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and agnostic—to present through a chosen leader a comprehensive summation of its beliefs, I was astonished at how devoid of present-day help the replies were. So I put down some of my cherished beliefs on paper.

Maybe to call such an attempt at a universal point of view "religion" is putting what I have said in the wrong category. Yet it is not antagonistic to any religious denomination, but adds, as I see it, a fresh, vitally practical element to all. It ought to add dignity and a feeling of equality and importance to every individual if he could realize he is helping to create the civilization he is living in.

The modern world, thrown together by new inventions, and brought together in the UN by common need, is demonstrating the fact and the necessity of mutuality of living. I believe that repeated explanation of the how and why of this practical unity would act as an antidote to self-centeredness and thus open the way to higher ideals. I mean by human mutuality that there is a "reality of moral values," and since this reality is seated in the one attribute, reason, which makes any man a man, it cannot have less potential for loyalty to its kind than to physical possessions unless we deny the sovereignty of mind over body. Education and improvement in the knowledge and pursuit of what is good remain the great task. Following is what I wrote.

Every normal human being accepts life, and rather eagerly, whatever anybody thinks about it or its origin. The normal person understands that his life will be lived in association with others having many different ideas, ambitions, characters, and capacities. Also he recognizes, if not always clearly, that each individual adds something to this society, much or little, willingly, or unwillingly, which may be a help or hindrance; and that each is dependent upon it, willing or unwilling. Thus, with his acceptance of life, the individual accepts, at least in some degree, this universal and necessary mutuality of association as a guide and control of his own living, which, in fact, is the express function of religion.

This mutual dependency and responsibility extending to all, also unites all in an entity, although non-corporeal, composed only of spiritual qualities characterizing the time or state of culture. This entity clearly exists and continues to exist from year to year, and century to century.

Moreover, it improves, and keeps on improving. For a living thing to go backward is to die, eventually. If this living thing went backward far enough, it would relapse into an animal state, in which each individual would live for himself, destined to die, leaving nothing behind, except, perhaps, another individual destined to die. But this entity, the offspring of humans, lives on, has lived on for thousands of years, good or bad to the degree that men have made it so. It is never too bad, turning back too much, or it would have died and left nothing but dying bodies for the next generations, including the present.

No human individual can live by himself nor for himself alone. An animal may, alone, go digging and living in dirt or hiding in bushes, but not man. Alone, man is lost. "To find himself he must lose himself," not in dirt or woods but in the lives of others—in a mutual way with the few people or many with whom his life is cast, remembering always he is only one of many, a part of the whole. People are all together building their environment, their constituency, their society to live in. A single individual cannot do it alone. Moreover this is the life, the entity that keeps on living as long as humans accept life. It is an eternal life in which all share right here and now.

If an individual tries to use for his private advantage life's interdependencies, he will witness, to the extent his bad intentions succeed, the deterioration of this structure, which all, including himself, have been building. The deterioration affects its dependability, security, safety—the attributes we all desire and appreciate. This structure also belongs to each individual. When he has come to see clearly what human life really is, which he has accepted, his interest and contributions of the individual are bound to improve. Mind, or reason, an attribute peculiar to humankind, makes each individual able to judge his contribution to mutual living and that of others.

Since the mutuality of human life prescribes that together people profit or lose, it is simply natural that good becomes the standard of their judgment—the good, in their opinion, and understanding, of what they offer and what they accept or reject, as, for instance, an invention, a reform, a change of standard or procedure, or, say, an improved steel plow, an offered vaccine or quack medicine, a peaceful procedure or enforcement of an idea by war, no matter what or who is the originator. From every class and faction of humankind there emanates an influence which widens and spreads to the extent it is known and approved. The policies of every state and political subdivision permeate the atmosphere in which the whole world lives, especially in these new times when *alpha* and *omega* are next-door neighbors. All is grist for the mill which is grinding out, *by its own standard,* a mutually approved product which is the image of the progress of its time and participants. It is the measure of human good so far attained, the *summum bonum of* the generations of mankind. But, this structure of mutuality is always building, not finally built.

Although the cultural entity in which man envelopes himself exhibits many monuments of spiritual progress, it also contains black ruins that mark his struggle with ignorance and evil. Yet, on the whole, it is far too good a structure to be razed to the ground in this century, with man sent wandering through bleak desolation to begin his building all over again. This world of present promise did not survive by means of the destructive physical force of man's wars, but rather because the repulsive demonstration of war's unhuman nature aroused the non-animal in man to spring to the rescue of this his most beloved offspring. Thus the current entity of his civilization was able to move forward faster than war could push it back. Could it do this if nuclear force were war's weapon?

Even science, with all its good record, if busied with things of destruction rather than progress, can lead the world astray. But the plain facts of human life and living today show men

how to build a mutually good life for all that will extend to all generations to come. The spiritual formulae they provide take precedence over all physical and animal ways in a very difficult human task—the peaceful living together of individuals of widely different degrees of human development. These spiritual formulae are the tenets of a religion concerned with life and living and saving, not death and dying and destroying. Only by acceptance all along the line of this mutuality of humankind, which mind has decreed, with all it implies of tolerance and patience and long suffering, can the world be rid of catastrophic upheaval brought on by those in places of power, trying anew to force others to accept their view of what is good. The inborn religion of human life cast out the animal dispensation of brute force and initiated the rule of mind by establishing the necessity of consideration of and cooperation with the whole by the individual. In all times of difficult decisions and confusing crises it points the way, the way of faith in *life* and its dictation of mutuality, in *mind* and its pre-eminence over body, in *man*, the protagonist of Life, able to lift life to an ever higher and higher plane for all people.

Palo Alto, California JUNE MILLER