

## RADICALS AND DOCTORS

WHATEVER happens with the Cuban Revolution during the next several months, the people of the United States are not going to be able to ignore it. Americans will want to know what is going on in Cuba for at least two reasons. First, they worry about the extent of the tie-up between Soviet Russia and Cuba; second, the Cuban Revolution was an old-fashioned, patriots-at-the-barricades sort of revolution which is intensely interesting to thoughtful people for humanistic reasons. The Cuban Revolution affords a testing-ground for the proposition affirmed by Everett Dean Martin twenty-five years ago in his *Farewell to Revolution* (Norton, 1935). He wrote:

Since October, 1917, revolutionary movements, whether Communist, Fascist or Nazi, are arrayed against precisely those objectives which have inspired revolutions since 1642. Present-day revolution is therefore a crowd movement against liberal democracy. It openly avows itself as such and in this respect both the Communist and the Fascist are the same.

While acknowledging that the social revolutions which began with the English revolt of 1642 were "inspired and rationalized as struggles for constitutional liberty, parliamentary government, and the rights of man," he nevertheless adds, "Whether such constitutional liberty as we now enjoy is in fact the fruit of revolution rather than of the orderly advance of civilization is a disputed question," and concludes:

There are many indications that revolution has accomplished less for liberty than is commonly supposed. Indeed, such liberty as the nations of the western world do possess would seem to be the result chiefly of the advance of learning since the Renaissance. I doubt if revolutions really solve any problems at all. It is significant, however, that revolutions since 1917 are no longer rationalized by liberal ideas. If the abandonment of liberalism were peculiar to the Communists alone it might be argued that the whole system of liberal ideas was only a

symptom of the deeper economic struggle to support the liberal bourgeois state. This argument, however, is invalidated by the fact that the intensely nationalistic revolutions of the Fascist type are equally anti-liberal. The cause for the abandonment of liberalism must, therefore, be psychological, and we are thus justified in approaching the whole subject of revolution from the psychological standpoint.

Since Dr. Martin wrote there have been a dozen or so more revolutions, some of them bearing out his thesis, some of them mixed in character. The Indian revolution, we might say, brought into being another "liberal bourgeois state," although India's revolution was in principle bloodless and therefore should count in Martin's favor. The new republics of Asia and Africa have had various origins, making it difficult to judge. The midwifery of the United Nations in these operations is not altogether encouraging, and probably we should wait for some time to pass before coming to any conclusion about them.

Cuba, however, might be taken as an example of a revolution which, while occurring in the twentieth century, belongs to the earlier cycle of revolts. The big question is whether the Cuban Revolution will proceed to the "abandonment of liberalism," to use Dr. Martin's phrase, or prove to be a renewal of the struggle "for constitutional liberty, parliamentary government, and the rights of man." It was certainly a *social* revolution inaugurated with a declaration of liberal aims.

We shall not attempt, here, any further evaluation of the Cuban Revolution. One reason for this is that C. Wright Mills has just issued a book, *Listen, Yankee*, on the subject (published this month by McGraw-Hill in hardback, with a fifty-cent paperback edition by Ballantine to follow) which will probably be an exhaustive study of both the events and the psychological implications of the revolution. Of immediate interest, however, is the report of LeRoi Jones,

Negro American author and editor, on his visit to Cuba last July to attend an anniversary rally of the revolutionaries. Riding on the train to Oriente, where the rally was to be held, Jones met a young woman who was a Mexican delegate to a Latin-American Youth Congress, one of nine hundred students who were also attending the rally. She was a graduate student in economics, the wife of an economist, and a mother. The two talked almost continuously during the fourteen-hour train ride. Jones describes their conversation (in *Evergreen Review*, November-December):

She questioned me endlessly about American life, American politics, American youth—although I was jokingly cautioned against using the word American to mean the U.S. or North America. "Everyone in this car is American," she said. "You from the North, we from the South." I explained as best I could about the Eisenhowers, the Nixons, the Duponts, but she made even my condemnations seem mild. "Everyone in the world," she said, with her finger, "has to be communist or anti-communist. And if they're anti-communist, no matter what kind of foul person they are, you people accept them as your allies. Do you really think that hopeless little island in the middle of the sea is China? That is irrational. You people are irrational!"

I tried to defend myself, "Look, why jump on me? I understand what you're saying, I'm in complete agreement with you. I'm a poet . . . what can I do? I write, that's all. I'm not even interested in politics."

She jumped on me with both feet, as did a group of Mexican poets, later in Habana. She called me a "cowardly bourgeois individualist." The poets, or at least one young wild-eyed Mexican poet, Jaime Shelley, almost left me in tears, stomping his foot on the floor, screaming: "You want to cultivate your soul? Well, we've got millions of starving people to feed, and that moves me enough to make poems out of."

These are emotions of which Dr. Martin's quiet generalizations take little account. It is as though the eighteenth century confronts the twentieth century, if we remain in the context of *Farewell to Revolution*.

Mr. Jones had opportunity to talk briefly with Fidel Castro. He asked the Cuban leader what he

expected in future relations with the United States. Castro replied:

"Ha, well, that's extremely difficult to say; your government is getting famous for its improvisations in foreign affairs. I suppose it depends upon who is running the government. If the Democrats win it may get better. More Republicans . . . I suppose more trouble. I cannot say, except that I really do not care what they do as long as they do not try to interfere with the running of this country."

Next Jones asked: "What about communism? How big a part does that play in the government?" Castro said:

"I've said a hundred times that I'm not a communist. But I am certainly not an anti-communist. The United States likes anti-communists, especially so close to their mainland. I said also a hundred times that I consider myself a humanist. A radical humanist. The only way that anything can be accomplished in a country like Cuba is radically. The old has been here so long that the new must make radical changes in order to function at all."

A two-part discussion of revolutionary methods, titled "Politics of Non-Violent Resistance," in the Autumn 1960 *Dissent* starts out with an analysis that throws considerable light on the background of American attitudes toward the Cuban Revolution. The writer, Michael Walzer, begins:

Disillusionment with the idea of revolution is one of the most interesting features of American intellectual life today. Since revolution was never a practical possibility in America, this disillusionment might seem as unimportant as the enthusiasm preceding it. What was always impractical is now abhorrent; it is a part of the process of accommodation. And yet it is more than that, for in the light of recent history, it surely seems necessary to be critical of the revolutionary tradition. After seeing the terror and the purge and all that goes with the revolutionary transformation of a society, the brutal manipulation of human beings, the corruption of culture—after seeing all this we are none of us, I suppose, revolutionaries. We have renounced Bolshevik "realism"; we have accepted, in some secular fashion, the fact of human limitation, we have searched for moral laws and human rights so absolute as to control our activity and our goals. We have

learned that there must be in human affairs a realm of the forbidden, of things which men cannot do. (I don't mean to deny that men, or rather a man, may on occasion have to do the forbidden thing; that is another question. It is important, however, that at such a moment he knows what moral risks he takes.)

But the general disillusionment has gone much further than this; men are never content to be taught elementary things. Having viewed the revolution through an apocalyptic haze, our intellectuals have come away so shaken by the vision as to renounce every spark of enthusiasm in their hearts and every utopian dream in their heads. They have fallen back in disorder upon the practical politics of pressure and reform. I say disorder because the retreat has brought with it no major re-examination of political alternatives. The defense of pragmatic, democratic politics has moved entirely between the poles of reform and revolution. We have been warned that any step outside the realm of conventional politics—outside the parties, the parliament, the system of pressures—is a step toward revolution and totalitarianism. Nothing is seen but terror on the one hand and gradual reform on the other. [Here Mr. Walzer seems to be replying to Everett Dean Martin.]

The foregoing is Mr. Walzer's introduction to a review of the use of non-violent techniques in group resistance to injustice. At the conclusion, he returns to the question of revolution, having pointed out the limited objectives of most of the forms of resistance he has described:

Whatever the social level on which it is enacted, and whatever the forms employed, resistance implies an essentially defensive politics. I do not mean to renounce that more purposive and aggressive politics which is so important an element in revolution. But perhaps, after all, utopias are not established or even approached through the old revolutionary channels: by seizing governments, writing constitutions, announcing decrees and enforcing them with a new police. [He now agrees with Dr. Martin.] Such activities may still be necessary—and if necessary then worth-while—in Africa and Asia. [Should he add, in Cuba?] But in the West today what we must look for in politics is the defense of standards, the protection of rights and liberties, the maintenance of life. These are not little things, and each of them is endangered and threatened by those historical trends whose conclusions have become contemporary clichés: mass society, garrison state, totalitarianism. Against all these, the forms of resistance are

appropriate. Indeed, insofar as communities exist through which resistance is possible, the grotesque and awful future we so casually promise one another may safely be postponed. The possibility of communal resistance, and not the balance of organizational pressures, is the only test of a pluralist and democratic society. When consent becomes a platitude and a myth, resistance is the proper activity of citizens.

What makes the difference between a country where the old-style social revolution may have some validity—in Asia, Africa, Cuba—and a country, say, the United States, where Dr. Martin's general judgment of "Farewell to Revolution" properly applies?

Is it the time-relation of the country to the Industrial Revolution? Does advanced technology make the major difference? It is certain that most Americans would regard the prospect of fighting in the streets and a violent overturning of their government as an abhorrent and useless folly. Are there other factors to be considered?

This question is such a large one that we shall not attempt to answer it, but turn to a very different sort of analysis of modern Western culture—a study of the significance of "symbols" by Dr. Rollo May, a New York psychoanalyst, in *Etc.: a Review of General Semantics* for the Spring of 1960 (published in September).

Dr. May starts out by identifying humans as beings who use symbols to relate themselves to their environment and to obtain a sense of meaning in their lives. To dramatize this view of man, he describes some patients in a mental hospital in Germany after World War I. These men had parts of the cerebral cortex shot away. The neuropsychiatrist, Kurt Goldstein, in charge of the hospital observed that these patients could function adequately only "if their world were shrunken in space and time to correspond to their limited capacities." Dr. May continues:

These patients kept their closets, for example, in compulsive order; if they were placed in environments where objects surrounding them were in disarray, they were at a loss to react adequately and

showed profound anxiety. When asked to write their names on a piece of paper, they would write in the extreme corner of the paper, any open space (any "emptiness") representing a threat with which they could not cope.

Now what had broken down in these men was the capacity for symbolic behavior, the capacity to relate to themselves and their worlds in *terms of symbols*. They could no longer experience the self over against, and in relation to, a world of objects. To have a self and a world are correlates of the same capacity, and it was precisely this capacity that was, in these patients, impaired. They lost the capacity, in Goldstein's words, "to transcend the immediate concrete situation, to abstract, to think and live in terms of 'the possible'." Though we can never draw a one-to-one relationship between a specific *part* of the neurophysical equipment and a specific way of behaving (the organism reacts as a whole or it does not react at all), it is still significant, nevertheless, that that part of the organism which was impaired was the cerebral cortex. This is the part which most radically distinguishes man, the part which is present in considerable size in human beings but very small or not present at all in animals. Goldstein points out, furthermore, that these patients, in losing the capacity to transcend the concrete situation, lived in a radically shrunken range of possible reactions, and in proportion to this they therefore lost their psychological freedom.

It is this capacity, lost to men with cortical injury, which enables a man "to experience himself as distinguished from the world of objects, separate from people around him, to know himself as the one who *has* a world." Dr. May now turns to the role of symbols:

Symbols are the language of this capacity for self-consciousness, the ability to question which arises out of and is made necessary by the distinction between subject and object. As Erich Kahler points out, the symbol is a "bridging act," a bridging of the gap between outer existence (the world) and inner meaning; and it arose out of man's capacity to separate meaning and outer existence. . . . The psychological essence of the symbol is that it has the power to grasp the person as a totality as he immediately exists in the world. It follows, thus, that an individual's self-image is built up of symbols. Symbolizing is basic to such questions as personal identity. For the individual *experiences himself as a self* in terms of symbols which arise from three levels

at once: those from archaic and archetypal depths within himself, symbols arising from personal events of his psychological and biological experience, and the general symbols and values which obtain in his culture.

Dr. May has three points to make. The first, already made, is the fact that man's psychological freedom depends upon his capacity to have recourse to symbolic interpretation of his experience. The symbol is the significant unit in the myth, which connects several symbols in a representation of ultimate meaning. The myth embodies a vital function—"The myth of Adam is not just a tale of a man in paradise who eats an apple in disobedience to a command, but a story by which we confront the profound problem of birth of human consciousness, the relation of man to authority, and moral self-knowledge in the sense symbolized by 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'."

His second point is that "*contemporary man suffers from the deterioration and breakdown of the central symbols in modern western culture.*" Dr. May supports this contention mainly from his psychoanalyst's casebook, but there is plenty of other evidence. He finds, for example, that "the neurotic problems of one decade generally reflect underlying conflicts in the society which the man in the street can so far defend himself against, but which will come out endemically in the society in the next decade." Speaking of the general experience of psychoanalysts, he says:

Now what we find typically in our patients in this decade is that no symbols seem to have compelling power and meaning to grip them any more—not "God" nor "father" nor the "stars and stripes." A decade ago the symbols related to "competitive success" and "love" did have the power to grasp people and elicit their allegiance, but there is reason for believing that these symbols too have lost their power. . . . Since the symbols of love have largely been swallowed up by the needs for security, and the myths of success absorbed by the new myth of the organization man, even these time-honored Western symbols have lost their power. It is not, of course, that our patients have lost the capacity to symbolize, like Goldstein's organic patients; but

rather that they have no available content for their symbols which they can believe in wholeheartedly enough to make commitment of themselves possible. This is a central aspect of the "emptiness" experienced by so many contemporary sensitive persons; they can transcend the concrete situation indeed, but they land in a symbolic vacuum. . . . Since the 1930's the "chaos of conflicting patterns" seems to have developed toward an *absence* of patterns. We often observe in our patients that they cannot discover any accepted symbol in their culture these days sufficiently accepted even to fight *against!*

In this context it is easy to understand the fascination of Zen Buddhism, which proposes, in effect, that the "symbolic vacuum" is the highest psychological good. Or, to put it in another way, symbolic representations of the Real are what stand in the way of realization of the formless reality which lies behind. When images lose their savor, a search must begin for more profound satisfactions. The Existentialist condemns all ideologies and metaphysics (political and philosophical symbolism), seeking reality in infinitely varied functional immediacy, which is a "dynamic" sort of formlessness representing the highest good. The mystic must pass through the terrible ordeal of the "dark night of the soul," during which all cherished images dissolve into the impersonal void, which, if he survives, is transformed into the substance of universal being.

But meanwhile there is *anxiety*. Not ordinary anxiety, which has a particular object, and is allayed by practical measures, but neurotic anxiety. This is Dr. May's third point, which he states as follows:

Our third observation is *the breakdown of these transcendent cultural symbols and values is fundamentally related to the emergence in our day of what we call psychoanalysis*. This point needs to be emphasized because of the tendency among many psychoanalysts, particularly of the central Freudian stream, to hold that psychoanalysis is to be understood as the discovery of a new method of diagnosis and a new method of treatment, roughly analogous to the way penicillin and the other antibiotics were discovered in the biological sciences. Granting the importance of Freud's great contribution in making the phenomena of dreams and other

unconscious phenomena amenable to the methods of Western science and his revolutionary influence on the image of man—contributions which will certainly endure in literature and science—it is nevertheless true that psychoanalysis was called forth by certain historical crises. Chief among these was the disintegration of the symbols and myths in our age of transition, which left the individual in a position in which he could not orient himself or find his identity in accord with these symbols or in rebellion against them. . . . Psychoanalysis is an activity which occurs in a culture when such symbols disintegrate, and it has the practical purpose of helping individuals endure, live, and hopefully fulfill their creative potentialities despite this situation. This does not deny that we may learn a great deal of basic truth about man in his times of crisis, his periods of being robbed of the protection of his symbols and myths. It does imply, however, that in a culture which attains some unity—in a *community* toward which, if we survive, many of us feel we are heading—the therapeutic functions will become more widely a normal and spontaneous function of education, religion and family life. This unity will be expressed in symbol and myth.

So, if we read these varied texts correctly, what the eighteenth century needed was a revolution; but what the twentieth century needs, and must have, if it is not to fall back into atavistic violence, is a philosophic faith with a symbolism and myth appropriate to the intellectual subtlety and growing moral perception of modern man.

We cannot expect the people who are fighting the battle of the eighteenth century to understand us and our problems. *We* have to understand *them*. And we have to begin to identify our problems for what they are, instead of looking for a mysterious "enemy" on eighteenth-century battlefields. For us, that enemy does not even exist, or could not, if we would get on with our own "historic tasks."

## *REVIEW*

### MYSTICISM REVISITED

W. T. STACE, who retired from a professorship of philosophy at Princeton in 1955, possesses one of those remarkable minds which never know how to stop. Some thirteen years ago (in the *Atlantic* for September, 1947), Prof. Stace developed the consequences of a completely materialistic philosophy with the unbending rigor necessary to pursue an idea to its logical conclusion. Then, in 1952, he presented a counter-argument for a spiritual view of life and nature, with equal or even greater power. A later work, *The Teachings of the Mystics*, now available in a Mentor edition, pursues the meaning of supra-physical experience. This book should be in the libraries of those who respond to such thinkers as William James, John McTaggart, W. Macneile Dixon, and C. J. Ducasse.

In his opening chapter, Stace discusses the relevance of "mysticism" to the idea that "a new kind of consciousness" should be a major concern of Western philosophy:

In his book *The Varieties of Religions Experience* William James suggests, as a result of his psychological researches, that "our normal consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different." This statement exactly fits mystical consciousness. It is entirely unlike our everyday consciousness and is wholly incommensurable with it. What are the fundamental characteristics or elements of our ordinary consciousness? We may think of it as being like a building with three floors. The ground floor consists of physical sensations—sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch sensations, and organic sensations. The second floor consists of images, which we tend to think of as mental copies of sensations. The third floor is the level of the intellect, which is the faculty of concepts. On this floor we find abstract thinking and reasoning processes. This account of the mind may be open to cavil. Some philosophers think that colors, sounds, and so on, are not properly called "sensations." These fine points, however, need not seriously concern us. Our account

is sufficiently clear to indicate what we are referring to when we speak of sensations, images, and concepts as being the fundamental elements of the cognitive aspects of our ordinary consciousness. Arising out of these basic cognitive elements and dependent upon them are emotions, desires, and volitions. In order to have a name for it we may call this whole structure—including sensations, images, concepts, and their attendant desires, emotions, and volitions—our *sensory-intellect consciousness*.

Now the mystical consciousness is quite different from this. It is not merely that it involves different kinds of sensation, thought, or feeling. We are told that some insects or animals can perceive ultraviolet color and infrared color, and that some animals can hear sounds which are inaudible to us; even that some creatures may have a sixth sense quite different from any of our five senses. These are all, no doubt, kinds of sensations different from any we have. But they are still sensations. And the mystical consciousness is destitute of any sensations at all. Nor does it contain any concepts or thoughts. It is not a sensory-intellectual consciousness at all. Accordingly, it cannot be described or analyzed in terms of any of the elements of the sensory-intellectual consciousness, with which it is wholly incommensurable.

Elsewhere in this chapter, Stace explains why he wrote the book on the mystics:

Although mystical experiences may in certain respects have different characteristics in different parts of the world, in different ages, and in different cultures, there are nevertheless a number of fundamental common characteristics. I shall also assume that the agreements are more basic and important, the differences more superficial and relatively less important. This hypothesis can only be fully justified by an elaborate empirical survey of the descriptions of their experiences given by mystics and collected from all over the world. But I believe that enough of the evidence for it will appear in the following pages to convince any reasonable person.

The most important, the central characteristic in which all *fully developed* mystical experiences agree, and which in the last analysis is definitive of them and serves to mark them off from other kinds of experiences, is that they involve the apprehension of *an ultimate nonsensuous unity in all things*, a oneness or a One to which neither the senses nor the reason can penetrate. In other words, it entirely transcends our sensory-intellectual consciousness.

In developing his subject, Stace takes us through Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic mysticism, and turns finally to the relevance of mystical experience to contemporary writers and thinkers. Drawing upon Arthur Koestler as an example of one who experienced an unexpected mystical break-through, Stace quotes Koestler's account of his thought—and something beyond thought—as he awaited probable death in a Franco prison during the Spanish civil war. Koestler wrote (in *The Invisible Writing*):

"Mystical" experiences, as we dubiously call them, are not nebulous, vague or maudlin—they only become so when we debase them by verbalisation. However, to communicate what is incommunicable by its nature, one must somehow put it into words, and so one moves in a vicious circle. When I say "the I had ceased to exist," I refer to a concrete experience that is verbally as incommunicable as the feeling aroused by a piano concerto, yet just as real—only much more real. In fact, its primary mark is the sensation that this state is more real than any other one has experienced before—that for the first time the veil has fallen and one is in touch with "real reality," the hidden order of things, the X-ray texture of the world, normally obscured by layers of irrelevancy.

What distinguishes this type of experience from the emotional entrancements of music, landscapes or love is that the former has a definitely intellectual, or rather noumenal, content. It is meaningful, though not in verbal terms. Verbal transcriptions that come nearest to it are: the unity and interlocking of everything that exists, an interdependence like that of gravitational fields or communicating vessels. The "I" ceases to exist because it has, by a kind of mental osmosis, established communication with, and been dissolved in, the universal pool. It is this process of dissolution and limitless expansion which is sensed as the "oceanic feeling," as the draining of all tension, the absolute catharsis, the peace that passeth all understanding.

The coming-back to the lower order of reality I found to be gradual, like waking up from anæsthesia. There was the equation of the parabola scratches on the dirty wall, the iron bed and the iron table and the strip of blue Andalusian sky. But there was no unpleasant hangover as from other modes of intoxication. On the contrary there remained a sustained and invigorating, serene and fear-dispelling after-effect that lasted for hours and days. . . .

Whether the experience had lasted for a few minutes or an hour, I never knew. . . .

In conclusion, Prof Stace sums up his belief that the Indian view, essentially mystical in its premise that God and man are identical, is nearer the truth than the dualism of Western religion—which separates man from deity. Stace also calls attention to the possibility that "a new kind of consciousness" may be developing as human evolution proceeds. In any case, the reader is left with the persuasive idea that "spirituality" will continue to exist through all world crises: "Materialistic civilization is against it, but the good and the beautiful and the true manage to survive from generation to generation. In general, spiritual values manage to survive. And this will surely be true of mysticism."

## COMMENTARY

### TRIUNE MAN

THE disposition of the man-as-observer idea in this week's *Frontiers* seems a little too casual. What is said is doubtless true enough, yet it is certainly not the whole truth, and the tendency to sweeping judgments of "science" is already strong enough to be guilty of excesses.

Take for example this question of man's nature. Man is, after all, an observer. There is even a sense in which he is an "object." The Pavlovian psychologists and the Behaviorists did have a lot of evidence to support their view. Its weakness was not in any lack of supporting facts, but in its claim to total explanation of human behavior.

Insofar as men are moved by outside forces in their behavior, they are objects. There is indeed a "thing" aspect of human beings. Every statistical anticipation of the behavior and reactions of population groups depends in some measure on this "thing" element in people.

The public relations counsel and the propagandist make their living from knowing how people usually react to stimuli of various sorts. The difference between the motives of the teacher and the motives of a propagandist dramatizes the difference in the conception of man which their work represents. Ideally, the teacher has no interest in drawing his pupils to some predetermined conclusion. Any sort of predetermined conclusion is a defeat of the educational process, since the teacher is basically concerned with helping the young to learn how to make independent discoveries. The educator regards children and young people as ends in themselves, while the propagandist regards the people he seeks to influence as means to his ends. The propagandist's ends may be "good," and he may even believe he is helping people in influencing them in a certain direction, but unless he is considerably more of an educator than a

propagandist, he is really treating people as "things."

*Training*, as distinguished from education, makes extensive use of the conditioned reflex. So far as we can see, the training of animals depends very largely on the mechanism of the conditioned reflex, and it has many applications in the care of small infants. But for adult human beings, considered as intelligent moral agents, the technique of training easily becomes a method of brain-washing. It is no accident that brain-washing is an outgrowth of Pavlov's psychology.

Man-as-observer, in the context of scientific activity, has the meaning of absolute impartiality in making a report of what is observed. The ideal of man-as-observer has an obvious merit, yet this ideal can become a sterilizing agent in connection with a man-with-a-mission. Take a figure like Gandhi. What is the pertinent report that perfect "objectivity" would make about him? You could describe his movements, his travels. Nothing distinctive, here. Why not some other man's travels? Then you could report on what he *says*. At once, objectivity is lost, since Gandhi makes a lot of far-reaching judgments about what is real, what is good, and what has the highest value. It is not difficult, of course, to report exactly what he says, since it is nearly all by now in books, and editions of Gandhi's works keep on coming out every year. But collecting all his writings is hardly a scientific project. When you got through you would have a sort of dictionary of Gandhianism, but no evaluation—just the words.

The question is bound to arise, was Gandhi *right*? When was he right? All the time, or just some of the time? How are you going to decide?

The life of a man like Gandhi represents the tension which exists, in any given epoch, between what is and what might be. He is a prime example of man-with-a-mission. So you ask, were Gandhi's beliefs "true"? And if you then refer to what Gandhi believed you find that it concerns very largely the potentialities of human life which *may* be realized, if men should be moved by some

intangible, inward inspiration to try very hard to realize them.

Here was a man, you might say, who was determined to break, if he could, as much as possible of the crust of human ignorance and hate. In effect, he said that the meaning of life is the continual recreation of human possibility. What is not possible today, he said, may become possible tomorrow, if we give our hearts to the project. Gandhi's truth, in short, is a conditional sort of truth. Upon what do the conditions depend? They depend upon the subjective side of human beings, on their perceptions, ideals, and ethical decisions.

Obviously, in order to make a decision about Gandhi's "truth," you have to participate in some way or other in his state of mind, and feel, or try to feel, what he felt. If he was right, he stood upon some far height of perception. How can you judge him without even trying to stand on that height?

So there is in every man a kind of eternal triangle of being—man-as-object, man-as-observer, and man-with-a-mission. It is the balance among these three kinds of identity which determines what we think, how we behave, and even what we finally *are*.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### "CHALLENGE TO COMPLACENCY"

A PAMPHLET Of this title, produced by a group of "Young Friends" in Washington, D.C., tells this story: Beginning with the concern of two youthful conscientious objectors to military service, a Friends' meeting of between twenty and thirty youths prepared a letter for high school students, presenting the pacifist position and pertinent details on the conditions under which conscientious objectors to war are recognized by the government. On May 1, 1960, 22,000 letters were delivered to the Washington post office, for mailing to students. As the pamphlet says "The effort evoked considerable response." Members of the group were often called "subversive," violence was threatened, and the chairman of the Young Friends, William R. Martin, was dismissed from his job as assistant to the Senate Minority Secretary. The Secretary himself, J. Mark Trice, explained the dismissal by saying that Martin had been previously advised that controversial statements made by him while "on the job" would not be tolerated. The fact that the informative letter concerning CO status, and the reasons which led many young persons to respond to it, were entirely separate and private concerns, was ignored.

The introduction to *Challenge to Complacency* reads:

The following report tells of the activity and experience of a Young Friends (Quaker) group in sending a letter to high school students about alternative service to the draft. The report serves several purposes. First, it informs those who have given their support or made inquiries of Young Friends' stewardship in handling this matter. We hope it shows both where we did well and what we might have done better. Second, for those Friends and others who are concerned about the lack of information on alternative service reaching today's young people we hope this shows what can be done with sufficient investment of time, self, and money. It is our intention to map at least roughly the road to

be travelled and some of the obstacles that might be encountered. Third, for the larger community this illustrates the experience of one group of American young people in venturing into a field characterized by both apathy and strong opinions. For us it has been a challenging experience. We invite others to come forward and speak to those issues on which they have concerns. We suggest that they will find they have embarked on a course that is not easy, but certainly stimulating.

Washington Young Friends

The "highly controversial" letter itself, signed by Martin for the group, follows:

Dear Friend:

As a realistic student, you can't discuss your future anymore without discussing the draft.

We don't mean simply discussing what Congress, the President, or the local draft board is going to do.

This is just the beginning.

We mean discussing what you or your friends will do when you open the mail someday and find that notice headed "Greetings."

You may hope that these "Greetings" never come. Or you may be so incensed at Communist aggression and totalitarianism that you are half hoping to be prodded into "doing your bit" in defense of the American way of life.

In either case, you owe it to yourself as a student to think a little about the kind of training you will be given in the armed forces and where it is all leading.

By now almost everyone knows that you surrender many basic freedoms of thought and action when you take the induction oath. If you think it is undiplomatic to disagree with some of your teachers, just try arguing with your superior officers, once you have been inducted!

The main purpose of this authoritarian control is to overcome your human reluctance to kill. This is an unpleasant fact and efforts have been made to sugarcoat this pill. But the facts are that you will be shown how to plunge a bayonet into the flesh of another human being, how to break his throat with your bare hands. You will be trained to drop a bomb on a target that may turn out to be a home or a school, how to detonate an atomic or hydrogen bomb that may wipe out 400 square miles of human habitation with millions of lives.

If this sort of thing nauseates you it's well to think about it in advance. Once you put on a uniform you will not be allowed to express any qualms of conscience about the things you do.

If this occupation could accomplish its announced purpose, saving our families from attack and the moral values of our civilization from destruction, you might think it justified. But on occasion even our military leaders have admitted that this is not the case.

"I have known war as few men now living know it. . . . Its very destructiveness of both friend and foe has rendered it useless as a means of settling international disputes." (General Douglas MacArthur.)

If MacArthur and others are right, as a draftee you will be forced to cooperate in acts which will end up by destroying the civilization for whose ideals you are supposed to be fighting. There is literally no defense against nuclear weapons and little chance of "preserving" very much in a full scale war.

You may find this hard to believe since you see so many respected educational, religious, and civic leaders supporting the military effort. But it is a sad fact that the "Cold War" has already produced a widespread fear, public hysteria, and pressure for conformity.

Is there no hope then? Is there no choice between a self-destroying, world-destroying war and supine acceptance of Communist totalitarianism?

A growing number of young men like yourself have found another answer. These men, from all religious faiths, have made the decision to become conscientious objectors. They refuse to serve in the armed forces and they refuse to make or bear arms. Anyone who has a deep conviction that war is wrong, and who objects to killing other human beings can take this stand. Section 6j of the Selective Service Act as amended provides that no person should be required to perform military service who is conscientiously opposed to participation in war because of religious training or belief. Your pleas for peace are always questionable so long as you yourself are ready to participate in war.

We can love our country and sincerely work for its highest welfare without bearing arms. True love for our country does not mean a hatred of others. It is our conviction that only the application of principles of peace, love, justice, liberty, and international good will will make for the highest welfare of our country; and the highest welfare of our country must harmonize with the highest welfare of humanity

everywhere. Our faith is in security through love, protection through good will and for such we are willing to make the necessary sacrifice. We are opposed to war as a method of settling disputes because it is destructive of our highest values and sows the seeds of future wars. We feel that true patriots build upon the eternal principles of right which are the only foundation of stable government in our world.

Do you have the courage to stand up for what you believe is right? Can YOU conscientiously take the life of another human being?

We are enclosing a copy of a letter which one Friend has recently sent to his draft board. We would be happy to have you join us for lunch and fellowship at 12:30 on any Sunday afternoon at 2111 Florida Avenue, N.W., just above Dupont Circle.

Sincerely,

WASHINGTON YOUNG FRIENDS  
WILLIAM R. MARTIN, CHAIRMAN

An appendix attached to *Challenge to Complacency* reproduces stories concerning the Young Friends' protest meetings and statements as reported in various Washington newspapers. All in all, the incidents related by *Challenge to Complacency* provide a profoundly stimulating basis for discussion among high school and college students.

Copies of the pamphlet may be obtained for 25 cents from Washington Young Friends, 2111 Florida Avenue, N.W., Washington 8, D.C.

## *FRONTIERS* What Is the Project?

THERE are many ways to divide up the philosophical positions that men can take, but a simple classification that seems to apply to the present would reduce all this diversity to two essential outlooks: the one that starts out with the idea of man-as-observer, and the one that sees him as man-with-a-mission.

The first position, characteristic of the age of science, sets out to answer the question, *What*. The other begins with a declaration of *Why* and makes a report on the entirety of human experience in the light of this assertion of meaning.

Evidence for the growing importance of the *why* point of view comes from a variety of sources. For example, there is this paragraph from Ortega's book, *Man and Crisis* (quoted in Review for Nov. 16):

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. . . . 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.

Then there is the Sartrean idea of man-as-project, briefly developed by a MANAS reader in a letter in the Nov. 23 issue, and elaborately set forth by Everett Knight in *The Objective Society*. The primary human reality in this point of view is man's purposiveness. His being is his being *for* some reason, some end or collection of ends—preferably high and good ends, but at any rate ends.

Now this, we shall say, is nothing new. All the ancient religions began with such a view. The flight of the soul to the Alone, its Odyssey, the eternal Quest, the going out from and coming back to the One, the never-ending palingenesis of

conditioned existence—these are foundation ideas of all religion. This is no doubt true, but what is different in the modern declaration of purpose as the essence of man is that the purpose is not spelled out. Ortega speaks of "drama" and "destiny," but he does not write a play of three acts and fit the human being into its form with Procrustean sanctity. Both Ortega and Sartre declare for atoms of meaning, building blocks of purpose, not completed structures. The outcome remains mysterious; there is no revelatory "final answer" in this philosophy.

Whence this plain difference between the ancient and the modern idea of the human being as man-with-a-mission?

There are probably subtler explanations, but the obvious thing to point out is that the ancient and the modern philosophies of purpose are separated by a long interlude of belief in the idea of man-as-observer, which is also belief in the idea of man-as-object.

The old religions—that is, the old religions in their popular or mass-belief form—spelled out human purpose so completely, with diagrams, charts, and so many prophecies, sign-posts, rituals, ceremonies, and adventitious aids, that there was no tension in them. If you believed and behaved, you would make it. The old religions all had their mystical side, in which the tension remained—in which a man was inevitably *on his own*—but mystical religion was never popular except among the few. The great historical changes in human attitude and belief have never been very much affected by mystical religion. The massive redefinitions of man which came in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were sparked by angry reactions to the tyrannies and the absurdities of dogmatic, organized religion, while mystical religion served only as the quiet leaven of an untold secret. How can the silent perceptions of the spirit animate a crusade?

It is true, of course, that mystical insight sometimes produces vast consequences in the world of practical affairs—as, for example, in the

case of Isaac Newton, of whom it was said that "Sir Isaac did but reduce to a mathematical form the central principles of nature revealed in Behmen [the German mystic, Jakob Boehme]"; and true, also, that the mystical ideas of the *German Theology* were a primary inspiration of Martin Luther; but the mark left upon history by these happenings (the advent of modern physics and the Protestant Reformation) has not been precisely "mystical." Mass influences are of necessity converted into terms of popular communication, and in religion this has usually meant, in the past, precise doctrinal, if not dogmatic, definitions of meaning.

Dogma accomplishes in religion more or less what materialism accomplishes in scientific philosophy—it makes of man an object. The price of certainty in religion is the loss of freedom. The price of certainty in science is neglect of the issue of human decision.

You could say, therefore, that the scientific revolution, which eventuated in the theory of man-as-object, did not *really* take anything away from human beings that they had not already lost to the dogmas of religion. The man-with-a-mission of traditional Western religion, at any rate, was pretty well reduced to a being who hoped for redemption, not from independent religious discovery, but through salvation-by-association. Having the "true" religion was a matter of belonging to the correct organization, asserting belief in the One True Creed, and conforming to the stipulations (paying your "dues," observing the conventional morality, and supporting the prerogatives of the clergy) laid down by the theological authority.

It seems clear that the present-day return to the idea of man-with-a-mission is a return that is carefully hedged with rejection of the sort of prefabricated "explanations" of meaning by which, in the past, theological authority gained the power to reduce men to objects.

Man-as-observer, however scientific a notion, no longer satisfies. Man-as-observer is man

outside looking in. He is man without motive, without purpose, a falsification of the actual human condition. Man-as-observer is supposed to represent the perfect "objectivity" of the scientific spirit. But there is no such thing. Every man who observes something is bound to mutter, in one or another of the languages of motive available to him, *What use is it to me?* The idea of man-with-a-mission takes this all-pervasive fact into account, and so can be the foundation of a philosophy which is in close touch with the reality of our lives. The idea of man-as-observer, when left as an ideal abstraction, leads inevitably to the idea of man-as-thing, since the time must come when the observer looks at other men, and because he is permitted no knowledge of "purposes" (that would not be "objective"), he can only see those other men as *things*.

So it is fair to say that Erich Fromm has summed up the new spirit in his dramatic phrase, *Man is not a thing*.

We could stop the discussion here, with a feeling of satisfaction at the present, but there is one disturbing thought which haunts the future. What will happen to our careful avoidance of metaphysics when someone who has thought further about these matters comes along and announces, *The world is not a thing?* Then we shall have problems indeed, for if the world, like man, has purposes, we shall be obliged to add to the great question of the relation between the individual and society, the still greater question of the relation of man to the universe. Fortunately, this announcement is not likely to be made for at least a little while.