

## CANONS OF CRITICISM

A SENTENCE taken from Hegel and put into a learned article of philosophical criticism (by Carl J. Friedrich, in *Diogenes*, No. 10, 1955) forms the basis for the following discussion. Hegel's sentence is this:

When a man has finally reached the point where he does not think he knows better than others, that is when he has become indifferent to what they have done badly and he is interested only in what they have done right, then peace and affirmation have come to him.

Both readers and writers may ponder this statement with profit. It is hardly, of course, a canon of criticism, but rather a suggestion to those who wish to participate in the community of human thought. When a man does something badly, it is the duty of the critic to point out his mistakes. But the critic ought also to give some judgment concerning the importance of the mistakes. Actually, they may matter very little, and too much attention to them may hide the merit of an extraordinary work.

For example, there is Simone Weil's *The Need for Roots*. You might describe this book as both glorious and impossible. It is the draft for a Utopia. During the war, the Free French in London, not knowing what to do with the restless energies of this young woman of genius, asked Simone Weil to write a book which would set forth her recommendations for the "renovation of the educational and governmental system in France after the war." The result, *The Need for Roots*, published in 1952, is a program for gods and demi-gods, not for the population of twentieth-century France, nor for the people of any other country. So a critic might say that the book is visionary and impractical. But this comment would be both stupid and irrelevant, and there is encouragement in the fact that no critic of any stature made it. Miss Weil is plainly

contemplating conditions as they might exist in an *ideal* society. Perhaps she did not even ask herself whether such plans could be "carried out"; considering the temper of the book, it probably seemed to her that no other plans ought to be offered, regardless of their prospects for being carried out.

But taking *The Need for Roots* as a utopian essay, another sort of criticism is easily conceivable. Simone Weil is as vulnerable as Plato to certain charges. Early in the book she discusses freedom of opinion, suggesting that there are three ways in which human intelligence may be exercised. It can work (1) on technical projects, which involve only the development of ways and means to a pre-established end; it can (2) exert influence on other minds, moving them to decide in a particular way or to go in a particular direction; and it can (3) consider purely theoretical matters.

Miss Weil maintains that publications which give scope to the second means of the expression of intelligence have no right to unlimited freedom:

. . . publications destined to influence what is called opinion, that is to say, in effect, the conduct of life, constitute acts and ought to be subjected to the same restrictions as are all acts. In other words, they should not cause unlawful harm of any kind to any human being, and above all, should never contain any denial, explicit or implicit, of the eternal obligations toward the human being, once these obligations have been solemnly recognized by law.

Newspapers and weekly periodicals obviously fall into this class and would, in Simone Weil's ideal society, be subject to regulation or control. Nor are writers exempt from the same responsibility:

Writers have an outrageous habit of playing a double game. Never so much as in our age have they claimed the role of directors of conscience and exercised it. Actually, during the years immediately

preceding the war, no one challenged their right to it except the savants. The position formerly occupied by priests in the moral life of the country was held by physicists and novelists, which is sufficient to gauge the value of our progress. But if someone called upon writers to render an account of the orientation set by their influence, they barricaded themselves indignantly behind the sacred privilege of art for art's sake.

Miss Weil is quite willing to name names:

There is not the least doubt, for example, that André Gide has always known that books like *Nourritures Terrestres* and the *Caves du Vatican* have exercised an influence on the practical conduct of life of hundreds of young people, and he has been proud of the fact. There is, then, no reason for placing such books behind the inviolable barrier of art for art's sake, and sending to prison a young fellow who pushes somebody off a train in motion. [Lafcadio, hero of Gide's *Caves du Vatican*, pushes somebody off a train in Italy to prove to himself that he is capable of committing any act whatever, however motiveless, unrelated to preceding events.] One might just as well claim the privileges of art for art's sake in support of crime. At one time the Surrealists came pretty close to doing so. All that has been repeated by so many idiots *ad nauseam* about the responsibility of our writers in the defeat of France in 1940 is, unfortunately, only too true.

To provide a kind of intellectual "exercise field," Miss Weil proposes that writers may enjoy immunity from moral responsibility in certain publications which would be known as "experimental," where the writers could "set out in their full force, all the arguments for bad causes," as a means of learning as much as possible about the problems involved. But in this case no one could assume that the contributors to these publications themselves *believed* in what they wrote.

In no other way could a writer escape responsibility for his influence. If he publishes in a serious journal of opinion or a book, he must be accountable for what he writes:

If a writer, thanks to the complete freedom of expression accorded to pure intelligence, publishes written matter that goes contrary to the moral principles recognized by law, and if later on he becomes a notorious focus of influence, it is simple enough to ask him if he is prepared to state publicly that his writings do not express his personal attitude. If he is not prepared to do so, it is simple enough to punish him. If he lies, it is simple enough to discredit him. Moreover, it ought to be recognized that the moment a writer fills a role among the influences directing public opinion, he cannot claim to exercise unlimited freedom. Here again, a juridical definition is impossible; but the facts are not really difficult to discern. There is no reason at all why the sovereignty of the law should be limited to the field of what can be expressed in legal formulas, since that sovereignty is exercised just as well by judgments in equity.

This section of *The Need for Roots* continues, speaking of the need for protection against propaganda and suggestion, which are said to be forms of constraint which do violence to human beings, even though no threat of fear or physical distress is employed. The State itself, Miss Weil says, "should also be severely prohibited from ever dealing with subjects which belong to the domain of thought." This prohibition Miss Weil would extend to all "groups":

Protection of freedom of thought requires that no group should be permitted by law to express an opinion. For when a group starts having opinions, it inevitably tends to impose them on its members. . . . intelligence resides solely in the human being, individually considered. There is no such thing as a collective exercise of the intelligence. It follows that no group can legitimately claim freedom of expression, because no group has the slightest need of it.

Matters of taste would also come under control, in Simone Weil's society of the future:

. . . repression could be exercised against the press, radio broadcasts, or anything else of a similar kind, not only for offenses against moral principles publicly recognized, but also for baseness of tone and thought, bad taste, vulgarity, or a subtly corrupting moral atmosphere. This sort of repression could take place without in any way infringing on freedom of opinion. For instance, a newspaper could be suppressed without the members of its editorial staff

losing the right to go on publishing wherever they liked, or even, in the less serious cases, remain associated to carry on the same paper under another name. Only, it would have been publicly branded with infamy and would run the risk of being so again. Freedom of opinion can be claimed solely—and even then with certain reservations—by the journalist, not by the paper; for it is only the journalist who is capable of forming an opinion.

These quotations have been drawn from material spread over eighteen pages, yet only in a brief paragraph at the end does Miss Weil deal with a question which has been crying out for attention—who will be the judge of all these exceedingly difficult questions? Who will define the "subtly corrupting"? How will the "moral principles" from which all these decisions flow be established? The answer is as brief as Plato's disposition of the same problem in the *Republic*. The author says simply that the right judges must be found:

But, it will be objected, how can we guarantee the impartiality of the judges? The only guarantee, apart from that of their complete independence, is that they should be drawn from very different circles; be naturally gifted with a wide, clear, and exact intelligence; and be trained in a school where they receive not just a legal education, but above all a spiritual one, and only secondarily an intellectual one. They must become accustomed to love truth.

There is no possible chance of satisfying a people's need of truth, unless men can be found for this purpose who love truth.

Dozens of "practical" questions crowd the reader, at this point, yet none of these questions is of any great importance compared to the illumination of individual responsibility which Simone Weil has provided. Standards, in short, are of infinitely greater value than the means of "enforcing" them. In fact, one could argue that the development of these standards in the context of a proposed "State" is only to supply a rhetorical frame that lends them sharp definition.

Thinking over such matters, one may come to the conclusion that while common agreement, even among an "elite," on what is "baseness of

tone and thought, bad taste, vulgarity," might be impossible to obtain, the arousal of all writers to a consideration of these values is really what is wanted. Who, after all, could be expected to practice "good taste" from fear of punishment of public reprimand? The idea is almost ridiculous. But the insistence upon the responsibility of writers, upon the foolishness of exempting writers from responsibility on grounds of "art" or "freedom" is not ridiculous at all.

The proposals of Simone Weil form a dilemma only if they are taken literally, and only for those who have fallen into the habit of thinking that the good society will be defined by its *laws*. We might even stipulate that no *enforceable* good is worth arguing about. Laws and prohibitions cannot possibly do anything more than affect the secondary values of the good society.

Simone Weil's mind was filled with the principles to which human beings might be expected to respond in an ideal society. She had had, herself, the kind of education that members of a good society ought to have—but, to say this is to underline a further paradox, for how could anyone duplicate Simone Weil's education in a "system"? To examine her education is to discover that it bears no particular resemblance to any conventional theory of education. She did, of course, go through the schools of France, becoming a teacher of philosophy, mathematics, and Greek language and literature, but the distillation of human experience that enriched her mind came from such adventures as two years of working on the production line in a Renault factory and in Parisian metal plants—a stint she undertook in order to understand at first hand how factory workers are psychologically affected by mass production methods. How do you "teach" people to have an interest of this sort?

You don't. All you can do is try to have such interests, yourself, and to demonstrate their importance in your own life and thought.

Now either Simone Weil realized this or she embodied an extraordinary naïveté, sometimes

found in persons of genius, which is wholly oblivious to the difference between themselves and other people. What were provocatives to her remained unheard and unseen by others. Needs quite plain to her were undreamed of by most of her countrymen; accordingly, her "State," had anyone taken her plans seriously and attempted to put them into effect, would have been an abortive failure. But even here, the thing to remember is that such "failures" have a splendor which the safe and the practical men are blind to. We can learn from such failures. But from the sort of failures we are having, nowadays, men are gaining almost nothing but a feeling of ignominy. These are failures without human dignity.

The canon of criticism, then, that we are trying to further, is this: What does the writer think about human beings, their possibilities, their potentialities? A writer with a low estimate of man will have little of importance to say. It is the critic's duty to point this out.

How shall we apply Hegel's statement, here?

Well, we shall have to say that the writer who has contempt for man is hardly worth reviewing or "criticizing," save to expose his contempt. The trouble with skilfully and cleverly expressed contempt is that it is often easy to sympathize with. It delights egotism and permits one to excuse himself from bothering with things that ought to have attention. Contempt arms the cynic with superficial and plausible arguments and, by an unspoken logic, turns the institutional harbors of irrational religion or the ivory towers of skepticism into inviting refuges from the business of life.

The critic, then, ought first to determine what the writer thinks of human beings; or whether, in the words of Henry Beston, he is "on the side of Life." Now it is true enough that a stance on the side of the idealists, the enthusiasts, and the humanists does not make a man into a good writer or advocate of high purposes, but, as Hegel says, let us see what a man has "done right," before finding fault with him. Too often, critics are

merciless to a writer because he offers the wrong illustrations for the right principles. It is better to try to understand his point, instead of ignoring it because he has not been able to do it justice.

A Simone Weil can cow the critics with the almost blinding light of her mind; no one, so far as we know, has dared to attack her book. *The Need for Roots* is a *tour de force* of the moral intelligence and a book every professional or amateur critic ought to read over at least once a year, to slow down his use of the glib strictures which come so easily to those who work with words.

## *REVIEW*

### RELIGION IN THE FUTURE: JUNG

CARL JUNG'S "God, the Devil and the Human Soul," in the November *Atlantic*, clearly establishes that his contributions to the field of psychological literature are by no means finished. As with Julian Huxley's *Saturday Review* article, "A Religious Outlook," reviewed two weeks ago, Jung's *Atlantic* article is part of a book to be published this year.

While Dr. Jung is not so insistent as Dr. Huxley on the elimination of the personal-God concept, he explains why the God-Devil dualism has been an extremely bad thing. The *actual* dualism, Jung points out, is within man himself, and until this is recognized, we are deprived of the capacity to deal with evil. Jung writes:

Here, of course, we come up against one of the main prejudices of the Christian tradition, and one that is a great block to our policies. We should, so we are told, eschew evil and if possible neither touch nor mention it. For evil is also the thing of ill omen, that which is tabooed and feared. This apotropaic attitude toward evil, and the apparent circumventing of it, flatter the primitive tendency in us to shut our eyes to evil and drive it over some frontier or other, like the Old Testament scapegoat, which was supposed to carry the evil into the wilderness.

But if one can no longer avoid the realization that evil, without man's ever having chosen it, is lodged in human nature itself, then it bestrides the psychological stage as the equal and opposite partner of good. This realization leads straight to a psychological dualism, already unconsciously prefigured in the political world-schism and in the even more unconscious dissociation in modern man himself. The dualism does not come from this realization; rather, we are in a split condition to begin with. It would be an insufferable thought that we had to take personal responsibility for so much guiltiness. We therefore prefer to localize the evil with individual criminals or groups of criminals, while washing our hands in innocence and ignoring the general proclivity to evil.

And that is precisely what Christian nations have made a habit of doing. God and goodness are appropriated by "our" side in international

conflict, while our opponents are regarded as governed by the forces of evil. But the matter does not end here. If we do not understand "evil," we blithely, if unknowingly, perpetrate it:

This sanctimoniousness cannot be kept up in the long run, because the evil, as experience shows, lies in man—unless, in accordance with the Christian view, one is willing to postulate a metaphysical principle of evil. The great advantage of this view is that it exonerates man's conscience of too heavy a responsibility and fobs it off on the Devil, in correct psychological appreciation of the fact that man is much more the victim of his psychic constitution than its inventor. Considering that the evil of our day puts everything that has ever agonized mankind in the deepest shade, one must ask oneself how it is that, for all our progress in the administration of justice, in medicine, and in technics, for all our concern for life and health, monstrous engines of destruction have been invented which could easily exterminate the human race.

No one will maintain that the atomic physicists are a pack of criminals because it is to their efforts that we owe that peculiar flower of human ingenuity, the hydrogen bomb. The vast amount of intellectual work that went into the development of nuclear physics was put forth by men who devoted themselves to their task with the greatest exertions and self-sacrifice and whose moral achievement could just as easily have earned them the merit of inventing something useful and beneficial to humanity. But even though the first step along the road to a momentous invention may be the outcome of a conscious decision, here as everywhere the spontaneous idea—the hunch or intuition—plays an important part. In other words, the unconscious collaborates too and often makes decisive contributions.

So it is not the conscious effort alone that is responsible for the result; somewhere or other the unconscious, with its barely discernible goals and intentions, has its finger in the pie. If it puts a weapon in your hand, it is aiming at some kind of violence.

The liberating effect of psychology's study of the unconscious springs from its implication that the ethical and moral problems of man are everywhere the same—that there is *one* human race. Political thinking focuses on the manipulation of outward objects. Usually, the

religionists are on the side of the politicians, talking peace and goodness but really interested only in "denouncing evil." Denouncing evil is all right, so long as one recognizes his own psychological alliance with the motivations out of which it has grown. But if evil be externalized, we feel safe only when we are surrounded by the evidence of extensive military preparations.

The unconscious mind has been thought to be an unimportant reflex of conscious attitudes, rather than the seat of many of our higher ideals as well as our purely personal promptings. Dr. Jung protests:

The unconscious, if not regarded outright as a sort of refuse bin underneath the conscious mind, is at any rate supposed to be of "merely animal nature." In reality, however, and by definition it is of uncertain extent and constitution, so that over- or under-valuation of it is groundless and can be dismissed as mere prejudice. At all events such judgments sound very queer in the mouths of Christians whose Lord was himself born on the straw of a stable, among the domestic animals. It would have been more to the taste of the multitude if he had got himself born in a temple. In the same way, the worldly-minded mass man looks for the numinous experience in the mass meeting, which provides an infinitely more imposing background than the individual soul. Even Church Christians share this pernicious delusion.

It is Jung's assertion that we must look to psychological knowledge for our liberation from "group thinking." The goal, as with the ancient Greeks, is that of the acquisition of *self-knowledge*, and this we cannot obtain until the wheat is separated from the chaff in both religious and political thinking. Jung concludes:

The psychiatrist is one of those who know most about the conditions of the soul's welfare upon which so infinitely much depends in the social sum. The social and political circumstances of the time are certainly of considerable significance, but their importance for the weal or woe of the individual has been boundlessly overestimated insofar as they are taken for the sole deciding factors. In this respect all our social goals commit the error of overlooking the psychology of the person for whom they are intended, and—very often—of promoting only his illusions.

We have a little trouble with Jung here, and rather suspect that he has a little trouble with himself on this point. Since God serves as a sort of rallying ground for group thinking, allowing a watered-down approach to individual definition of a "sacred Reality," it is not easy to see how Jung can elsewhere imply that belief in God is fully appropriate for certain persons. As Dr. Huxley points out (in matter quoted in *MANAS* for Jan. 1), the idea of God tends to externalize our conceptions of goodness and greatness.

It is even possible for buried resentment of such a powerful "Father figure" to persist in the minds of those who consider God an authoritarian power, the source of reward and punishment. In a novel of adolescence, *The God Boy*, Ian Cross illustrates this attitude:

"I don't care what else God is going to try on me, but whatever it is, he had better watch his step"... "I was a baby like other babies, a little boy like other little boys, and I certainly didn't do any big wrong. That's what I have against God. Me so little and he God."

Insights of this sort can hardly have escaped Dr. Jung.

## *COMMENTARY*

### **KOINONIA FOR CALIFORNIA?**

FROM Lucerne Valley, in California, comes a communication headed "The Koinonia," and signed by Gross W. Alexander, a retired Methodist minister. Mr. Alexander announces his willingness to contribute his property, valued conservatively at \$50,000, as the foundation for starting a branch of the Koinonia (of Americus, Georgia) in California. He writes:

If a Koinonia, a Christian community, is established in California before long, I plan to deed my possessions to it. For half a dozen years, I have been using the term, Koinonia, where I own property, but there has been no community here. In case a community is established, the members would be able to administer their property according to their wishes, perhaps liquidating this property and applying the proceeds to purchase, and/or payment for, another site.

This should be an exciting prospect for community-minded California Christians, of whom there are many. Mr. Alexander will probably receive many letters of appreciation and encouragement. One thing about his announcement, however, brings troubling thoughts. In urging others to make offerings similar to his own, he declares that "affluent men or women of deep devotion could actually make possible the economic basis of a community in short order." How? The income tax laws permit deduction from taxable income of gifts to Koinonia Farm, Inc., which is "a tax-exempt church." Using an arithmetic not altogether clear to us, Mr. Alexander proposes that such affluent persons could give to Koinonia "without the net deduction of a dime from their incomes." He explains:

That is, they could switch income tax money to Christ. While paying Caesar his due, they could become partners of God.

The arithmetic is difficult enough, but the rest we don't grasp at all. We know about Clarence Jordan, of Koinonia, and have great respect for him, but we doubt very much, if we addressed a

letter to Christ at Koinonia, that anyone would have the temerity to open it.

It is plain to those who have kept track of the labors and sufferings of the people of Koinonia that here are some of Christ's most devoted followers. Isn't it enough to say that you help people like that if you support Koinonia? That they are people who are bucking prejudice and ignorance with friendliness and kindness and practical brotherhood?

The idea of getting to be "God's partner" without it costing you "a dime" is not half so attractive as joining with some decent human beings who are acting according to their highest light.

God is into too many things, as it is, judging from the people who claim to have close relations with Him. If the people at Koinonia have God for a partner, let this be their modestly kept secret.

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In justice to Koinonia, it should be said that, having seen the Rev. Alexander's appeal, a spokesman for the Community pointed out that the members have never solicited funds and do not wish to exploit as the basis of an appeal for funds the fact that gifts to the Community are deductible for income tax purposes. Further, while sympathetic to Mr. Alexander's hope for the establishment of a California Koinonia, the Georgia community is in no position itself to take steps in this direction.

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This week's *Frontiers* article is by an Indian contributor who feels that "Friends in the West and the U.S. sometimes pat us [Indians] a little too much and suffer from ethereal notions." He writes to afford "a proper perspective on Indian affairs." We can easily agree that the prospects for India, as here described, are as discouraging as any "realist" could wish.

For encouragement, however, we wish more Indians, and Americans too, would read *Richer by*

Asia by Edmond Taylor (Houghton, Mifflin, 1947). Mr. Taylor served with the armed forces in India during World War II and this book, which is the best book we know of on contemporary Indian life and ideals, is the report of a man for whom the experience of living in India brought the discovery of a rich and varied civilization. The author reports an enthusiasm for India which surpasses any of the easily shattered "illusions" which our correspondent thinks Americans too often indulge.

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Add constructive references to Sputnik: A California reader put together the following paragraph to express the kind of thinking he tries to do—thinking in which, he is kind enough to say, MANAS articles play a part:

A person floundering in a sea of contradictory beliefs may be encouraged to evaluate his half-existence for what it is. Just as it takes a specific momentum to propel a satellite out of the earth's influence, to become a semi-autonomous body of itself, so it takes tremendous encouragement and volition to free the mind from the fetters of heresy and dogma.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves CORRESPONDENCE

AGAIN we have heard from a parent who strongly desires to educate her own child and who deplors the regulations which make this virtually impossible according to the prevailing laws of the land. This subscriber informs us that she "intends to do battle for the privilege of teaching her children through the elementary classes." And a battle it will be, since most school administrators and state legislators already feel over-burdened with the task of providing education for the vast majority of children whose parents can't be bothered with teaching or don't know how to teach.

This correspondent thinks that Rousseau was quite correct in maintaining that parents should be the "natural instructors." She remarks that "only because we are 'alienated' individuals in an 'alienated' society does the great majority willingly accept the idea of sending the child to others for their instruction." But it is one thing to maintain that parents "should be" the natural instructors of their children, and another to insist that they *are*. On the whole, we have a higher regard for the educational approach of teachers than that of parents, for there is something about teaching, somewhere along the line, which is meant to be impersonal. The parent can provide needed personal love and affection, but seldom seems capable of maintaining the discipline of "learning for its own sake." Either willing to put up with too much nonsense, or susceptible to wounds in self-esteem if a child seems obtuse, the parent is often not a good teacher.

So we should hate to sponsor a campaign advocating "home instruction for everybody." But we shall support to the theoretical limit the individual parent who wants to teach his own children. We quote portions of the letter written by our subscriber—presumably to a school supervisor:

Dear Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

I want permission to teach my child through the elementary grades. If you cannot give me permission, please send this letter to whoever can give me permission or advise me to whom I may address my request.

My oldest boy is six years old and I have the permission of the state to withhold him from school until the age of eight.

As the laws do not allow me to take an examination to qualify as a tutor for the elementary grades, I must find another solution.

I am willing to take a few students and call myself a private school, if this will allow me to do as I wish to do.

The government allows conscientious objectors to refuse action in war; there must be a loop-hole for an intelligent woman who has the time, interest and desire to teach her own child.

The Declaration of Independence states—"that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

The Preamble to the Constitution says that the Constitution is to "secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves."

Does this mean that an intelligent woman cannot teach her child to read, write and figure? Instead of individual instruction he must sit long hours in boredom with forty other children and progress along with the slowest.

I have used the regular first grade books and if I can obtain permission, will use the regular required books for each grade. Any examination would be perfectly acceptable, either of myself as tutor or my child as student.

We are law-abiding citizens. However, I intend to demand my liberty and go to any extremes to do so. America needs patriots. She also needs independent cultured spirits.

Please do not send me a stack of printed sheets explaining teachers' requirements. I have them already.

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Many MANAS readers have expressed interest in the Danish Folk School movement, and

in all related attempts to break with stereotyped educational patterns. The following letter is from a subscriber who writes a first-hand account of his stay at a Folk School in "Ronshoved Hojskole, pr. Rinkeoes, So. Jylland, Denmark":

What is a Folk School? This is not easy to explain to an American, I must confess, but if you will allow me to generalize, I can give you at least an idea of its function and purpose. The Folk Schools have a history dating back to the middle 1800's, when a daring and rather progressive educator, Christian Kold, felt the need for a school which would enable the land folk, young men and women of rural Denmark, to further their understanding of the culture and the world in which they live. He envisioned a school where the magic of "the spoken word" would instil and inspire in the minds of the youth a desire for knowledge, and, as such, the concept of learning for its own sake becomes the manifest dogma on which the schools were to be run.

With such a philosophy of education, examinations were deemed unnecessary and, in fact, a hindrance to the free development of thought. At the same time, provision was made for teaching courses of a more practical value.

To a large degree, and with few exceptions, this has been the dominant theme of the Folk Schools. From humble beginnings the idea caught on, and today these same schools are playing an important role in Scandinavia. One might say that this is "extra-education," above and beyond the call of duty, an education for a better understanding of ourselves and others. That it has been an eminently successful experiment is obvious from the large numbers of students who flock to these schools every year.

The Folk School which I am presently attending is located in South Jutland right on the border with Germany, separated only by a narrow fjord which gives a most impressive sight in the morning when the mist rolls into the water and the orange sun peeks over the horizon. The land is rolling, hilly, and wooded; a rather untypical picture of flat, well-cultivated Danish farm land, indeed a picturesque site for a school.

Having arrived at the school, I was not quite sure what to expect, and the fact is I'm still not always sure what tomorrow will bring, for this is a center of activity where anything can and does happen. The fellows and gals here, about 80 of us, come predominantly from rural homes, but every section of

the country is represented. Most are in their late teens or early twenties. They have all been working since 14 or 16, when their formal school ended, and have taken off five months to *come back* to school. A more lively, spirited bunch you could not find anywhere.

We get up at 7:30, breakfast at 8:00 (oatmeal with milk, two slices of bread, tea) and the classes start promptly at 8.40, continuing till supper. A certain amount of choice is involved in what we study, but certain lectures are attended by the whole school as a group. These lectures include philosophy, sociology, psychology, literature, history, etc., all integrated in a lecture rather than separated into different subjects, an idea I rather like.

Once a week we have discussions and lectures on art, youth problems and organizations, border problems. There are electives, such as music, part singing, religion and Bible study, agriculture, English, and sewing. All students go to gymnastic sessions. The teacher-student relations are very close; most classes, even the lectures in some cases, are rather like seminars, with as little formality as possible, which makes for a conducive atmosphere in which to learn. It goes without saying that everything is said in Danish, and comprehension is sometimes a problem. For such a small country as Denmark, it amazes me that there are so many different dialects.

Occasionally we have a distinguished guest speaker who visits the school and gives us an interesting lecture on some phase of Danish life. Already we have made a trip into Germany to see the Royal Danish Ballet on tour there, and later on we shall take an extended tour into Holland. On evenings when we're not responsible for homework we have a lot of fun. Once a week we spend a couple of hours folk dancing. I hope to introduce the group to dances from other lands.

Let me close with the best wishes for your happy holiday season, and if the spirit moves you, drop me a line and just try and make me homesick!

## *FRONTIERS* Disillusioned India

OUR times will justify the substitution of "politics" for "patriotism" in Dr. Johnson's observation on the last refuge of a scoundrel. A practicing politician has to employ abilities that often lend themselves to gross misuse in backward countries like India, experimenting with democracy. The electorate is not politically mature or vigilant, it is simple, credulous, and emotionally vulnerable. Under these conditions a gift of the gab, power-mongering, intrigue and partisanship carry an ambitious and unscrupulous politician intent on self-advancement very far. Political democracy, then, instead of promoting the greatest happiness of the greatest number, breeds only cabals and cliques, and politics then becomes very much the preoccupation of those whose last refuge was, according to Dr. Johnson, patriotism.

India's record during the last decade would make a rewarding study to all who are curious about the prospects for political nefariousness under democracy. It is a sad commentary on the political situation in India that men of character and ability keep away from politics and generally lack electioneering enterprise. It is all the more disconcerting that such enterprise is best exercised by men with an avidity for power and with aims no loftier than carving out a career for themselves. This degeneration, which has made politics worthwhile and attractive only to the rabble-rouser, the fanatic, and the power-hungry, is incredible, since Indians who are still young remember well the days of the freedom movement which inspired much courage and idealism in its people. Why should freedom have corrupted India's politicians to an extent that could not have been even dreamed of?

The obvious answer is that politics is dirty and cannot ennoble. Politics is means to power and power is acquisitive; it is only greed in political guise. The aspirant for power has to

elbow, push and trample. Politics has not civilised itself very much since the days of palace intrigues and the murder of babes in the Tower of London. Where there were a few bad men seeking political power, now democracy has made possible the candidature of many bad men for such power. Democratic adventurers have taken over from royal and feudal brigands and in the place of swords, lies, slander, bombast and intrigues now intimidate the people in the backward democracies. Courageous men fought against royal tyrants on behalf of oppressed peoples. They are now needed in greater numbers to save people in backward democracies like India from predatory politicians hungering for power. Humanitarians in India who worked for universal suffrage in the simple hope that the vote would fortify their people from the depredations of politicians were not fully aware of the extent to which political depravity could reach during ten years of self-government.

Gandhi's response to the challenge thrown by the British to Indian nationalism raised the level of political behaviour in India. For this reason, George Orwell described him as a clean politician. Gandhi's cult of non-violence which led people to brave British bayonets and jails with courage and forbearance did make Indian politics clean by rendering meanness irrelevant in the context of heroism. Nevertheless the usual political tendencies, which were only implicit and not altogether absent, asserted themselves as soon as India became free. On the eve of independence, political prisoners, impatient for rewards, busied themselves over ministerships in the prospective popular governments.

Gandhi has often been regarded as a strategist in the West. He realised that non-violence was the only weapon available for a subject people in revolt against a mighty empire. His "strategy" perhaps consisted in his adoption of non-violence as an instrument of policy to persuade Britain to part with power. But in retrospect the present state of Indian politics makes Gandhi's

achievement in putting the Indian people on their best behaviour during the freedom struggle more important than this "strategy." The identification of British rule as a principal evil in their minds imbued them with a sense of urgency to end it and thus vindicate national honour. Britain's graceful retreat made relaxation in political morals possible. India's freedom fighters now became politicians and ambition took the place of ideal.

It had not occurred to many that Gandhi had set himself a task which was not merely the ejection of the British from India; judging from the things that he did not live to do, this could have been merely incidental. The British conquest of India was made possible by a national decay the country fell into at some stage in her history and Gandhi wanted to raise her out of this decay. He was working for the regeneration of the Indian people and the achievement of political freedom was only a step forward in this direction.

Today's free India is by no means the regenerate India of Gandhi's dreams. Political propensities have come into play and they make the courage and idealism which inspired the freedom movement seem very remote. Political freedom could not lift India from the general-backwardness and poverty, but is only a means to doing it. India could not afford to rest after the exacting freedom struggle but needed all the courage, sincerity and hard work her people were capable of. Above all, her leaders had to exercise a severe check upon selfishness, greed and the lust for power, for which opportunities had become very extensive in India after independence. History will record how India met this challenge.

During the days of the freedom movement Gandhi had the advantage of the physical presence of the British Government, against which people instinctively rebelled. It was easy to organise a mass movement against British rule on an emotional plane. But there is nothing so very physical about the political predatoriness that came to plague free India. A change in "strategy" was necessary to save the people from the

powermongering and political opportunism in India.

Valiant freedom fighters have now retired from Indian politics in despair, being unable to do anything good for the people through political activity which serves to elevate only the ambitious and the unscrupulous. Critics of the Communist doctrine that the end justifies means have pointed out that power in a Communist dictatorship, far from serving as a means to achieve the proclaimed end of a classless society, becomes the desire for power, though there is nothing Communistic about India's politics. Indian politics has fallen into a pattern of mean wits ranged against mean wits, hedging and dodging in the struggle for power.

Political parties express lofty sentiments over every social problem but the solution of problems independent of power politics has become rare and difficult in India. They are regarded worthy of attention only as factors either assisting an opposition party to gain power or maintaining the ruling party in power. No politician anxious to win or remain in power can afford to be straight in his thinking or action; he has to be shrewd. He cannot be true to his principle or convictions; he has to attend to pressure groups or interests which have advanced him in the past. During the last decade India has travelled fast from Gandhian politics to the politics of power and expediency.

The results of the application of power towards the solution of a problem, viz., uplift of the backward classes, have been tragic and crazy and could have been avoided if only wisdom had had a chance. A few Indian communities are socially and educationally very backward and this is no doubt due to their persecution by higher castes in the past. The problem can to some extent be met immediately by the reservation of a few seats in educational institutions and by the offer of liberal state grants and scholarships to members of these communities. There is really no alternative to the solution of the problem offered by patience, goodwill and tolerance. Neither wish

nor fiat can settle the problem overnight. But apparently the Madras Government in South India believes otherwise. They have cut through the circuitousness of sane reasoning by a very simple formula. Backward communities have to be educated. Educate them in as large a number as possible and as quickly as possible. Lower educational standards and make examinations a walk-over—and presto! Members of backward communities qualify and graduate quickly *en masse*. What does it really matter if these graduates are ignorant, inefficient, and are a disgrace to the universities that turned them out? The State is there to give them jobs and can do with indifferent employees so long as it pleases a numerically larger section of people who will be important in the next elections.

Rulers held down by power politics and pressure groups can never be free and soon get into a state of helplessness. Indeed, any one who has taken an interest in Indian affairs will have noticed the widespread helplessness in the country, quite in keeping with its traditional fatalism. For instance, if one makes an enquiry into the rampant corruption and inefficiency in government departments, he will be appalled by the despair with which the whole problem has been abandoned by the concerned people. Nothing could be done, he will be told, except by the Minister at the helm of affairs; but what has happened to the Minister? Something very serious. It is doubtful whether he is in a position to frown on the foul means to which he himself owes his present position, which he has to retain at all cost. Corruption can be put down only by a strong, honest man of character—a man who can hardly expect to become a minister in the India of today.

The Government have to blame only themselves for inefficiency. Discipline suffered in government and other offices as a result of the paternalistic regard for the junior and subordinate staff; labour unions became not only strong, but aggressive, unreasonable and irresponsible in their

behaviour and demands and are to a large extent responsible for the resulting inefficiency. Statutory safeguards for civil servants are very liberal and summary dismissals for indiscipline and inefficiency are not possible. The Government has to be meek towards those unions and union leaders whose goodwill ministers must court.

The cult of expediency has infected not only politics but all levels of society in India. The prevailing brand of ethics is that of the go-getter who cheerfully disregards all codes of conduct that circumscribe him from self-advancement. A business man has not only no use for an honest worker; he is not in a position to demand any integrity from his employees. In their anxiety to win favour from the government, a business firm encourages its representatives to do their best to please an official; an employee who is too scrupulous to gratify a corrupt government official's rapacity does not remain long in the firm's employ. The firm has therefore to wink at its own corrupt employee when he lines his pocket in his turn.

Free India is disillusioned India. Gandhi dreamt of a *Ram Rajya*, a Utopia where everybody would speak the truth and do good things. He hoped that India would blossom into such a land. But truth and good deeds are things that democratic India cannot afford. Apparently, it must await a better race of Indians—whom Gandhi hoped to develop—who will not make such a mess of democracy.

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