

## THE LOST WORD IS NOT THE LAST WORD

ANYONE who reads a lot and tries to form opinions about the right and wrong of what is going on in the world inevitably reaches a point of painful uncertainty, involving intellectual and moral frustration. Take for example the question of Cuba. MANAS has printed a little material on the contemporary revolution in Cuba—specifically, quotation, with comment, from Lyle Stuart's *Independent*, from an article by Barbara Deming in the *New Republic*, and from a statement by the Cuban Defense Committee, of Palo Alto, California. (MANAS, Aug. 3 and Sept. 21.) It is difficult not to feel strong sympathy for the protagonists of the Cuban Revolution. As Lawrence Shumm of the Defense Committee put it, "We once had a revolution, also." Then, in the *New Republic* for Oct. 10, we read Daniel Friedenberg's account of his own emotional difficulties with the same problem. Mr. Friedenberg is a New York businessman who speaks Spanish and has written sympathetically of Castro's cause. He begins by describing his feelings in 1958, going on to his troubled reaction to more recent events:

Castro's was the good fight, perhaps the only clean and unequivocal fight since the Spanish Civil War. At least I thought so in 1958 and still do with that part of my heart my mind tells me is unreliable.

Then my thoughts turn to Havana two years later. I still was *Fidelista* and tried to explain away why in an article published in the Summer 1960 issue of *Dissent*. But I had become a troubled *Fidelista*. The Fidel Castro who wrote *History Will Absolve Me*, that impassioned defense of a young man who awaited the torture chamber and the firing squad, that plea for decency and justice that brought tears to my eyes . . . could that young man be so transfigured by power that he had become a maniac?

I refused to believe it. It was America's fault, the United States, by its stupid and criminal support of Batista, had brought on this reaction. Sugar was the symbol of Cuba's exploitation, as oil had been the symbol of Mexico's, and Cuba's fight to free itself was a fight for national emancipation.

Even with the visible evidence of a totalitarian state before me, even while reading the portrayal by the Cuban press of our country as a ravaging Fascist power, I believed with the best part of me that in the Cuban mixture of good and bad, the good was the higher truth. And even with a sub-machine gun pointed to my back at a public meeting, the muzzle held by a grim soldier because I had asked an embarrassing question, I could still, sweating cold, defend Fidel Castro, whatever the logic of it.

So I returned to Havana a third time several weeks ago, to a city held in a new mesh and a new doctrine. And when I came back to the United States, I understood for the first time how my grandparents must have felt when they saw the shoreline of New York. I sympathize with Fidel Castro and feel the tragedy of his position, but I no longer think history will absolve him.

Mr. Friedenberg's article is an answer to an earlier discussion of the Cuban Revolution by Samuel Shapiro (in the *New Republic* for Sept. 12, now available as a reprint), in which the writer takes a more optimistic view of the relations between Cuba and Soviet Russia. Mr. Friedenberg continues:

It would be useless to confute the mistakes in fact, the wrong innuendos and false conclusions of Professor Shapiro. Like the good soldier, he believes, and then assembles his hopes and dreams to support his belief. But there comes a time when the weight of the facts becomes so heavy, the contradiction between our dream and reality so gross, we must throw off our delusions, or cease being honest men. And that time has come.

Well, what shall we say or think about the Castro revolution? It seems to us that very few people are in any position to say much of anything about it, in the sense of contributing confidently to a decision of national policy. The situation is painful in the extreme, since these reporters (the two *New Republic* writers) are both men of good faith and sympathy for Cuba. It will not do to decide between them on the basis of our own subjective inclinations. The fact is we want a simple, clean identification of

good and evil in the Cuban revolution and we cannot have it.

There are other ways, however, of looking at the situation. We may say, for example, that the dilemma created by such conflicting reports is an artificial one. The *real* dilemma is in the larger historical situation which presses us to classify other peoples as either *for* or *against* the Communists, or *for* or *against* the United States. Much of the time, the people who are to be so classified are by no means ready themselves to make such a decision. But *we* can't wait. We have to classify them. The need to make such decisions flattens out the complexities of events and turns the flow of current history into a simple, two-sided tape—white on one side, black (or red) on the other. We have to define what happens in other parts of the world in terms of the issues *we* care about, ignoring what the people who are involved in the events care about. If you set about studying the history of Cuba to find out how the Cubans feel and think as human beings, you may gain some understanding of the present situation, but the people here will still demand to be told what Castro is going to do *now*. They want a yes-or-no answer, not a humanistic survey of the past. It is difficult to reproach them for this attitude.

Yet they must be reproached. Actually, to have to make political decisions on the over-simplified basis of deciding about who is anti-communist and who is not is like having to decide which youth or maiden is to be fed to the Minotaur—a son or daughter of your own, or some stranger's son or daughter. What do we know, *really*, of the hopes, longings, morality or immorality of these people, beyond the simple fact that they are human, like ourselves? You can read and read, and you still don't know. The more you read, the more reluctant you are to pass judgment.

But, on the other hand, every human being has a basic need for engagement. He wants to be on the right side. He wants to add his strength, or the strength of his opinion, to the forces of justice and truth. What is the use of having "hopes and dreams" if you can't ever justify a practical decision in their favor?

We started out with a political illustration of this problem, but it has various other forms. Take the question of what we can know about ourselves and the world—the epistemological problem. The problem of knowledge seems at first glance to be a somewhat "safer" issue to have an opinion about than the matter of whether or not Fidel Castro has joined the Communist camp. After all, whatever you decide, you won't be calling out the Marines. Or *will you?* A brief tracing of the history of the idea of knowledge shows that it is not such a morally neutral conception, after all. In a few hundred years, human thinking about knowledge swung from one extreme to the other. The medieval synthesis of the Christian outlook asserted that final truth was accessible to human beings in the form of Divine Revelation. The great scholastic doctors busied themselves with the task of making the truths of Revelation explicit. They endeavored to rationalize the content of the scriptures and the thought of the Fathers into a single comprehensive system of knowledge. Then, with the coming of the Renaissance and the dawn of the age of Science, the project changed. It was still a project in rationalization, but now the data to be processed by the human mind were spread out in the pages of the Book of Nature, instead of the Holy Scripture. The source of truth, under scientific dispensation, was no longer a God, or His spokesman in the form of a Prophet, but a Method. The Method of Science was not unique to a single person. It was a universal instrument which could be used by anyone willing to learn its disciplines. One man might use it improperly, but his mistakes were sure to be found out by others.

So, in the course of about two hundred years, a theory of knowledge was shaped and reached its climax at about the time of the French Revolution. Scientific knowledge was to guide the future development of mankind. The Revolutionists were so convinced of this doctrine that with the unseating of Louis XVI they inaugurated a new calendar and celebrated the beginning of a new age with the worship of the Goddess of Reason, who paraded in the streets of Paris. The "scientific socialism" of the Communist revolution was another chapter in the unfolding of this faith.

But with the refinement of scientific techniques and the development of a body of thought about the practice of science itself, doubts began to arise. Men began to ask themselves, Will we ever *know* anything about the world that is "out there"? They realized that they might even learn how to blow up the world without knowing what the world really is! Knowledge may be power, but is power inevitably knowledge? You could say of this development that the analytical genius of Western intellectuality was beginning to defeat its own epistemological ends. It analyzed the objective world in order to "know" its reality, but the objectivity of the world seemed always to melt into aspects of the technique of observation. Finally, men very much involved in analysis of this sort, or fascinated by its conclusions, declared that all men could ever know about the world was a precise description of how things "look" in terms of differing observational techniques, and that accuracy in knowledge is no more than accuracy in the use of the words which represent what we see.

The problem of knowledge, for those who disliked the conclusions of the logical positivists, became the problem of justifying the claim that there is some kind of reliable relationship between what we see, with whatever instrumentation is available, "out there," and what is *really* there.

The position of the logical positivist is something like that of the man who has read all the reports he can locate on the Cuban Revolution, and finds them so contradictory that he decides that no truth at all exists concerning the Cuban Revolution, since the reports can go on and on, indefinitely, each one being different because a different man makes it, so that it is impossible to *know* about the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban Revolution, he decides, is only a linguistic expression we apply to a collection of reports, which do not relate to a "real" happening, but only to the idiosyncrasies of the reporters. There is, in short, nothing to be done, since the reality of the Cuban Revolution cannot be established. There will never be a Last Word, and only the Last Word is acceptable as true scientific knowledge.

The position of the logical positivist is very like the position of the man who has finally realized, not simply that you cannot believe what you read in the

newspapers—which is, after all, compiled from irresponsible self-interest—but that you can't even get the Last Word in papers like the *New Republic*, which represent wholly conscientious attempts to relate the facts. All they can offer you is different views by different men.

Well, it might be argued, you can still go to Cuba and make up your own mind. You can, but this is no scientific solution. Science is after public truth, not private decision. If you go to Cuba and make up your own mind, you will be just another Lyle Stuart, or another Barbara Deming, or another Samuel Shapiro or Daniel Friedenberg. You will be one of the reporters in an endless series of reporters. You will not get the Last Word.

No, you will not get the last word, but maybe you will get something else. You may get a feeling about human beings in torment and struggle that applies to all revolutionary situations. You may be obliged by the pressure of your heart to say something to yourself about the meaning of human life and man's longing for the good. The experience may even change your outlook toward man and history and the terrible conflicts which threaten all the world. You may decide that the last word is that there can never be a last word.

But if you come home with feelings of this sort, you will not be able to write for the newspapers, although the *New Republic* may give you some space. What you have done is make a philosophic judgment about man and life. Someone will then say, of course, that you could have done this without going to Cuba at all; that you have not really added to the Word, but are just confusing the issue with "soft" thinking at the time of a national emergency. Now the real issue is beginning to shape up at another level.

As you think about these things, it becomes apparent that life is really a struggle to get the Word, and if you don't struggle at all, you are not alive. But what sort of Word are you after? There is in the air these days a spreading atmosphere of recognition that a man must pursue this struggle for himself. It can't be left to the man with the Bible in his hand, nor

to the man with the test-tubes and the slide-rule. Least of all can it be left to the men with the Bombs.

A review article by Thomas F. Curley in the *Autumn American Scholar* has some material related to this issue. Discussing the role of the novelist, Mr. Curley says:

Now a good deal has been written about the satisfactions of mere seeking without reference to finding. That's nonsense. If you're unconcerned with the object of your search you're not seeking at all, you're just circulating. There are pleasures in that, too, as Wallace Stevens reminded us. What I am concerned with here, however, are the effects upon the imagination and craft of the novelist of a search that is both necessary and at the same time fruitless. To put it crudely: the artist cannot find his new experience without writing; and to write he must remember, thus mingling the new and the old in a marriage that obscures both. But if the reality sought remains stubbornly out of sight, the seeker, just as stubbornly, remains himself. He does not give up or turn back. This stubbornness of the seeker in his search leads to two complementary difficulties: the first has to do with the demands which the writer makes, or fails to make, of himself; the second, and more important, relates to the quality of his imagination and his craft.

"If one does not request," Norman Mailer wrote, in a brief criticism of Saul Bellow, "an apocalyptic possibility for literature, then I have been needlessly severe on Bellow, for his work does no obvious harm, but I think one must not be easy on art which tries for less than it can manage. . . ." Mailer, who has as proprietary an air about the future as Ben Johnson had for the past, is extreme but also representative. He wants men in novels with "the lust to struggle with the history about them." . . . Mailer may be wrong, he may be muddle-headed, but he is never irrelevant; and if the conservatives ever get around to noticing him again they will no doubt accuse him of "growthmanship."

To illustrate his point, Mr. Curley quotes some sentences from Mailer's essay "The White Negro." The passage concerns the language of Hip:

[It is] pictorial like non-objective art, imbued with the dialectic of small but intense change . . . for it takes the immediate experiences of any passing man and magnifies the dynamic of his movements, not specifically but abstractly so that he is seen more

as a vector in a network of forces than as a static character in a crystallized field.

Mr. Curley adds explanation:

In his [Mailer's] version, . . . Hip cannot judge human nature according to any a priori standard, that is, a standard inherited from the past. Since the result of any action is unforeseeable, conventional moral responsibility is impossible. A vector in a network of forces, character is seen as perpetually ambivalent, moving in an absolute relativity "where there are no truths other than the isolated (and momentary?) truths of what each observer feels at each instant of his existence." I don't believe that Mailer's version of Hip is true of human nature—quite the contrary, but I am sure it is correct about what many think and feel and, moreover, want human nature to become. The Hipster has, in Mailer's words, a childlike adoration of the present. I think it is more correct to say that he hates and fears the past. If you respect the past, Mailer says, you must also respect concentration camps. That's just right, but not with affection. You respect concentration camps in the sense that you can say, "Yes, we did that and we must take the responsibility for it." It is important to remember that the most "bestial" of acts are committed by men, that is, our brothers, and not, as the language of some modern politics would have it, by "wolves" and "jackals."

This analysis is a bit complicated, but what seems to be happening here is that Mailer, as a man committed to an "apocalyptic possibility for literature," is looking for an escape from the purveyors of the false word, and the Hipster, with his total devotion to immediacy, has immunity to the false word. There is an obvious correspondence between the Hipster's devotion to the moment and the alliance of a certain kind of mystic with "timeless" reality. Neither one has any truck with intermediate illusions, doctrines, or ideological claims about the nature of things.

Writing on Zen Buddhism in *Encounter* for October, Arthur Koestler reports on an interview with Zen abbots in Japan. It is apparent that Koestler wanted to get some kind of commitment from the abbots concerning responsibility for what goes on in the world. The following is a portion of the questions and answers in the discussion, with Koestler's comment:

"You favor tolerance towards all religions and all political systems. What about Hitler's gas chambers?"

"That was very silly of him."

"Just silly, not evil?"

"Evil is a Christian concept. Good and evil exist only on a relative scale."

"Should not then tolerance, too, be applied on a relative scale? Should it include those who deny tolerance?"

"That is thinking in opposite categories, which is alien to our thought."

And so it went on, round after dreary round.

This impartial tolerance towards the killer and the killed, a tolerance devoid of charity, makes one sceptical regarding the contribution which Zen Buddhism has to offer to the moral recovery of Japan—or any other country. Once a balm for self-inflicted bruises, it has become a kind of moral nerve-gas—colorless and without smell, but scented by all the pretty incense sticks which burn under the smiling Buddha statues. For a week or so I bargained with a Kyoto antique dealer for a small bronze Buddha of the Kamakura period; but when he came down to a price I was able to afford, I backed out. I realised with a shock that the Buddha smile had gone dead on me. It was no longer mysterious, but empty.

Mr. Koestler has not really given us "the word" on Zen Buddhism. His inspection of the opinions of a few abbots is on a par with his investigation of "Yoga," reported in an earlier issue of *Encounter*, after he had visited some institutes devoted to yoga in India. But what this quotation does afford us is some insight into one important reason for the popularity of Zen in the West. Zen shows a thorough familiarity with the fact that the report of the moment can never be the last word and has even made a kind of dogma of this view. When a Westerner, suddenly smitten by the fact that all his theories of truth have fallen apart, finds out that a Buddhist sect *starts out* with rejection of all theories of truth, he is likely to be interested.

The Western world is currently being visited with the dreadful revelation that there is no Last Word of the sort that it has believed in throughout some two thousand years. As a result, any view of the human situation which takes the impact of this revelation into account is almost certain to attract

attention and followers. Both Existentialism and Zen Buddhism have in common a dynamic conception of life *without* any "word" at all. For people so endlessly and lately betrayed by false words, this promise of an uncomplex and unequivocal salvation is too much to resist.

It remains to be suggested that modern disenchantment with the idea of the "last word" is not unlike the stance of Plato's philosopher who, having seen that the "reality" on the walls of the cave is made up of deceptive shadows, is trying to get up his gumption to go out into the sunlight. There he may find that Truth, instead of being limited to a few well-defined images of dark and light, is infinitely complex—completely wild, you could say, although satisfying in a new way. In keeping with the allegory, other steps lie ahead. The philosopher must go on out, and then, after a time, he must go back, to try to explain the shadows to the men in the cave, and to relate their forms to those other forms which may be seen by another kind of light.

An undying voice in the human heart keeps on telling us that the sunlight does indeed exist. What the voice does not tell us—not, at least, in the simple words of the daily newspapers, nor even in the more earnest communications of the *New Republic*—is how to find it.

## REVIEW

### ORTEGA'S PHILOSOPHIC PROPHECY

JOSE ORTEGA Y GASSET'S *Man and Crisis*, published in 1958 by W. W. Norton (three years after the author's death), might be taken as evidence of Ortega's conviction that a man's "age is first of all a stage and not a state of his body or his soul." One chapter in *Man and Crisis*, concerned with the confusions which abound when one considers history in terms of various succeeding "generations," continues with an unintended commentary on the author's long and productive life:

There are men who reach the end of a long existence with an uninterrupted vigor which, taken by itself, would make it difficult to distinguish between the high tide of their youth, their maturity, and their old age.

Beginning with his classic *The Revolt of the Masses*, all Ortega's works have revealed a capacity to view the phenomena of what we call "history" with extra-dimensional perception. The "masses," for instance, were not moving towards a deplorable state of non-creativity simply because technology and over-population so decreed—they were undergoing a psychic transformation for which they in part were individually responsible. And in *Man and Crisis*, the meaning of "crisis" derives from Ortega's conviction that neither atom bombs nor the possibility of international fratricide can give proper definition to that term. The crisis in social history, just as crisis in individual human life, represents a stage of vacuity. While Ortega is specifically concerned with illustrating the significance of the many complex ideative changes which took place between 1550 and 1650, much of his analysis applies directly to the present. We quote from the chapter called "Change and Crisis":

Life as crisis is a condition in which man holds only negative convictions. This is a terrible situation. The negative conviction, the lack of feeling certain about anything important, prevents man from

deciding with any precision, energy, confidence, or sincere enthusiasm what he is going to do. He cannot fit his life into anything, he cannot lodge it within a specific destiny. Everything he does, feels, thinks, and says will be decided and achieved without positive conviction—that is to say, without effectiveness; it will be only the ghost of any real doing, feeling, thinking, or saying; it will be a *vita minima*—a life emptied of itself, incompetent, unstable.

Since at heart he is not convinced of anything positive and therefore is not truly decided about anything, man and indeed the masses of men will move from white to black with the greatest of ease. During periods of crisis one does not really know what each man is because in point of fact he is not anything with any decisiveness; he is one thing today and another tomorrow. Imagine a person who, when in the country, completely loses his sense of direction. He will take a few steps in one direction, then a few more in another, perhaps the exact opposite. The world and our convictions about the world make up our sense of direction, orient us, give us the compass points which direct our actions. Crisis man has been left without a world, handed over to the chaos of pure circumstance, in a lamentable state of disorientation. Such a structure of life opens a wide margin for very diverse emotional tonalities as a mask for life; very diverse, but all belonging to the same negative type. On feeling himself lost, man may respond with skeptical frigidity, with anguish, or with desperation; and he will do many things, which though apparently heroic do not in fact proceed from any real heroism but are deeds done in desperation. Or he will have a sense of fury, of madness, an appetite for vengeance, because of the emptiness of his life; these will drive him to enjoy brutally, cynically, whatever comes his way—flesh, luxury, power.

It soon becomes apparent that Ortega, although opposing the oversimplifications of most cyclic theories of history, subscribes to a *cyclic* theory of his own which has considerable subtlety. A paragraph from "Change and Crisis" might be taken as ground for a hope that the "skeptical frigidity" of today will ultimately be transcended, for while the image of contemporary man is so often vacuous—"human existence abhors a vacuum. All about this state of negation, this absence of convictions, there begin to ferment certain obscure germs of a new set of positive

tendencies. More than this, in order that man may stop believing in some things, there must be germinating in him a confused faith in others. This new faith, I repeat, although misty and imprecise as the first light of dawn, bursts intermittently from the negative surface of man's life in a time of crisis, and provides him with sudden joys and unstable enthusiasms which, by contrast with his usual humor, take on the appearance of orgiastic seizures. These new enthusiasms soon begin to stabilize themselves in some dimension of life, while the rest of life continues in the shadow of bitterness and resignation."

Ortega has much to say about the problem of "overloaded culture"—a condition which represents our time as well as the Middle Ages, when knowledge is "presented in a form so intricate, so overloaded with distinctions, classifications, arguments, that there was no way in so overgrown a forest to discover the repertory of clear and simple ideas which truly orient man in his existence." Everything is infinitely complicated, events largely pre-ordained, and mass opinions confirmed by ritual. Ortega continues:

Culture, the purest product of the live and the genuine, since it comes out of the fact that man feels with an awful anguish and a burning enthusiasm the relentless needs of which life is made up, ends by becoming a falsification of that life. Man's genuine self is swallowed up by his cultured, conventional, social self. Every culture or every great phase of culture ends in man's socialization, and vice versa; socialization pulls man out of his life of solitude, which is his real and authentic life. Note that man's socialization, his absorption by the social self, appears not only at the end of cultural evolution, but also before culture begins. Primitive man is a socialized man without an individuality.

Those who believe that the socialization or the collectivization of man has only now been invented commit a grave error. This has always occurred when history falls into a crisis. It is the maximum degree of man's alienation or otherness.

For many years Ortega held the chair of Metaphysics at the University of Madrid, and we wondered if we should find in this book any concern with the transcendental aspect of the human being. The following discussion of the complexities involved in distinctions between the "generations" seems to speak to this point:

By the word *youth* one understands a certain state of the body and soul of man which is very different from the state which both body and soul present in old age. But this assumes that man is primordially his body and soul. My entire thinking rebels against this error. Man is primarily his life. . . . That man whose physical youth seems unfading, has, like any other, passed through the inexorable stages of existence; still young in body, he has had to live through maturity and then the life of an old man. And in fact Aristotle puts the *akmé*, or bodily flowering of man, between thirty and thirty-five and the intellectual *akmé* (with an excess of precision which is not a little surprising) at fifty-one. With which, let it be said in passing, he reveals his own adherence to the perennial error, more serious in him than in anyone else, of believing that man is in substance the biological organism—body and soul—with which man lives.

The essential discovery that in man the substantive thing is his life, and that all the rest is adjectival to it, that man is drama, destiny, but not thing, gives us a sudden flash of illumination on this entire problem. The ages are ages of our lives and not primarily of our organisms—they are the different stages into which the things we do in life are segmented. Remember that life is no other thing than what we have to do and have to make, since we must make ourselves in making it.

## COMMENTARY

### THE BONDS OF POWER

IT may be, as some people tell us, that we live in a great age, a time of high human achievement, but there is one thing about the present period to which these champions of modern times give no attention. All men are surrounded by countless pressures—general pressures and particular ones—to shape our minds toward predetermined conclusions. We of the "free world" may not have given up our belief in the abstract ideal of independent thinking, but we have largely given up its practice. Some passages in a book by Richard Livingstone, *The Rainbow Bridge* (Pall Mall Press, London, 1959), devoted to the greatness of ancient Greek civilization, compel this admission. He writes:

No people have ever used the eye of the mind so steadily and effectively as the Greeks. It meets us everywhere from Homer to Epictetus. Even the earliest Greek literature shows that instinct to see things without prejudice or prepossession, which is a forerunner of reason. Thus Homer writes of a war between Greeks and barbarians, but we could not tell from the *Iliad* whether he was Greek or Trojan. Thus Thucydides narrates the war in which his country was ruined; but it would be difficult to tell, except for rare passages in which he speaks in the first person, whether he was an Athenian or a Spartan. . . . It is by reason that the Greeks achieved the most difficult of all tasks, that of seeing further than the conventions of their age; thus Plato, in a state where women had no education or share in public life, declared that they should have the same upbringing as men and follow the same pursuits and occupations; thus, in an age when slavery was universally accepted, Alcidas (fifth century B.C.) wrote: "God has set all men free; nature has made no man a slave", thus, two centuries later in a world divided by race, culture, and government, Diogenes, when asked what was his country, replied: "I am a citizen of the world"; and Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, said: "Let us look on all men as fellow countrymen and fellow citizens, and let there be unity in our life, like that of a flock feeding together in a common pasture."

The Greeks reached these truths—Plato, the emancipation of women; Alcidas, the abolition of slavery, Zeno, the unity of mankind—not under the

pressure of social or economic trends, but by the power of reason, breaking the thought barrier of their time. It has taken mankind a long time to see that far; even today we have not seen as far as Zeno.

What do we lack, that the Greeks possessed? Or if we have what they possessed, why does it not find more frequent expression? Volumes could be written on these questions, but one thing is clear: the pressure upon us to reach conclusions which conform to the conventions of our age is very great, and it is a pressure armed by all the techniques of modern communication.

We are bound by the very achievements of which we are so proud. The *power* we own confines our minds through fear that we may lose it. We have come to dread with a great horror the free exercise of the mind—not because wide-ranging, independent thought is "subversive" in itself, but because the conventions have become so narrow, so chained by timidity, that almost any sort of deviation disturbs their foundations.

Look at Linus Pauling—harassed and pursued by the legislature for being civilized, humane, *and* an outspoken man. We note that the National Education Association has decided to compile *dossiers* on all those who find reason to criticize American education. Soon it will be called "un-American" to think at all. Is it only a failure in our power that can set us free?



## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### NONENTITIES AND TROUBLE

NATURE, it is said, abhors a vacuum. A similar expression is used by Ortega in *Man and Crisis*—see Review) in proposing that a state of social "crisis" exists when "negation" or an "absence of conviction" prevails. This rule applies to most of the problems we tag as juvenile delinquency.

Young people whose homes provide no sense of goal-seeking are easily driven further into a state of vacuity by the bombardment of unpleasant news about the world. An article in the *Saturday Evening Post* for Sept. 10, "Why Do They Misbehave?", gives an example of this sort of "pressure." The writer is Mr. E. T. Hall:

At the opening meeting of our student body in January, 1960, I read to our school the entire list of front-page headlines from the New York *Journal-American* of New Year's Eve, 1959. They ran something like this: WIDOW BRUTALLY MURDERED; FRUITLESS STEEL TALKS; QUILL THREATENS STRIKE; KHRUSHCHEV ADAMANT, TRAFFIC TOLL 100 DAILY; ENGAGEMENT BROKEN, GIRL SUICIDES AT 18.

To youth, the external world, especially as managed by adults, must present a picture very much akin to what one sees through a rapidly turning kaleidoscope—though without any familiar geometric patterns. If you turn a kaleidoscope fast enough and long enough, the tendency is to see nothing. So between the vacuous inner world of no value, of negation (producing what Ortega calls "skeptical frigidity"), and the kaleidoscopic outer world there is little opportunity for establishing any perspective. What the *Journal-American* headlines emphasized in the way of confusion and violence is also characteristic of disoriented youth—not as an echo of social chaos, but as a parallel development. An article in the New York *Times Magazine* (July 10), by Gertrude Samuels, dealing with the "gang girl" aspects of delinquency, stresses the fact that the delinquent is unable to focus upon any clearly defined goal. "Movement"

is frenetic and aimless, with no "sense of movement" within. This is the vacuity of which Ortega speaks. It makes a crisis for youthful individuals and brings collective crisis to all those who don't know how to fill the inner vacuum. Effective social workers, such as Miss Martha Lewis, of New York's Youth Board, can only build upon the sense of inner motion. Miss Samuels writes:

Social workers are trained to note change and capitalize on it. Though to many eyes, gang girls appear to be a "hopeless bit," the professionally trained can, as they put it, "see movement, and feel exhilarated that we are part of it."

It is in search of "movement" that Miss Lewis has been devising ways to "reach" the girls.

The disoriented young person has to learn somehow that a step out of vacuity does not necessarily make one vulnerable. Bruno Bettelheim in *Truants from Life* demonstrates that the most seriously disturbed children fight to preserve their particular "vacuum," because in non-feeling and non-thinking there is at least no threat:

The children often manage, particularly during their first year at the School, to keep us at a distance despite our deep wish and best efforts to make contact with them, to reach them emotionally. They have an almost uncanny ability to frustrate even our best-intentioned, most genuine attempts to establish rapport. To what degree does the tendency of parents, for example, to bring up their children according to deadly routine stem from the child's own lack of spontaneous response? Failure to experience such response during the first months of the infant's life may cause a mother to despair of her ability to act correctly toward her child. Because of her insecurity, or in an effort to protect herself against frustration and guilt, she may turn to mere routine.

The social worker, as well as the teacher, in the school supervised by Bettelheim encounters a kind of sodden response. Whatever the causes—lack of love, lack of family, or misunderstanding by parents—the *isolation* of the disturbed child is a primary factor. These children do not like their condition, nor have they chosen it, but they are frightened by any alternative. As Bettelheim puts

it: "Entering life in the outside world is for them the supreme test. Though it is a great challenge, it also places a terrible strain on their energies. The tasks confronting these children in their readjustment to the world must be viewed in this perspective. It is a difficult and anxiety-loaded adjustment, which might prove overtaxing even for a 'normal' child."

Putting all this together, we might say, encourages an experimental attitude, based on the view that the crisis for anyone—child, youth or man—is present whenever he fails to feel his identity as a potentially creative being. The overt and senseless destruction of property and the casual violence of the delinquent teen-ager are but after-effects.

A paragraph in *Psychiatry* for February illustrates this point. Ezra Vogel describes the situation which may be caused by parents who attempt to preserve an unsound marriage because of fear of either social or religious disapproval. Dr. Vogel writes:

One suspected that many of these marriages would have been dissolved except for one fact—a child had become the scapegoat for the tensions of his parents' marriage. Instead of the parents' discharging the full force of their affect on each other, they discharged much of it on to the child. One of the several determinants of the emergence of an emotionally disturbed child appears to be that the child is being used as a means of preserving his parents' marriage. The parents have succeeded in preserving the marital bond, but perhaps at the cost of the impairment of the child's personality development.

The preservation of a marriage when children are involved seems a worthy end, but in this case the parents are helping to reduce their children to non-entities. The "full force" of the parents' emotional disturbance reached the child within the home, just as the full force of social and cultural unrest reaches so many juveniles collectively. Both situations work against a genuine "sense of identity," and when there is no sense of identity, a vacuum takes over. And a young person whose

center of life is a vacuum is indeed in a state of crisis.

Illustrated in situations of this sort is the crisis typically produced by the war between the conventions and awakening moral perception. People assume that they know what is "right," and control their external behavior in a particular area, but give destructive and disintegrating impulses free rein in other relationships. Then, when the cruel consequences of their acts become apparent, they feel abused by the fates and seek scapegoats for their pain. Today we see both private and collective crises emerging in these terms. Fortunately, we also have observers who are able to explain what is happening.

## *FRONTIERS* The Motors Must Idle

WE have for review a book, as yet unopened, which presents the views of a number of scientists on religion. The book is no doubt of value, since the contributors are distinguished, and its contents will no doubt supply material for these pages. Yet we shall undertake to read it with a certain reluctance. Our purpose, here, is to look at the reasons for this reluctance.

What have science and religion in common? Both propose to seek for or disclose the truth. While the scientist may be a bit wary in using the word Truth, what he says is bound to relate in some way to the idea of truth, even if all he does is set some limit to its availability through science, or make a definition of the *kind* of truth he is after, or hopes to reveal.

The religionist is capable of more diverse views. He may say that he *has* the truth—the *absolute* truth—about the nature of things, and offer to tell you about it. Or he may say that perfect truth is known only to the Deity and that a proper relation with the Deity may entitle man to obtain such fragments of verity as are within his capacity to understand. Or he may declare that he is engaged in a *quest* for truth, and in this case there is a second analogy between science and religion, since the scientist, too, speaks of his undertaking as more of a search than a hoarding of already acquired possessions. Both, at any rate, are engaged in an effort to relate the known to the unknown and thus to reduce the area of the unknown.

If these are ways in which science and religion are the same, how are they different? Actually, both the differences and the similarities between science and religion are arguable, so that what is said on this subject will have to be a kind of summary of prevailing views rather than an attempt at final judgments. The differences and similarities between science and religion are arguable because the scientist may find what he

conceives to be the spirit of religion in his scientific work, while the religionist may feel that there is something resembling scientific discipline in his undertakings. They are both *men*, and there is a resolution of the differences in this common humanity. Men are men before they are either "scientific" or "religious," so that there is a sense in which the separation of serious thought into these two areas is an abstracting and even superficial procedure.

Nevertheless, science and religion have in general quite distinguishable meanings, on the basis of which some differences may be established. To begin a catalogue of these differences, then, we may say that science defines things in terms of other things, while the business of religion is to define things in terms of themselves.

To put this in another way, employing the analogy of mathematics, you could say that religion is supposed to provide the axioms, while science works out the propositions and devises techniques for making the propositions go where we want them to go or apply to the things we want them to apply to.

We are in trouble here. In general, it may be said that there is no noticeable connection between the axioms of religion and the propositions of science. There are overlapping "spheres of influence," but no clearly functioning connections such as exist in mathematical operations. The spheres of influence, however, stand in reciprocal relation. That is, the common understanding of religious ideas or first principles has been extensively affected by the sterling virtues exhibited in the practice of science. You could say that the growing mastery of science over a certain kind of truth has produced by induction an intuitive sense of fitness as to the means by which *any* kind of truth will be found, so that the religionist has for centuries been refining his approach, which means his thinking about the goals of religion. The bearing of religion on science has probably been a little different. That

is, the influence of religion on the scientists has not been so much through the example of the religionists as in a growing sense of need for perceptions in an area science does not touch and hardly presumes to touch.

But these interpenetrating influences are "behind-the-scenes" influences. They do not establish direct relationships. We know, that is, of no case where a scientist has taken a religious first principle and demonstrated in his scientific specialty the consequences of that principle in practice. Of course, there are dozens of cases where the scientist as philosopher may say that for him a religious first principle *illuminates* the objects and processes his science examines, but this is not a "direct" relationship. It may, of course, be the only kind of relationship possible between science and religion, but to say this we need far more precise definitions of science and religion than we have made thus far.

Let us make a beginning at better definitions. Science enters the realm of human action at the level of perception of the objective world of nature. It *tries* to make no prejudicial assumptions about the nature of the world. Whether science does in fact make such assumptions is an arguable issue (argued with great profit by E. A. Burtt in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science*), but it does not *intend* to make them, and we are now concerned with the scientific ideal and not with the limitations or impracticabilities of science. Science, in short, starts with *objects*. Newton, they say, began with an apple, asking, Why does the apple fall? Physics is essentially the science which makes particular explanations of particular falls of things—all kinds of falls, or motions, of all kinds of things. It tells how (never exactly *why*) one thing causes another thing to move. With the refinement of our knowledge of causation, science has had a desperate time keeping the notion of cause objective—since causes sometimes show a strong propensity to dissolve into a subjective (in physics a mathematical) mist—and this

development of the study of causation has already made some scientists, beginning with Newton, wonder about hidden links between science and religion, but these speculations remain speculations so far as the body of scientific inquiry is concerned.

We are now ready to borrow a helpful idea from Plato. He said that matter is made up of units which are moved by outside forces. This seems a proper definition, judging from our observation of how science works. And he said that the soul is a *self-moving* unit.

Now, perhaps, we can jump to a better distinction between science and religion. Science is knowledge about units which are moved by outside forces. Religion is knowledge, or is supposed to be knowledge, about self-moving units.

We are not sure about how you get knowledge of self-moving units, nor how you verify it once you think you have found it. All we are beginning to be sure of is that a great abyss remains in man's life when he feels that he has no such knowledge at all. This feeling of emptiness on the part of modern man is the reason for the attempts to bring science and religion together. One hope is in some measure to extract from science some of its blessed, if limited, certainty, and give it to religion.

We are now ready to make another jump. The jump is to the judgment that the trouble with expecting science to help religion in this way lies in the fact that, if we look at history, the people who have seemed to *have* some religious truth were always people who were self-moving toward some high destiny. They didn't have the knowledge until they began to *move*. The condition of their knowledge, in short, was a prime violation of the condition of scientific knowledge. They couldn't even begin to move until they made a great and far-reaching judgment about the nature of religious or philosophic truth. The evidence that they had the truth lay in the fact that they were *moving* men.

So, ostensibly, when you call a conference for the meeting of religious and scientific men, you are inviting the religious men to let their motors idle, instead of whirling by, so that they can talk to the scientific men, who are permitted no subjective motions in their character as scientists.

This comparison, of course, assumes what isn't so, or doesn't seem to be so. It assumes that men who have religious status in our society are men who have religious truth. More than likely, the best of such men don't even pretend to have religious truth, so that in this case the conferences may make some sense. What we are trying to get at here, is a description of the common ground that may be reached between science and religion. The common ground is itself a kind of abstraction, just as the separation of scientific men and religious men is the result of an abstracting process, but clarity seems to depend upon going at the problem in this way.