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WHAT IS A MAN TO DO?

THERE are times when the institutional rules of modern society are so grossly inapplicable to the moral realities in human beings that the resulting injustice—or rather, cruel insensibility to human value—seems more than one can bear. A situation of this sort burst into view a few years ago in the United States, when the state of California proceeded to execute a man, Caryl Chessman, mainly because of his unabashed rejection of the familiar image of the convicted criminal, and in spite of the personal rehabilitation he had accomplished during some nine years of imprisonment. In this instance, "legality" (if indeed it was legality) moved inexorably to take the life of a human being, totally and intentionally oblivious of the fact that this action was an obvious miss of any wise or intelligent social purpose. Countless people around the world endured what can only be called a judicial murder, feeling impotent and aghast after so many had done all they could to prevent the execution from taking place. (There have been many similar cases, of course; Chessman's fate is used here as an illustration because some of the qualities of this man made a popular issue of his struggle with the judicial process.)

In *A Bar of Shadow* (William Morrow, 1956), Laurens van der Post illuminates a similar situation growing out of World War II. This brief story is an attempt by the author to give an account of the struggle of two human beings to understand one another, despite their separation by cultural backgrounds so different that they could be joined as human beings only in the extreme situation of one more purposeless killing. One of the two men is Hara, a primitively loyal Japanese sergeant who awaits death by hanging after his conviction in a War Crimes Tribunal trial; the other is an English officer, Lawrence, who had been under the direct supervision of Hara in a prisoner-of-war camp. The Japanese sergeant controlled the British prisoners in the camp with the same ruthless demands he made of himself as a servant of the Emperor. He cut off the heads of three British flyers who broke the camp rules in a pitiful attempt to buy some food in a nearby village. "It was he, who, day after day in the tropical sun, drove a horde of men ailing and only half-alive to scrape an aerodrome out of coral rock with inadequate tools until they were dying and being thrown to the sharks at the rate of twenty or thirty a day."

It is difficult to imagine how an author could generate sympathy for such a man, but van der Post does it by making Lawrence repeat his own understanding of Hara as a human being. An hour or so before the execution is scheduled, the British officer visits Hara in his cell. The Japanese soldier welcomes him, hoping for an answer to his question

Why is he to die? With the dignity of a man who, years before as a boy of seventeen, had made an intense religious ceremony out of saying good-bye to life when he joined the Japanese army, Hara said to Lawrence: "I do not mind dying, only, only, only, why must I die for the reason you give?" He explained that his conduct in the camp had been, in his eyes, no more than his duty:

> "I have punished you and killed your people, but I punished you no more than I would have done if you were Japanese in my charge who had behaved in the same way. I was kinder to you, in fact, than I would have been to my own people, kinder to you than many others. I was more lenient, believe it or not, than army rules and rulers demanded. If I had not been so severe and strict you would all have collapsed in your spirit and died because your way of thinking was so wrong and your disgrace so great. . . ."

And now the horror of the sufferings and deaths in the camp was to be compounded by another killing. Lawrence said afterward to a friend:

> "It was not as if he had sinned against his own lights: if ever a person had been true to himself and the twilight glimmers in him, it was this terrible little man. He may have done wrong for the right reasons, but how could it be squared by us now doing right in the wrong way? No punishment I could think of could restore the past, could be more futile and more calculated even to give the discredited past a new lease of life in the present than this sort of uncomprehending and uncomprehended vengeance!"

Lawrence recalls a moment one night in the camp when Hara revealed himself, telling the Englishman about his deepest convictions. Through the sergeant's halting words, Lawrence looked back into the past to watch a small, bowlegged boy, with blue-shaven head and shuffling walk, solemnly report to his ancestors that he had pledged his life to Japan. Suddenly, as if by a flash of lightning, the Englishman saw their roles reversed; it was not he, but Hara, who was the prisoner. Lawrence muses:

> "I had once in those ample, unexacting days before the war, when the coining of an epigram had looked convincingly like wisdom, defined individual freedom to myself as freedom to choose one's own cage in life. Hara had never known even that limited freedom. He was born in a cage, a prisoner in an oubliette of mythology, chained to bars welded by a great blacksmith of the ancient gods themselves. And I felt an immense pity for him. And now, four years later, Hara was our kind of prisoner as well . . . with sentence of death irrevocably pronounced."

Lawrence sees Hara as a man whose individuality had been totally submerged in the emotional tradition of his society. He behaved not by individual human precept but by the internalized commands of a social organism which was like a "super-society of bees with the Emperor as a male queen-bee at the centre." Hara was able to communicate these feelings to Lawrence, who concluded that Hara's people "were so committed, so blindly and mindlessly entangled in their real and imagined past, that their view of life was not synchronized to our urgent time." It was wholly beyond them to "respond to the desperate twentieth-century call for greater and more precise individual differentiation."

In the cell, Lawrence is swept by human affection for Hara, but fails to make his feeling known to the man awaiting death. He leaves, but after a time, filled with remorse, hurries back to the prison, only to find that Hara has been hanged. Too late. "Must we always be too late?" is Lawrence's question which reaches out from this book to haunt very nearly all the fateful decisions of men in the twentieth century.

Are we our brothers' keepers? And if we are, how are we their keepers? If we admit the moral validity of Lawrence's pain, what are such men—and we are *all* such men—to do about it? Abandon the national state and turn anarchist? Become Gandhians, which is practically the same thing? Shall we say with Thoreau: "How impossible it is to give that soldier a good education, without first making him virtually a deserter?"

We have only to think of Hara's state of mind to recognize how difficult it will be, if not wholly impossible, to bring some men, some societies, to consider the idea that their primary responsibility is to individuals, not to political organizations. In this context, moreover, the expression "political organization" is misleading or inadequate. For Hara, the Japanese state was living, organic reality. It was his identity and his life; by private contract made in his heart, when it "died"—suffered defeat in war—he died, too. Hara's commitment and self-sacrifice gives frightening support to Aristotle's dictum that membership in the state exhausts a man's being.

Pragmatic arguments about "survival" will not impress men like Hara. For them, mere "survival" has no value; it is rather a kind of shame, alongside of honorable death in the faithful performance of duty. Mr. van der Post's reader is confronted by the undeniable, if dark, magnificence of this third-class sergeant's

character. He had his nobility, and it confuses the values for making a judgment. We can't, we say, let him have his way; and yet it seems some kind of mutilation of human life to take his way away from him—by execution or some less final means.

There is of course the "practical" approach. You can say that "Nature" erases from existence the species (nations, cultural groups) which-are unable to adapt to the forward course of evolution. You can say (adopting Lawrence's analysis) that the Japanese failed to respond to "the twentieth-century call for greater and more precise individual differentiation" (the democratic way), and could not, therefore, survive. This way you cast the military machine of the United States in the role of Nature's scavenging operations, with the atom bomb as a kind of climactic triumph of natural law. You admit that people get hurt in the unfolding of the evolutionary struggle, but add that this can't really be helped. (And if you say this, you will of course be willing to die as heroically as Hara, when your time comes, because the black men, or the yellow men, have become the *avant-garde* in the evolutionary struggle.)

But if you don't like this argument, or are unwilling to make it openly and press it to a logical conclusion, you have serious problems. These can be got at by taking into account the two kinds of moral authorities the world has known: the spiritual teachers and the law-makers.

From the spiritual teachers we have what are sometimes called "counsels of perfection." Both Buddha and Jesus give instruction according to the sublime ideal of human perfection. You don't find any talk of the "lesser of two evils" in what they say. They don't seem to recognize any extenuations in the pressure of practical affairs. The only compromise they allow is in the service of the weak. Self-interest is simply not permitted as a basis of action. In the case of Jesus, not even the higher self-interest of preserving the person of the Teacher would allow the wrong of violence. When Jesus was arrested, as Matthew relates, "one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, *Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."* And earlier in Matthew, when Peter asks: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him: till seven times seven?" Jesus makes answer: "I *say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."*

Plainly, the great teachers were not legislators. They did not deal in "equity." Their doctrines seem not to have included any solutions for the problems of practical men. These were left to the Manus, the Solons, the authors of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and all the constitution-makers of history. One wonders why.

In any event, it seems possible to say that the law-makers, whether from ignorance or knowledge, undertook something far more difficult than repeating the counsels of perfection. They attempted to codify the compromises that would be necessary to make the social community a going concern. For men of conscience and human sympathy, this must have been an extremely painful task. You might even wonder if they had to drug themselves with some kind of moral blindness in order to do it at all.

Whatever the explanation, let us take this "moral blindness" hypothesis as the basis for understanding the mistakes—if they are mistakes—of the law-makers.

Now what, in terms of its laws, is the social community? It is a deliberate attempt, by some human beings, to make rules of behavior, of right and wrong, for themselves and others. Why do they do this? They do it because the ideal of behavior governed by intuitive mutual understanding, with a resulting consensus, is apparently not compelling enough to obtain the sort of behavior that is desired or required. Accordingly, they make the laws, and then they associate with the laws a body of morale-building precepts and cultural directives which are intended

to make the laws understood and popular, or if not popular at least effective. Law-makers, depending upon how they think of human beings, use various devices to gain acceptance for their programs. Sometimes they insist that adherence to the rules they lay down is the only way to get into Heaven. This is the theocratic State. Sometimes they argue that the highest good of Freedom is purchased by conformity to the law—and since there is obvious truth in this claim, a kind of secularized religious enthusiasm may attach to the duties of citizenship in this case. The notion of sovereignty—which has to do with the external relations of the society—obtains sanctity through the state's role in preserving the conditions of the free life, or in assuring the continuity of the true religion, or from whatever it is that the state is believed to add to the individual. And since the state is in the service of *all*, the interest of the sovereign state is manifestly greater than the interest of any one person.

We are considering, here, the state or the political community only as an agency of power or coercion—coercion whether by social pressure, indoctrination, tabu, authoritative tradition, or direct physical threat. In defense of this role of the state, it may be said: Well, coercion may not be the ideal way to lay the basis for a harmonious and progressive social life, but it is the only way that *works*, human nature being what it is. We are pursuing education, also, so that some day these coercive measures can be reduced, if not entirely eliminated. It is a compromise, of course, but all politics is compromise, isn't it? We can't have total anarchy. Even our educational efforts would break down, if there were no "real" authority.

Letting this argument, for what it is worth, go, let us look at what happens in a community which obtains conformity through coercive means. (It is of course inconceivable that *all* the conformity results from coercion. This would be no community, but some kind of death camp. What needs inspection are the consequences of the coercion, where it is applied, and whether or not it is recognized as such.) How shall we describe coerced behavior? Well, it is basically non-rational behavior. It is things people do because, from either internal or external compulsion, they must.

Now in a simple community, say, a New England town, or an Indian village, having an element of coercion in government will seem reasonable enough. Very little of it is needed, in any event. But let the community grow to the proportion of a nation-state—a modern military power—with all the overlays of justification of national policy and in behalf of domestic tranquility which have accumulated over a century or more, and you have a collection of coerced or irrational behaviors which are no longer simple at all. These behaviors begin by irking, and end by horrifying, observers who have some recollection of the counsels of perfection of the great teachers, or observers who try to live by the precepts of the Humanist tradition. And the trouble is that you don't know what to do. Half-measures don't seem to do any good; reforms don't last; the basic irrationality persists and a reform is only the imposition of a more attractive or presently fashionable coercion. The real trouble in peoples' lives comes from doing a lot of things that they don't really understand, and, from the point of view of the practical management of states, are not intended or allowed to understand. The state has become too complicated for human understanding, and its managers know it.

The major—and very nearly the only important—result of this development is that the law-makers have won out over the spiritual teachers. Their ethic of judicious compromise in behalf of the good social community—its survival, when not its "progress"—has by contrast made the counsels of perfection seem quite impractical, quite ridiculous, and the Lawrences of our time, the men who begin to question the very foundations of the order under which they live, get no answers at all.

We now see, perhaps, why the spiritual teachers—and we are stipulating that they were truly wise, and not naive, in their neglect of "social" questions and the problems of political organization—gave only their counsels of perfection; or spoke, that is, only to individuals, and not to states. It takes a Jehovah, not a teacher, to speak to a state. Real teachers would not give assent to a kind of compromise which, once established as "moral," could only go the wrong way, becoming greater and greater, instead of being diminished through strenuous individual resolve. If the wise allowed themselves to counsel groups instead of individuals, they would give full justification to people who are eager to shift their load of individual responsibility to the "organization"—the Church or the State. But organizations have only a sham morality. Their morality is never anything more than the *esprit de corps* of the people who make it up. It almost appears to have been a pedagogic principle of the spiritual teachers that people must recognize the sham for themselves. To *tell* them this might have wrought endless confusion. It seems to have been a truth they whispered only to their closest disciples.

It fell to Gandhi, in the twentieth century, to attempt to win public recognition for this truth. And it remains to be seen whether or not he was right in his reading of historical necessity. For the objective consequences of Gandhi's views, however in harmony with those of the great teachers, are plainly anti-state. And he did not whisper; he *shouted.*

Gandhi can hardly be wrong, ethically and morally, if we have any respect at all for the Great Teachers. But is he right, historically? Has the time come to demand a *social* application of the counsels of perfection?

There is nothing visionary or illogical about this evolutionary conception of spiritual truth. After all, the justification of the statists for their military triumphs and their devastations of lesser breeds without the law is also an evolutionary claim—a version of Social Darwinism. All that Gandhi proposed was a theory of evolution for individuals instead of for states. Now, he said, is the time to take part in a great moral mutation. And if it be argued that he may be wrong, the rejoinder can be that there is not much hope by any other means.

Here is a quotation from Alfred Reynolds, a writer for the *London Letter,* in which he examines the implications of political action from what seems to us a position developed from Gandhi's logic (the article quoted is reprinted in a paperback, *Pilate's Question,* published by the *London Letter, 25,* Melville Road, London, S.W. 13):

> All human actions, those of war, poverty, intolerance, social inequality, racial discrimination, the position of women and sex-morality are rooted in untidy, insincere, or confused thinking. It is only at their roots that these problems can be dealt with. No amount of legislation, demonstration, or civil disobedience can hope to straighten the backbone of man, strengthen his personality and create an atmosphere of mutual respect and free cooperation.
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> Weighing all possibilities of action, they all come under one of the above-mentioned categories. Pressure for legislation, orderly demonstration or "direct" action may indeed embarrass our rulers and prompt them to give way on minor points. We certainly do not discourage such activities and some of us might even participate in them. On the other hand, we feel no illusions concerning their outcome should be encouraged. We ought to realize that the very resilience of the system is based on the confusion of millions of minds. Those interested in the perpetuation of the status quo will always adapt it to the requirements of the general social development. Its essential features, however, will not disappear in the wake of reforms—if anything they will be strengthened.
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> By securing work, health and a modicum of welfare for the many, the twentieth century removed the impetus of the nineteenth century's revolutionary demand for a society without class distinctions. The small man, by "improving himself," becomes an enemy of general improvement and a staunch supporter of the system which he identifies with his personal interests. By telling their subjects that to safeguard peace, military strength must be

maintained, the rulers win the support of anxious and peace-loving millions for the cause of bigger and better bombs. By pretending that the coloured peoples must develop and work towards partnership, the white masters allay the consciences of their fellow whites, placing the onus of advancement squarely on the shoulders of the coloured peoples. . . .

Let us, by all means, march back and forth from Aldermaston, lie in cement mixers in War Office compounds, demonstrate outside camps and ministries; but let us not delude ourselves that the problem of international violence has been resolved even to the smallest extent. . . . Women chained themselves to railings to obtain the suffrage: half a century later many of them vote conservative, support rearmament, demand the retention of capital punishment and become pillars of conformity. The nation authorized a Labour government to introduce educational reforms, social security and a national health service: all these led merely to an unprecedented strengthening of a competitive and unjust social order.

It is not a happy thought that actions intended to improve the human condition lead but to a more scientific and hygienic jail for the human spirit. The broiler houses of the contemporary hen are symbolic of the course human destiny is taking. No danger of starvation or sickness threatens these unfortunate birds. Their shelter, their nourishment, their health is secure. So is their unscrupulous exploitation and ultimate slaughter.

However, men and women are neither birds nor cattle. In every one o£ them dwells the potential power of the mind to respond to thought. Regrettably, this thought can be promulgated only by means of words. Words, if meant and lived, can penetrate even the thickest skull. People will have to choose ultimately between the universal broiler house and the cold wind of freedom. Only thought and no amount of action can make them choose the latter.

What Mr. Reynolds is saying is that the function of the law-maker, and of the champion of group identity, must be replaced by people who begin to be determined to understand *everything* they do. Only by this means can the delusions spawned by political organization and action be rendered harmless. Only by this means can we close the now intolerable gap between the counsels of perfection and the ruthless necessities of the law-makers, and their plausible apologies for what they think they have to do.

REVIEW
"CONVOCATION ON MORALITY"

WE are going to pick quotations from Sloan Wilson's *Georgie Winthrop*–or is it Georgie Winthrop's *Sloan Wilson?* There are critics, certainly (before whom we tend to cringe a bit), who are sure that neither should be taken seriously. But then, we may have been regarding ourselves as too *avant-garde* anyway. Sometimes the men who write to make money say something worth quoting, and Mr. Wilson is often deftly instructive.

When we first read *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit,* we noted his skill in exposing the self-righteousness of conventional morality. Probity was seen to be usually a mere matter of expectation, while the unanticipated situation in a man's personal life was unassimilable, because psychologically unprepared for.

George Winthrop, however, is prepared to discuss morality in a sensible fashion—as the vice-president of a small college. The president entrusts him with the task of promoting a "Convocation of Morality" which will bring favorable publicity to the campus if dignitaries of sufficient magnitude can be induced to participate. Actually, Georgie makes a fair administrator. He has always taken himself with a grain of salt, and the same qualification could make him a good teacher—if administrators had any time for such things. Mr. Wilson has some warming passages about George in the first chapter, as our dubious hero dons riding clothes of an early morning before he punches the time-clock in the administration building:

> He felt absurd, as he always did in that outfit, as he always did in any sort of uniform or costume, or even a dinner jacket. He was George Winthrop, used to tweeds, gabardines or dungarees, and anything but a business suit or fishing clothes made him feel as though he were trying to perpetrate some kind of hoax. For four years during World War II, he had felt himself to be an impostor in the uniform of an Army officer, and he always felt foolish when he donned a mortarboard and academic gown, as his new job as vice-president of Wellington College often required him to do. The riding clothes seemed especially presumptuous, making him into a figure from a whiskey advertisement—Sir Wiloughby Wiloughby entering the steeplechase at Something Downs with the cream of international society looking on, and a glass of hootch firmly clutched in his right hand.

George approaches the task of organizing a "morality" convocation with some unprofessional misgivings:

> Modern Morality. Why was he always so cynical about his work: why couldn't he get genuinely excited about a symposium on such a subject? Certainly it would give him a chance to make a good speech. Did he really want to be president of the college? Any man wants to reach the top of his profession, he thought, and certainly he had once fairly ached for the honor, the authority, the big presidential mansion, the increase in salary, the prestige, but now all he could think of was having to make an infinite number of speeches before alumni groups, solving an infinite number of thorny administrative problems, hiring, firing, making out budgets, compromising even his compromises.
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> What, he thought, would they say if I entitled my speech "The Morality of the Private College, if Any"?
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> Don't be a cheap cynic, he told himself sternly.
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> "Do you know that college graduates make a hundred thousand dollars more in a lifetime than people who don't go to college?"
>
> Such crap!

This is the setting for the entrance of Wilson's Lolita, the seventeen-year-old daughter of George's first love, now a celebrated poet inebriate. George's fascination by the girl seems not to be from sensual appeal—it is a brief affair, neither sordid nor sensational—but because she is the first completely honest person he has met, knowing not only beyond her years, but also his, as the dialogue often reveals:

> "Good night, Charlotte," he said, leaning down and giving her a paternal peck on the cheek. "Let's not get into difficulties again."

"If you just didn't have to be George Winthrop!" she said. "That's such a terrible name. And Georgie! That's even worse."

"Some use it in affection."

"For a little boy! What do you have to be a Georgie for? Do you suppose anybody ever called George Bernard Shaw Georgie? Do we have Johnny Kennedy for President? Did Janey Austin used to write books? Wouldn't you get tired of all those kids?"

"Stop it," he said laughingly.

"Don't you see how being a Georgie limits you? There are so many marvelous things that Georgie Winthrop can't do. Why don't you take a Jewish name? Jews are good family men, but they're much more realistic than you are. You'd never find a Jew the vice-president of a college."

"Now, what do you mean by that, Charlotte? I hate generalities about Jews or anyone else."

"Don't accuse me of anti-Semitism—I'm half Jewish, and I'm not an anti-Semitic half Jew either. But it's true. Can you tell me the name of a Jew who's the vice-president of a college?

"Not offhand. What on earth are you getting at?"

"Jews are sensible people—they've had to be to survive. A Jew would be a professor if he liked the academic life, or a businessman if he liked money. He wouldn't try to combine the worst of both worlds. Only a Georgie Winthrop would do that!"

Mr. Wilson, as we remarked years ago in connection with *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, likes to show the person behind the plausible façade which supports success. His particular talent lies in demonstrating that the man who uses a mask may not be corrupt, but only unawakened to life, too long a stranger to the ecstasies of being one's self.

COMMENTARY
THE EVIL MEN DO

SINCE not only the correspondent whose observations make the beginning of this week's Frontiers, but another reader also, has written to object that MANAS seems not to take into account the hazards and difficulties—indeed the mortal dangers—of human life, we should acknowledge the pertinence of the comment.

The one contributor—in Frontiers—lays emphasis on the apparent inability of men organized in societies to devise methods of overcoming evil which do not themselves become sources of further wrong. The other (in a letter) feels it important to recognize more explicitly how vulnerable becomes the man who tries to find the stuff of awareness, to handle the hot wires of authentic self-knowledge.

The fault—which is a fault of the times in which we participate—is manifest enough. We live in an age whose makers thought only to cast aside the theological stain of sin, yet also hid from themselves the Promethean agony. These later "founders," or rather their epigoni, spread a shallow doctrine of Happiness, justifying the bland isolationism of a people who complacently accepted the instruction that they were meant to skim the cream, have all the "better things."

We claim the Greeks as our spiritual ancestors but what have we remembered of the dread decrees of *Ananke?* Who is prepared to pay the price rendered by Oedipus for his discovery of "reality"? There is a line of descent to be traced from the Five Hundred, but not from Socrates. And as for the Christian heritage we hire and pay with far larger sums than twenty pieces of silver a vast corps of professional persuaders to keep telling us that this is a world in which Yankee know-how augmented by scientific technology has ended any possibility of another Gethsemane.

Small wonder that unnameable horrors visit our lives, gaining access from bothwithin and without. We are indeed beset by the Furies, and who could be immune? What defenses, after all, are left to men who have forgotten, as though they never knew, that they are accountable to the Gods—whether the Gods live on Olympus, aloft in the Empyrean, or are more subtly immanent, though deeply buried, in these men themselves?

Let a man begin to play upon his own heart-strings with the bloodied pluck of desperation, and he cannot help but hear, not only his own confused responses, but all the secret cries of sorrows that his fellows hide from one another—lest they be known and *exposed.* The Dark Night of the Soul can hardly be mere allegory, only the mystic's plaintive report of how he became lost. Let a man start seeking in earnest, and he must encounter not only his own blindness, but the funded insensibility of the whole great mechanized collective.

Yet who is brash enough to recite compensating joys he has not felt, or lay claim to beatitudes not earned? It is fitting only to declare one's share in the hungers that all men feel, and to echo promises which even the worst days on earth cannot deny. Ours is an age of heroes stricken with paralysis of unbelief in themselves, born to myths of mediocrity and undistinguished acceptance of a small but cleverly upholstered rung on an automated Jacob's Ladder.

Meanwhile, the evil, we think, is becoming plain. To what does it testify? That is the question we have hardly begun to ask, much less to answer. Some bitterly warped symmetry, no doubt, but *whose?* How many men must join the organization before we can begin to straighten things out? What is the magic number that drives away impotence and makes us wise and strong?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

EDUCATION AND METAPHYSICS—I

WE have used the title, "Education and Religion," for some ten articles in this column, attempting to emphasize insights and affirmations which have a historical connection with certain religious traditions, but no necessary connection at all with theological doctrines or dogmas. The view which developed is that there are two approaches to religion available to any citizenry—(1) indoctrination in specific beliefs, and (2) education seeking the psychological meaning in great scriptures and traditions—and that the two approaches are mutually exclusive. Since the Constitution of the United States places primary emphasis on the right of the individual to find his own faith, genuine defenders of the spirit of this Constitution are obliged to oppose indoctrination. Indoctrination never can lead to an increasingly thoughtful electorate, nor to the individual assumption of ever-larger responsibility. One sort of Christianity, for instance, believes in the individual, in his innate capacity for self-government, and another sort does not.

To believe in the "kingdom of heaven" as a realm of being which describes the state of mind of a Buddha or a Christ, means to believe that every man may one day become what the *Bhagavad-Gita* calls "a self-governed sage." Such men are discoverers of values beyond those comprehended by the social contract, though not necessarily in conflict with the laws of the land. This, we submit, is the pure meaning of the Sermon on the Mount. Or take, for example, these passages from Matthew:

> For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.
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> Ye have heard that it was said by them of old times, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment;
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> But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. . . . (Matt. 5 20 22)
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> Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:
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> But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Matt. 5:27-28.)
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> Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:
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> But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne. (Matt. 5:33-34.)

Here, the emphasis is on greater subtleties in ethical evaluation and conduct than can be discerned in a rule-of-thumb morality. And it is precisely the perception of these subtleties which elevates the soul to another "abode," the "kingdom" of which Jesus later speaks. The most elevating message of the gospel is "metaphysical" simply because it deals with polarities and motivations which cannot be adequately equated with material rewards or punishments. And it is for this reason that the study of "metaphysics," properly understood, can be held to have a decisive connection with the higher values on which respect for individual conscience depends.

The foregoing is a roundabout introduction to some considerations presented by *Humanistic Education and Western Civilization* (Holt, 1964, $5.75), a volume of essays dedicated to that inveterate defender of the relation between metaphysics and education—Robert M. Hutchins.

In his book, the *Higher Learning in America*, written in 1936, Dr. Hutchins described the educational emphasis which would obtain in a university which recognizes the meaning of metaphysics—not as an exercise in formal linguistics, nor as a purified theology, but as one of the most important activities of man. Dr. Hutchins wrote:

> The student beginning with the junior year would study metaphysics, the science of first principles. He would study the social sciences, which

> are practical sciences, dealing with the relations of man and man. He would study natural science, which is the science of man and nature. He would study all three categories, with emphasis, if you like, on one of them. The higher learning is concerned primarily with thinking about fundamental problems. "A man who really participates in the progress of the sciences, must do so when the time of education is past." In the university he must come to grips with fundamental problems.
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> Metaphysics, the study of first principles, pervades the whole. Inseparably connected with it is the most generalized understanding of the nature of the world and the nature of man.
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> I am not here arguing for any specific theological or metaphysical system. I am insisting that consciously or unconsciously we are always trying to get one. I suggest that we shall get a better one if we recognize explicitly the need for one and try to get the most rational one we can. We are, as a matter of fact, living today by haphazard, accidental, shifting shreds of a theology and metaphysics to which we cling because we must cling to something. If we can revitalize metaphysics and restore it to its place in the higher learning, we may be able to establish rational order in the modern world as well as in the universities.

The introductory essay in *Humanistic Education* is by Arthur A. Cohen, who discusses the importance of Dr. Hutchins' approach. Dr. Cohen writes:

> Since metaphysics is the science of first principles, it is appropriate that Hutchins' only tenaciously held principle should be the pre-eminent importance of metaphysics for education. What relevance does metaphysics have for virtue or democracy? At first blush, it would appear to have none. Metaphysics is abstract, difficult, stratospheric. But let us recall that Aristotle regarded the intellectual virtues as the consequence of the appropriate use of man's reason. If a man reasons patiently, quietly, intelligently, assessing evidence, weighing the interconnection of kinds of knowledge and the bearing of knowledge upon life, it may be expected that such a man may come to lead a wise life. And one believes that the wise man is more likely to be virtuous than is the fool or the illiterate or even the practically educated. The right employment of the natural endowments of men, the turning of these endowments to inquiry into the highest and deepest must help a man to achieve those virtues which we call justice, prudence, courage, magnanimity. Lastly, such a man is prepared to bear other men with affection, helpfulness, and courtesy. He is also likely to assist them along the path toward truth.

A devotee of philosophy is inevitably concerned with refining and elevating the standards of value to which his society subscribes. This, in turn, necessitates constructive criticism, and such criticism should not only be tolerated but encouraged. Further, such criticism is a necessary part of the Great Dialogue of which Dr. Hutchins often speaks.

FRONTIERS

Frustrating Paradox

HAVING read the lead article and editorial in the April 29 MANAS, I find myself in agreement with much that was written, but not with its too facile optimism. Power is essentially a social problem concerned primarily with economics and politics which are basic in organized social life. History is certainly largely, though not entirely, a record of the struggle for social power in economics and politics. To discuss power without recognition of the growth of organized economic power is to evade the issue.

It is by no means clear that education and political constitutions, as you suggest, are attempting to reduce the use of power. On the contrary, they accept power as necessary and seek to control it by checks and balances. In our present society, despite education and constitutions, organized economic power is steadily increasing and it demands a type of conformity which is even more coercive than politics. If this is to be changed, it will take more than words. I don't wish to criticize Mr. Saroyan, who is to be congratulated on keeping his mind, even if the body is given to the draft, but your quotation from him seems a bit unfortunate because it emphasizes the power of organized society.

Now MANAS in the past has urged the need for philosophy and it has frequently quoted with approval great mystics without committing itself to any genuine mystical faith. No doubt it is possible to build a philosophy around a mystical faith, but the genuine mystic has reason to be suspicious of that philosophy unless it is based on more or less complete detachment from worldly possessions. Two great philosophers—Schopenhauer and Nietzsche—struggled with the problem of power in depth. Nietzsche glorified it; Schopenhauer repudiated it philosophically and joined the mystics intellectually, if not in faith. MANAS is no less thorough in its denunciation of power than Schopenhauer, but it is less forthright in reaching his conclusions. I also believe that, as an end in itself, power leads to nihilism or to a deadly status quo, but that does not prevent me from facing the problem of economics and politics as best I can. When you avoid economic issues and express skepticism of practically all political action, your optimism evades basic worldly realities unless you are willing to go the whole way in a mystical faith, which is detached from such "realities." What you say about the beauties and serenity of nature is true in its place, but that does not solve the problem of evolution as expressed in social power. Even if wars end and the world ultimately becomes one in politics, the problem of power is still with us. And that problem leaves little room for optimism.

It is undoubtedly true that neither economics nor politics can make a good world without good people, but that truism means very little in practical life unless one faces the social obstacles as they exist. Philosophical anarchy, or the abolition of all coercion, is a grand ideal, but only the genuine mystic tries to live it in its entirety, and even he has to eat and find shelter. Recognition of the essential pessimism of power as an end should not blind one to what is actually happening in organized society, nor should it be an essential frustration in one's own life. Regardless of whether one's philosophy of this world is optimistic or pessimistic, the individual can do his best to live with a minimum of coercion because otherwise he finds it difficult to live with himself. Why does he find that difficult? I am not sure of the answer, but I doubt that it is the result of his rational intellect. I think one must differentiate between the rational intellect and the mind, for the latter includes emotions and intuitions as well as mere intelligence and reason. The intellect may recognize the evil of power as an end but, as a rule, it uses power to overcome that evil and therein lies the greatest and most frustrating paradox of life. Failure to recognize that society is increasingly bent on solving the evil of power by means of power does not help. One

can live with frustrations and compromises, provided one is at least doing his best to live with the least possible coercion as enabled by his innate character and heart. But is it not well to recognize our compromises and failures? My intellect tells me that it is very doubtful that man can survive without some coercion, but power in that case must be a means and not an end. This too may be paradoxical, but, unless one can experience the faith of the genuine mystic, I am afraid one must live with that paradox.

READER

Our differences with this reader—if, indeed, they are really differences—seem to be mainly a matter of unspoken assumptions, for which MANAS must accept considerable responsibility. The view of history or "progress" commonly reflected in these pages has little in common with the Victorian optimism of the nineteenth century. No one needs to point out, today, that the evil of power did not pass away with the abolition of the divine right of kings and the political absolutisms of the pre-revolutionary centuries. But it does need to be noticed that people *expected* cruel and oppressive power to become a thing of the past with the advent of rule by law under constitutions and the prevalence of democratic forms of government. The extreme pessimism of the present, common in liberal and often radical circles, is a reaction to the failures of this expectation.

The modern world, and men of good will in the modern world, are now in the process of assimilating the impact of this failure and trying to understand what it means. Possibly the first serious investigation of this problem came in Erich Fromm's book *Escape from Freedom.* It was at any rate the most widely read discussion of socio-political phenomena examined from a psychological point of view. MANAS attempts to forward the view that political correction of characterological weaknesses on the part of the population at large simply does not work. In the past, by reason of the liberating nature of political action, characterological change has been closely associated with political revolution. The will to be free from outside injustice and restraint is both personal and political. Its expression in action manifests both personal and social growth.

Today's problems of justice and the control or elimination of power are subtler and more difficult to understand. People have gained emancipation from political tyranny, only to become victims of impersonal forces (their own social and economic institutions) which were in some measure allowed to come into being and grow into controlling power by the indifference and irresponsibility of the people themselves. Actually, for the great majority, the idea that there is a direct relationship between their victimization by the modern state and their own habits of mind, values, and concepts of the "good life," is a quite unpalatable proposal, without sanction from any familiar tradition or analysis. It is the contention of MANAS that a politics for today which ignores this prime reality of social and moral causation is an anachronism which can do nothing but distract from the basic task of the twentieth century—the development of moral independence, self-reliance, and a greater sense of personal responsibility by individuals. For this development to take place, there must be a conscious effort to find a durable philosophy of life, an inspiring idea of the self, and a sense of purpose, even of "destiny," which will sustain people during what promises to be one of the most difficult and perilous transitions in all human history—the growth to a higher level of maturity for mankind at large. We can make no other reading of the issues and the opportunities of the present crisis in human affairs.

The materials of psychology and religion, of mysticism and metaphysics, are essential resources for any such undertaking. Hence the frequent discussion of such questions in these pages. We do not "adopt" any historically identified "mystical" faith for the reason that a philosophy is

something you "grow," not adopt or get "converted" to.

We do not discuss economic and political questions at length for the simple reason that they do not, it seems to us, go to the heart of the problem; further, others are doing this better than we could do it, and we try to profit by and repeat for general consideration the conclusions they reach. We take note, for example, of what seems to us the best in contemporary socialist thought; we frequently report on the activities of the radical pacifists; we repeatedly attempt to show the insight of the anarchist point of view; and we often review material produced by thorough and conscientious investigators of the economic problems of the modern world. It happens that the findings of these people usually seem to confirm our own basic premise: that the changes that need to take place in forms of social and economic organization will not become seriously possible without some profound alterations in the basic attitudes of human beings. This means changes in working and functioning philosophy—the convictions and beliefs that men actually *live by*. From week to week, MANAS presents the materials that seem vital and pertinent to people who are interested in this sort of change. If we seem to exhibit "optimism" in doing this, it is not because the task seems easy, or even likely to be accomplished in the near future. Nor is it from any denial of or blindness to the more hideous and depressing aspects of the modern world. Rather, our optimism is of the marginal sort which proposes that this approach will really work, and that social and individual goals can be reached in no other way. The free society can only result from the development of free and responsible men. We maintain that this is the lesson of contemporary history—heaped up, pressed down, and running over. A truism of the MANAS editorial policy, we may sometimes fail to make this position clear, and the occasional reproaches of readers that we ignore certain of the shortcomings, failures, and evils of modern times are probably deserved.