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THE RELEVANCE OF PHILOSOPHY

A PHILOSOPHER, someone has said, is any man who has begun to think seriously. One of the characteristics of serious thinking, or philosophy, is that it does not matter very much how it begins, or what provokes it to begin. Nobody starts to think in a perfectly symmetrical situation. Some men begin thinking because they are miserable, some because they see that others are miserable. Philosophy is the natural pursuit of conscious beings, or it becomes their natural pursuit when they are unable to find reasons for what they experience.

What can we say about philosophy? As the fruit of philosophizing, philosophy is the deposit of the serious thoughts of other men. One can know a great deal about these thoughts of others without doing any philosophizing oneself. In fact, philosophy is often held to be a dull and useless subject mainly for this reason. But this is not the philosophy that is relevant today.

The relevant philosophy is the philosophy which results when a man wakes up in the morning and begins to wonder why he is going to do what he is going to do for the rest of the day. There are obvious reasons, of course, for his going out to work at his job. He has a family to feed. He has himself to feed. But why this job and not some other? Suppose he is a man who is able to think about the lives and behavior of other people. Nine times out of ten, he makes his living from what we are disposed to regard as the weaknesses and appetites of other people. He may, on that morning when he begins his questioning, say to himself that this is a terrible way to make a living.

Now he begins to reason with himself. I am no moralist, he may argue. If all these people choose to wear out their lives struggling to possess the sort of products my company has to offer, why shouldn't the company make them and why shouldn't I sell them? It is not my business to tell people how to live. But of course, it is. The mainspring of his selling effort is exactly a process of telling people how to live. Their lives, he keeps saying, will be more gracious, more individual, more *everything*, if they buy his company's product. And if he happens to be a careful reader of the trade press, he will find *Business Week* offering him this sagacious warning:

> Status no longer means having what the Joneses have. The mature market, says Motivation Dynamics, Inc., has quit worrying about status as a means of expressing your place in the community. People are buying to express identity, to themselves, most of all.

Even the sluggish awakenings of the age are rapidly interpreted into rules for selling goods.

Well, suppose he didn't have to sell goods; what would he do? What else is there for him to do? He can make the goods before they are sold, which is perhaps a more wholesome way to live. It depends upon the goods. What is finally realized is that the sense of unworthiness is not so much a specific reaction to a particular job, but a mood that is in the air. Perry Miller, in the Winter (1961-62) *American Scholar*, puts the general diagnosis in a few paragraphs:

> . . . If in an age of machines and of helpful gadgets our propensity be nourished to live with less and less understanding of all that we ought to comprehend, what happens when our debilitated faculty is told that it has to live under the shadow of nuclear weapons that by their very nature defy the few lingering canons of rationality?
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> Virtually all reports on the general behavior of Americans add up, so far, to a pattern of further and further regression into the womb of irresponsibility. There is everywhere documented a refusal to accept what I would hopefully term adult status. I shall construct a dialectic too simplified to suit any social scientist, but roughly it appears to run something like this. First, because there is nothing this or that particular individual can do to prevent the bombs from falling, then, if they do fall, the fault is none of his. Although they be launched by man-made missiles or dropped from man-made jets, and although man may be exterminated, he remains

> morally immune an innocent victim of the machine. Second, if, as several analysts assure us, the threat of mutual obliteration will itself keep the bombs from falling—as it prevented the use of poison gas in the last war—then our citizen can also claim that the fault is none of his. These may be the sheer alternatives with which we are confronted; there would seem to be no third recourse. . . .
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> What, then, can we say? We may say that without recourse to romantic isolationism we are able to resist, and will resist, the paralyzing effects upon the intellect of the looming nihilism of what was formerly the scientific promise of mechanical bliss.

Mr. Miller, who is professor of English literature at Harvard University, says all this in a matter of fact way, obviously without much fear of contradiction. Hence we say that the new tendency to question one's life, one's ends, one's job, is not the result of a specific ailment or difficulty, but the outcome of a mood. He speaks of "looming nihilism," with assurance that he will be understood. He is. And the situation he describes is not simply caused by the anticipations of nuclear horror, although we may have been hurried into the self-questioning phase by these fears.

Putting the trouble more precisely, Mr. Miller speaks of "the dislocation between the sensitive mind and the confessedly insensitive environment in which the machines have corralled us." This is undoubtedly what the "sensitive mind" feels, and so the questions arise. Why is the mind a captive of this environment? Why are human beings, endowed with the many excellences of which they have been told, increasingly impotent to live happy, fruitful lives? Why are they now so unsure about what *is* a happy, fruitful life?

There are a lot of obvious things to be said in answer to this question—things which form the stock-in-trade of the moralist—yet the obvious answers can never be satisfying answers. You could say that the good critics are the ones who tell us what is bad, what we have come to *know* is bad, such as bombing one another, wasting our lives in getting and spending, interfering with other peoples' dreams and fulfillments, and so forth. And the bad critics are the ones who tell us what is good. Why should they be bad critics? Because what they tell us has such a hollow sound.

Ours is an age, in short, which is experiencing a breakdown of the idea of the good, or rather of all the familiar images of the good. The people who tell us what is good, or what is good for us, are unbelievable. They are presumptuous. They don't *know* what is good for us.

But destructive criticism, we say—and it is true—is a barren seed. It does not move men to creative action. It lacks the power to synthesize human energies. So, with encyclopedic knowledge of evil, but practically no knowledge of good, we are reduced to the great and primitive question of philosophy—*Who am I?* This question is beyond good and evil, although good and evil soon catch up with any answer that is returned.

Of course, to say that no one is able to tell us what is good is to insist upon a partial truth. There is some uncommon knowledge in the land today concerned with the goodness of certain forms of behavior, or certain attitudes of mind. This is really a new way of thinking about goodness. In the past, accounts of the good were descriptions of human goals. They had to do with getting to Heaven, or having enough for all on earth, or devising a proper political system or a technology which would solve the problems of poverty and ill-health. It is these accounts in which we are now unable to believe. An honest man who is also intelligent finds it impossible to imagine himself getting to heaven without bringing along some of his private inside hell. An honest man's identity has its hellish aspects and it is hard for him to imagine himself without them.

And what, for goodness sake, would he *do* in heaven? The more you think about such questions, the more you tend to conclude that goodness, for human beings, is a *mode* of consciousness, and not an end of action. This is a solvent for all human problems, but it is almost too frightening to use, since it threatens to dissolve most if not all of the things for which we have felt life is to be lived. To borrow from Dr. Maslow, the self-actualizing person is not a person who has arrived at a particular goal.

He may be a cook or a professor, a businessman or a railroad engineer. He has not Solved All Problems.

We still hunger for an idea of a *substantial* good. We want something to work for, or an image of the self that we can *become.* But the horrifying part of this hunger is that the substantial goods that we have worked for during, lo, these many years, have brought us to exactly the shackled conditions in which we find ourselves today.

No wonder we find ourselves backing into Buddhism!

It is somewhere around this point in subjective reflections that the intellectual pursuit of the Self gasps and gives up. And then one is almost grateful for the concrete situation which, every morning, announces that it is time to go to work. When the subjective quest begins to make you feel lost in a hall of mirrors, you are glad to fall back on the substantial reality of the external world. The cobblestone, as Dr. Johnston said, is *real,* and never more real than when you stub your toe on it.

But one thing must be admitted about the reassuring qualities of the world of external reality, when you return to it after brooding about the nature of being. This reality is now only second degree. The grounds of disillusionment, the causes of the subjective quest, are still there. The world is still a horrible mess. Men are still, as Mr. Perry says, regressing "into the womb of irresponsibility." All that you have gained is some kind of bleak personal acknowledgement that you must learn to try to order the mess and fight the irresponsibility.

So, the questioning changes. What, then, is the world? There are a lot of answers to that question. Most of them are entirely technical answers which tell you what the world is made of and how many of its parts work. What they don't tell you is what the world is *for*. What or whose purposes are being fulfilled by the world?

It is difficult to make a beginning at answering this question without living out in the mind the basic transitions of Western thought. It is not easy to determine exactly what the ancient Greeks thought about the "purpose" of the world, but possibly the safest thing to say is that they believed that the world was alive, as a great animal is alive. The Neoplatonic philosophers were emanationists who held the physical world to be a projection of an ideal world. One might not go too far wrong in suggesting that the Hegelian idea of the world as representing the form of self-realization of the universal spirit was the basic idea of antique philosophy. The Christian replacement of pagan thought on this question had little of philosophy in it, being entirely peripheral to the Christian preoccupation with God's stage-managership of the drama of Salvation. That the living world of nature might have its own inherent fulfillments seldom occurred to Christian thinkers. For them the world was rather a monument to the Deity; or, on occasion, a kind of polar opposite to the divine realm, in this case regarded as the domain of unregenerated matter. The world or "Nature" had no role of its own, but represented a kind of secular presence which could betray wayward human beings into sin and error. The first Christian attempts at Universal History (see Orosius and Augustine) were obvious apologetics for Christianity, and practically frivolous so far as serious philosophy or cosmology was concerned. Serious thinking in this area—except for an occasional mystic like Jacob Boehme—did not begin until the scientific revolution and the day of the Natural Philosophers. And then, after only a brief interlude of metaphysical speculation, the mechanical theory took over. Not why, but how, was the proper scientific question. The region of "why" thinking had been so clouded by theological pronouncements and assertions that a sensible man could hardly be persuaded to enter it at all. So, after some three hundred years of investigation of how the forces of nature work, we now have a considerable body of scientific information about the world, impressive in its details as well as in its comprehensive accounts of some of the larger processes of the universe, but which is absolutely silent on the question of what all this activity may mean.

Now this is not a criticism of science. It is not the business of science to declare meanings. But what may be criticized is the fact that men of ability and promise in the sciences have allowed the

prestige of their disciplines to rule out of respectable thought even the possibility of a philosophical theory of meaning for the world. For man and his life of irresponsible purpose and purposes, the world had become a great expanse of dead opacity. There was motion, boundless energy, and even the poetry and elegance of configurations of forms—but *no meaning*. How do you get meaning? You get it from the realization of ends. Toward what far-off destiny does the world move? The answer was, "None!" Actually, the serious scientific thinker would not answer the question as directly as this, but instead would tell you about the heat-death of final entropy, and the fitful, random motion of atoms which have lost all relationship to form.

What this theory, or this absence of theory, concerning the meaning of the world has eventually produced, for the life of modern man, is the environment of a moral vacuum. Its intellectual designers, who were nihilists of meaning, did not understand that they were making the world an impossible place for man to live in. Human beings can no more do without a moral atmosphere than they can do without a physical atmosphere. The twentieth century has been a time when other airs rushed in to fill the vacuum. The world may have no ends, but the Communists find the ends of the political state all-absorbing. The good of the state is the highest good, in Communist philosophy. A similar conception of the good, unavowed, but obviously becoming the most powerful, has arisen in the West, mainly out of the apparent need to compete with the dynamics of Communist power. Truly, the enemy is within, for by this submission to the Communist philosophy of power, the West has already abandoned its historic moral philosophy, the humanist ground of liberal politics.

The heart which hungers for meaning can find no haven, no hope or promise in such a world. And in the present, when the limited systems of short-term meaning—the "Go West, Young Man" theories, the "Start a business of your own" theories, and even the "Form a Tolstoyan Community of Brotherly Love in the Wilderness" theories—can no longer capture the energies of men of imagination, there is no escape at all from the faceless walls of unmeaning which surround modern man.

So, by the bankruptcy of meaning in the external world, we are returned to wonderings about the self. The result of this loss of meaning in the world around us is that we can no longer borrow from the world, from the community which supports our physical existence, the form of our personal identity. The world has no moral capital of identity to offer us, since the only thing that we can use in our feelings of identity is a sense of *meaning*.

Somewhere it is said that the philosopher is naked and helpless as a newborn babe. There is a great truth in this, if the idea be read with patience and delicacy. The philosopher is naked because he has worn out—or, perhaps, assimilated—all the major illusions which at once clothe and confine the common run of mankind. And the philosopher is helpless in that he has no more the resources of anger and fear to arm his indignation and to harden his heart. If he is to stay alive, he has, so to say, to subsist upon the mechanisms of support devised by other men. So, appropriate to ancient Indian tradition, he is a beggar. All that he can rely upon is the longing in the hearts of other men to become philosophers. And the longing to be a philosopher is the one movement of man's being that cannot be stirred by adventitious aids. It must begin of itself.

But something is contributed to the longing to be a philosopher by the great revolutions of history. There are times in the affairs of men when the very events seem to strip us of all conventional terms of meaning. It is then that the face of life seems to say, "Become a philosopher or perish!"

It is not that there is any glory or badge of honor in trying to become a philosopher. No more than the survival of sanity and integrity is involved. But from the flowering of the mind's meanings found by those who struggle to become philosophers come all the enduring riches of the human race.

Letter from America

NARROWSBURG.—Last week I met an independent man. He was only a name to me, although I've dealt with him for years, and his wife walks down from the hills through the woods, along the lane, and finally out at our metropolis every month to pay their feed bill. But I went in to see them and their place recently, and they were delighted to have me come. They still milk cows by hand, and they have a pump out in the yard. They seem reluctant to admit that their recently acquired electrical service is worth the cost, and of course the wiring meets the barest minimal standards, having been grudgingly installed in the woodshed, the old millhouse, and on the spring shanty, where it appears to hang apologetically, temporarily, hesitantly. Our vaunted civilization walks boldly into their yard as far as the transformer pole, then seems to realize it's sort of an intruder, a brash new-rich character in the presence of an Old Hand, and uninvited. Progress in the presence of Poverty, or maybe Peace.

They live at the end of a long lane that wanders away from the hard road through woods and around the hillocks and finally ends on the barn floor. I measured it on my way out. It's almost nine-tenths of a mile. Every morning of the year Ed hitches an old horse to an old wagon and draws the two or three or whatever number they have of milk cans out to the main road, where a truck picks them up and takes them to the milk plant. The place is spotlessly clean, the dogs are friendly, the cows look as though they wanted you to scratch their heads. The cats must be fed cream, and a few fat hens wander idly about the premises, making some soft curr-curr-curring noises and picking up bits of sustenance, including the ends of visitors' shoelaces, on sort of an experimental basis, as though they were in their own leisurely manner compiling statistics on the Digestibility of Matter.

Old Ed's not too smart, but he's wise. There is a difference, of course. Mostly we don't stop to think about it, but there is. I was aware instinctively that there must be some story about the rural-route mailbox in the apple tree, twelve or fifteen feet off the ground, but I hesitated to ask. He must have finally noticed that I kept glancing at it, up in the apple tree, and explained it to me, casually. His nephew, he said, had sent home or brought home, from some far part of the world where he was serving an Army stint, a tin of some special kind of cakes or candies or something—he had forgotten which, since it had been quite a few years ago. Anyway, somehow the tin got put in that apple tree for a robins' nest, and when it rusted out and the robins seemed dismayed to lose their home, he one fine morning decided that the mailbox out on the hard road, which never had anything in it but junk mail, would make the robins a fine new home. So he took the mailbox back in the long lane, climbed up the apple tree, nailed it firmly in the same crotch where the old tin had been, and the robins have been happy ever since. And if the mailman has to leave anything for Ed (Mrs. Ed says she thinks he throws most of the stuff away), he leaves it on the big flat rock at the end of the lane, by the milk cans, and he puts a little stone on top of it, and if it blows away, or gets rained on,—well, it isn't too important anyway.

There is of course a moral here, as anyone can see. There has to be a moral drawn from any critical observation, for without such experience there would be no education. But the real value to any individual of any moral lies not in its being pointed out to him, but in his reflecting on it himself and drawing that particular and peculiar conclusion for himself, which is the end product and real satisfaction of reflection. Here is the way I look at it. Robins' nests in mailboxes may be more important than all the megatons and monies that all the men of all time have amassed. And there are probably many Thoreaus at the ends of long lanes that wind through many hills. And maybe most of man's troubles—mine and yours, individually, and ours collectively — are the result of our being smart but not very wise. There might even never be another war if there were more Eds around, and fewer of me.

COUNTRY CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
"AN ESSAY IN VALUES"

CONSIDER INDIA, a new book by Horace Alexander, issued by Asia Publishing House of Bombay (distributed in the United States by Taplinger Publishing Co., New York, $4.50), is of course a book about India, and it is also, as the sub-title says, "An Essay in Values." But most of all it is an unostentatious but searching study of the human situation in these troubled and puzzling times.

Mr. Alexander comes to the reader with various credentials to vouch for his competence to write about modern India. He has spent many years of his life in India. He first met Gandhi in 1929 and worked with him for considerable periods of time on various occasions. He is author of several books on India—*The Indian Ferment* (1929), *India Since Cripps* (1944), and *New Citizens of India* (1955). This last book (Oxford University Press) is the fruit of Mr. Alexander's personal observation of the great migration of Indians in two directions—from Pakistan to India and from India to Pakistan—during the six months from September, 1947 through March, 1948. The partition of India uprooted *millions* of human beings from their homes and forced them to find new ways of life in a new country.

In the present book, Mr. Alexander spreads a broader canvas. It is a work of appreciation of what the new Republic of India has accomplished in behalf of hundreds of millions of people who have lived in comparative hunger and neglect for centuries. It is a work of insight into Gandhi's vision and genius, and it helps the reader to understand why Prime Minister Nehru is so loved by the Indian people, no matter what critics and opposing politicians say of him. But most of all it is an attempt to reveal how Indian thinkers, not one but several, have undertaken the Herculean labor of understanding what is really wrong with the habits, standards and ideals of the modern world, and to show their insistent determination to set down their conclusions, despite the contempt of "practical" men, the ridicule of worldly politicians, and the weaknesses of those whom they would help.

It is said that when Michael Faraday brought to Gladstone his first model of an electric dynamo, the British statesman asked the inventor, "Very interesting, but what good is it?" Faraday answered, "What good is a new-born baby?"

Defenders of the thinking and programs of Gandhi, Nehru, Bhave, and Jayprakash Narayan might reply to their critics in a similar manner. These four, of course, are by no means agreed upon all important questions. They have no neat solution, no tidy answer to the world's problems. But there is a sense in which they alone among modern world leaders have dared to ask unsettling questions regarding the common assumptions of modern society.

Gandhi was obviously the first to look closely at the roots of evil in human affairs. What comes out of a careful study of Gandhi's life and thought is not so much the clear outline of his "extremism" and his "revolutionary" rejection of violence as a tool of political action, although notice of these things can hardly be avoided. What impresses the reader most is Gandhi's perceptive discovery of the dynamics of the good or regenerated life and his practical wisdom in finding ways to help men to put them into practice. Gandhi is the man who, in the tired, disillusioned, and cynical years of the twentieth century, gave new voice to ancient counsels of perfection, and in words that made it possible for ordinary people to take them to heart. He spoke to the potential hero in every man, the potential philosopher and sage. His life was a never-ending honor and tribute to the human spirit. This, basically, is what he did. The specifics of his program, in terms of which he became known and famous, were all applications of this vision of human potentiality and destiny. Mr. Alexander has a paragraph on what this meant to Gandhi in practice:

> The essence of his [Gandhi's] conviction was this: every man can control what he does today; no man can control what may happen a year or a century hence. Therefore, let each man do the best he knows today, leaving the outcome to God. This does not mean, of course, that men should have no long distance goals. By all means let us agree to strive together for the independence of our nation; for the peace of the world; for such improvement in the world's economy and such equitable distribution in the world's goods that every man, woman and child may have a tolerable amount of the necessities of life. But how do you begin? The best way to begin working for the freedom of your country is to act as if it were free today; in other words, begin to build up all the useful mutual services that will give true dignity to the country when it does achieve its freedom; ignore the alien government as far as possible, and build alternative organs of common action. To build world peace, begin by acting peacefully towards your neighbor today; show understanding of his point of view, try to meet his demands, even if they do not seem reasonable, approach him, whether he is your neighbor, or a remote foreigner living across an armed and dangerous frontier, as if his aspirations were similar to your own; act peaceably toward him, be patient with him, "go the second mile" with him. Wars, says Gandhi (and he is certainly not the first wise man to say it), do not bring peace; they bring further wars; nor do threats and preparations for war bring peace; therefore let us try the peaceful approach to peace. And again with poverty; you will not destroy poverty by destroying the rich; better to set a good example by making friends of the poor, by sharing what you can from your own surplus, by trying never to use for your own selfish enjoyment what others need for the bare necessities. Such living may help to commend peace and social justice to others. You cannot tell what the outcome may be, but such action may in fact bring you something better than you had ever dreamed of.

Gandhi brought tidings which are not unknown to the West, but which are acceptable only in times of extreme trial. "I can offer you only blood, sweat, and tears," said Winston Churchill to the British, in the midst of the most terrible war of history. Gandhi sought a similar sacrifice, but for peace instead of victory.

There was more, of course, in Gandhi's appeal:

> Perhaps Gandhi is the first important political leader in thc world who has consistently kept the needs of the poorest, and above all the voiceless poor of the villages, who are often beyond the sight and the thought of modern social reformers, in the forefront of his mind and heart. To the day of his death he had them constantly in his mind. He was always at home when he was among them, and he felt imprisoned when he had to dwell in cities. As far as was possible for a man who had to live the life he was called to, and who had travelled about the earth and been educated in London, he identified himself in his every day life with the poorest and the lowliest and the lost. He must abandon everything that he did not strictly need, not because of the spiritual efficacy of asceticism in the proper sense, Gandhi was not an ascetic. But, so long as one man remained in abject poverty, he held that possession of anything he did not need was a form of theft. Many of his close friends he considered thieves. He tried not to be one himself.

Jayprakash Narayan, who withdrew several years ago from the leadership of the Praja Socialist Party in India to work with Vinoba Bhave, is now the advocate of a new kind of socialism. He is an uncompromising critic of the statist tendencies of Communist countries, where "dictatorship is being equated with democracy, state capitalism with socialism, colonialism and national expansionism with world revolution." He adds: "After forty years of revolution and socialist reconstruction, equality and freedom, the most cherished values of socialism lie trampled under foot." The current expressions of Jayprakash are a forthright challenge to socialist thinkers all over the world. It is a commentary on their lack of imagination and their unwillingness to do original thinking that, so far as we know, they have made no serious response to his analysis. Here is some quotation from Jayprakash:

> Construction of a socialist society is, fundamentally, construction of a new type of human being. The importance of such human reconstruction is admitted on all sides, but I am afraid no sooner is the admission made than it is forgotten and every one joins in the race to get on the State wagon. Clearly if human reconstruction is the key to socialist reconstruction, and if that is beyond the scope of the State, the emphasis in the socialist movement must

> change from political action to such work of reconstruction. . . .
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> What will be the dynamics of such a movement? So far the dynamic of social change has been the conflict of self-interests. The self-interest of labor has been juxtaposed to the self-interest of capital, the intermediary interests choosing their sides according to their own view of the main conflict. Labour actuated by self-interest wishes to create a different social order in which it is assumed that selfishness will not rule the lives of men. Here you have a fundamental contradiction. . . . Equality and freedom and fellowship can never become realities unless the moral evolution of the individual has been such that he voluntarily is prepared to limit his wants and his freedom in the interest of his fellow human beings. . . .

This is the new political thinking in India, which is really not "political" at all, but a fresh evaluation of the political process in terms of the actual dynamics of human development and social change.

Vinoba Bhave, known to all the world for his achievement in persuading wealthy landowners to transfer land to the poor, and the people of entire villages to decide to hold their land in common, appears in this book as a searching critic of "democratic" politics. In the following discussion of "direct democracy" we gain insight into the inspiration Jayprakash has had from Vinoba:

> We must [says Vinoba] be clear about what we mean when we talk of direct democracy. The more I think on this question the more I get convinced that a believer in direct democracy must remain aloof and outside and not get involved in the machinery. The idea of getting elected and accepting office in order to improve the working of democracy is a form of subtle self-delusion. Some one has said that government in India is becoming irresponsible because good men are not coming forward to form a strong party of opposition. I say it is just the opposite. That is, there is no effective criticism and curb on the Government because most politically minded people have got themselves attached to this or that party. Some keep mum because they belong to the ruling party and the criticism of the opposition parties does not become effective because people know their main interest is to get into places of power. People therefore do not take them very seriously. Criticism can be effective only when it comes from disinterested quarters, that is, from people who are sincerely devoted to social service and do not belong to any political organisation.

A concluding comment by Mr. Alexander sums up the burden of criticisms by Gandhi, Vinoba, and Jayprakash:

> The doom of the world, if it comes, will come through political folly; but the statesmen of the world are not its real leaders. Those who, in the long run, control the destiny of man are the leaders of thought and of the arts, those who control the inner promptings of the mind and the emotions. Here the India of Gandhi and Tagore, of Vinoba and other seers, most of them unknown to the West, are opening our eyes to the hidden tendencies by which we are driving ourselves to our doom.

This book is an earnest, honest, and unsentimental tribute to the fruit of modern Indian thought. It is bound to be highly valued by thoughtful American readers.

COMMENTARY
TO START THE NEW YEAR

THERE are many tragic figures and groups in the world. Of them all, the plight of the Spanish refugees from Franco's Spain has seemed to us especially hard to bear. These are people who suffer exile, want, and poverty for conscience' sake. They are people of great dignity. In behalf of Spanish Refugee Aid, Inc., Salvador de Madariaga has written the following letter:

> Dear Friend
>
> There is a notion abroad that the Spanish Civil War is over. So it would be, had the will of the Spanish people prevailed. But the weight of sheer force has enabled another will to prevail—a will that keeps alive the memory and even the worst emotions of the Civil War in an ever dwindling minority that wields all the power of the State.
>
> The refugees of old cannot return without running unpredictable risks. New refugees keep sacrificing their homes in Spain to keep their freedom. The work of the Spanish Refugee Aid is as pressing and as precious as ever. Give all you can as soon as you can.

The address of Spanish Refugee Aid is Room 406, 80 East 11th St., New York 3, N.Y.

Too late, alas, for Christmas gift notice came the suggestion that we call attention to the War Resisters League 1962 Appointment Calendar, dedicated to the radical and revolutionary great. But a calendar, after all, can be bought in January. Besides being a handy place to note engagements, it is an all-time almanac of the struggle for human freedom, with memorable quotations from lovers of their fellows, from Socrates to Vinoba Bhave. The price is $1.25, or $7.00 for six. Send orders (with money) to the War Resisters League, 5 Beekman St., New York 38, N.Y.

Pete Seeger America's most popular folk singer, is having a bad time with the United States Government because in the summer of 1955 he refused to tell the House Un-American Affairs Committee things which he believed were none of the Committee's or anyone else's business, such as his personal political opinions and associations. He took this position on the grounds of the First Amendment, not the Fifth. He was convicted of contempt of Congress last March and on April 4 was sentenced to a year in prison. He is now free on bail, awaiting the decision of the Federal Court of Appeals. An interesting folder on the Seeger case is available from Harold Leventhal, Room 602, 200 West 57th St., New York 19, N.Y. We have seen no better comment on the Seeger case than the observation of the New York *Post:*

> The notion that the Republic is a safer place because the Justice Department has caught up with him is the kind of fantasy to which we have been subjected too long. No one has remotely suggested that Seeger is a spy or a saboteur, or that he possesses any knowledge of such dreary areas. That the combined power of the House Committee and the Justice Department should be rallied to imprison him is a bitter burlesque. Some jail will become a more joyous place if he lands there, and things will be bleaker outside.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
NOTES IN PASSING

WE have often said that MANAS takes no partisan position in regard to current educational theory. Neither the advocates of the "traditional disciplines" nor the "new educationists" seem to us completely right, so that when the Council for Basic Education (partisan) sponsors *Tomorrow's Illiterates*, we have only to point out the particular facts or figures which seem to us to deserve attention. *(Tomorrow's Illiterates* is published by Little, Brown & Co., edited by Charles C. Walcutt, Professor of English at Queens College, with an introduction by Jacques Barzun.) In Fred Hechinger's review for the New York *Times* (Nov. 5, 11961), there is this on "non-phonic" reading instruction:

> The most serious indictment of the "limited vocabulary" method is that it has excessively dominated the content of children's books, even those used outside school. The "word list" has become a straitjacket.
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> At this point the report on American reading deficiencies meshes with the comparison of literacy in Russian and American schools. Dr. Trace (author of *What Ivan Knows that Johnny Doesn't*) points out that Russian first graders, admittedly along with tales of Lenin's school years, begin to read Tolstoy. At junior high school level, Russian youngsters are expected to read original pre-Soviet classics while much American classroom literature is condensed or simplified.
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> That these criticisms of present American reading instruction are not just the polemics of another group of theorists was shown in New York City last week when 144 new elementary school teachers diagnosed the serious weaknesses in their training as deficiencies in reading skills and phonics. The deplorable aspects of the "history of the error" is not that mistakes were made but that they were imposed by a mixture of arrogance and docile following.
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> The promising aspect of the counter-revolution is that it does not attempt to sell any new monolithic method. *Tomorrow's Illiterates* lists a variety of current experiments to improve reading instruction. They differ in detail, but have in common the early use of phonics combined with much pictorial material.

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There has been an upsurge of interest lately in educational experiments with the "non-graded" school. As every educational pioneer seems to have noticed, there is something basically artificial about compartmental learning. On this point such widely dissimilar reformers as Homer Lane and Gandhi have agreed. *Education Summary* for Sept. 27, 1961, speaks of the successes of the non-graded school:

> When the teacher will understand the freedoms which non-grading permits, creativity may follow. He will not have to worry about encroaching on the work of an upper grade. . . . He now will be able to work without the crippling fear of having to fail any child who does not come up to the grade standard by the end of the year. Moreover, he will not need to worry about a child's reading being in advance of his arithmetic.

In "The Wasted Classroom," in *Harper's* for October, Nathan Glazer suggests that the compartmentalizing of knowledge is a basic habit-pattern of the Western mind, an Aristotelian and medieval hangover. And as the student must skip from one discipline to another and work for separate "grades," his professors also feel the confinements of arbitrary barriers. Dr. Glazer writes:

> Finally, we come to the third evil of college teaching today—the departments. If the classroom system needs grades to justify its existence, it also needs the departmental system to fill up the class time and decide what to ask on the examinations. Once again, let us divide what is necessary and useful from its distortion. The departments of knowledge have a long and honorable history. To be a member of a department means that a man owes his loyalty to his field of knowledge as well as to his university. Indeed, the department, or rather the discipline (which is expressed in the form of the department in each college or university), is more important to him generally than the school in which he happens to teach. He may shift schools but scarcely ever will he be able to shift departments. His advancement,

within his college or from a job in one college to another, will depend not on his virtues as a teacher (who is to judge that?) but on his standing in his discipline, and this standing is measured by *(a)* his doctoral degree (granted by a group of people who have such degrees in the same discipline); (*b*) his publications (in the journals of his discipline); and (c) his research grants (given by persons drawn from his discipline). And of course he has been trained in that discipline, in a graduate school.

What this means is that it is much easier for a man to think of himself as a psychologist, a historian. a sociologist, a classicist, a specialist in Elizabethan drama than as .someone who is engaged in liberal education. And he is more concerned in *communicating his discipline* to the students than in *educating* them. Obviously this is a large and general charge and there are exceptions. But since it is the discipline that has prestige, the professor is oriented generally to what is most characteristic of the discipline. This means the newest thinking in his specialty, the most abstract concepts, the things about which scholars do research and publish papers. In psychology, for example, he would think he was engaged in the worst kind of sellout if he paid attention to the psychological problems that concern the students rather than to those that concern psychologists.

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As long as we are on the subject of current criticisms of education, we might mention a recent comment by Prof. Hyman Kublin, of Brooklyn College (New York *Times*, Nov. 1, 1961). Prof. Kublin feels that our youngsters are woefully ill-prepared for a sympathetic understanding of the cultures and the problems of Asia and the Orient. The only reason why the Orient is still "the mysterious East," he says, is that our secondary schools fail to make themselves hospitable to communication between cultures. The *Times* report on Kublin's remarks continues:

"The standard course is not only a misnomer but educationally obsolete—a thinly disguised offering of traditional nature in Western civilization," Prof. Kublin declared. To inform teenagers about this increasingly important area of the world, he has proposed the following steps.

(1) Revise the content and method of the standard world history offering to include non-Western cultures.

(2) Add elective courses in great civilizations of Asia on the senior high school level.

(3) Help secondary school social studies teachers to learn more of the history, cultures and present problems of Asia and other areas of the non-Western world.

(4) Require some background in non-Western cultures for the licensing of social studies teachers.

(5) Find scholars to prepare world history textbooks and other teaching materials that include "competent attention" to Asia, Africa and South America.

FRONTIERS

"No Human Sound"

> I am frightened at having heard nothing for years which gives a human sound. Always the same words telling the same lies. And in the fact that men put up with them I see the proof that they play, yes truly, they play with a whole part of their life and of their so-called vital interests.
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> —Albert Camus, A *Writer's Notebook*

AN article in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (for Nov. 9, 1961) by Christopher Mayhew (MP) examines the issues of the present "cold war" in unfamiliar terms. He writes:

> The Marxist challenge of competitive coexistence, as preached by the world's Communist parties, is unscientific, sterile, and dangerous. Instead of taking up the challenge in the name of freedom, as they are so often urged to do, the non-Communist countries should denounce the challenge in the name of peace and sanity. In its place, they should advance a new conception of coexistence—aiming at ideological disarmament—based on the following principles.
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> (*a*) There will always be many different social systems in the world, corresponding to the different circumstances, traditions, problems, and faiths of the peoples.
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> (*b*) Rivalry between countries of different social systems is dangerous to peace, obstructs co-operation and is not inevitable. Relationships between States should be based on mutual aid, mutual regard, a frank acknowledgement of shortcomings, and a readiness to learn from others.
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> In reply to the Communist challenge, therefore, the non-Communist world should take its stand on the conception of *"Coexistence Plus": "Plus* ideological coexistence, and an end to proselytising and to bitter and dangerous rivalry; *plus* practical East-West co-operation; *plus* genuinely free East-West contacts."
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> Millions of non-Communists in NATO and uncommitted countries could find common ground here, and would probably support with great moral conviction a world-wide peace-and-friendship campaign based on these principles.

However, this sort of challenge cannot be taken up by men who have propagandized themselves into irrationality. An editorial in the same issue of the *Guardian,* dealing with Nehru's American visit, indicates how difficult may be a fair evaluation of international events and policies:

> The New China News Agency recently reported a meeting in Delhi at which United States industrialists discussed with Indian industrialists and Ministers the possibilities of more investment in India. The Americans, said this report, demanded many guarantees, Mr. Nehru made a speech of undisclosed content, at which the Western visitors were "tremendously moved and pleased." Thus do the Chinese seek to blacken the reputation of the man who disagrees with them about their common border. He even pleases American capitalists. Unfortunately most Americans do not read the Chinese press, and they seem extensively under the impression that it is only the Communists that Mr. Nehru tries to please. Such is nonalignment.
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> Mr. Nehru must not be entirely surprised. Only on Monday, on the day after his arrival in the United States, his October Revolution message of friendship to Mr. Khrushchev was published: "I am confident that this friendship will continue to grow and contribute towards the realisation of our common aim of world peace." And on the same day he told newspapermen "hate is a bad thing," which was not what they were hoping to hear. Besides legitimate differences of national interest there are incompatibilities of style. There is also Mr. Krishna Menon.
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> These impediments to understanding do not alone explain the perplexities of the United States press when it contemplates Indian policies, and certainly not the extraordinary misinterpretation of Mr. Nehru's role at Belgrade. If he had not been there the neutrals' conference might indeed have been the one-sided affair that many Americans seem to think it was. Unfortunately attitudes to "neutralism" are part of the battleground in the domestic political conflict, and those against it on principle (as they were against, say, General Marshall and are against Mr. Adlai Stevenson) are the more articulate. There is no reason to think that President Kennedy shares the prejudices ascribed to him by those who would like him to have them. On the contrary, his constructive policies towards India since his inauguration have borne little relation to what newspapers have reported "opinion in Washington" to be.

These are the psychological tendencies which, more ominous even than the increasingly improved techniques for nuclear destruction, move in the direction of disaster. In the November 20 *New Republic,* Louis Halle offers a "psychoanalysis" of the typical political mind of our time:

> If there is any hope of keeping this vicious spiral toward extremism and war from getting altogether out of control, then we are going to have to understand the political psychology involved. The fundamental feature of that psychology is the tendency of the great abstractions to take the place of this world's intricate realities in men's minds. The enemy, with all his complex humanity, is dehumanized. The human reality is replaced by the image of a demon, monstrous in the ruthlessness of his purpose, in his viciousness, in his appetite for destruction and his thirst for power. Most of us can remember how this became the predominant image of the Japanese people and of the German people presented to us during the last war. It is the image of the enemy presented in General Walker's statement announcing his resignation from the Army and proclaiming his rebellion.
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> This image of the demonic enemy carries with it a clear implication: that anyone who would try to deal with him as a being who shares the common characteristics of the human race, anyone who would seek to reach agreements with him, anyone who does not aim at his extermination, must either be in league with him and a traitor to his country, or else must be the dupe of traitors. It follows that the forces of moderation in the country, including those which govern it, must be in a state of treason. The conclusion of such extremist reasoning is that all-out war is already implicit in the situation and must be acknowledged. This war must be waged against the enemy within the gates no less than against his forces on the outside. And once the claim that we are already in a state of war is accepted, then the question arises why we are not undertaking to shoot with everything we've got (why we are "pulling our punches").
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> We may be sure that essentially the same situation prevails inside the Communist world. The Stalinist image of the brutal and ruthless capitalists corresponds to the view that our radical right wing propagates of the Communists. The forces in the Communist world who favor "peaceful coexistence" with the capitalist monsters are traitors to the cause—including those who govern in Moscow. The situation must be recognized as one of all-out war waged for the extinction of the enemy species. "Peaceful coexistence" is treason.
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> It is significant that our own extremists can justify their position today only by an assurance that, if we go all out against the enemy, he will retreat rather than fight. (It may be that the corresponding argument is made by Stalinists in Moscow today.)