VOLUME XIV, NO. 9
MARCH 1, 1961

A QUESTION OF CONSEQUENCES

FOR some time now, MANAS has been printing material concerned with the idea of unilateral disarmament. Unilateral disarmament means disarmament by one country, regardless of what other nations may decide to do. There is hope, of course, that the example of the disarming nation will be followed by others, but no guarantee that this will happen. In view of the extreme character of such a step—a step which is probably irreversible—the surprising thing is that unilateral disarmament is seriously considered at all. The fact, however, is that unilateral disarmament is now being proposed in both the United States and Britain by people who argue effectively for its support and who are attracting the interest of persons who, a generation ago, would have regarded the idea as a sample of "pacifist insanity."

You could say that the growing attention won by arguments for unilateral disarmament is a tremendously important sign of the times, since it indicates a readiness—even if on the part of only a small minority—to break with practically unquestioned beliefs about national security and with almost instinctive attitudes of simple self-defense.

How can the arguments for disarmament have become so persuasive in so short a time? The answer is, they have not become especially persuasive, but the alternatives have become so threatening that the advocates of disarmament declare there is no longer a reasonable choice. We can get into this subject quickly by quoting an address by W. H. Ferry before members of the American Association for the United Nations, at the International Relations Club on the campus of the University of California in Santa Barbara, last December. Mr. Ferry, who is a vice president of the Fund for the Republic, first published his advocacy of unilateral disarmament in a Santa Barbara newspaper on Jan. 13, 1960 (see MANAS for March 30, 1960). What we shall quote of the present paper can by no means represent the full body of his argument, but is offered in brief indication of the thinking of serious defenders of unilateral disarmament. Mr. Ferry writes:

> Now I wish to make it as clear as I can that I do not think unilateral disarmament would be pleasant, or painless, or easy for the country to bear. I think only that it is more practical and more moral than the alternative, nuclear war. It is here, it seems to me, that the argument must be joined: whether, in fact, these are the alternatives, and I believe they are. Now, if I am willing to espouse so drastic a measure, I am required to accept the most drastic consequences that anyone can think of. What are these consequences? In the few public discussions of this subject that I know about—it is not a very popular subject—no one has yet said that he believed the Russians would bomb this country, or any other country that had been rendered more or less defenseless by withdrawal of our atomic arsenal and military apparatus. The most drastic consequence seen is that the Reds would take over. In this view, the nations of the world, the United States included, would sooner or later become Soviet satellites.
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> This is a fiercely disagreeable prospect. But by the terms of the argument, I must accept that this will happen. I must stipulate each and every detail of such a take-over: Congress turned into a puppet, our governors replaced by functionaries from the Kremlin, jackbooted soldiers with Red Stars on their shoulders on street-corners, and Communism replacing democracy as the American way of life. I do not believe for an instant that this would be the outcome, far from it, as I shall argue in a moment. But I must be willing to agree on the worst results of my policy that anyone can foresee. My opponents might, after all, be right.
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> Where they are wrong is in declaring that, because they think it will happen, Communist domination is the purpose of my proposal. I think that democracy is demonstrably the most just form of government. I regard freedom and justice as the

navigating stars for mankind. I differ mainly with my critics, perhaps, in having a higher respect than they for the durability of these virtues. I have confidence in their staying power, and believe they will finally prevail over any adversity. I am against the police state and for the democratic ideal; but I cannot see how our present programs are helping our ideals or hurting the police state.

Now let me turn to the alternative, war. Here my opponents in turn must stipulate the most drastic consequences, as I have done. In this case, however, one need not do any imagining of what would happen. Daily the facts and forecasts pile up. Both sides boast of their overkill ability. A vivid definition of this completely modern word is provided by Mr. Real (with Harrison Brown, in *Community of Fear*, a Fund for the Republic pamphlet]. Overkill means, he says, "pouring another bucket of gasoline on a baby that is already burning nicely." I shall not even use the scariest data available, that is, I shall not insist on the most drastic consequences, which would be annihilation. Let me use an old estimate which says that a "moderate attack" on the U.S. would kill 60 million at once, seriously injure another 20 million, and destroy about half the homes and 35 per cent of the industry of the nation. This estimate dates back to early 1959; presumably in the intervening two years there have been enough of what are laughingly called technical improvements to raise that figure. But let it stand. Let it stand beside the 20 to 30 million Russians that we might be able to destroy in retaliation. And beside this let us eliminate from the face of the earth the whole of Great Britain, large parts of West Germany, France, Turkey, and other countries serving advance missile bases. When you hear the words, "Give me liberty or give me death," this is what is meant. When Patrick Henry spoke in Williamsburg in the eighteenth century war was still an acceptable means of settling disputes. It is no longer acceptable, it can no longer settle anything.

Yet this is the alternative. It seems to me an impractical not to say immoral, alternative. It is certainly impractical to embark on a course which you know has no chance of bringing you where you want to go. I take it that American aims, in their simplest expression, are to survive, to prosper, and to carry the banner of freedom and justice into the world. Wiping out half of the population and most of the industry and culture of our nation would not appear to be a recommended way for accomplishing such tasks.

> There are some who, faced with these alternatives, choose war. One of the most intelligent editors I know says, for example, that he thinks defense of Berlin would be worth 60 or 70 million American lives. When reasonable men have thus looked the odds in the eye and opted for catastrophe, the argument would appear to be ended. But the question must still be answered, by what right may we decide to destroy the centuries-old accumulation and devastate the world for who knows how many generations to come?

So, Mr. Ferry is for unilateral disarmament. You can take issue with his argument, you can resist it or reject it, but you cannot ignore it, nor can you deny the facts on which it is based. This paper will no doubt be printed in full before long, and MANAS will then note how copies may be obtained. Meanwhile, there is another aspect of the question to be considered—the matter of responsibility for the position one assumes on this issue. We have a letter from a reader who finds cause for some disturbance in the fact that unilateral disarmament seems to be "catching on." The following came in the form of informal comment, not written for publication:

> . . . I'm profoundly concerned about all this disarmament business because (1) it misses the primary questions—I don't think it strikes at the human dynamics involved, but represents human inability to learn to work with long-range, not easily solvable problems; (2) it implies a degree of development of world law *or* of militant world public opinion which simply doesn't exist, in the relative power vacuum which would ensue, the ruthless would prevail as in one of our own frontier communities, because nations as now constituted don't form effective vigilante committees, and (3) the whole business has been over-simplified and extremized since the early days. . . .

Such concerns should not be neglected. Setting aside the issue of whether or not they are indeed "primary"—an issue which will and ought to hang over their consideration like a sword of Damocles—let us look at these questions.

The proposal of unilateral disarmament, this reader suggests in effect, has the attraction, but also the immeasurable dangers, of an "absolute"

sort of solution to the problem of war. Practically anyone, you could say, can throw himself into the drive for unilateral disarmament without having to weigh the issues and problems of human behavior which would almost certainly result from even the partial success of such a campaign. "Absolute" positions have a kind of go-for-broke glamor, with corresponding emotionalism, but they tend to obscure the differentiated levels of reality which are present in all large problems of human behavior. You might compare the enthusiasm for unilateral disarmament of some people with the naïve belief of unsophisticated communists in the doctrine of the withering away of the state. You could even insist that the emotional intensity that may on occasion appear in demands for disarmament resembles somewhat the frenzy which overtook the fanatics of the Mississippi Bubble, or the Holland Tulip Craze. At any rate, these phenomena of crowd behavior all typify in some way "inability to learn to work with long-range, not easily solvable human problems."

In short, our correspondent is wondering what will happen to the campaign for unilateral disarmament when it reaches the point of beginning to exhibit the traits of mass human behavior. He is endeavoring to anticipate what people will do when they find themselves uninhibited by the sanctions of fear and authority. In fact, his effort to see into a possible future in this way is probably something like what the experts of civil defense do when they try to plan for the behavior of the population of a city such as New York or Los Angeles, in the case of a hit or a near-miss in thermonuclear war. Of course, if the attack is on a scale of the sort referred to by Mr. Ferry, then the problems of civil defense administrators will be much reduced by the death rate in those general regions; but presumably, a certain amount of evacuation and resettlement will still go on. There may be terrible food shortages, lack of water, uncontrollable hysteria, and senseless acts of desperation. Some one will have to cope with all this. The ordinary folk who are not for unilateral disarmament are not noticeably preparing themselves for such exigencies, so that it is fair to say that exacerbated problems of human nature will be present in this situation, also, although in the case of the troubles of the voluntarily disarmed nation, the physical environment will at least exist, or be in better shape from not having been bombed.

It is true enough that, today, not enough world law exists to deal with the conditions which might arise in a disarmed or partially disarmed world. The power vacuum of which our correspondent speaks might indeed collapse into the "fiercely disagreeable prospect" Mr. Ferry considers. The overrunning of the world by a ruthless totalitarian power is a possibility that must be faced.

Yet there remains the question: What are we to do? In seeking an alternative to an admitted death of 60 million Americans, and probably an equal number of Russians, not to speak of the casualties of innocent and not-so-innocent bystanding nations, it seems reasonable to be willing to settle for a program that may be somewhat less than neat.

The trouble with this whole problem is that it continually elicits attempts to combine rational with irrational factors. Maybe rational and irrational factors can be put together, *but not with any predictable result.* The stress experienced by human beings when insistently confronted by irrational forces tends to make them try to surround the threat with rational plans and procedures, and then to pretend that the irrational forces are no longer there. There is for example the man who says that the preservation of the status quo in Berlin is worth the sacrifice of "60 or 70 million American lives." What sort of an equation is this? You can't ridicule his view as atypical. The nationality of the administrators of some islands off the coast of China is an issue that might also bring such sacrifices to the United States. And to Russia.

When you invite people to fit themselves "to learn to work with long-range, not easily solvable

problems," instead of adopting the absolute stance of unilateral disarmament, you have to promise them some time. If a "promise" is perhaps too much to ask, how about a "decent expectation" of some time? And the people who will be responsible for giving us this time—what are they doing about learning to work with long-range problems? Anything? They want time, all right, but do they want it for the same reasons that we want it? And what will happen if, in the next year or two, someone jiggles the balance-of-terror system? How much time have we *got?*

But we ought not to press this sort of argument when the only point that needs making here is that all the weaknesses our correspondent lists in his "primary questions" are also present in the system of crackpot realism, but don't show in the same way. They are there, but they come out only in the lethargic tolerance of our monstrous "overkill" capacities, and in the almost casual acceptance of the idea that the crucial frontier of the good life for Americans lies in the perfection of Polaris submarines and the development of biological poisons. Meanwhile the population is instructed by those humdrum Boccaccios, the civil defense administrators, on how to find romance and pleasant leisure hours in concrete-lined holes in the ground. Indeed, the weaknesses are all there, but now they are *managed* weaknesses which emerge only in predictable ways. It is right to recognize these weaknesses and to expect that they will harass the well-intentioned programs of any conceivable future, but how nice, in any event, to think that a future, whatever its weaknesses, can still be imagined.

It seems evident that it is the strongly irrational element in the prospect of nuclear war, only thinly disguised by the technological rationale of defense measures, which calls out the absolute stance of the man who declares for unilateral disarmament. There are no genuine relativities to reason about in the war program. The relativities are verbally shallow and conceptually non-existent. There is nothing to bite into for the man who is willing and eager to "work with long-range problems." How can he expose the façade except by the absolute protest of total disarmament?

As for the civil disobedience wing of the movement for unilateral disarmament (which our correspondent does not mention, but which deserves attention), we have a text from a paper by Harris Wofford, associate professor of law at Notre Dame. In a talk to students he said:

> If the proposition to which we are dedicated is self-government, then we must respond to the law, resist it, change it, and fulfill it, even as it challenges, changes, and educates us. Civil disobedience is one way in which we can exercise the choice that the law gives us. It is the choice that makes us free.
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> Now I have not even come to Gandhi, and all I will say about him is that he, too, was a lawyer—trained in London's Inner Temple—and I think he always saw civil disobedience as a constitutional form of persuasion, as a way to reach and move the minds and hearts of people and thus to mould the law. . . . the beauty of *civil* disobedience is that, in part at least, it answers a problem that has bothered people from St. Thomas to the present. Aquinas held that laws contrary to human good were not binding in conscience except to avoid "scandal or disturbance." Since violent disobedience in the violent centuries that followed, did indeed often cause scandal and disturbance contrary to the common good, St. Thomas' exception has generally proved the rule, at least the rule for lawyers. But *civil* disobedience by its nature avoids the kind of scandal or disturbance that St. Thomas rightly feared.
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> In fact, what is wrong with the theory of civil disobedience in this country is not that our jails would fill. For jail-going is not the natural disposition of most men. A little jail-going against some of our laws might be a good yeast to leaven the lump of our modern Leviathan. Civil disobedience could be an antidote to the centralization and standardization of our life, to the sense of fatality of the multitude as well as to the tyranny of the majority. We certainly need some kind of Socratic gadfly to stir society from its dogmatic slumbers.
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> No, the problem, I fear, is rather that by nature we seem more inclined to disobey not unjust laws but just ones. We all engage in civil disobedience in the form of jaywalking or speeding, to name only two popular varieties. But we hesitate to resist unjust law.

> We do not take personal responsibility for injustice. Instead of taking Socrates straight, we seem to prefer the comic version. I am referring to Aristophanes' portrayal in *The Clouds*, where the student of Socrates says: "But I wish to succeed, just enough for my need, and to slip through the clutches of the law." But there again, we are free to choose which Socrates—which inner light or higher law—to follow, and it is the choice that makes us free. (Printed in *Liberation*, January, 1961.)

The matter of responsibility for one's personal example remains. This question, however, is posed in relation to a dilemma with two absolute horns. We say this on the assumption that it is becoming increasingly difficult, and may eventually be impossible, for an observing man to believe that he can effectively work for peace while failing to work for unilateral disarmament. There is only one way to determine responsibility, and that is to examine the possible consequences of what one does. And in this case, as Mr. Ferry insists, it is necessary to compare the worst with the worst. Any other course than this would amount to claiming a prophetic insight that no man possesses. (Or you might say that if a man did possess such insight, he would be far too wise to use it in polemics, although any man is entitled to speak of his hopes and expectations, as Mr. Ferry does, when they are not the hard core of his argument.)

The worst consequences of unilateral disarmament, we submit, are better than the worst consequences of not disarming, considered by any objective measure of human good. The subjective consequences are also important, but speculative. For example, you might be persuaded that, despite the confusions brought to a nation which finds itself "weakened" by pacifist persuasions, a fresh moral perception would bloom to remedy at least some of the attendant disorders. It must be admitted that the State, as we know it and have known it, would not prosper. Perhaps it would be best for the Nation-State to come to an end by this means.

It is certain, finally, that none of our sharp definitions and projected programs can be a precise anticipation of the future course of history. Dozens of leavens are doubtless already at work, some above, some below, the threshold of conscious life. There must be concealed as well as apparent vectors in the complex course of human events and what we do, by plan and deliberation, will probably survive mostly in the form of intellectual and moral attitudes. What else, after all, has supplied the continuity to civilization? Do we honor Socrates because he kept his powder dry? Our great men, it is true, have fought in wars, but this was hardly their memorable distinction. Athens fell to Philip and to Rome, but the ancient Athenians still exercise a sovereignty over our minds and supply many of our visions of the good. Epictetus was a slave, but he would hardly have turned the world into a cinder to avoid shackles which never touched his spirit.

In this epoch of desperate strivings for security, it is necessary to return again and again to the question of what it is that we want to preserve, the question of what it is humanly possible to preserve, and the question of what is worth preserving. When these three come down to being the same thing, we shall probably have no difficulty in deciding what to do.

REVIEW
THE GREAT DIALOGUE

SOMEONE—probably a celebrated mentor of the Great Books movement—has said that literature is an embodiment of the Great Dialogue, the unending conversation of the human mind concerning the meanings of things. The idea is not a new one, but it has a peculiarly important value for the present, when established meanings and authorities are very nearly all breaking down, or are at least trembling in the balance.

The only thing that has hope of being preserved, in such a period, is the art of investigation. We read in the papers about the apparent impotence of the UN forces in the Congo and wonder, quite naturally, why an international authority of this sort does not seize the initiative and help the Congolese to conduct their affairs and decisions with a semblance of order, or at least without more bloodshed. And then you realize that, whatever the ineptitudes in the situation, an effort is being made to preserve the political form of the Great Dialogue. Even if you suspect all sorts of invisible pressures and partisanships, the fact remains that there is this announced intention and a form of carrying it out, in turbulent Africa. Even if the effort should fail, some men will have tried to support an enduring principle under extraordinarily difficult circumstances, and there is no more important activity for human beings to undertake. The Great Dialogue is an aspect of universal education, and in education, you do not look so much at the immediate successes or failures, but are primarily concerned with the continuous effort to use the tools of the educational process.

Not everyone is equal to full participation in the Great Dialogue. Historically speaking, it is evident that past cultures were subject to a strong tendency to substitute for the Dialogue the form of the Catechism, which is a kind of dialogue, but not between equals. The Catechism is a conversation between the one who knows and the multitude who are told what to think. There is always this temptation on the part of those who take social responsibility to turn the Great Dialogue into a Catechism. If you have an authoritative Catechism, you are able to marshal social forces and keep the unruly energies of men in line. You can *do* things.

The temptation to make catechisms has beguiling forms. You start out, as Western civilization started out, with the discovery of the Great Dialogue and its liberating implications for human beings. You start with the questions of Socrates and the moving discourses of the Platonic Academy. And then you say, but we cannot only sit around and talk. We must put this method to work for the larger human benefit. The wish becoming act, you turn the Dialogue into a technique for questioning Nature, and you get the Scientific Method. To design an experiment is to frame a question directed to the natural world. Soon, however, the catechism-making tendency began to show itself in the sciences. This new-born assurance of scientific investigation was not a product of the method of science, but of the sort of questions which were put to Nature. By means of this limitation imposed on the questions, the entirety of the moral universe was excluded from the scientific purview, and some other restrictions were also imposed. Eventually, the practice of science became a discipline of specialists, and while the conclusions of this reduced form of the Dialogue continued to be useful to human beings, they were no longer philosophically interesting. The efficiency of the project had become more important than the quest for meaning. While great scientists would regularly break out of the confinements of the scientific catechism, asking fundamental questions, such men have been the exceptions rather than the rule, and have usually been regarded by their colleagues as lacking in essential scientific discipline.

Whenever the dominant cultural embodiment of the Great Dialogue takes on too many catechistical tendencies, a schism begins to

develop between its conventional exponents and men of independent mind. The latter first discover and say to themselves, "But we don't really *know* all that," and then they begin to say it publicly. In time they become the leaders of a return to the original form of the Great Dialogue, which is intellectual, moral, and philosophical, and has its primary embodiment in literature.

Leaders of the breakaway from the scientific Catechism in our time have included such men as Ortega y Gasset *(Toward a Philosophy of History),* W. Macneile Dixon *(The Human Situation),* and more recently the Existentialist philosophers. Ortega puts the matter with great clarity:

> Scientific truth is characterized by its exactness and the certainty of its predictions. But these admirable qualities are contrived by science at the cost of remaining on a plane of secondary questions. . . . The past century, resorting to all but force, tried to restrict the human mind within the limits set to exactness. Its violent effort to turn its back on last problems is called agnosticism. But such endeavor seems neither fair nor sensible. That science is incapable of solving in its own way those fundamental questions is no sufficient reason for slighting them as did the fox with the high-hung grapes, or for calling them myths and urging us to drop them altogether. How can we live turning a deaf ear to the last dramatic questions? Where does the world come from and whither is it going? Which is the supreme power of the cosmos, what the essential meaning of life? We cannot breathe confined to a realm of secondary themes. We need a comprehensive perspective, foreground and background, not a maimed scenery, a horizon stripped of infinite distances. . . . We are given no escape from last questions. In one fashion or another they are in us, whether we like it or not.

It is man's driving need to consider the last questions that returns him to the Great Dialogue and brings a new incarnation of life in literature.

Can we say that the carrying on of the Great Dialogue is the heart of the cultural process, and that if you desire to understand your own culture and its problems, or some other culture, very different, perhaps, from your own, the first step is to examine the vitality of the Great Dialogue in that culture, determining where it is most alive and where it has succumbed to the catechistical tendency? This sort of question grew in importance as we read the memorandum of an American psychiatrist who had recently spent time in India studying the practice of the mental hospitals there and observing the Indian form of education in psychiatry. In the United States, psychiatry developed in the agnostic context of the scientific spirit—as if the psychiatrists were saying to each other, "Nobody knows about these things, so let's find out, *together."* The enormous vitality of American psychotherapy today undoubtedly springs from the fact that its development has coincided with the revival of the Great Dialogue in other areas, setting loose an adventuresome originality; and it comes, also, from the *directness* of the encounter of human beings in the patient-doctor relationship. In India, however, the somewhat hardened and institutionalized forms of the Great Dialogue have never broken into bits in the way that the Western catechistical forms of the Dialogue (traditional religion) were shattered by the explosive force of scientific discovery. The Indians, you could say, have had their scientific revolution at second-hand. Nor is the cultural tradition of Indian religion (Hinduism) an embattled opponent of scientific ideas. And while there are rigid cultural practices growing out of Indian religion, a remarkably pure expression of the Great Dialogue is still preserved in its finest philosophical treatises. But what the American psychiatrist found most frustrating was the authoritarianism of education, with little if anything of the give and take of individual discovery. Indian education was simply passing on "the great tradition," in this case the teachings of Sigmund Freud and some others. The American psychiatrist wondered if he would have to take up yoga and become a guru in order to gain the status to get his ideas across. There were, however, numerous compensations for these difficulties and he began to see, quite early in the experience, that it would be necessary

to work *with* the forces of Indian culture, if he was to do much good in psychiatric education. One hopes that this doctor will eventually do a book on his Indian adventure.

The important point is that the problem of psychiatry in India is only a special case of the problem of the fortunes of the Great Dialogue in India. For some years, now, we have been wondering when an authentic Indian literature, a *living* literature of the present, would begin to appear in India. There is plenty of writing going on there, writing in traditional forms and writing in imitation of Western literature. We have now decided to be more patient. The Indian intellectuals are living in a kind of No Man's Land which lies between their ancestral tradition of the Great Dialogue and the modern versions created by the West. To bring these very different forms of the Dialogue together in organic synthesis is a labor of Hercules, just as the political embodiment of the Dialogue is for India a labor of Hercules. The Indians are having to rebuild their culture and their political economy at a time when the cultures and political economies of all the world are in radical flux.

COMMENTARY
THE IDEA OF "ACTION"

THE problem of the intelligent individual of today concerns the question of "action." What is it? How can a single person make the weight of his opinions actually *felt?* How can he become a cause, however small, that will influence the conduct of the affairs of the nation and the world?

There is certainly reason enough for pondering this problem. The individual who has these questioning feelings is obliged to move around in the narrow passages left between towering institutions. He writes a letter that is read by one or two, but the opposition writes an editorial that is read by millions. The grain of the times, the habits of the masses, the momentum from the past—these and other forces are against him.

Thinking about these things, you begin to understand what old-time radicals called "the anarchism of the deed." The anarchists of the past—of the time of Alexander Berkman (see his *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*), who shot Henry Clay Frick to draw public attention to the sufferings of Carnegie Steel workers—thought that violence was the only effective way to dramatize the cruelties and injustices they opposed. There is still a kind of anarchism of the deed practiced today, but it has changed from a violent act in demonstration against the social harm of human beings to a harmless act in demonstration against the organized violence of human beings. There has been, in short, a complete about-face in the methods of the radical movement during the past twenty years. This change has accomplished an interesting sort of merger between the *avant-garde* of political radicals and the most committed of the "social action" Christians. These people are evolving through practice a fresh definition of action. It is wide enough to include a great many activities, ranging from civil disobedience to less hazardous marches or poster walks, vigils, leaflet distribution, and meetings. But more broadly, this movement—the general awakening of the individual is slowly taking on the proportions of a movement—includes projects in community farming, experimental schools, and other ingenious efforts to devise a "way of life" which fosters individuality and the morality of an awakened conscience.

The idea of "action," in view of these various expressions, begins to take on the meaning of "any culture-shaping activity that is on the side of life." More confidence, perhaps, is needed in the potentialities of the less dramatic but profoundly fruitful forms of family and community life which demonstrate, quietly but unmistakably, the commitment of human beings to human values.

"Human values" is a cliché which must be spelled out. In this context human values means values which arise directly in human behavior and are directly realized by people, regardless of institutional surroundings. Human values reside in things done for their own sake, because they are good to do. Human values are values which exist above the level of the cash nexus and the acquisitive transaction. When a man sings or speaks or philosophizes or builds a house, for the joy, satisfaction, and need of singing or speaking or thinking or building, human value pervades his life. When the pleasures of life are spontaneous, unbought, and practically unsought, human value is present. When the content of a communication is its sole end, the dignity of man gains its most enduring confirmation. When you think of how many people would keep still if they were no longer paid for what they say, you realize how far we have come from the recognition of human values.

The world of awakened individuals needs to create at least the nucleus—or many nuclei—of awakened communities on the side of life, and filled with the riches of human value, beneath and around the "demonstration" sort of action, to give body and substance, and even enlightened custom, to the sanity which, declared by a picket line or at a court arraignment, comes as a strange surprise, or even an intrusion, to the people who have not thought much about these things.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A SHORT time ago we referred to some optimistic comments on the 1960 White House Conference on Children and Youth found in *Children,* a bimonthly issued by the U.S. Department of Education. This magazine is probably as good a publication as can be hoped for in connection with government-sponsored public welfare. However, we now have a contrasting evaluation of the results of the huge Conference in a *Humanist* (September-October, 1960) article, "Triumph of Institutionalism," by Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs, professor of psychiatry at Chicago Medical School. The gist of his comment is that the complex procedures of such gatherings almost inevitably tend to flatten out the issues of greatest importance and to reduce debate and discussion to peripheral concerns. Summarizing, Dr. Dreikurs says:

> I learned an important lesson. It seems clear to me that the changes which have to be made to deal effectively with our problems, with our children and youth, cannot be made within existing institutions. It is becoming increasingly evident that the faults of a system cannot be perceived by those within it. This is true for private and public agencies, for our school system, our welfare institutions and all strong and powerful institutions, with their own frame of reference and their own principles of operation. There is no point to enter into any argument and controversy within a given system or institution. The change must come from the outside, through the pressures by those who are not involved and submerged in the existing practices. What has to change is more than can be provided by one or another piece of research, by one or the other slight innovation. The changes occurring in our society are too fundamental and too far-reaching to be met satisfactorily in such a way. New concepts, a new vision, new ideas and new ideals are needed; it is doubtful that existing institutions, particularly if they are successful and therefore well entrenched, will be able to provide them.

The government considers itself, and quite rightly, to be servant of the public, but the trouble with the public of our time is that it is continually being instructed as to what it wants in education, and in government. Basic criticism of the status quo and radical departures seem to be irrelevant to the greatest-good-of-the-greatest-number psychology upon which governments, national educational associations, and other very large and influential organizations quite naturally depend. The first two paragraphs of Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd* speak to this point:

> In every day's newspaper there are stories about the two subjects that I have brought together in this book, the disgrace of the Organized System of semimonopolies, government, advertisers, etc., and the disaffection of the growing generation. Both are newsworthily scandalous, and for several years now both kinds of stories have come thicker and faster. It is strange that the obvious connections between them are not played up in the newspapers; nor, in the rush of books on the follies, venality, and stifling conformity of the Organization has there been a book on Youth Problems in the Organized System.
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> Those of the disaffected youth who are articulate, however —for instance, the Beat or Angry young men—are quite clear about the connection: their main topic is the "system" with which they refuse to co-operate. They will explain that the "good" jobs are frauds and sells, that it is intolerable to have one's style of life dictated by Personnel, that a man is a fool to work to pay installments on a useless refrigerator for his wife, that the movies, TV, and Book-of-the-Month Club are beneath contempt, but the Luce publications make you sick at the stomach; and they will describe with accuracy the cynicism and one-upping of the "typical" junior executive. They consider it the part of reason and honor to wash their hands of all of it.

Dwight Macdonald's *Partisan Review* (Spring, 1960) discussion of "Masscult and Midcult" suggests that the issues of education will remain obscured until it is recognized that only an education which releases the mind can transcend both "masscult" and "midcult":

> This collective monstrosity, "the masses," "the public," is taken as a human norm by the technicians of Masscult. They at once degrade the public by treating it as an object, to be handled with the lack of ceremony of medical students dissecting a corpse, and at the same time flatter it and pander to its taste and ideas by taking them as the criterion of reality (in the

case of the questionnaire-sociologists) or of art (in the case of the Lords of Masscult). When one hears a questionnaire-sociologist talk about "getting up" an investigation, one realizes that he regards people as mere congeries of conditioned reflexes, his concern being which reflex will be stimulated by which question. At the same time, of necessity, he sees the statistical majority as the great Reality, the secret of life he is trying to unriddle. Like a Lord of Masscult, he is— professionally—without values, willing to take seriously any idiocy if it is held by many people (though, of course, *personally*. . .). The aristocrat's approach to the masses is less degrading to them, as it is less degrading to a man to be shouted at than to be treated as non-existent. But the *plebs* have their dialectical revenge: indifference to their human quality means prostration before their statistical quantity, so that a movie magnate who cynically "gives the public what it wants"—i.e., assumes it wants trash—sweats with anxiety if the box-office returns drop five per cent.

Whenever a Lord of Masscult is reproached for the low quality of his products, he automatically ripostes, "But that's what the public wants, what can I do?" A simple and conclusive defense, at first glance. But a second look reveals that (1) to the extent the public "wants" it, the public has been conditioned to some extent by his products, and (2) his efforts have taken this direction because (a) he himself also "wants" it—never underestimate the ignorance and vulgarity of publishers, movie producers, network executives and other architects of Masscult—and (b) the technology of producing mass "entertainment" (again, the quotes are advised) imposes a simplistic, repetitious pattern so that it is easier to say the public wants this than to say the truth which is that the public gets this and so wants it. The March Hare explained to Alice that "I like what I get" is not the same thing as "I get what I like," but March Hares have never been welcome on Madison Avenue.

And what of the "child" or "youth"? A comment by David Holbrook in the Manchester *Guardian* (Jan. 5) directs attention to the innate clarity and integrity which young people manifest before the "system" gets to them.

In teaching them, and meeting them in youth clubs and evening classes, I find more and more that the child's soul or natural creature has a marvellous intuitive drive towards the most positive and valuable possessions of life. They want to live long, to fall in love, marry and have children, to serve others, to value themselves, their households, and their work highly. They have a deep natural religious sense, and a sense of awe at all aspects of creation. What strikes me above all is their sense of responsibility, their desire to make their own decisions.

All these natural virtues become assailed and are often submerged between 13 and 20. They become a nuisance and a nuisance and a danger with their ferocious motor-cycles, they fall into bad sex, and affect Hollywood sensuality with consequences in venereal disease, illegitimacy, and sorrow; they waste money on stupid clothes and banal gramophone records; they drink too much; they seal their death warrants with heavy smoking.

If children were not as responsible as they naturally are, youth would be utterly depraved.

These are not issues which we can expect White House conferences to focus upon, but they are the issues which both youngsters and their parents are really concerned with, whether they know it or not.

FRONTIERS

Outdated and Updated War

EVERYONE, presumably, has heard that war is no longer a test of courage, but now the failure of a test for sanity. How thoroughly this fact is realized may soon make a monumental difference. A Reuters dispatch from Tokyo (Los Angeles *Times*, Dec. 17) drives home the enormous difference between the physical and psychic effects of atomic war and the effects of more "primitive" weapons. Under the title "Atomic 'Plague' Still Hovering Over Nagasaki," the Tokyo report reads:

> The misery spread by the atomic bomb dropped over Nagasaki 15 years ago lives on for thousands of Japanese in this city. Many, healthy now, dread the day their gums may bleed again. They fear the first hint of fever too. Both are signs that radiation sickness has hit them.
>
> Many Japanese know they felt the breath of the radioactive cloud Aug. 9, 1945, and years ago may have suffered bleeding gums with other disorders. Hundreds hope that, with the help of medical science, they now have been cured.
>
> Continuous surveys tend to show there is no such guarantee. In recent years, the number of deaths attributed to radioactivity has increased. Medical surveys show that from August, 1953, to August, 1954, the number of fatally afflicted was 35. This figure dropped during the 1955 to 1956 period, but since then it has risen steadily. From August, 1959, until last August, 42 died.
>
> The Nagasaki municipal government announced that more than 25% of the city's population, or 87,866 persons, still were affected by radiation.
>
> Doctors said the afflictions varied from slight ailments to the 40 serious cases confined to hospitals. These cases usually were diagnosed as leukemia or cancer. Minor complaints ranged from lung and liver disorders to skin ailments.
>
> Of those exposed, 21,636 persons received medical treatment. They were issued "health notebooks" by the welfare ministry permitting them further medical consultation if they suspected radiation poisoning.
>
> A medical treatment law for atomic bomb victims passed last Aug. 1 entitles patients to a $5.60 a month living allowance.

William Lee Miller's review of Robert Tucker's book *The Just War*, in the *New Republic* (Jan. 9), begins by noting the shallowness of the average American's conception of what atomic warfare means:

> The nuclear arms business can offer contrasts even more stunning in their irony than those of a modern commercial Christmas. The "open house" at Vandenberg Air Base last fall, for example, proved to be a sort of Kansas State Fair with glimpses of Hell. On a beautiful Sunday in sunny California we piled the kids into the station wagon and tootled along the blue Pacific and up through the hills (past signs saying first, "Watch out for Deer," and then "52nd Missile Squadron —Peace is our business") to join these thousands of happy American families, with sport shirts, blankets, and cameras, in this big flat park-like place where we could all see our nation's "missile muscle." The children played on the grass. . . .
>
> We watched cheerfully while there were shot off for us several highboys ("Let's hope we don't hit no Russian subs out there—because those are going outside the three-mile limit," joked the master of ceremonies, a jovial fellow). As frolicking folk will, we got in the way of the program ("We will not detonate until everyone is back 50 feet; there are people or somebody in the area"). Finally as the *pièce de resistance* we had a "simulated atomic explosion," mushroom-cloud and all ("We hope to give you a big fireball") . It was quite a day. A new stamp bears the legend "And this be our motto, in God is our trust" and, under that, a picture of an exploding bomb.
>
> A certain lack of sensitivity—or of a sense of humor, or irony, or something—that these exhibits display has a more serious counterpart in the set of ideas with which we have tried to deal with the phenomenon of nuclear-missile weapons. Just as the weapons themselves have been fit comfortably into old habits and pieties, without apparent strain, so the implications of the weapons have been fit comfortably into old ideas and attitudes.

Only a casual reading of current novels dealing with the American War of Independence, the Civil War, and World War II, makes it

graphically clear that the differences between past and present wars are not simply a matter of degree of destructiveness, but involve basically important psychological dimensions. In John Brick's *The Strong Men*, a realistic story of Valley Forge, a young officer of the Continental Army talks to a Jersey militiamen who is superintending the destruction of a bridge to hamper the British advance:

> We met our first Jersey militia on the Crosswicks Road. There were two companies of them, swarming like ants on a bridge that crossed a sluggish creek. One by one the timbers parted from each other and were carried off into the scrub growth that flanked the stream.
>
> It took a little doing to get one of their officers to talk to me. He was too busy watching every twist of a crowbar and every swing of a sledge.
>
> "We got to take this bridge apart. Cross her now if you're going to. She'll be down and hidden away in a couple minutes."
>
> I paused, puzzled. "Why are you hiding the timbers? Wouldn't it have been faster to burn the bridge as it stood?"
>
> His thin face took on a pained expression. "Burn it? Burn this bridge? Lemme tell you something, mister. My father built this bridge, fifteen year ago come August. It's the best damn bridge in Jersey. May not be big, but it's solid. Burn it, hell! Once the redcoats get across the creek and on their way to where it is they're going, we'll come back and put her up again. Every spike and every bolt, right where it ought to be. Thing like a war is temporary, mister, but my grandchildren will be crossing this bridge when you and me are long gone."

Things were considerably rougher by the time of the Civil War. In Richard O'Connor's *Company* Q, we find a "regular" Union officer recoiling in horror at the fire power of the latest artillery of that day:

> General Thomas swept off his black fedora and brought it down in an arc like a headsman's ax. It was the prearranged signal for the battery to open fire, section by section.
>
> To Archer the spectacle of the next hour was like having a front-row seat at a massacre. When the first blast from the Union artillery struck the enemy skirmish lines, they paused for a moment in their tracks, and then the men started falling. Great gaps were torn in the lines. Their losses were so great that they stood dumbfounded, undecided whether to advance or retreat and knowing that either would probably be fatal. Some knelt to help wounded comrades and were themselves cut down by succeeding rounds from the guns. Archer had never seen artillery working its execution on unprotected lines of infantry and was appalled. It was as if the face of modern war had suddenly showed itself for the naked grisly skull it was. There were men in the opposing ranks carrying their dark red battle flags, the Confederate Stars and Bars, and the embroidered silk banners presented by the ladies of their home towns, bugles still issued their rallying cries, swords still flashed in the sun, but all these ancient talismans of battle were revealed as frippery. This was not fighting, it was killing. There was no more chivalry about it than in a slaughterhouse .

Now for a glimpse of the "battlefield" of Hiroshima, where the curtain went down on the final act of world War II. This was also the day that buried heroism in war and the warrior:

> Those who ventured into Hiroshima shortly after the explosion are usually incapable of describing what they saw there. Not only were the houses gone, the streets and avenues had also disappeared. An occasional tree which had not been entirely consumed by flames stood, a gaunt calligraphic silhouette. There were trams in which motionless passengers scorched black sat on the skeletons of benches, and these trams showed in some cases where a street had once been. The water reservoirs provided the best landmarks, since these had of course not moved, though they were now grimly filled with dead bodies. Those inhabitants of the town who had been outside it when the bomb fell, and who now returned to look for what had once been their homes, could find nothing. They would dig, and sometimes they would find a piece of china or metal. This simply proved the futility of search. Bones half-calcined buried under layers of hot debris, would be all that remained of a family that might or might not have been the family of the searcher. There was absolutely no hope of finding a son or daughter or husband or wife still alive. (*The Bomb*, Fernand Gigon.)