

Résumé of Comments and Discussion

Comments by Dr. K. L. S. Rao:

Life is not so compartmentalized as you have made it with this categorization of intolerances; formal and material intolerances, etc., seep into each other.

Given the inherent intolerance in Judaism, how can a dialogue be carried on?

Please elaborate more about the spiritual dimension of Jewish nationalism, for that is a crucial point in today's world.

Practical tolerance is really not enough because it does not do justice to the other man; it will leave us still strangers at heart. The Asian religions feel that all religions are valuable because they have given consolation and helped people through life. It is true also that every religious system is in process, as we can see by our meeting here today. Practical necessity will eventually surmount theoretical differences between us; it is necessary that we get together.

Systems are built by minds of men. We must be careful not to sacrifice men for our notions and systems of the truth. In the West, so much emphasis has been placed on propositional truth (true or false); Asian epistemology is quite different. Its emphasis is on understanding truth in a more living sense. Let's recognize that we all have crutches and need them; it is not necessary to change one's crutches.

Discussion:

Dr. Werblowsky answered that his point to open oneself to the

shock of encounter with other religions. Because of opening oneself to dialogue, there is a possibility one might change crutches. You must be prepared for all possible consequences in inter-religious dialogue. The crucial stage of inter-religious dialogue is worshipping together, and not just watching others worship but sharing in that worship.

As to nationalism, I relate to my Arab neighbor, said Werblowsky, first as an Arab and only secondly or thirdly as a Christian or Moslem. It was agreed, however, that religion is often very much involved in national conflicts.

There followed an exploration of the possibilities of conversion in Judaism. Dr. Werblowsky stated that historically Judaism knows conversion and the Book of Ruth justifies it. However, the understanding then was that the national, social and religious sense were identical. Through secularization, these three were separated, but again may come together with the establishment of the State of Israel. However, that State of Israel includes an element of critical plurality of religions. Werblowsky said he did not believe there was any sense in conversion to Judaism, for in the traditional process religious conversion also involves naturalization (to a nation) and adoption into the "family" of Judaism.

The gap between symbol systems and reality or the possibility that different symbol systems are talking about the same reality was discussed. It was proposed that reality can only be lived not talked about. Judaism speaks in very concrete and anthropomorphic ways of God to drive home a specific lesson. The ancient Jews were not afraid of speaking in this way because they did have a basic, fundamental feeling of the otherness of

God. It was stated that truth may be something more abstract than reality. Thich Nhat Hanh said that he had felt an identity when Dr. Werblowsky was talking outside of the language he was using because of their common experiences of reality. He said a religious language must be spoken through religious reality. For instance, he was asked which part of Vietnam he was from, and after some reflection, answered from the "center." This is absurd scientifically but really reflected his reality.

Hanh went on to say that dialogue needs *comprendre* (the French word, to understand), which is etymologically composed of coming together, making two understandings one. This encounter is necessary for real dialogue. Comparative religion cannot approach this because it tends to treat religion as a science. The kind of dialogue involving comparative religion is important, but it is not real dialogue, which must involve living together.

Werblowsky summed up by saying that for real dialogue we must break through to the life of the other through listening, sharing, and living together. Since humans have intellect, we cannot ignore this activity of translating symbol systems. But comparative religion, he agreed, does not necessarily help religious dialogue. Comparative religion and religious dialogue are different in the same way that musicology is different from music. Sometimes comparative religion equips you for understanding the intellect of the other better, but the important thing is more than understanding.