

## MORAL MAN AND AMORAL SOCIETY

AT the end of an illuminating analysis of the campaign and voting returns of the last national election, in relation to "peace" candidates, Roger Hagan, writing in the *Nation* for Feb. 2, asks a summarizing question:

At the moment, then, the debate comes down to this: will it be necessary over the next decade to try once again to reconstruct democracy within the parties on the lowest level, as reformers have repeatedly tried to do, and thus to battle head-on the accelerating trend toward centralized policy formation? Or must the peace movement build from small beginnings and early disappointments a new force with a radically critical program which links the problem of cold-war escalation to the organic problems of the domestic society and economy as no standard politician can dare to do? In a way it comes down to whether one believes in power or ideas.

This article, "Peace at the Polls," should be enormously instructive to all those who hope to make their opinions felt directly in the conduct of national affairs. Many books might and probably ought to be written concerning the issues and practical problems he defines, and possibly some of the candidates who ran for office on peace platforms will begin to write them. Here, we should like to look more closely at Mr. Hagan's final formulation.

It was Plato who first raised the banner of Idealism for the Western cycle of civilization. "Ideas," he declared, "rule the world." Two thousand years later, Tom Paine repeated him, saying:

An army of principles will penetrate where an army of soldiers cannot. It will succeed where diplomatic management would fail; neither the Rhine, the Channel, nor the ocean can arrest its progress; it will march on the horizon of the world, and it will conquer.

It seems fairly evident from history that the men who believe in ideas and try to live by them seldom change sides from discouragement. They may be driven to despair—even to the brink of suicidal hopelessness, as was so brave a spirit as Joseph

Mazzini—but they do not become opportunists of power. For them, victory through mindless power would not be victory but defeat. It follows that material circumstances and what might be called "secular trends" do not as a rule command much attention from believers in ideas. They follow the line of moral inspiration, make what adjustments they can to practical failure, and keep their spirits up by the mystique of the "saving remnant," the *lamed vov*, or some such conception of the yeast that will raise up a better future.

There are times when the pattern changes—when ideas seem to *succeed*, and the hard surface of human indifference gives way to a great historical break-through of principle. We can hardly pretend to offer a rational explanation of these rare and exciting sequences in human affairs, but the fact that they happen at all is far more consolation than we need for our inability to understand why. The spread of Buddhism throughout Asia is one great instance of the successful penetration and rule of ideas. The translation into political reality of the vision of the eighteenth-century philosophers is another. No doubt there were collaborating "accidents" of history in both cases, which made these achievements possible. No doubt factors of self-interest and unplanned vectors in other human struggles for power made their contribution to the matrix in which the new, free society of the United States emerged. It is hardly possible that the unalloyed idealism of a handful of dreamers reached into the hearts of three million colonists from the Old World and "changed" their lives and their objectives. On the other hand, something well-nigh miraculous *did* happen in America at the end of the eighteenth century, and it *did* approximate the vision of men who sought to make ideas change the world. Having watched from England the course of the American Revolution, Dr. Richard Price wrote in 1784 of its victory "in favor of universal liberty"—"A revolution which opens up a new prospect in human affairs, and begins a new era in the history of mankind." Although English,

Price expressed pleasure in the fact that Britain had been unable to destroy the governments of the colonies, for now there existed in the world "a sequestered continent possessed of many singular advantages, a place of refuge for oppressed men in every region of the world." He saw in this region the foundation of "an empire which may be the seat of liberty, science and virtue, and from whence there is reason to hope these sacred blessings will spread, till they become universal and the time arrives when kings and priests shall have no more power to oppress." Greatest among Price's hopes was the dream of a new system of education for the new land. He wrote on this subject from insights and according to precepts that were to become almost household expressions a hundred and fifty years later:

The end of education is to direct the powers of the mind in unfolding themselves; and to assist in gaining their just bent and force. And, in order to do this, its business should be to teach *how* to think, rather than *what* to think; or to lead into the best way of searching for truth, rather than to instruct in truth itself. . . . Education ought to be an initiation into candour, rather than into any systems of faith, and . . . it should form the habit of cool and patient investigation, rather than an attachment to any opinions. . . . hitherto education has been on a contrary plan. It has been a *contraction*, not an *enlargement*. . . . Instead of teaching to think freely . . . it hath qualified for thinking only in *one* track."

Obviously, the location of these developments on "a sequestered continent possessed of many singular advantages" had a great deal to do with the comparative success of the American Dream. The very physical circumstances of life in America were hospitable to the virtues of independence and self-reliance and to the versatile ingenuity which came to characterize industry in the United States. These virtues bred still others which gave a temper to the character of the men who pioneered a new civilization. It was this happy combination of vision, circumstances, and opportunity which came into focus at the end of the eighteenth century and made Michel Crèvecoeur ask his often quoted question: "What is the American, this new man?"

We do not linger with this subject to sing the praises of the United States, but simply to establish the fact that there are times when great vision, a little virtue, and a new center of historical causation seem to bring about what, elsewhere, patriots and reformers break their hearts to accomplish in vain. It is at least conceivable that something of this sort might happen in behalf of the great objective of world peace.

It is not just conceivable, but certain, that incidents such as the falling-out of China and the U.S.S.R. relaxed for a time the tensions between the United States and Russia. Practically anything which makes the outbreak of war less likely may be regarded with relief by workers for peace, since it gives them "time," and while the weakening of animosities by their division and focus in other directions cannot be counted as any kind of "moral progress," hard words between the Russian and the Chinese Communists do have the effect of breaking the stereotype of a monolithic, practically omnipotent Asiatic Power which has no other purpose than to subvert, humiliate, and absorb our own civilization. This bickering among the Communist nations reveals a human quality we have had some experience with ourselves, and anything which makes the Communists look human has at least a minimum value.

Of considerably more importance to our thinking about war and peace is the matter of how the Cold War is affecting the economic home-life of the United States. Here, again, no big moral issue is involved. A man ought to find better reasons for remaining at peace than the fact that war will bring him financial ruin, but if the threat of bankruptcy happens to be an effective "deterrent," and if it reaches him as a natural consequence of decisions of state he has previously applauded, the pacifist need not complain at this obscure collaboration of morally neutral events.

In the *Nation*, again, we find an exploration of the economic consequences of our obsession with endless preparation for war. This article, "The Coming Politics of Disarmament," is by Fred J. Cook, author of several *Nation* "specials," such as "Juggernaut," "The FBI," "The CIA," and "The

Ultras." The gist of the present discussion (in the *Nation* for Feb. 16) is put in an early paragraph:

While no politician worth his salt at the ballot box would, as yet, dare to embrace disarmament, the hidden forces that eventually move even politicians to rationality are beginning to operate. The fact is that the prolonged arms race has started at last to commit a form of economic *hara-kiri*. Recessions come with increasing frequency; unemployment rates continue disturbingly high; the growth rate limps. These are symptoms that clearly say all is not well, and the inquiring mind, probing behind them, quickly discerns two facts: (1) military spending is a drag on the overall economy of the nation; (2) it represents a financial drain to most of the states and awards its beneficences only to the few.

These are hard, economic facts, only now becoming apparent that in time may well become the cornerstones for a new politics of disarmament.

Mr. Cook spells out these hard facts with equally hard figures. He starts by making it clear that the military sort of economic "pump-priming" brings no lasting benefit to the nation and is beginning to exhibit disastrous leaks to economic analysts. While military expenditures create millions of jobs, the men who work on these jobs are producing goods that in economic terms are simply *waste*:

Minuteman, once finished, is sunk in its silo and there it sits, waiting for Doomsday. The billions spent to produce it and its kindred flock are dead, they have not created useful goods, they have not opened up new lines of endeavor, they have not stimulated and regenerated the economy. Economists, analyzing the prosperity of Western Europe, where the growth rate outstrips ours, where unemployment runs far lower, have been struck by the fact that this prosperity seems to bear a direct ratio to the proportion of the national income that is plowed back into the domestic economy instead of being buried in the silos of modern war.

So the first conclusion is that our cold-war preparations are debilitating to the national economy; and the second conclusion, documented with a breakdown by states of defense-spending, is that the economic benefits it does bring are very unevenly distributed—only one state, California, getting the lion's share. While the entire nation is being bled by

the taxes imposed to finance armaments, seven states get more than half (57.2 per cent) of the \$25 billion in military prime contracts, with California's share nearly \$6 billion in 1962. There is small possibility that this distribution can change very much, since government purchases will quite logically go to companies with existing research and production facilities.

This concentration of American resources in the making of economically useless products has a tangible effect on unemployment statistics. For years, and regardless of increases in the military budget, the United States unemployment rate has remained at 5.6 per cent. "Other nations," Mr. Cook points out, which are "spending far less on military hardware, exhibited strikingly lower unemployment figures." Even impoverished Italy has an unemployment rate of only 4.3, while France, West Germany, Sweden, and Japan all have rates under 2. Britain's rate is 2.4 per cent.

Asked by a senator why the European economies are growing so much faster than ours, Gardner Ackley, of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, replied:

I would stress, certainly . . . stress the fact that in the United States we have been devoting a very substantial chunk of our resources to military purposes during this period. Those same resources in most of Europe are being devoted to productive investment, and it is not surprising that this productive investment should permit a much more rapid growth of total output than we have.

In a senate hearing last August, Senator Hubert H. Humphrey pointed out the potential disaster in another aspect of excessive spending on military requirements. The Federal Government, he said, finances about 65 percent of the industrial research and development that goes on in the United States, and most of this is devoted to the military and to space exploration. A slightly smaller proportion of British research (60 per cent) is government-financed, with the apparent result that England also has a slow rate of economic growth. Meanwhile, in both Germany and Japan, 85 per cent of every research dollar comes from private sources and is devoted to the design, development, and production

of civilian goods, and the German and Japanese economies are in burgeoning health. Senator Humphrey comments:

What is happening to our civilian economy as we plow more and more of our scientific personnel, our brains, into the military and into space and into atomic energy for military purposes? Where are we going to end up in this trade competition with these Belgians and these Dutch, who are clever, and the Germans who are very clever who are spending more money for civilian aspects and will develop products cheaper, better and more serviceable?

Further, the drafting of scientific and engineering talent into defense industries swollen by government appropriations is not only taking these first-class brains away from civilian industry, but is also disrupting the economies of states which have little or no defense business. The experts move to California for the choice jobs, the workers follow, and then the local industry dries up, leaving whole sections of the country in what seems to be permanent economic ill-health. "You end up," Senator Humphrey says, "with these hard-core areas of unemployment." And when so conservative a columnist and publisher as David Lawrence declares, as he did last July, that our economy is "stagnant" and that "the truth is America cannot absorb the present-day expense for armament and grow productively at the same time," Mr. Cook's conclusion can hardly be questioned:

Here, then, is the first basis, only now beginning to be perceived and discussed, for the eventual creation of a politics of disarmament. Given time, it may perhaps be highly persuasive, for business itself, which has been committed ideologically and financially to the aims and rewards of the cold war, must come to see that this commitment no longer serves—that the economic welfare of the nation demands a civilian not a military, employment of the nation's best brains and resources. . . . Economics, in other words, has begun to throw its powerful arguments behind the idealistic and humanitarian pleas of those who are seeking to stop the arms race.

So, it is entirely possible that powerful interests will cautiously begin to swing their influence to the campaign for peace, although with no more basic morality than there was a generation ago in the business interests which decided quietly to support

Hitler because they thought he would serve their long-term acquisitive ends. The latter were of course wrong; those businessmen became Hitler's captives, then his dupes and pawns, and finally often his victims. Perhaps a similar process will operate in the present, with the enormous difference that the businessmen who become captives of the "politics of peace" may eventually find that they are glad, glad, glad that they did what they did, even if they meant only to make an honest dollar.

This, you could say, is a "realistic" ground of hope. The men who, as we say, "make the world go round"—the businessmen, the industrialists, the architects and caretakers of our modern progress—may at last be moved by the only logic they have been trained to understand: the logic of the processes of economics to which they have pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. For now this logic is muttering in louder and louder undertones, "It won't work, *It won't work*, IT WON'T WORK! Sooner or later, the businessmen will hear, and will attend. Unlike some other disciples, they are able to recognize their master's voice.

But this is not the only kind of "realism" available in the world today. The men who try to live by ideas also regard themselves as realists. What we are attempting to suggest is that there are rare moments in history when various kinds of "realism" all point to a single course of action, and that when this happens, great changes take place. You can call it a fortunate conjunction of events, you can call it a species of Divine Intervention, or you can refuse to call it anything, but do all you can to encourage the conjunction and consolidate the gain. The thing that seems most important to recognize, in any such conjunction, is that the men who believe in ideas give the vision that other men, each according to his motives, choose to follow, and that without vision, the epoch would have no climax, and the birth of a new cycle of progress would abort.

We conclude our discussion with a quotation from T. K. Mahadevan, a writer in the Indian weekly, *Bhoodan* (Dec. 1, 1962) in which the "realism" of Mohandas K. Gandhi is fervently declared:

We are living in fantastic times and only an act or acts of fantastic courage and daring can deflect us from the path of certain disaster. This is no time for lukewarm attitudes or a gradualist, empirical approach. Nor for leisurely feeling our way, one little step at a time. This is the time for a bold reckless leap—even a leap into the unknown. This is the time for a revolution in our thinking—for an agonizing reappraisal of our concepts of peace and human brotherhood. This, in short, is a time for a new realism in international relations.

I believe that this realism is most in evidence in Gandhi's seemingly Utopian call for unilateral disarmament. In our current phantasmagoria of the megaton bomb, the intercontinental missile and mega-death, the only step that makes any coherent sense is for each nation, big or small, nuclear or non-nuclear, to take the lone decision of scrapping its own armoury all on its own without waiting for others to make a start. A negotiated disarmament is a political fiction. We shall wait till doomsday—and how near doomsday is!—if we hope that agreement will be reached on all the minutiae that have kept disarmament negotiations going endlessly for the best part of two generations. . . . Multilateral disarmament is a contradiction in terms. Someone must lay down arms first. Disarmament will never get a start except unilaterally. It must *begin* with some one nation. There is no other way.

Surely it would be foolish on our part to expect the nuclear powers to neglect their own defence when we are not prepared to do so ourselves. If we believe we need supersonic jet fighters to defend ourselves—even though acquiring these further impoverishes an already emasculated and starving nation—how dare we raise our voice when the Americans or the Russians insist upon perfecting their own defence? We are voiceless eunuchs, all of us. . . .

The only concrete, realistic step towards disarmament is for one nation to throw discretion to the winds, wait for no one and strip itself of its so-called defense forces and armaments.

Why shouldn't this nation be India? What shall we lose by unilateral disarmament? Nothing but an unwieldy army and tons and tons of outmoded hardware which is eating into the vitals of our infant economy and which—if the truth must be told—cannot defend our country one whit against any determined assault. Maintaining an army is a costly relic of the old days, which the sooner we outlive the better. It's like keeping a butler. Only the top-dogs among nations can afford this luxury.

What shall we gain by unilateral disarmament? Firstly, we shall solve our neighborhood problem in the quickest and most graceful manner imaginable. Secondly, we shall have shown others a way out of the blind alley and dared them all to take the risk or face suicide. I am sure humanity will take the risk. I am certain, as I have never been certain before, that Gandhi was dead right in this, even if he can be proved wrong in everything else he said and did. And I am saying this as one whose approach to Gandhi has always been critical and questioning in the extreme. Let us make no mistake about it. Gandhi was right and we are all wrong. . . .

The Anti-Nuclear-Arms Convention, New Delhi, like the two other conferences which followed it in Accra and Moscow, has nimbly sidestepped this central issue of our times. But I wish to believe it is not too late to make amends. Let the Implementation Committee of the Convention take up the task of educating the people (in the first instance, of this beleaguered but emerald country of ours)—not into the horrors of atomic war, of which every breathing Tom knows enough to keep his blood curdled, but into the bunkum and hypocrisy of negotiable, multilateral (or, in the jargon, of general and complete) disarmament, so that they may come to accept the great truth that Gandhi died teaching—that the only concrete, genuine, realistic, sensible, logical approach to disarmament lies through unilateral disarmament—and unilateral disarmament by us and not as a sermon for others.

If we miss this chance, we shall only be marking time—till the deluge overtakes us one and all and (as the latest he deluge overtakes us one and all and (as the latest mythology has it) the humble, denigrated cockroaches take over the quick and hygienic disposal of our mega-corpses—alas!

## REVIEW

### "WESTERNS" AND VIOLENCE

ALL of us would-be *philosophes* enjoy an argument about the comparative virtues of the Western story—a literary tradition which, although it appears to be exclusively American, has struck answering chords in many out-of-the-way places throughout the world. Some young hipsters of our acquaintance used to band together weekly for the purpose of hooting at the clichés of any Western movie they could find. Then, as an opposite extreme, there are sentimentalists like ourselves who readily excuse a bad plot in a Western because of the irresistible appeal of a man facing odds alone, fighting with courage against environment and hostile humans. (In this context even the "bad man" evokes some sympathy.)

Among the sometimes-talented defenders of the romance of the West is Norman A. Fox, whose collection of short stories, *The Valiant Ones*, reveals a thoroughly romantic viewpoint. In his foreword, Mr. Fox emphasizes the courage called out by life before urban and suburban conditions surrounded us with comfortable and safe routines:

Detractors of the Western story as a fiction medium claim that the cowboy has been shaped into a myth-symbol and that the other frontier types have been glorified beyond reality as well. Yet for every dramatic scene the fictioneer has provided, history has provided an even more dramatic one and the most colorful characters of Western fiction had their living counterparts. And certainly courage runs like a bright thread through the history books and the old newspaper files and the tales of bearded men, the source springs from which the fictioneer has drawn. The old letters have that thread, too, and the old diaries. For it took courage to brave the frontier, and that courage had many forms.

Thousands of stories have been spun and thousands are yet to be written. Soldiers on the frontier fighting for thirteen dollars a month pay; emigrants with a dream such as sparked the mighty Mormon movement to the Salt Lake region. Lonely prospectors and the lonelier mountain men before them. Early explorers. The men who put the

telegraph lines through. The stagecoach drivers. The women who waited with ready rifles in the log cabins. The children who learned what a war whoop meant before they learned to walk. The roll call is endless. The valiant ones, the men, the women, and sometimes the children.

An article in the *Texas Quarterly* (Autumn, 1960) looks at the psychological appeal of "The Cult of the Bad Man." The writer, Wilson O. Clough, begins with a question:

All nations have their legendary heroes; but where except in the American West are they so recent, and where has the hero been so completely the outlaw? There is no questioning the factual base of his existence. Too many contemporary accounts are available. Nor is the student of American history unaware that the frontier was always subject to lawlessness, reckless behavior, and deeds of violence.

It is legitimate enough, then, to inquire, why this glorification of a vicious and brutal type? And who are the glorifiers of these ghouls of easy bloodshed? Some are the softer tourist breed, seeking titillation in the lonely spaces, though themselves unlikely to challenge even the lowly jackrabbit in cold blood; some are young journalists who thrive on the inflation of the melodramatic and the pseudoprodigious; still others are steady devourers of pulp fiction and haunters of the TV screen.

But more are the rank and file of inhabitants of the great Rocky Mountain region, ready at the drop of the hat to take on by innocuous proxy all Eastern belittlers of the land of peaks and mesas.

After examining the lives of some of these dubious heroes, Mr. Clough wonders why insane rebellion sometimes seems better than none:

The bad man's lawlessness, therefore, does not signify that he alone knew resentment and frustration. Resentments we have always with us—as the Populist movement of the 1890s proved. How to retrieve the losses, how to force the readjustment of the unfair balance, how to sublimate the resentments legitimate or fancied, these are the permanent problems, individually and socially. The shallow adulation of the killer by the unthinking is hardly to be recommended as a social phenomenon; yet in the last analysis, it may not be the callous killings, the sadism, the brutality, that attract, but something deep in the heart of man, the strange and desperate dream of never to submit, never to be conquered, the force

that compelled Milton to make a hero of his Satan, and made Melville cast his Captain Ahab in a heroic role.

The unselective tourist, therefore, will not lead us far in the mystery. He is a tamed creature, and will never draw his gun upon the invaders of his daily freedom, the ugly concession traps, the grotesque billboards, the mean-spirited leeches upon his family's small provision for travel. He is housebroken, and he knows that jobs are not always easy to find. Thus his passing salute to the bad man and his legend, half-jocular, half-historical, though not very deep, may be still an atavistic stirring of the old dream of freedom for every man, whatever the price. We always appeal to that dream in the mass when the nation is threatened; we not so often stir it in the individual, for that is to court the unexpected. Yet that dream began in defiance of the accumulated burden of "Down, dog, down," and it rings in trumpet tones out of the legend around the base of Thomas Jefferson's statue in Washington—what man had the nerve to put it there?—"I have sworn on the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." The bad man had no mind to boast of, no political philosophy behind his deeds, only an insanity of rebellion; even so, the cult of the bad man symbolizes in some crude and distorted way the endless hunger of the human animal for freedom in an inattentive world.

These quotations are extremely interesting—particularly against the background of more recent fratricide. The highly organized wars of our century have been filled with ghastly violence, but the unthinking violence of a mob rather than of a man. Or, put in another way, modern violence is not so much an expression of an individual, whether good or bad, as it is an expression of his confinement to mass action in the mechanics of war. And when the violence is over, the survivors are left with neither their badness or goodness very much strengthened. They are simply left empty. The war proceeds, not because of them, but in spite of them. There is both poignancy and profundity in a brief passage in Lawrence Sargent Hall's *Stowaway*—a description of "the day the war stopped":

In an unguarded moment, the war simply ended. It seemed to us hardly possible that so massive an action so long in the making and extensive in the

carrying on, could have ceased without any world-shaking and decisive climax, upon the midnight. The tremendous momentum of a tremendous concerted effort had simply ground to a standstill, leaving millions of tons of equipment, thousands of ships, including the old *Belle*, in drydock, scattered over the earth surging against the sudden stop.

The war had ended as though it had concluded nothing, therefore signified nothing, and, because it seemed at the moment to promise nothing, as though its ending merely prolonged the lives of those who had survived it. The crew lost their sense of common cause and condition, unable to see themselves as participants in the deeper general destiny secreted in nature.

Our achievement in the fundamentally incomprehensible turmoil of the world now seemed an illusion which peace had reduced to a shambles. Some of us went out on a round of the bistros to celebrate an event we hadn't felt or witnessed, feeling that we had been stealthily cut adrift from coherence.

So a lot of people are going to continue reading Western stories and seeing Western screen plays. We can only hope for more artistic depth and philosophical perspective in the devising of these " sagas. "

## *COMMENTARY*

### A QUESTION OF RATIONALITY

THE concluding portion of this week's lead article, entirely a quotation from the Indian weekly, *Bhoodan*, is the kind of expression which draws criticism from persons who like to think that they practice an even-tempered objectivity toward the problems of the world. More and more, the Peace Movement is attracting this kind of criticism—criticism which says that pacifists are not interested in "sober facts," but write and speak from moral premises to condemn all policies save their own—unilateral disarmament.

The charge is in some measure true. That is, the "facts" in question seem to many pacifist thinkers to have grown so clear in their implication that there is no longer any point in making a great show of "rational analysis." Instead, they call for an all-out commitment to revolutionary action that will make war impossible.

It is natural, of course, for individuals who regard a nuclear war as in some degree rationally "manageable" to insist upon a contrary view and to argue that pacifist exhortation blurs the issues and renders more difficult the conduct of national affairs according to the rule of reason. But what this criticism omits is the virtual certainty that no nation can become involved in a war without all manner of issues being "blurred" during the period before actual hostilities break out. The psychological unity required of a first-rate power preparing for all-out war demands the systematic discouragement of questioning or argument that might be a "divisive" influence. Then, with actual war, the "dialogue" concerning policy, however weak it may have been, stops entirely. And it may be years, or even decades, before it can be resumed.

War is just that necessity which submits all forms of independent reason, of rational questioning, to the block of military necessity. At the same time, war is filled with the terrible dilemmas of "command decision," obliging men who are themselves decent human beings to deliver to certain death the flower of a nation's youth, and to condemn whole cities and

countrysides to impersonal, technological obliteration. A sober toleration of these possibilities can hardly inspire caution and "objectivity" in others. Insistence on a "rational temper" creates certain plain obligations for its advocates.

It is certainly possible to argue that supposedly rational planning for war—or rational plans which include the possibility of massive nuclear destruction—is itself an unmistakable symptom of the onset of an irrationality beyond all comparison with the impatient insistence upon disarmament of the advocates of peace.

There is one further consideration: The critics of pacifist "emotion" show an extraordinary innocence of the forces which in the past have produced the larger movements of history—movements, that is, which have also been changes in the level of human culture and civilization. Nothing great is accomplished without the energy which rises from deep human emotion. The Reformation, which set men free in their moral lives, was a vast emotional reaction to the confinement of conscience by the laws of a fallible institution. The surge which carried Pilgrims and Puritans to the New World, the vision which stirred the revolutions of the eighteenth century, bringing the splendid rhetoric of Thomas Paine—these were not sober rationalist weighings of issues and balancings of strategic advantage with "computed" expectation of what an opposing power might do. They were bold declarations of the human spirit. They were rational, however, in the sense of counting the cost of *not making* such declarations. Ultimate human decisions are often of this sort.

So, the aroused and determined expressions of men who have chosen to declare for peace will no doubt go on. They ought to be regarded as a force potential for great historical change, and not as mere extravagances of outraged emotions. Yet there are times when outraged emotions find voice as the deep requirement of men who are determined to remain human.



# CHILDREN

## . . . and Ourselves

### SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

ACCORDING to Dr. H. F. Harlowe, a former president of the American Psychological Association, the question as to whether or not human beings are born with certain innate powers is still an open one. Does the child "learn" by conditioning everything he is said finally to "know" as an adult, or does he have inner potentialities beyond those of physical instinct? Dr. Harlowe considers this to be "one of psychology's unsolved problems." From the standpoint of religious education, this is obviously a crucial matter. Either the assumptions on which the teacher of ethics proceeds must be Socratic—involving belief in the "soul" as a "self-moving unit"—or he must rely on methods of indoctrination.

An article titled "Adventures in Spiritual Discovery," appearing in the *National Parent-Teacher* (May, 1956), expresses a liberal religionist's point of view. Sophia Lyon Fahs writes:

Are some children by nature more sensitive than others to emotional stirrings and intuitive insights? Can all children develop spiritual sensitivity—with help from grownups, perhaps? Just what can we do to nourish a child's spirit?

Our answers to these questions depend on what we mean by *spirit*. Psychologists today, when they wish to indicate the two parts of a personality, usually say "mind and body." Sometimes they use two Greek words, *psyche* (mind) and *soma* (body). Putting them together, doctors have coined the word *psychosomatic*, meaning "affecting both mind and body."

The important difference between old and new ways of thinking about spirit and body is that we used to believe that the two could be separated. It is now quite generally agreed by scientists that the two are so thoroughly intertwined that the line between them cannot be drawn.

Probably children often have important spiritual experiences that their parents or teachers know nothing about, experiences they may have done nothing unusual to inspire. A child discovers something. He remembers something. And it startles him, arouses his curiosity, stirs his feelings.

Mrs. Fahs makes an important point in respect to religious education when she says that conventional Sunday-school learning often fails to provide a basis for learning from sorrows and difficulties. When we seek to protect the young from the deeply troubling aspects of life, we display little faith in their "innate" capacities to become philosophical. Mrs. Fahs continues:

Children can grow spiritually through experiences with tragedy as well as with love, through seeing ugliness as well as beauty.

According to an ancient legend, it was an experience first with an old man, then with a sick man, and then with a dead man that awakened the spirit of Buddha and impelled him to renounce his wealth and home in order to search for the true meaning of life.

Another article, titled "The Development of Spiritual Resources in the Young Child" (*Religious Education*, September, 1961), clearly leans in the Socratic direction. Dr. Evelyn W. Goodenough, of Tufts University, asks: "How shall we handle a child's questions, particularly those that seem to deal with ultimate questions or spiritual values?" Dr. Goodenough continues:

First, I would urge that a child's questions always be taken seriously and taken as signals of learning. But an adult must not try to answer everything at once. In so doing, he would not only kill the quest for knowledge, but in all probability give the child intellectual and spiritual indigestion. The adult must try to set the child to think for himself and very often he can do this by remaining silent, by answering only a little of what the child wants to know, or by leading him to more questions. Such occasions often offer excellent openings for cultivating in children the power of projection, of creative imagination, which our gadget-filled world tends to minimize in children's experience.

It is sometimes good to say, "I really don't know how to answer your question, but I'll tell you a story."

In Dr. Goodenough's opinion, the ancients knew better than we do how to stimulate the imagination for appreciation of abstract values. The myth, as Erich Fromm has pointed out, is part of the "forgotten language" needed in the search for psychological meaning. Dr. Goodenough expands this perspective in relation to teaching the young:

Many adults avoid the use of myths, feeling they are untrue. Yet many questions about mankind and the universe neither scientists nor theologians understand, and the child, like most adults, is not ready for the uncertainty of our ignorance. But the child is ready to go into a world of creative imagination, as his dreams and stories clearly show. And he likes the idea of a "story." The adult should be ready to go into this world with the child, not freezing his imagination with formulae, but stimulating it by suggestive myths.

The last centuries of education have tended to rob us of our fancifulness. We have been taught to look for facts and tell the truth. The child approaches truth not through fact at all but through feeling and fancy.

Obviously we are here committing ourselves to the view that all children have an "innate" capacity for evaluating ultimate questions and for seeking transcendent meaning. But this "soul" aspect of the child cannot be measured by an adult; there are no "grades" which may be assigned for proficiency in spiritual understanding. What the parent or teacher *can* do is to *listen* to the wonderings of young people.

Writing on this topic for the *International Journal of Religious Education* (July-August, 1960), Nelle Morton reminds us that only those adults whose sense of ethical meaning is practically engaged can listen properly—and this listening needs to precede any effective assistance offered to the child. Prof. Morton continues:

If listening involves the acceptance in trust of another person, then it would follow that children need listeners in order to become persons. Children can never be sure of themselves or accept themselves until someone listens to them.

When a teacher listens, not to a child but to what she thinks the child should say or how she thinks the child should act, much distress can follow. Such a teacher may insist on "sharing" at a too-early age and in pushing children to work in groups before they achieve any sense of autonomy from which to relate to others.

Older children also need listeners—sympathetic listeners, in order to be themselves. But if they have not been listened to with some sense of respect when they are younger, they soon learn to tailor their real

questions and responses to adult approval and expectancy.

But when older children find real listeners they begin to ask in one way or another the ultimate questions.

What "religious" point of view will best support the Socratic position? An article by Philip Smith in *The Reading Teacher* (September, 1961) carries these interesting paragraphs on the ancient Greek metaphysic:

Socrates evidently believed that prior to a man's earthly existence his soul resided in a realm of pure form. In this perfect abode man's soul lived in intimate acquaintance with the pure idea or essence of all things. He thus attained knowledge of an ideal unchanging reality.

As result of the birth trauma and the imprisoning of his soul in an imperfect material world of changing objects his knowledge of the ideal was erased from his conscious mind. Gradually, however, at least some men, especially when helped by a sagacious teacher, were able to recollect portions of this perfect knowledge. Indeed, if man did not already possess a dim, subconscious grasp of the essence of truth, beauty, and goodness, there would be no point in instructing him in such matters, for he would be unable to recognize what was at issue in any particular case. There would be little point in discussing, for example, whether this act was more just than that act, unless the people involved in the discussion had some prior understanding of the nature of true justice.

Given this metaphysic, teaching became a matter not of telling but of aiding the student to recall what he already subconsciously knew. Socrates therefore developed his method of teaching by questioning. He invited his students to explain to him the nature of truth, beauty, and goodness. He challenged their imperfect answers by asking the kind of additional questions that would lead them to recognize the inadequacy of their ideas. Under such prodding a student was led to construct and reconstruct his thinking, moving ever closer to the perfect understanding his soul had enjoyed prior to its being shackled to this world of imperfect, shimmering copies or shadows of reality.

Today one seldom encounters anyone with such a fanciful view of the nature of reality, yet the Socratic method of teaching is generally recognized as a useful procedure. Why?

## *FRONTIERS*

### The Question of Socialism—Again

A LONG letter from a reader expresses disturbance at what seems to him a cavalier treatment of Socialism in the MANAS editorial for Feb. 6. We are able, in the space available, to reproduce only selected paragraphs for comment. In one place, this correspondent says:

MANAS seems to have bought the current stereotype of socialism as a centralized, bureaucratic totalitarianism which would take away the freedom of the individual and give all power to the state. Such a conception of life is, of course, untenable. But it is more nearly a caricature of socialism than a description, and represents the picture of political totalitarianism or fascism rather than that of socialism. That we in America equate such a picture with socialism only shows how little we know about it. MANAS has blown down a straw man of the culture's creation. For you to have accepted this conventional appraisal of socialism means that you have markedly departed from your traditional policy of penetrating, social criticism.

The editorial in question, if we are able to read and understand our own writing, made it clear that "uncaricatured" socialism of the sort our reader approves and wants, would be a social order that intelligent people with common sense might institute. We expressed doubt that such people with such common sense exist in sufficient number to bring it about.

Our inability to see how a magazine like MANAS could either be started, or survive, in a contemporary socialist society, was not a speculative gambit, but the result of conversation with the mayor of a city in an existing socialist country in Europe. If we sold the crown jewels, we could start the paper, all right, but we would not be able to earn the money to keep it going, as we do in the United States. Our position, on this point, is "a bird in the hand. . . ."

Our reader seems to reproach us for our ability to keep going:

[This] is not the first time it [MANAS] has argued the merits of success—its own success—in

capitalist society. But really, isn't this a bit smug? For every MANAS that succeeds, there are countless publications which barely manage to make it, and that are dying, through lack of funds, all the time. I wonder if MANAS doesn't have a rich uncle footing the bill, for, unlike its sister publications, it seems to have no financial problems at all, and never asks for contributions.

MANAS has no rich uncle, only one of the other kind, since the paper happens now to be deeply in hock to its printer for an amount running into four figures. The editors and publishers, when they started back in 1948, knowing something of the fortunes of publications of this sort, resolved to find some way of keeping going by working hard to make money to do so. As a result, the writing of MANAS is a night-time and week-end project for the editors. They *knew* they would have a big deficit, but they decided never to "beg," or run money-raising campaigns. They would simply make the need for help known, from time to time.

This has been done, and some help has come. But more than comes is needed, which is a way of saying to our reader that MANAS is far from being a capitalistic success at free enterprise. Its economic survival is some kind of miracle, as the editors see it. If we could triple our circulation, we might come close to breaking even. We feel no great gratitude to the capitalist system that our survival has been possible, but only a preference for a system where the interstices are large enough to allow this sort of precarious existence. We find gratuitous in the extreme the observation of our reader:

*You* have succeeded—but go tell it to the forty to fifty million impoverished Americans of Michael Harrington's "Other America," or to the many Americans who, according to James Baldwin, have never been a part of America at all, of whom it cannot even be said that they have failed since they never had even the most elemental opportunities to succeed.

Our editorial policy in respect to political reform has been stated many times. We have little confidence in the utopian claims of the constitution-makers. We believe that the real

improvements in the lot of mankind must take place at deeper levels of being—that the appropriate changes in political and economic relationships will come as effects of those improvements, and cannot be their cause; although—and this is important—we readily admit that the necessary alterations in the fabric of our lives are often *symbolized* by political idealism such as some socialist theories represent. And we have no doubt that political and economic reforms will mark the progress that does take place.

A further comment by our reader seems not too distant from this view:

MANAS has reservations about the priority of politics and political theorizing in human affairs. So do I. I am frankly repelled by the rabid socialist who is vitally in tune with political reality, but just as completely out of tune with personal reality. Socialists—like other sectarians—have personalized the ideology and ideologized the person. They have lost the person in their quest for political truth. In losing the person, they have lost the only source, the ultimate source, of the validation of their political theory. But there is a more genuine kind of socialism that seeks to remain free of ideologizing and speaks not of collective truth but of personal truth. There is a decentralized democratic socialism, and there is a personalist socialism (as Buber and Berdyaev have so eloquently shown us). We tend to judge socialism by the most popular and vocal supporters it has enlisted—the bureaucratic, organizational, party socialists with their almost fanatical devotion to the impersonal mechanics of organizational achievement. Nevertheless, I insist that we must not judge an idea by its most vocal proponents (and I would be the first to admit that the bureaucratic, party socialists have done the cause of socialism more harm than good).

No doubt there is a "decentralized, democratic socialism"—the kind that would be possible when economic goods are no longer held to be the highest goods, and when possessions are no longer taken as signs of "security." And when that kind of socialism becomes a political possibility, MANAS will no longer have to defend itself for having remained indifferent to the appeals of any kind of socio-political formula. We do not enjoy having our sentences tortured to reveal sneaky reactionary tendencies and

cryptocapitalist vanities. We make a clear distinction—or try to—between the socialism of Jesus Christ, Gautama Buddha, yes, and Erich Fromm, and the socialist societies of the present or the programs of orthodox socialist parties. Our editorial comment was plainly identified as written in the context of the Review article in the same issue—which happened to concern a valuable critique of modern socialism—*existing* socialism. It was not about the socialist vision splendid, which our critic suggests we have sullied or ignored. We would call attention to the fact that years before Erich Fromm published *The Sane Society*, in which he took as a prime example of the sort of socialism he admired the achievements of the French Communities of Work, MANAS devoted much space to an account of the extraordinary achievements of these *voluntary* socialist or non-political "communist" groups.

The concluding remark of our correspondent is as follows:

I would urge MANAS to reassess its view of socialism, not in order to become more politically conscious and concerned, but in order to do greater service to the cause of a great idea, one of the greatest in our Western heritage, an idea which is still worthy of consideration and capable of firing the ethical imagination of men, even after these many years, these decades, of abuse and misrepresentation.

This is not an unwelcome suggestion. We have been trying to do this in discussions of Gandhi's views of socialism—which do not have the materialism of Western socialist thinking—and by calling attention to the thinking of Jayaprakash Narayan, the Indian socialist leader who several years ago joined Vinoba Bhave and has since published searching criticism of Western political forms in their relation to human freedom. We shall continue to print material along these lines, as suggestive of the direction of the thought of those who seem to us to be innovators in socialist thought.