

GENERAL SCIENCE

Religion and Being Good Not Necessarily Connected

Theory Advanced That Religion Is Culmination Of Tendency of Organism To React to Whole Situation

A SCIENTIFIC view that there is no necessary connection between religion and whether a person is good or evil was boldly presented to the second annual Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion meeting at Columbia University by Dr. Hudson Hoagland, Clark University physiologist.

Stating as a fact that "many, if not most, scientists are agnostics," Dr. Hoagland challenged religionists and some philosophers with the idea that the agnosticism of the scientists is as deeply ingrained as is the religious faith of other people.

Good and evil, Dr. Hoagland contended, refer to that which is good and bad for a particular organism at a particular time.

"Thus ethics may be something quite independent of religion," he said, "although when sound ethics can be combined with the basic religious drive, as has often happened, desirable social conditions are likely to follow. On the other

hand, when bad ethics become combined with a religious drive such as that behind Nazism, bad social conditions will follow.

"Scientists in general believe strongly in certain ethical activities and in ideals controlling them. Empirically there is such a thing as the good life, and one need not justify it by supernatural sanctions. The lives of such men as Socrates, Christ, and Lincoln, in contrast to Nero, Napoleon, and Hitler speak for themselves. Most agnostic scientists are as ready to fight for their ideals as they would be if they believed them to be sanctioned by God—or by science for that matter."

Dr. Hoagland explained that all that we know is a product of the functioning of our nervous systems and that our neurosensory apparatus is itself a direct product of biological evolution. One of the most fundamental characteristics of a biologically successful organism is that it reacts to situations as a whole.

"Religion appears to me," said Dr. Hoagland, "to be a culmination of this basic tendency of organisms to react in a configurational way to situations. We must resolve conflicts and disturbing puzzles by choosing some sort of configuration, and the religious urge appears to be a primitive tendency, possessing biological survival value, to unify our environment so that we can cope with it. This same basic urge is perhaps the source of esthetic pleasure in art and in science. Since art forms and scientific theories are limited in their scope, more extensive satisfaction is derived from religious interpretations of the meaning of life. These are especially satisfying if they can unify cosmology and views about values in one theology.

"The same motivation is the main-spring of many social philosophies which give a basis for extrapersonal unity of belief and action. For this reason the totalitarian faiths of the Nazis, Fascists and Communists appear to stem from the same basic biological source as does the faith of the devoutly religious man. The very name, totalitarian state, is suggestive of this."

Dr. Hoagland's paper, which resulted from group discussions in New England, was among those discussed at the opening sessions of the five-day conference devoted to the relation of science, philosophy and religion to the democratic way of life.

Religious people and agnostic scientists alike, Dr. Hoagland emphasized, can and should stand together in opposition to totalitarian threat that stresses the all-importance of the state and degrades the individual to insignificance. He urged the conference to promote a world federation too strong to be attacked and capable of popular self-government after the manner of our own federal government.

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Set Directions, Not Ends

DON'T WORK toward set ends, but instead strive in a desired direction, Dr. Margaret Mead, anthropologist of the American Museum of Natural History, advised the conference as a result of her studies of primitive peoples.

"A clear picture of the end—a blue print of the future, of the absolutely desirable way of life—has always been accompanied by the ruthless manipulation of human beings in order to fit them, by the use of rack, torture, concentration camp if (Turn to page 191)



REPAIRING SABOTAGE

After the Italian cargo vessel S. S. Villaperosa was sabotaged by the smashing of the bedplate of the engine into literally thousands of pieces, the job of putting this nautical humpty-dumpty together again was accomplished by electric arc welding. This photograph was made by the manufacturers of the welding equipment, the Lincoln Electric Company.



Questions of Size

WILDLIFE administrators are learning new lessons all the time from experience with game refuges. J. Clark Salyer II, chief of the division of wildlife refuges, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, told the International Association of Game, Fish and Conservation Commissioners at their St. Louis meeting.

Since a primary consideration in establishing game refuges is to permit a certain overflow into adjacent hunting lands, size is an important factor, Mr. Salyer stated. There was a tendency in early days of refuge establishment, especially in the richer, more humid parts of the country, to make them too large. The idea now is to make them of more moderate size and have more of them.

Size of course has to be considered in connection with other factors. For small upland game birds in the East, a mere 40 acres will often be sufficient, and a square mile may be enough for adequate protection and feeding of a herd of Eastern deer. But for the scattering bands of desert mountain sheep in the arid Far West, a million acres may not be excessive.

"The size of a waterfowl nesting refuge," Mr. Salyer continued, "can be almost unlimited, so great is the need for greater production. It is conditioned upon the availability of low-grade land for restoration, a satisfactory water supply, and the ability of the administering agency to develop and maintain it.

"It is not sufficient merely to obtain adequate open water and marsh land to produce food and shelter for the waterfowl residents, but for nesting purposes it is imperative to obtain the upland for almost a mile in width adja-

cent to the water areas in order to give adequate nesting area.

"It is standard practice in the national waterfowl refuge program to obtain a zone averaging a mile in width around the major water areas for this purpose alone. Even then, the number of nests plowed under on adjacent farms is appalling."

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necessary, to the decreed pattern," Dr. Mead warned. "When such attempts have been merely the blind intuitive gropings of the fanatical and the power-driven, they have been sufficient to destroy all the values upon which the democratic way of life is based. Implemented by science—as they could be implemented—a new hideousness is created unguessed at in the darkest torture chambers of the past. The victims of such a process become progressively more apathetic, passive and lacking in spontaneity; the leaders become progressively more paranoid. Only by devoting ourselves to a direction, not a fixed goal, to a process not a static system, to the development of human beings who will choose and think the choice all important and be strong and healthy and wise in choosing, can we escape this dilemma."

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Democracy Based in Nature

"DEMOCRACY is the way of life that recognizes the right of every man to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," declared Prof. Max Schoen of the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh. "This is not a proclaimed right, but is rooted in the very nature of living beings in general, and of human beings in particular. Hence, no form of social organization that violates this right can have peace or permanence, for whatever obstructs liberty obstructs life, and life will either destroy whatever obstructs it or itself be destroyed."

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The percentage of fat in a *cow's milk* naturally varies at different seasons, and even from day to day, says a dairy specialist, but he adds that a cow will maintain a rather constant test level over a period of years.

Skunk pelts are more valuable the smaller the stripes are, and solid black pelts bring top prices.

THE HARVARD BOOKS ON ASTRONOMY

Edited by Harlow Shapley and
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Now Ready 

The Milky Way

By Bart J. Bok and Priscilla F. Bok
Harvard College Observatory

This book presents for the first time in semi-popular form the advances made in the exploration of the Milky Way. The dust and gas in the vast spaces between the stars, the compositions and dimensions of star clusters, the appearance of our galaxy to an observer in the Andromeda nebula, and the problems related to the past and future of our galaxy are discussed. Among the 96 illustrations are two large scale photographic maps of the Milky Way, recent photographs made with Schmidt cameras and portraits of the leading scientists in the field.

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96 Illus. 204 Pages. \$2.50

Between The Planets

By Fletcher G. Watson
Harvard College Observatory

This generously illustrated book summarizes our knowledge of comets, meteors, asteroids and meteorites. While it includes the latest discoveries about these bodies, it also considers the multitude of vexing problems yet unexplained. The interrelationships between the several varieties of bodies are stressed and the ways in which they might have been formed are discussed critically in relation to the formation of the planetary system.

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