

## THE WAR ON ALIENATION

[This is another of the broadcasts of Henry Anderson, delivered over the Berkeley Pacifica station, KPFA. Mr. Anderson's earlier contribution was "The Case Against the Drug Culture," which appeared in MANAS for Nov. 16, 1966.]

THE most redoubtable enemy of man in our society in our time and perhaps of man in any society at any time—is not poverty or joblessness but demoralization, and to that extent it should be part of the larger battle. But poverty, and the War on Poverty, need to be kept in perspective. Despair is not peculiar to the impoverished. To single out the poor as though they have problems different in kind from the rest of society is caste thinking of a most pernicious sort. It is diversionary from social truths we can ill afford to ignore; it suggests a type of solutions which are really going to solve nothing. When "radicals" suggest that the way to humanization lies in appropriating \$100 billion to "fight poverty" rather than \$2 billion, they have fallen into the trap of authoritarian liberalism.

Joylessness and despair are no respecters of the "poverty line." They are found above it as below it, and who is to say there is less on one side or the other? The proper war for our time is a war on demoralization, feelings of powerlessness, self-doubt, confusion, estrangement of man from his potential—in a word, a War on Alienation, wherever alienation may be found.

An omnipresent government is one of the causes (and effects) of our estrangement, but paradoxical as it may seem, I want to suggest that government might, in spite of itself, play a significant role in a War on Alienation. Before going into that, however, let me develop briefly some of the assumptions on which this discussion rests. A War on Alienation is conceived as assisting in the emergence of face-to-face groups which wish to act cooperatively for any legitimate purpose. The term *face-to-face* should be stressed, to distinguish such groups from those which communicate only by correspondence, or by

proxy, or by elections with some people "representing" other people. We have had more than enough of A presuming to speak for B, C, D, and the rest, just because they all happen to be poor, Negroes, farm workers, Catholics, trade unionists, or whatever. This is one of the major ways in which B, C, D, and the rest have become demoralized. They need to speak and act for themselves, directly, with respect at least to some corner of their lives—and the more corners, the better.

The face-to-face associations I envisage will be voluntary associations. By and large, persons who aren't interested in the purpose of the association simply won't participate—but won't feel threatened or intimidated by the fact of their non-participation. The initial call for the formation of a group might take a form such as: "Anyone interested in starting a community theater cooperative is invited . . ." etc., etc. Of course, there are any number of different kinds of little theater groups. These differences should be fully aired. No doubt, some will not like the decisions which are reached. But these are not going to be political organizations. They are not going to wield power over anybody. There is thus no point in trying to forge uneasy "united fronts," behind which internecine warfare is waged, in the manner of political groups. Coercive and quasi-coercive groups can be more demoralizing than no groups at all. A War on Alienation must recognize this danger, and contain built-in safeguards against it, insofar as possible. If someone strongly feels that he has a better idea for a theater cooperative, he should feel free to organize another one, and receive technical assistance without prejudice.

When I use the word "cooperative," I don't mean the kind of Co-op in which you buy a share for \$5 and absolutely nothing more is ever required of you. The word "cooperation" is, to me, a very active sort of word, implying the bona fide involvement, and responsibility, and testing, and stretching of every member. A face-to-face association whatever

its purposes, needs the talents of all its members, and, even more to the point, the members need to have their talents needed—and a setting in which they are not only permitted, but obliged to exercise these talents. War on Alienation is a war for freedom—but not the freedom to continue being unproductive and untested, which seems to me no freedom at all, but the very dungeon in which most of us languish.

The heart of my proposal is that these face-to-face-associations would receive organizing information and advice. Not money, mind you, but information and advice. For reasons I do not have time to go into here, I believe grants of money may do more harm than good. But it has been my experience that informed advice is always needed. There is nothing to prevent people from organizing against alienation, right now. But, at the same time, there is nothing to help them. And it isn't an easy thing to do. There are likely to be mundane problems of tax-exemption, liability, etc. And the even more ubiquitous and more important problems are social-psychological: Why do human beings become organized? How? Why do they sometimes remain organized, and sometimes fall apart? How can a group continue to meet the developing needs of its members, which are, after all, not going to remain static?

In the present scheme of things, where is one to turn for advice on such questions as these? On legal matters, you may happen to have a friend who is an attorney. But this still leaves the more important social-psychological advice. Where can you go? To so-called labor organizers? To so-called behavioral scientists? The fact is that there is hardly anybody in our great, knowledgeable, competent society who has any useful knowledge at all, any real competence, in this surpassingly important area: the art of bringing people together in a meaningful sense.

If we are to be saved at all, it seems to me, it will not be by "poverty money," but by human organizers, wedded to democratic, cooperative values. Since few such persons are to be found at present, it follows that a War on Alienation must include the training of human organizers, perhaps before anything else. Although they are rare, there

are enough such persons right now, to serve at least as the cadre of a training program. No esoteric knowledge or skills are required. No college degrees are required. Indeed, I sometimes think they are a liability. The greatest organizer I have ever known personally is a Catholic priest who probably never had a course in behavioral science in his life. The second greatest organizer I have known personally is a Mexican-American farm worker who never went to college, or even to high school, so much as a day.

What is more, I believe that one of these days, or years, a number of persons with well-developed organizing skills are going to become available to society-at-large. When the histories of this time of ours are written, I believe they will record that the supreme value of the civil rights movement was its preparation of multi-purpose organizers who, after helping the oppressed liberate themselves, went on to help liberate us all. The histories will record, I think, that the master contribution of this time was not the discovery of the computer, but the rediscovery of mutual aid.

The types of liberating and humanizing things for which people may associate together are limited only by the limits of human imagination. They range from physical exercise to the most recondite intellectual exercise; from something as modest as cooking or gardening to something as ambitious as the creation of an orchestra or a white-collar union. One of the possibilities which intrigues me, because I happen to work in it, and because it seems to me an area in which our society is particularly barbaric, is the organization of health and medical services.

Now, obviously, it cannot be left to me, or you, or to any other one person to decide what kinds of cooperative action are legitimate and which illegitimate, which humanizing and which dehumanizing.<sup>1</sup> But there is gradually emerging in this world a vision, somewhat blurred around the edges (and I rather think it should stay that way), of

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<sup>1</sup> Cooperation is perhaps *per se* humanizing. But it does not thereby justify its service to dehumanizing ends. In my personal opinion, a cooperative for obtaining narcotics, or for wife-swapping, for example, would be more dehumanizing than otherwise, and would fall outside a legitimate War on Alienation.

what a healthy, grown-up human being is like. Existential philosophy contributes something to this vision; survivals from Freudianism contribute a little; theoretical anarchism contributes something; many disciplines, many tempers, all having in common the wish to see man fulfill himself. A few of the names which come readily to mind, in connection with this intellectual movement, are John Dewey, Martin Buber, Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Paul Tillich. There are many more. Many of these men are still living and active. I do not know if they could be induced to serve on an advisory committee to a War on Alienation, but if they could, I would feel quite secure in the conviction that they understand democratic values, and man's other needs, as well as they can be understood at this time.

Obviously, there are a great many objections and difficulties. For one thing, a proposal such as this implies bringing out into the light a number of things that most people would probably prefer not to think or talk about. It is comparatively easy to admit the material impoverishment on the far side of town; it is difficult to admit the impoverishment in the quality of one's own life. It is very painful to recognize the extent to which one has wasted one's self.

I would not be surprised if the most vigorous and articulate opposition to any such proposal were to come from a somewhat unexpected quarter: radicals and libertarians and intellectuals. Many of these people tend to have become old before their time, tired, disillusioned, sterile, as a result of involvement with groups—but a far different kind of groups than I envisage. They have broken their hearts in floundering, futility, bickering, and backbiting in organizations which were essentially political. In many cases, they have turned against organizations as such. All they want now is to be left alone. I understand how they feel, because I feel that way myself on occasion. But I am quite sure that our society will not become humanizing and fulfilling with every man isolated, any more than it is with every man marching in lockstep, bruised by the shadow of the Monolith.

The implications of a War on Alienation are as broad as the social order itself. Think what it would do to our compulsory miseducational institutions, our political institutions, our recreational institutions, and all the rest, to have to respond to the challenge of viable alternatives!

Let me close by mentioning perhaps the most satisfying prospect of all. Even though a War on Alienation would involve, at the outset, some government coordination, unlike any other government program I can think of, it would have the removal of government built into it. A War on Alienation would be a training ground for "subversion"—in the sense that it could subvert the demoralizing feeling that people have to live at the pleasure of the Federal establishment or some other establishment outside the perimeter of their immediate control. A War on Alienation would subvert the demoralizing feeling that people have to fear themselves, have to doubt their own competence and capacities. Once this process were begun, it would be self-accelerating. It would not turn back. If a member of a successful "community" became involved in any other group, he could then serve as the advisor, without calling in an outside consultant. And so, morale, whatever you want to call it, would spread and deepen, lift and soar.

You may object that governments have never taken part in their own subversion. This may be true. But these are curious times, in which yesterday's fantasy is today's commonplace. It appears to me that we are poised at the top of a great watershed, and can go either way, very far, very fast. I perceive encouraging signs that we are not going the way of 1984. I believe we are beginning, however tentatively and willy nilly, to head down the side of the watershed which leads to humanization. How else can you account for certain demonstrable facts? How can you account for the civil rights movement? How can you account for the Free Speech Movement and other student "revolts" and the fact that even the most unsympathetic analyses of student unrest have had to acknowledge that alienation is at its taproot? How can you account for the fact that the Speaker of the California Assembly has come out for *ombudsman*—really quite a

fundamental departure? How can you account for the fact that two billion dollars' worth of public policy (a test by which, at present, one can measure how seriously our society takes anything) is the direct outgrowth of a book, *The Other America*, by an open, admitted, recognized, unrepentant, card-carrying Socialist? This could not have happened ten years ago, or five years ago, or even three years ago, it seems to me. The times, they are a-changing. There are strange things happening in this land..

For reasons such as these, I find it imaginable that Government itself can be induced, within the proximate future, to take a part in the destruction of the myth of its own omnipotence—will assist those people engaged in the construction of a different social order, through something akin to what I have called a War on Alienation.

It will speed the day if you, yourself, call for it—loudly and clearly—and act on it, which will be louder and clearer still.

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## *REVIEW*

### THE PLATONIC QUEST

DEEP tropisms of the human spirit seem to be working for a Platonic revival. Since there is a vast content in Plato, with many currents of thought to be distinguished one from another, the reasons for going back to him are various. Leonard Nelson, whose *Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy* (Dover) was reviewed here recently, found in Socrates the ideal model for the teaching of philosophy. Eric Havelock, a classical scholar, sees in Plato the first Western thinker to become fully aware of the potentialities and obligations of *individual thinking*. For Havelock, Plato was a man who deliberately set out to transform the Greek language in order to make it serve the high educational purpose of liberated self-consciousness (see *Preface to Plato*, Harvard University Press, 1963). Stringfellow Barr's volume, *The Three Worlds of Man* (University of Missouri Press, 1963), is a labor of love in which the author's manifest scholarly attainments become secondary to an ardor not unlike the tumultuous resolve of the Prodigal Son to *go home*.

There is not, however, any emotional disorder in these three lectures by Mr. Barr. He is one of a growing number of men who have had more than enough of the pretentious half-truths of the modern world, and who see that halfhearted concern for human good, whether in politics or education, is not enough to make the world better, but is instead helping it to become steadily worse.

Mr. Barr returns to the Greeks because he finds in them something he has not found elsewhere—an approach to the question of human good which takes full account of the complexity of the matters involved, and which ranges these matters according to a carefully reasoned order and priority. There is in Plato attentive distinction among the disciplines required for balanced human development. Ultimately, what Mr. Barr is arguing for is the reality of moral *science*. This is no easy case to present, since, for many men, the idea of science and the idea of morality are mutually exclusive notions. A sure, objective exactitude, we have been told for almost a century, is possible only when we eliminate the

slightest trace of moral "bias." To overcome this view it is necessary to show that for Plato, the attainment of moral truth was to be accomplished by a virtual perfection of the intellectual tools that would enable men to eliminate any sort of bias or partiality in their thinking. Plato's *odium theologicum* was as firm as that of any modern freethinker but he refused to abandon the quest for moral truth because its waters had been badly muddied. Havelock's *Preface to Plato* makes this abundantly clear, and is also of enormous help in explaining why those who find their way back to the Greek philosophers become so clear-eyed and unashamed in Plato's defense. "It was not the antiquarian interest of the historian," says Mr. Barr in his Preface, "which drove me back in time for more than two millennia to the Greeks. It was because the Greeks, it seems to me, still talk about many of our contemporary problems more clearly than we do."

His first lecture, concerned with the first "world"—in *The Three Worlds of Man*—is entitled "Action." Here Mr. Barr reveals the abyss which separates the piddling and passive conceptions of "virtue" in our time from the vigorous principles held by the Greeks to be the guides of action. We suffer, today, from "some sort of moral deterioration," and "worse, we do not know how to restore what we call our moral values." After speaking of the horrors of the Russian revolution and "the obscene sadism of Hitler's Fortress Europa"—stages in an orgy of violence that has "all but destroyed the moral fabric of Western Christendom and has left us morally exhausted and confused"—he passes to the domestic scene of the United States:

We know we have become not only the richest nation on earth but the richest in recorded history. We hear our insurance companies warning us that overweight has become one of our main health hazards, in a world community conspicuously underweight. We know that collusive profiteering and gross misrepresentation distinguish our business life, that familiar ethical standards in our learned professions have declined, that alcoholic escapism disfigures our social life, that sloppy schooling and broken homes handicap our children, that widespread civic cowardice has supplied a field day for demagogues. Meanwhile those who write our advertising copy praise our self-indulgence, condone our

cowardice, wink at our cheating, and congratulate us on our folly. . . .

Morality and ethics, of course, have to do with the virtues and vices of man, and when it comes to these we moderns are handicapped by a badly depreciated vocabulary. The words virtue and vice have become moralizing words. Virtue is something which women rather than men are admired for and sometimes lose. In short, the word carries no strong meaning except what was once discreetly called female chastity and may now suggest only a regretfully salvaged virginity.

This first chapter is an exploration of the meaning of the four cardinal virtues of the ancient Greeks—courage, temperance, prudence, and justice—more or less as found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. The man in whom these virtues remain undeveloped practices their opposites—he becomes vicious. "Men who lack these virtues in whatever degree are to that extent cowardly, greedy, foolish, and crooked," and these men "the Greeks would consider vicious whether they belong to a so-called vice ring in one of our large cities or merely live their petty, stumbling, ugly little lives in a pleasant suburb, admired and respected by neighbors who have not yet caught on to them."

It becomes apparent that the loss of the virtues comes from failure in education and from reduction of their meaning by misapplication. Something beyond the virtues is required for their symmetry in action. That something is "Wisdom," the name of man's second World and Mr. Barr's second lecture. Mere prudence, which is practical sagacity, is not enough. "Prudence uses ideas and principles and theories, but it does not contemplate them, it applies them." Now emerges the larger significance of the Platonic quest:

When, in Plato's Dialogues, Socrates faces the connection between the moral virtues and the intellectual virtues, he is far more drastic than Aristotle: no man, he announces, wittingly does evil. To this statement, Aristotle took strong exception. He was convinced that, by manipulating the practical syllogism to suit our desires—by rationalizing, as we would say today—we constantly do things which we know we ought not to do. But in dialogue after dialogue Socrates raises the question of whether virtue may not be reducible to

knowledge. And the knowledge he seems to be talking about would have to involve not only what Aristotle called prudence, or practical wisdom, which applies correct opinion to the particular case; it would have also to involve philosophic wisdom, which goes beyond what is merely opined to what can be truly known. Behind moral failure lies intellectual failure, and in a sense all vice is a form of stupidity and ignorance. If our prudence had knowledge back of it instead of correct opinion, blindly held, we would not choose evil; we would not want to rationalize. . . .

Mr. Barr states briefly the essentials of the Socratic venture:

. . . he [Socrates] could not fail to observe that the moral corruption he saw underlying the magnificent age of Pericles was due less to men's failure to live up to their principles than to their increasing failure to descry the principles clearly. All men had opinions on virtue. And yet, when he questioned them in his gentle but relentless way, their opinions turned out to be merely opinions, not knowledge. They even turned out to be hopelessly inconsistent opinions, as indeed opinions on moral problems have a way of doing. But Socrates wanted to know, not merely to opine. It seemed obvious to most men that without knowledge of some sort there could be no virtue, nor any moral act, but only anthropological *mores*, enforced by the tribe. But true prudence deals with specific means, chooses them with reference to ends and often by the light of general rules. Granted that it must frequently act even where it has only opinion to go on, yet it needs as much knowledge as possible. But aside from the fact that good moral action needs knowledge, knowledge is a good in itself. It is a good because man has the power, within limits, to know.

It is only the shallow mind which, having heard this statement of Plato's case, shrugs and turns away, saying, "Is *that* the best we can have?" For where will he turn, except to his body of uncriticized opinions? The refusal to participate in the Socratic dialogue because no final certainty is promised leaves for alternatives only those ill-founded assumptions which have brought us where we are. When the role of challenge and questioning is thus restricted to a handful of heroes and martyrs, we learn, after a time, what "might have been" from the mourning sadness of the poets. The poets are heard, today, with the same ritual agreement and lack of courageous response as Aristophanes was heard by his countrymen when, in 400 B.C., he wrote of the follies of the Peloponnesian War:

From the murmur and subtlety of suspicion with  
 Which we vex one another  
 Give us rest.  
 Make a new beginning  
 And mingle again the kindred of nations in  
 The alchemy of love,  
 And with some finer essence of forbearance  
 Temper our minds.

But how, indeed, do men learn to "temper their minds"? Plato believed that they learn it from the pursuit of wisdom. The fruitful practice of the virtues depends upon wisdom. Mr. Barr shows how the *Republic* develops this theme:

As the dialogue proceeds, Socrates weaves a magic skein of luminous analogies between the various types of unjust men and the various types of unjust state. But since, both in the individual soul and in organized society, a just ordering of the organic parts will all hang on the quality of the wisdom that directs them, we are back again at the Socratic point that virtue depends in a special way on wisdom, a wisdom capable of transcending mere opinion and achieving knowledge. We cannot learn to be brave or temperate or just without this higher wisdom, for it is this wisdom that tells us which of our physical desires to follow and which we may not follow; it is this that brings to our souls the internal ordering in which Socrates saw justice. In short, all genuine moral choices are guided by the high wisdom that knows principles, as well as by prudence about cases. That is why a brave act is wisdom acting with respect to danger; and a temperate act is wisdom acting again, this time with respect to pleasure; and a just act is wisdom acting with respect to the rights of other men about us. If this be true, then it is easy to see why Socrates in so many of the dialogues seems to suspect that all virtues are really species of theoretical wisdom as much as of prudence. Or, more baldly, that virtue is knowledge.

As Havelock shows, it is to Plato that the West owes its first clear awareness of the need for self-conscious objectivity in the individual pursuit of knowledge. The idea of *psyche* as autonomous intelligence was the core principle of the intellectual revolution which "saw the Homeric state of mind give way to the Platonic." Havelock's characterization of this transition enriches the meaning of the "examined life":

When confronted with an Achilles, we can say, here is a man of strong character, definite personality, great energy and forceful decision, but it would be equally true to say, here is a man to whom it has not occurred, and to

whom it cannot occur, that he has a personality apart from the pattern of his acts. His acts are responses to his situation, and are governed by remembered examples of previous acts by previous strong men. The Greek tongue therefore, as long as it is the speech of men who have remained in the Greek sense "musical" and have surrendered themselves to the spell of the tradition, cannot frame words to express the conviction that "I" am one thing and the tradition is another, that "I" can stand apart from tradition and examine it, that "I" can and should break the spell of its hypnotic force; and that "I" should divert at least some of my mental powers away from memorisation and direct them instead into channels of critical inquiry and analysis. The Greek ego in order to achieve that kind of cultural experience which after Plato became possible and then normal must stop identifying itself successively with a whole series of polymorphic vivid narrative situations; must stop re-enacting the whole scale of the emotions, of challenge, and of love, and hate and fear and despair and joy, in which the characters of an epic become involved. It must stop splitting itself up into an endless series of moods. It must separate itself out and by an effort of sheer will must rally itself to a point where it can say "I am I, an autonomous little universe of my own, able to speak, think and act in independence of what I happen to remember." This amounts to accepting the premise that there is a "me," a "self," a "soul," a consciousness which is self-governing and which discovers the reason for acting in itself rather than in an imitation of the poetic experience.

The tool afforded by Plato for this discovery is the dialectic—not the win-lose argument of *eristic*, but argument in which both sides have a common goal, "to find the true answer to the problem." The art of abstraction, leading to timeless principles such as are found in mathematics, is to be learned by the Guardians, who are most responsible for the common good.

In his final lecture Mr. Barr shows that there is nothing alien to religious inspiration in the Platonic quest—which in some sense depends upon it. For Socrates, inspiration and philosophizing had collaborative roles: "He operated in a religious tradition that, at its best, had always opened the mind of man, not closed it."

## COMMENTARY

### THE PHILOSOPHIC DISCIPLINE

CERTAIN paradoxes ensue from a comparison of the Platonic objective (see Review) with the criticisms made of both modern science and modern education by humanist psychologists such as A. H. Maslow. Plato, as Eric Havelock shows, was interested in developing "that capacity which turns a man into a student by defying the pressure of his environment." Havelock (in *Preface to Plato*) continues:

. . . this pressure is . . . sharply defined in contemporary Greek terms as that of the poetised tradition with its habit of passionate emotional identification with persons and stories of heroes, and with the play of action and episode. Instead, the "philosoph" is one who wants to learn how to restate these in a different language of isolated abstractions, conceptual and formal; a language which insists on emptying events and actions of their immediacy, in order to break them up and rearrange them in categories, thus imposing the rule of principle in place of happy intuition, and in general arresting the quick play of instinctive reaction, and substituting reasoned analysis in its place, as the basic mode of living.

Commenting, Prof. Havelock remarks that this intellectual activity of grouping experiences according to abstract categories is now quite familiar, having been "accepted into our Western culture and made part of it," but he adds, this "was not always so."

Present-day critics of excessive intellectualization are engaged in redressing balances—in pointing out how abstract knowledge seals off certain kinds of knowing. In *The Psychology of Science*, Dr. Maslow quotes David Lindsay Watson as saying:

When two men are arguing, I do not find the truth of the matter always rests with the more dispassionate participant. Passion may enhance the disputants' power of expression and thus lead, in the long run, to deeper regions of truth. . . . It is beyond question that *certain kinds* of emotion entirely distort our judgment. But I would ask the rational

extremists: would we *have* any science, if truth did not inspire passionate devotion in the searcher?

So there is now serious effort to distinguish between different kinds of feeling in the quest for truth. We might add that the abstractions in which Plato was interested belonged to a transcendental order and should not be confused with the generalities developed by the physical sciences. An attempt at synthesis between Platonic idealism and Humanistic Psychology might prove a fascinating if difficult enterprise.



## CHILDREN

### . . . and Ourselves

#### THE FETISH OF GRADES

YEARS ago, in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Carl Jung remarked that clever intellectuals who enter the medical profession tend to make good specialists but poor *nurses*. He meant that their capacity to manipulate abstractions in a logical fashion often brought impressive results in technique and in research, but that the delicacies of dealing with sick human beings remained unknown to them. What seems an oblique confirmation of Jung's view comes in the form of a recent report on the significance of grades earned in medical school in relation to the practice of the students after they become doctors.

In an article in the Los Angeles *Times* for Sept. 18, 1966, Richard Reynolds summarizes the findings of a team of researchers of the University of Utah, then adds the conclusions of a New York study of academic grades in relation to professional excellence. Mr. Reynolds begins:

*There is almost no relationship between the grades a student gets in medical school and his competence and success in medical practice.*

In other words, poor medical students—that is, poor grade-getters—may in some instances become good doctors, while some who get high grades in school may become poor doctors.

This astounded the leader of the research team, Dr. Philip B. Price. He called it a "shocking finding to a medical educator like myself who has spent his professional life selecting applicants for admission to medical school." And he added that it caused him to question the adequacy of grades not only in selecting those who should be admitted, but also in measuring a student's progress.

Just as amazed as Dr. Price was the leader of another research team in New York, Dr. Eli Ginzberg, whose group made a somewhat similar survey. That team took as subjects 342 graduate students in various fields who had won fellowships to Columbia University between 1944 and 1950. Ginzberg and his associates set out to learn how successful these 342 persons had become 15 years

after they completed their fellowships. The discovery that shocked them was this:

Those who had graduated from college with honors, who had won scholastic medals, who had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa, were more likely to be in the lower professional performance levels than in the top levels!

Why should this be?

To answer this question, Mr. Reynolds turns to report after report concerned with the enormous preoccupation of the young with grades—an attitude which is plainly imposed on them by adults, both parents and educators. He comments:

It's a sad fact that most parents and school people have placed mere grades instead of education upon a pedestal, and in the worship of these symbols education is forgotten and harmed by neglect. . . . Parents who go to extremes in demanding high grades often put frightful pressures on their children. Some crack under it—like the California boy who came home from high school last spring with a report card containing no grade higher than a D and shot himself to death on the living room floor. It is regrettable that no one ever explained to that lost boy that in some instances poor scholars have become successful men in many occupations.

Mr. Reynolds continues, assembling various evidences of widespread cheating among college students. "At least 55 per cent of college students cheat to obtain better grades," he says, reporting on a survey conducted over a two-year period at ninety-nine schools, by William J. Bower of Columbia, in a project supported by the U.S. Office of Education. A retired general, commenting on the notorious exposé of cheating at the Air Force Academy, remarked:

Our whole society today is feeling a pressure unknown to previous generations. It may be expressed in these words: Nothing but more formal education will save you, and if you want to make a great score, chalk up as many college degrees as possible.

While the "pass-fail" substitute for grades is being practiced in some colleges and universities, and is found to bring both satisfaction and relief to

students, causing Mr. Reynolds to hope that this custom "will soon spread to the broader levels of secondary and elementary schooling," the basic question of *why* the pressure spoken of by the Army General has become so fierce is not dealt with in any depth.

Actually, the high value placed on external evidence of skill in the manipulation of symbols is only a single effect of the pervasive influences described by Lewis Herber in a passage quoted in the Jan. 25 MANAS lead article:

The modern city and state, the massive coal-steel technology of the Industrial Revolution, the later, more rationalized systems of mass production and assembly-line systems of labor organization, the centralized nation, the state and bureaucratic apparatus—all, have reached their limits. Whatever progressive or liberatory role they may have possessed has clearly become entirely regressive and oppressive. They are regressive not only because they erode the human spirit and drain the community of all its cohesive solidarity and ethico-cultural standards; they are regressive from an objective viewpoint, from an ecological standpoint. For they undermine not only the human spirit and the human community but also the viability of the planet and all living things on it.

It is in consequence of the necessities of administration of such a society, with all its external, standardizing tendencies, that reliable indices of "performance" in terms of grades have seemed so necessary. Students are processed and then selected in behalf of the "Knowledge Industry," instead of being educated. As Norman Roseman said: "The critical factor in an advanced technological society is the capacities and qualities of people, and no one is better suited to understand this than the administrative intellectual." Or, in Mr. Herber's words: "All that is spontaneous, creative, and individuated is circumscribed by the standardized, the regulated, the massified." Not the unpredictable, intangible human qualities—resources of originality, humor, warmth, and intuitive insight—but the mechanistic skills, the sharp, impersonal intellectual facility which can be moved around from one function to another like an interchangeable part: this is the

capacity which the administrative intellectual understands and values, and which he can measure, classify, and order up.

Education, in other words, is faithfully reflecting the compulsive demands of the vast secular transformation of the character and value-system of our society, and to reverse the direction of this change will involve much more than ameliorating "pass-fail" niceties. The very meaning of education is at stake.

In *The Revolt of the Masses*, Ortega attributed the progressive capture of Americans by the fascinations of technology to the energetic youth of the United States. "Youth," he remarked, "does not require reasons for living, it needs only pretexts." And obsession with grades indicative of abstract, technical knowledge is an inevitable accompaniment of what Ortega calls "technicism," which has become the camouflaging substitute for those deep purposes that humanist critics find so tragically lacking in modern society. Thus, neurotic anxiety about grades and cheating in order to "get ahead" are only superficial of symptoms of far deeper problems, involving questions which, so far, have not been asked by those whom the symptoms most upset.

## *FRONTIERS*

### On Loving One's Enemies

For the good that I would I do not:  
but the evil which I would not, that  
I do.

*Paul to the Romans, 7: 19*

A PHASE of the problem presented by Paul is framed by the comment of a SNCC volunteer: "It is harmful to a human person to feel that he must love a man who has a foot in his face." Here, the moral obligation to "love" your enemy is confronted by the equally important obligation to be honest. The importance of integrity in response to unspeakable outrage is not disposed of by waving a flag of moral generality, nor does it help matters to ignore the empirical fact that a wholesome respect is generated in others when a man stands up for his rights and for his dignity as a human being.

No complex issue can be clarified with clichés. A writer will avoid clichés by finding fresh, new words to prevent stereotyped communication and ritual response, but here the question is a little different. While the word "love" has many cliché uses, it may also be lifted out of this category by a context of high understanding. And then, for a time, its meaning is mysteriously expanded and seems equal to any use. This may be a way of saying that we cannot do without "love" while we are looking around for larger meanings. In any event the reconstruction of the meaning of love is too close to the reconstruction of life itself for this word to be casually handled as if it represented some kind of object to be redesigned or renovated when we get a little time. Love is essentially an act of being. It follows that to understand love is to understand being in all its phases—far beyond the present capacity of most of us.

Richard Gregg has some musing discussion of the various senses of love in an article in the November *Fellowship*. He starts out by setting the problem more or less as we have above. How,

it is fair to ask, can anyone be asked to "love" fiercely prejudiced, cruel, and callous men? What is the application of love when there is no apparent basis for it? What reply can be given to the following:

"For hundreds of years they [such people] have been exceedingly heartless and brutal to all of us, and have done their utmost to keep us down. They go to church and talk about democracy and pretend it is their ideal and practice, yet their actions reveal that they do not mean what they say. We won't be hypocrites and pretend to love them. You can't pump love up to order. Love has to be sincere and spontaneous or it isn't love."

Who could deny this? Love is not something that can be "turned on." It does not result from being advocated as a moral duty. It comes from participating in some common ground of being. For a feeling to be "sincere and spontaneous" it cannot be a response to anyone else's "ought," or even to one's own. "Sincere and spontaneous" means just that. An imitated love is not only immediately detected, it is also immediately rejected.

This, in Leslie Farber's terms, is a "problem of the will." In *The Ways of the Will*, Dr. Farber points out that the will has two realms, one the realm of basic attitudes, the other of definable acts. Sometimes, under moralistic pressure or recurring longing, we try to "apply the will of the second realm to those portions of life that not only will not comply, but that will become distorted under such coercion." He gives these examples:

I can will knowledge but not wisdom; . . . scrupulosity but not virtue; self-assertion or bravado but not courage, . . . meekness but not humility; lust but not love; commiseration but not sympathy; congratulations, but not admiration, religiosity, but not faith; reading, but not understanding.

The point is made. This is not an argument against loving one's enemies, but recognition that much more than a flow of feeling is involved in "loving" in the sense of the Biblical admonition. Love, as Mr. Gregg says, "is more than an emotion." He continues:

[It is] a closely woven interconnection of both ideas (thoughts) and emotions (feelings). In love between close friends each party has ideas about his friend and also feelings or emotions about him. The same is true about love between a man and a woman, or in mother love.

Another fact about love is not often realized but is nonetheless true. It is that love is a result and outgrowth of a strong realization and feeling of the unity of mankind, . . . Of what does this unity consist? What are its elements? Is it as strong as the easily seen differences among people? Is it strong enough to govern eventually all relationships between human beings?

Something of the realities behind these general questions is conveyed by Laurens van der Post in *A Bar of Shadow* (Morrow, 1956). In this story, an English army officer finally grows into an understanding of the ruthless Japanese sergeant who was the practical ruler of the prisoner-of-war camp where the officer had spent years of World War II. The tale is a work of art, the re-creation of an inch-by-inch transition in the Englishman's attitude from contempt to a kind of understanding that, if it is not love, must exist before love can be born. And only because of a series of circumstances which conspired to bring about this understanding was the Englishman *able* to feel what he finally felt for the tough little sergeant who waited in his cell for the hour of execution, after being condemned by the War Crimes Tribunal. From these circumstances the English officer had learned about the shaping influences in the sergeant's life, and could feel what the sergeant felt and know why he did what he did. The Englishman explained to a friend:

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

This light reached the English officer in the shadow of the gallows—and it was an aspect of love. Mr. van der Post makes his reader participate in the compassion that comes in unsought ways to the Englishman. If we knew how to induce this subtle transformation in ourselves, we would know how to love our enemies.

It seems obvious that one should not speak too easily of love. Love is no formula solution, no *ad hoc* measure to be applied to tough situations.

To press an imitation of love may be to accomplish its betrayal. To make the mood of love and understanding seem an easy thing—like joining the right church—is to invite the onset of a season of contempt for love and also to win men to the view that there is more honesty in caricature than in an ideal which has become identified with straining moralistic pretense.

We live in an age when "regular guys" find it natural to prove their worth by jocular vulgarity and are proud of their immunity to tender sentiments. There is hardly a limit to the demonstrations of this sort; extremes breed extremes when no one knows the measures of the good. What cheapening versions of "ideals" and moral practice are behind this almost universal reaction? Before we can love all men, we shall have to put some trust in all men, and if we are able to do this, we shall have made some diagnosis of the common ills lying behind such responses to conventional forms of "goodness" and "virtue." The responses may not be admirable, but for men who long for goodness, this is not the point: the point is to find out through understanding what is their cause. The capacity to love surely includes insight into alienating feelings. A reconciling force is a force used with skill. It is not an emotional blunderbuss but a penetrating solvent.

It is true that some men seem able to get their meanings through in almost any language. But this only exchanges one mystery for another. How did they get this ability? Not, we may think, by confusing what Dr. Farber calls the "realms of

the will." A part of the power of communication lies in the use of the imagination—in the capacity to see oneself in the position of others, and also to gain a sense of reality for as yet unrealized ideals. A man of imagination lives *as if* the world were more as he wishes it to be, and he is able to do this without giving evidence that he is a fool. Simply to "will" to have this power, while remaining ignorant of the disciplines which make it possible, is, as Yeats said, "the will trying to do the work of the imagination." And when failures result, men wonder what has gone wrong, why they have failed, and fall into some pit of selfcastigating sinnership which makes love all but impossible in any circumstances. A self-condemning man cannot love.

Self-righteous ideologies fail in politics for the reason that there can be no partisan justice and no dictated freedom. We are coming to see this quite clearly. Can we also see that there can be no love whipped by conscience, no understanding that is pressed on by an emotion which is less than the joy of understanding itself?

It seems doubtful that a man's salvation can be bought with anxious placations of guilt. The necessities of love are a matter for study, not exhortation. To stop speaking easily of love may not be a neglect but an honoring of the meaning we want it to have. Love is not only a dissolving flood; it is at the same time the architect of fragile structures which grow into bonds of understanding. Love must instruct in how the common endowment of being human is able to produce horrifying behavior, not in terms of some vast synonym of evil, but minutely, in the day-to-day process of life, by precisely the means by which we come to deceive ourselves. This kind of learning from an antagonist is a dissolver of egotism and a dissipator of self-righteousness. Love and the mystery of evil are interdependent variables. You cannot increase the one without diminishing the other.