

ENCIRCLING GLOOM

THE ills of our age are multiplying. Any month of the year, chosen at random, will produce from such papers as the *New York Times* a large batch of clippings prophesying disaster. Unlike the warnings of earlier times, these prophecies do not come from religious end-of-the-worlders or moralists of any sort, but from the men who are supposed to know what is happening in the world, and what are the "facts"—the scientists.

Dwellers in Los Angeles and its environs have long been familiar with the oppressions of "smog," that combination of air and pollutants which hangs over the city like a malignant pall, causing eye irritation and on occasion producing noticeable disorders of the respiratory tract. For more than ten years, physicians of this area have been calling attention to the serious effects on the human body of industrial wastes discharged into the slow-moving atmosphere of the region, and botanists have pointed out that the fruit of the citrus crop has declined in size and quality from the same cause.

It is now evident that smog is by no means unique to Los Angeles and cities like Pittsburgh and Donora in Pennsylvania. It has become a national problem. Dr. David E. Price, Assistant Surgeon General of the United States, speaking at a meeting of the Audubon Society in New York last month, asked this question:

Is there a connection between the release of new pollutants and the increase of certain types of diseases? Is this the reason, for example, why city people, who breathe more auto fumes, are more likely to develop lung cancer than country people?

Dr. Price's question is considerably more than "rhetorical." He said that it is now becoming conceivable, even if unlikely, that the human race would commit "specie suicide" by saturating itself with poisons. Pollutants, he added, are like the genie that the sorcerer's apprentice would like to put back into the bottle. The genie, however, likes his freedom and will not go back. Price's concern found

expression soon after the now notorious "cranberry" scare was precipitated as a result of a Federal Government warning that cranberries grown in the States of Washington and Oregon "had been contaminated by a weed-killer that had induced a cancerous growth in the thyroid of rats." (*New York Times*, Nov. 11.) It also followed a day after the Canadian fishing industry announced its worry about "the side-effects of DDT spraying for the spruce budworm on Atlantic salmon streams." Industrial air and water pollution have been increasingly serious problems in the United States for years, but they are now reaching proportions threatening to health. (Those who wish to know more about this subject might refer to Leonard Wickenden's *Our Daily Poison*, published by Devin-Adair in 1955, and to Drew Pearson's recent series of newspaper articles on the use of chemical additives by food processors.)

The thing that is impressive about Dr. Price's announcement is its source—the Surgeon General's office. We have been hearing these warnings for at least a generation from the health food people, the organic gardening enthusiasts, and the nutritionists, but now conventional authorities are expressing alarm. It is as though the Atomic Energy Commission, instead of Linus Pauling and the contributors to the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, had expressed alarm about the dangers inherent in further nuclear testing, admitting a serious menace in continued fall-out and the threat to children of strontium-90 in food.

In St. Louis last month, Dr. Homer Babbidge, Assistant Commissioner for Higher Education, triggered another sort of anxiety when he revealed the extent to which American centers of higher learning depend upon Federal subsidy for their support. According to a *New York Times* (Nov. 10) report, Dr. Babbidge—

said that 15 per cent of all operating income of the nation's colleges and universities was derived from the government and that some of the universities

received as much as 75 per cent. He did not identify the institution but he declared that "a technical institution" was receiving the 75 per cent, one in the Midwest 49 per cent and another in the West 41 per cent.

Dr. Babbidge gave these figures in an address before the annual convention of the Land Grant Colleges and State Universities. Commenting, one educator said that the Federal grants were largely for research contracts and not for general instruction. Another "declared that Government agencies should not be permitted to deal with graduate students as though they were 'so many nuts and bolts'." The general opinion expressed by the educators present seemed to be that Federal grants for special research (almost entirely military, one may assume) is pulling higher education out of shape. The grants, the teachers said, are "too heavily weighted on the side of business and national defense."

The foregoing is a mild version of what John Swomley said in his *Progressive* (January) article earlier this year. Swomley concluded:

It is hardly necessary to point out that the vast expansion of the American military machine cannot be stopped or the trend reversed without a major revolution in our foreign policy as well as in our whole culture. But this is not impossible if we begin to think for ourselves and organize for the democratic replacement of military domination by civilian authority. . . . No people can turn the important decisions of life over to its army without eventually becoming controlled by that army.

Now educators, despite the rich plums of subsidy which come to them from the Government, are becoming concerned, with a U.S. Commissioner of Education touching off public discussion of the question.

There is no need to repeat here the heavily documented threat of degenerative disease, emotional and mental disorders, and social disorientation to the welfare of the American population. But what may come as news is the report of similar symptoms in Yugoslavia. Visiting the United States on a Rockefeller Foundation grant, Dr. Branko Kesic, professor of hygiene and social medicine at the School of Public Health in Zagreb, told a New York *Times* reporter that Yugoslavia is

now experiencing the same side-effects of industrialism that have created so many problems for the United States. According to the *Times* (Oct. 18):

He said they [the problems] were divorce, mental disorders, deficient nutrition and juvenile delinquency. The effects, he said, are aligned with sorry monotony to those of other countries that began to industrialize more than a century ago. Except in Yugoslavia, he said, they have erupted as national pathological forces in the last twenty years.

Dr. Kesic said that since without industrialization no modern civilization could be built, "all national forces should be mobilized" to handle the resulting shattering problems. "I mean an integrated medical program which includes curative, preventive and social services which should be under one health administration," he said. Dr. Kesic said that alcoholism had become one of the major threats to his country's public health. "Alcoholism as a problem of national pathology only came with industry," he said. "Our peasants used to drink, but they were not alcoholics. Alcoholism is linked to the development of industry in all countries."

Surveys showed, he said, that young farmers flowing into industrial centers for work mixed with older workers whose insecurity rubbed off on them and led them to drink. In some areas, where the percentage of males exceeded that of women, he said, "alcoholism was prevalent."

Dr. Kesic described certain forms of malnutrition as coming directly from industrialization. More abundant consumer goods, formerly imported and available only to the privileged few, he said, now arouse workers to try to save on food to buy them, since they are not too far out of reach, he said.

Dickensian ills—crippled working children, or tubercular working mothers in mines—do not exist in Yugoslavia, he said. But, as in the United States, cardiovascular diseases now lead all others as the primary cause of death. The second cause is cancer.

We don't know whether Dr. Kesic will be chastised for these candid admissions about Communist culture in Yugoslavia, after he returns home. He seems to have spoken quite freely, as though he had nothing to fear. It is certain, however, that we don't get similar reports from Soviet spokesmen, who would hardly be willing to admit

that the same things are wrong in Russia as in the Capitalist United States.

Meanwhile, America has the distinction of being able to claim a sort of disorder possible only in a really "mature" industrial society. The following is taken from the Autumn issue of *Landscape*:

A small town somewhere in Texas, frightened by the diversion of traffic and business from Main Street to a new superhighway, has decided to take steps to remedy the situation. . . . The local businessmen are. . . going to give the entire downtown section a "Gay Nineties" decor to attract tourists. There are to be new facades in decorator colors, can-can dancing, "old-fashioned melodrama," with horse-drawn carriages to bring passersby into town, and a "Gay Nineties" Week with ladies in bustles showing tourists through the more picturesque homes. There is even talk of growing handle-bar mustaches.

The *Landscape* editor comments:

Texas being what it is, the plan will doubtless be executed down to the last fake detail, but if it were our lot to live in the town, we could think of several reasons for objecting to the idea. . . . The chief reason we feel no enthusiasm [is that] it can be dangerous for a community to go into fancy dress with the sole idea of pleasing tourists and persuading them to leave a few dollars behind. This, of course, is precisely what town after town in America and Europe is doing, only it is called "promoting tourism" and put on an educational plane. The effects of the practice are, more often than not, socially and aesthetically very unwholesome. For one thing, there is no room for good architecture nor for interest in good architecture in a town which chooses to think of itself as a stage set, and precious little room for thought about local urbanistic problems: the aesthetic status quo is not to be trifled with.

Much more important, however, is the deterioration in human relations which sets in when a large and active element in town decides to live entirely off the tourist trade. One of the virtues of small-town business is the personal relationship between merchant and customer; this vanishes altogether when transients are the chief source of income. And finally, what are we to think of respectable families who allow strangers to wander through their homes in return for cash?

Actually, what the Texas town is planning to do is comparatively innocent; it merely lacks dignity.

What those other communities do which use their cultural inheritance to attract tourists is far worse, for with them the damage is irreparable. Centuries-old religious observances are unceremoniously switched to a date more convenient for tourists, ancient forms of folk art and folk crafts are commercialized and distorted for the pleasure of tourists, and, lest tourists be offended, old established customs are often discouraged or even suppressed. After a while, of all the original wealth of art and tradition, nothing is left but *pastiche*.

What is it that has happened to these places? The same thing that is happening to towns and small cities throughout the Western world: divorced from the countryside they once served, not yet centers of industry, but plagued with metropolitan problems in miniature, they have abandoned their original identity, their true purpose for existing, and are searching for a new one. . . .

This is a diagnosis which begins with a Texas town, but has much wider applications. Not only towns anxious for tourist traffic have lost or abandoned their "original identity." Loss of identity is characteristic of modern civilization as a whole, and of modern man in particular. What we should like to suggest, here, is that essentially new human problems have been created by the rapid transformations which Western, and now Eastern, culture have undergone—problems for which there are virtually no familiar reference-points in history.

What has happened is something like the story of Antaeus. When Hercules undertook to wrestle with the giant, he began by throwing him on the ground, but with each fall Antaeus rose stronger than before. Then the Greek hero tried holding Antaeus away from the ground. This worked, and Hercules overcame the giant, who became puny from his prolonged separation from his Mother Earth.

The modern Hercules is technology, which is holding man away from his earthly matrix and has already destroyed the many intimate relationships which once united man and nature. But, unlike Antaeus, modern man can take no restorative falls. The problem is rather one of learning to live in the artificial superstructures produced by technology—of finding, perhaps, the elements of the "natural" in the complex creations of human beings.

The separation of man from nature has not been a simple severance. In addition to the physical separation accomplished by urbanization and by the unending service of appliances and conveniences which have taken the place of the rural environment, there have been sudden breaks with ancestral cultural institutions. The matrix of religious culture—which may be said to be "natural" in another way—has been shattered. Primitive doctrines of meaning and of role and duty have been forgotten. It is not only that men outgrew these doctrines. The doctrines had also become both static and corrupt. The old religions were almost totally lacking in adaptability. Modern Western nations wear their traditional religions much as men wear shackles. The faith of the Church of England, as so many critics have pointed out, amounts for modern man to an obligation *not to think*. Something similar could be said of all the orthodox forms of Christianity, whose creeds date back to the childhood of Western intellectuality.

With the dying out of the role of the sinner who seeks salvation, other parts were assumed by Western men. The new concepts in which men sought inspiration were Freedom and Achievement. They set out to be free, and this meant, for rebels against religious exploitation, assuming a *political* identity. As long as the struggle against reaction continued, the political identity served. But with the coming of the great constitutions of the eighteenth century and the popularizations of the slogans, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, another role was needed.

Achievement filled the bill. Achievement, agreeably to the Protestant Ethic, soon became Acquisition. The nineteenth century was an epoch devoted to the building of large fortunes by the few; and, in the fields of science, there were extraordinary advances which led to further industrial growth, in the terms of modern technology, during the first half of the twentieth century. While this was going on, the social irresponsibility of capital enterprise produced new definitions of Freedom, which changed from a political to an economic concept. Under this development, Freedom was held to be embodied in the Welfare State, which thus absorbed

both the political role of the free man and the acquisitive role of the entrepreneur of capital enterprise. A further change which took place in the idea of identity was instituted by Darwinian evolution—a theory which, while it brought emancipation from religious bigotry, provided human beings with the uninspiring ancestor of the hairy ape. The divorce from traditional religion was completed by Sigmund Freud, who left little of anything that could be called "morality" as a part of the inherited culture of the West.

Modern Western man is thus cut loose from any organic connection with the religions and philosophies of the past, having as a resource for feelings of identity only the rudimentary conceptions to be gleaned from scientific theory, which is confessedly morally neutral, and sterilely "objective" in the sense that it has a great deal to say about the external environment and about man's physical and psychological endowments, but nothing to say about him as an actual spiritual *identity*.

It goes without saying that this is a conventionalized portrait of man—a portrait drawn from the materials supplied by the height of the cultural attainments of Western civilization, with nothing said of the fact that by far the majority of people do not consciously live at this level, but are still participants in the uncoordinated beliefs inherited from an earlier period. But all that these beliefs have supplied to Western culture is the stability of lethargy and unresponsive custom. The actual movements of history and social change have taken place because of the forces described, slowly modifying old ideas, emptying them of anything more than formal existence, and leaving standing only the shells of habitual observance.

To this general picture must now be added the catastrophic impact of two great world wars, with all their consequent dislocations and moral exhaustions, their futilities, betrayals and disillusionments.

For the full meaning of all these changes to make itself felt, it is necessary to think of the difference between the children of this generation and those of the preceding generation. There is little that is solid and sure for the parents of today to pass

on to their children to provide them with standards of value, concepts of meaning, and feelings of role and identity. And the future lies in the hands of these children.

This is not necessarily a disastrous situation, but it is likely to be so in many, many instances. The choice for all parents is between some form of traditional moral teaching or philosophy of life, and intuitive invention and improvisation. In a period such as the present, there is obvious need to fill the vacuum left by multiple break-downs in the familiar sources of certainty and security. This can happen in two ways. It can happen, first, by the revival of impressive monuments of the authority of the State—a manifest tendency in this epoch. Or it can come through the searching reflection of individuals who seek a more substantial idea of the self, of human calling and role, than any which has been provided by institutional authorities for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years.

Last week's lead article, "Always Wear a Suit and Tie," by John Martinson and Charles Garrigues, reprinted from the San Francisco State College campus literary magazine, *Transfer*, gave considerable insight into the state of mind of the typical college student of the present time, indicating that our analysis is not so wide of the mark.

It should not be difficult to imagine some of the things that will happen when men and women of this sort are at the head of affairs—if affairs can be said to have any "head," in such circumstances. The difficulty with any prediction, however, is that another "revolution" is almost impossible to imagine. Revolution against what? Who are the oppressors we are going to overthrow? What is responsible for our bewilderments? There are no clear answers to these questions.

If there is to be a revolution, it could easily become a revolution of Nihilism—a blind flailing against an unknown enemy, a tremendous tantrum into which disappointed and frustrated people explode, without guidance or responsible leadership, unless it becomes, instead, a moral revolution which discovers new ways to send down roots into the soil

of a common life. Possibly, we shall have a measure of both before we are done.

At present one can see only the barest beginnings of such developments. There are the Existentialists, serious philosophers and humanist reformers whose program is mainly to expose the hypocrisies and deceptions of the status quo, and to reserve for man, by whatever means available, the quality of being human—never to compromise on this. Among the thinking portion of the population—the writers, artists, and teachers who, at least, are the articulate members of the thinking portion—there is evidence of a determination to be done with all the shallow pieties of past doctrines of human identity. Often in these pages other symptoms of rejection of the past are noted—the angry young men of England, the Beat poets of America, the unwillingness of thoughtful university professors to remain content with their academic inheritance, the spreading interest in the philosophic content of Zen Buddhism, with its iconoclastic judgment of all conventional preoccupations and ends. There is also a great deal of rude laughter these days—contempt, among the young, for the empty lives of their parents, for the "rat race" to which the "squares" have condemned themselves, apparently forever.

These are the obvious and gross symptoms. There are others which, with the tolerance of the reader, we might call subtle movements of the spirit, and cries of the heart. It is in these latter that is to be discerned, perhaps, the potential leadership of the future—the evidence that the great, shapeless mass of human wondering and anxious waiting may find a focus for its restless energies, a field for its labors, and a kindly light upon its dreams.

REVIEW

"HUMAN NATURE AND THE HUMAN SITUATION"

No special cleverness is needed to review this book by Joseph Wood Krutch—the best service for readers is to pick some quotations and let Mr. Krutch speak for himself. While this may be true of many other writers, it is especially so with Krutch, since his evaluations and criticisms are not so much startling or new as they are unique distillations of important meanings and can be best appreciated in the author's words. For instance, in a concluding chapter of *Human Nature and the Human Situation* (Random House, 1959), called "The Meaning of the Meaningless Question," Mr. Krutch displays a characteristic fondness for the idea that man is not fully a man unless he is aware of certain basic queries:

Any society which, like our own, believes in no transcendent God but is beginning to be nervously aware of the dangers of remaining permanently without "any strong convictions as to what is 'reasonable' for society" might well address itself seriously to three questions. (1) Are there reasons for believing that in some respects human nature is constant and that to that extent man is something not wholly what changing conditions make him? (2) If the answer to this question is "yes," then is it possible for the human being to recognize some of these constants as distinguished from those changeable aspects of his seeming nature which do depend entirely upon the culture in which he grows up and the economic system under which he lives? (3) If this question also is answered in the affirmative, then is it possible to say that certain aspects of his present condition are sufficiently repugnant to that nature to suggest that this is one of the reasons why unprecedented power and prosperity have not made him so content or so serene as might have been expected?

In another chapter, which borrows its title from Richard Weaver's provocative volume, *Ideas Have Consequences*, Mr. Krutch indicates why a good many people may be inwardly ready to ask the basic questions:

Even most of those who are neither Christian nor in any ordinary sense, mystical do nevertheless

feel that there is something lacking in our society and that this lack is not generally acknowledged; do feel that, for all its prosperity and for all its kindness, generosity, and good will, it is somehow shallow and vulgar; that the vulgarity is superficially evidenced in the tawdriness, the lack of dignity and permanence in the material surroundings of our lives, and more importantly in our aims and standards; that we lack any sense that efficient and equitable systems of production and distribution are only a beginning, as, for that matter, are also our ideal of democracy and our struggle for social justice. You may, as a few do, attribute this alienation to "a lack of religion." But perhaps even that term is not broad enough. It is a lack of any sense of what life is *for* beyond comfort and security, and it would still be so even if all these good things were conferred upon all. At best life would still remain, in Yeats' phrase, "an immense preparation for something which never happens."

Krutch searches for terms which may legitimately describe a "permanent human nature"—an aspect of man beyond relation to the conditions of any particular environment or society. But since such an affirmation seems relevant only when it is made by each man for himself, in his own way in his own time, Mr. Krutch addresses himself to those readers who wish to separate themselves from illusory identifications and distracting controls. In a chapter entitled "Permissive Exploitation," he sums up, for example, the alienation of men from any sort of work which embodies enduring significance:

Production is now neither for use nor exclusively for the profit of the bosses. It is for the "prosperity" of labor and the average citizen. But the "needs of the economy" rather than his own genuine needs still come first. And neither socialism nor communism seems to know how to reverse that topsy-turvy order.

Referring to a depression in his own day, Thoreau once wrote to a friend: "If thousands are thrown out of employment, it suggests that they were not well employed." To most readers who come upon that casual remark for the first time it seems merely heartless: "If there is no useful work for these thousands of people to do, then just let them starve." But there is another way of looking at it. If you are thinking not only of their plight but of how they came

to be plunged into it, then Thoreau's remark goes straight to the heart of the matter. A major fraction of the population is engaged in making things which nobody needs. All the arts of publicity are proving insufficient to persuade a sufficient number that they even "want" them. Is there nothing better that the now unemployed could have been working at? Must they boondoggle on a gigantic scale? Must boondoggling be accepted as the foundation of our economy? Or are there tasks upon which all might be "well employed"? Is our definition of what constitutes the good life the real reason they are not?

Mr. Krutch, in other words, has a generous capacity for taking us to task without ranting—and it is possible that those who have to be hit over the head with criticism are too dense to benefit from the impact. As for the predicament we currently face as a result of nuclear threats, Krutch conveys all that is necessary by repeating a tale from the Indian *Panchatantra*: Three notable magicians, in setting out to demonstrate their wondrous capacities to the waiting world, deigned to allow a humble man to accompany them—the Everyman who, at least in legend, possesses simple "common sense." Traveling through the forest, they encounter a pile of bones under a tree. Thereupon the three magicians vie with one another in demonstration of their powers over death:

"I," says the first, "can cause these dead bones to reassemble themselves into a skeleton." And at his command they do so. "I," says the second, "can clothe that skeleton with flesh." And his miracle, also, is performed. Then, "I," says the third, "can now endow the whole with life."

At this moment the simpleton interposes. "Don't you realize," he asks, "that this is a tiger?" But the wise men are scornful. Their science is "pure"; it has no concern with such vulgar facts. "Well then," says the simpleton, "wait a moment." And he climbs a tree. A few moments later the tiger is indeed brought to life. He devours the three wise men and departs. Thereupon the simpleton comes down from his tree and goes home.

There is no more perfect parable to illustrate what happens when know-how becomes more important than common sense—and common sense is at least the beginning of wisdom.

COMMENTARY

FOODS AND DRUGS

THE Washington columnist, Drew Pearson, recently turned his attention to the controversy over the use of chemical food additives by the livestock industry. In a series of three articles which appeared in the Los Angeles *Mirror-News* for Nov. 18, 19, and 20, Mr. Pearson revealed leading facts about an argument which has become so heated that four research doctors and scientists have lost their jobs because they persisted in warning that cancer might result from the use of certain chemicals in manufacturing and by the food industries. This, said Mr. Pearson, is "the real background of the cranberry dispute."

In his first article, Mr. Pearson reported that diethylstilbestrol,—stilbestrol for short,—now being used in the feeding of about 85 per cent of the beef cattle of the nation—"has been found by the National Cancer Institute to produce cancer in mice, rats, rabbits and guinea pigs."

Stilbestrol has in it female hormones which have a caponizing effect upon male animals, hastening the fattening process. This effect has obvious advantages for the people who raise cattle which are to be slaughtered for beef.

The National Cancer Institute maintains that in the long run stilbestrol may produce cancer in human beings, even when consumed in the minute amounts which remain in the flesh of food animals. The Institute doctors, Mr. Pearson reports, say that traces of the drug eaten in meat may stir to activity a dormant cancer in a woman who has had a former cancer removed by surgery. Or if a woman uses cosmetics in which there are cancer-producing ingredients, only a small amount of stilbestrol in food might be enough to start a cancerous growth.

The Food and Drug Administration permits the use of stilbestrol on the ground that it was in use before the revision of the Food and Drug Act by the Delaney Amendment on Sept. 6, 1958, and that tests since that time are inconclusive.

Objectors to the use of stilbestrol point out that a cancer-producing chemical might not show its effects for a long time. The House Commerce Committee said (quoted by Mr. Pearson in his second article): "In human beings, chemical-induced cancers may not appear until 20, 30 or even more years after the exposure."

During the next Congress, says Mr. Pearson, lobbyists for the food, farm and cosmetic industries will launch a campaign for repeal of the Delaney Amendment to the Food and Drug Act, which provides: "No additive shall be deemed safe if it is found to induce cancer when ingested by man or animal, or if it is found, by tests which are appropriate, to induce cancer in man or animal."

So far, according to Mr. Pearson, there has been no action to ban the feeding of stilbestrol to livestock and poultry.

A chapter in Leonard Wickenden's *Our Daily Poison* is largely based upon the testimony of experts before the Delaney Committee when it was gathering evidence, much of it concerning the use of stilbestrol, for the Delaney Amendment. For those who find it unbelievable that the guardians of the nation's health would permit any hazardous practices in industry and in food processing, this book should prove interesting reading.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THE "BEATNESS" OF WALT WHITMAN

WHEN Malcolm Cowley sat down to really work over the first edition of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, he was unknowingly preparing the way for some unusually provocative comment on "the beatniks," literary and otherwise. Cowley's article in the Oct. 26 *New Republic*, "The Guru, the Beatnik and the Good Gray Poet," shows that while Whitman passed through a psychological stage paralleling some of the "beat" poets, this was for Whitman merely a detour into an excusable megalomania.

The early Whitman was a true mystic and a genuine philosopher. His soaring feelings of transcendent discovery carried him away for a while, but the earlier Whitman, who was so well able to look beyond his personal self, finally reawakened. The result, as Cowley shows, is that we have three Whitmans rather than on the first and last revealing his true stature, with the "beat" poet nevertheless best known to literary history. However, even in his most unbridled self-worship, enough insight persists to bring uplift and exhilaration to readers.

What Mr. Cowley is getting at is this: the wandering, untrammelled expression which has so captivated the beat literateurs, will seldom get out of the egocentric circle, unless the writer has genuinely sought to make philosophical discoveries. Cowley shows these discoveries by Whitman, illustrating their sequential development and their close correlation with ideas in ancient Eastern philosophy:

Most of the poems in the first edition had been the record or sequel of a mystical experience, one to which Whitman alludes several times in his early notebooks. As a result of the experience he had arrived at something like a system of philosophy, and it bore an astonishing resemblance to certain forms of Hinduism. It included such notions as metempsychosis, *karma*, the distinction between the mere personality and the deeper Self (which he

regarded as the only source of true knowledge), and the progress of the Self through an infinite number of incarnations toward a final union with God. All these notions were definitely if somewhat hermetically expressed in the poems of the first edition but especially in the longest and great poem later called "Song of Myself."

It was a truly extraordinary achievement for Whitman to discover the outlines of a whole philosophical system chiefly on the basis of his mystical experience and with little help from books. Apparently he had read none of the Hindu classics when he wrote those early poems.

Subsequently Whitman's work took on the tones of ego-worship, thus cruelly disappointing the careful Emerson, who had been so thrilled by the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Unable to distinguish what Cowley calls the "external self or personality from the deeper Self that he was celebrating in his greatest poem," Whitman lived in a heady atmosphere indeed: He came to think he was a greater man, a greater poet, and a greater prophet than any other. This was the "beat" poet, of whom Cowley writes:

There were literary men who described their meetings with Whitman in a tone of fascinated horror that suggests the accounts of present-day visitors to North Beach or Venice West. Indeed one cannot help feeling that the Whitman of those days was a predecessor of the beatniks. He had the beard, the untrimmed hair, the negligent slouch. Although his costume was different from theirs—black felt hat worn indoors or out; no jacket or waistcoat; soft white shirt unbuttoned at the neck to reveal a red-flannel undershirt; coarse trousers tucked into the tops of cowhide boots—it was another defiance of convention that might be regarded as the 1860 equivalent of sweatshirt and sandals.

Much of his conduct also resembled that of the Beat Generation. He stayed out of the rat race, he avoided the squares, preferring the company of omnibus drivers and deckhands on the ferries; he was "real gone," he was "far out"; and he was writing poems in what Lawrence Lipton calls "the 'open,' free-swinging style that is prized in Beat Generation literature."

But this is not the end of the story. Apparently, Whitman gradually realized that he

was no longer making discoveries concerning the deeper "self," and his integrity set him searching for contradictions in his work and attitudes. Aiding this second transition was a humanitarian instinct that led him to devote himself wholeheartedly to selfless service in Civil War hospitals. Cowley continues:

Whitman's beatnik period, however, proved to be only a transitory phase of a life that had several other phases. The best record of his attitude during the period is the greatly expanded text of the third or 1860 edition, which is an engaging and impressive book for all its extravagant gestures and which, after the first, is the other vintage edition of his poems. Soon after it was published, the Civil War gave a new direction to Whitman's career. His war poems are disappointing, with two or three splendid exceptions, but his unselfish service in army hospitals helped establish still another personality, one he would keep to the end: that of the good gray poet.

It was during the postwar years that he produced some of his most important work, which was richer in structure though poorer in texture than his early poems. Much of it shows that he was turning back toward the Eastern beliefs expressed in "Song of Myself."

Cowley's portrait of Whitman furnishes a clear example of the "psychology of the hero" as described by Joseph Campbell. First pressing beyond all the confines of orthodoxy to a larger vision, he undertook a courageous journey "way out there." As with some of the protagonists in Greek myths, he became confused in new and strange lands, but finally he returned, drawn by an inward sense of destiny, with a "boon" to mankind. The undisciplined "Zen" (a contradiction in terms, actually) of our Kerouacs, Ginsbergs, and others, reveals no such dynamism of the spirit. But this, as we have often remarked, is not an age which inspires to self-discovery. Perhaps the time will come when the uninhibited "beat" writers will come out somewhere, instead of continuing to whirl in their own closed circles.

FRONTIERS No More Miracles

WE have material on Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan Movement from two rather different viewpoints. One is represented by a talk given in England—at a pacifist community house in Wales—by Vimala Thakar, an Indian woman co-worker with Vinoba. The other viewpoint is expressed by James E. Bristol, an American pacifist who recently spent a year and a half in India. Bristol's article is printed in the Christian pacifist magazine, *Fellowship*, for Nov. 1. Vimala Thakar's discussion embodies the dreams and ideals of the Bhoodan and Gramdan efforts of Indians who are attempting to put into practice the Gandhian conception of India's future; James Bristol writes as a friend, but one who has experienced some disappointments during his first-hand observation of the course of the movement in India.

Our only hope, here, is to provide a basis for further thinking about Vinoba's heroic program. It is evident that an element of starry-eyed expectations has been involved in the genesis and first stages of this movement—for which, it now seems apparent, Vinoba is himself partly responsible; and it is evident, also, that there is in this work a profoundly important truth concerning what must be done to establish a peaceful, harmonious society. On the other hand, there are realities in the psychological constitution of the Indian people which must be recognized and admitted—the same realities found in other peoples, all over the world—which stand as barriers to the progress of high, visionary dreams.

The Bhoodan Movement must proceed without the spur of Nationalism. It is plainly an altruistic and, in a broad sense, religious movement. Its success, so far, according to "realistic" critics, is no more than a "token" success. And so, disheartened, those in whom the starry-eyed element was dominant are now saying, "We have failed again."

This seems too easy a judgment, as much a mistake as the original, somewhat emotional optimism. The time has come, perhaps, to recognize that the social movements of the present, if they are to accomplish anything worth remembering, can no longer rely upon the stimulus of self-interest. This is a revolution within a revolution which it may take centuries to complete.

Early in her talk, Vimala Thakar reviews Gandhi's plans for the future of India:

He [Gandhi] presented an eighteen-point constructive programme, including the redistribution of land, village industries, a new scheme of education (which is known all over India as Basic Education), the elimination of the abuses of caste, equality of the sexes, and so on. He was visualising an independent India without class or caste, based upon principles of equality, love and nonviolence.

Vimala Thakar describes the beginnings of the Bhoodan Movement in much the same terms as Jayaprakash Narayan's account (see *MANAS* for Jan. 7, 1959), then continues:

The Indian National Congress came to the conclusion that this was not just begging for land, but that Vinoba's method contained the seed of social change. By the end of 1952 Congress was helping him directly. And then came Jayaprakash Narayan, the founder of the Socialist movement in India. He saw that Vinoba was not only collecting and redistributing land, but was trying to change the *attitude* towards private property and ownership. He joined the movement at the beginning of 1953, and with him came the moral support of the Socialist Party in India. By the end of 1954 Vinoba had received more than two million acres of land, and hundreds of youths were walking through the villages carrying the message of the Land Gift Mission. People in India had not seen or heard anything like this before. Social and economic change through the cooperation of rich and poor and without class conflict was something novel, unheard of, unprecedented in history.

And then, after receiving two million acres of land, Vinoba said, "Let us take the next step. With your small, individual pieces of land, you are not going to increase production. Why not pool your resources, work together, and vest the ownership of

the land in the village community? Land does not belong to man, but is a Gift of God, so let the village community be the trustee of it. Let the people residing in the village become one family. Those who want to go in for agriculture can till the land. Let those who want to go in for handicrafts and village industries be provided with the necessary instruments. Let those who are interested in education shoulder the responsibilities of educating the children in the villages according to the Basic Education scheme.

And that is how the Gramdan movement started. "Gram" is a Sanskrit word meaning "village," and "dan" is another Sanskrit word meaning "voluntary surrender of ownership." There are about four thousand villages today where the landowners have surrendered their individual ownership. . . . It is a sort of synthesis of village ownership, cooperation in agricultural work, and family farming.

The discussion of "machines" is important:

The part of industries in such development also needs mention. Generally, people think that Gandhi and Vinoba are against industrialization and mechanization. I would like to share with you my own experience. Neither was Gandhi, nor is Vinoba, against machines, mechanization, or science. But we are 380,000,000 people in India, and we have an abundance of surplus human labor. We therefore have to evolve a pattern of industrialization which is labor-intensive rather than capital-intensive. We have to use all the human labour that is available in the Indian village, and we will need machines—small-scale ones—to supplement human labor. We do not need to go in for large-scale production or big industries so far as food and clothing are concerned, because the raw materials are there in every village. Let that raw material be turned into finished products through the utilization of the human labour that is available in the village, supplementing it by machines. We cannot judge whether this sort of experiment has been successful or not, because we have only just started. But I feel that not only for India, but for the whole of Asia; where there is such a wealth of human labour, it is incumbent upon us to evolve a new pattern of industrialization.

We are trying to get new machines, small agricultural implements, and so on; and I have been thinking about how to utilize electricity for handicrafts, because we have to increase the purchasing power of the Indian people in a very short time. Such is the part that the machine has to play in our villages.

But we need cars, bicycles, fountain pens, wrist watches and so on, and these things cannot be produced in a decentralized way in India today. For these big or heavy industries Vinoba visualises social ownership. We have not yet started to apply these Sarvodaya values to industrial life, because the development of India means firstly the development of its 550,000 villages. In this revolution of social change it is not the towns and cities that are going to lead, but the villages. . . .

When, at the outset, we set up the polarity of "starry-eyed idealism" versus "brute facts," we did not intend to illustrate these extreme attitudes in our quotations. There is a clear "realism" in what Vimala Thakar says, and plenty of idealism in Jim Bristol's attitude. These two writers nevertheless help to illuminate the problem from their different points of view. We turn to Jim Bristol:

The Bhoodan-Gramdan movement is not sweeping the country in the way that I had been led to believe it was. It is not solving the land reform problem and is not producing the sizable economic revolution that I had been led to anticipate.

In many ways the movement is apart from the main stream of Indian life and development. The Second and Third Five-Year Plans put a strong emphasis on large-scale industrial development along Western lines, and although lip-service to Bhoodan and Gramdan is paid even by the highest Indian Government officials, it is evident that their hearts belong to the development of an industrial society that will be greatly influenced by the West.

Yet there is nation-wide reverence for Vinoba and his work. Prime Minister Nehru and President Rajendra Prasad confer with Vinoba, coming to see him for this purpose, and other Indian leaders seek his counsel. Bristol remarks:

In a very real sense these people are in the grip of a schizophrenia which means that their lip-service to the way of Vinoba Bhave is a very sincere lip-service, if that in itself is not a contradiction in terms. Yet the impact of their daily considerations moves them away from supporting Gramdan and Bhoodan with a major portion of their time and ability, which is devoted instead to the large-scale industrial development of their country.

Concerning "organization," Bristol says:

Vinoba Bhave is obviously a very different leader from Mahatma Gandhi. He does not possess the organizing genius of Gandhi, and because he does not follow up on details as Gandhi did, many things are done in his name that he probably does not approve of. Someone is needed to provide hardheaded organizational leadership for the movement. Many had thought that Jayaprakash Narayan, erstwhile Praja Socialist Party leader who gave up partisan politics several years ago to join the Bhoodan movement, would fill this need, but he is not doing so. . . .

There is manifest confusion:

A village is moved when Vinoba passes that way to become Gramdan, but nothing is done for a long time to translate this decision into action. Perhaps six months later a Gramdan worker enters the village. Often he is accosted with the question: "Did we decide to become a Gramdan village? We cannot remember."

Vinoba has now introduced a third idea—Shanti Sena, meaning "peace army." This army is to be supported by handfuls of grain given by the villagers. Noting that "each fresh Vinoba Bhave insight is essential to the building of a new and decent society," Bristol comments that the new idea comes long before the previous ones have been put into successful practice. "Before Gramdan has had an opportunity to prove itself in practice, Vinoba shifts his emphasis to Shanti Sena." Last April Jayaprakash Narayan told Jim Bristol that the time had come to "consolidate," that "Nominal Gramdan villages must become Gramdan in reality."

All that we have to offer concerning this is the idea of the importance of suspending judgment. While what Vinoba is doing obviously sounds pretty sloppy, one cannot be sure that tight and efficient organization is what is called for. This is the old way, the *political* way, of confirming gains. But political methods might take a movement that is admittedly weak and give it a spurious strength on a basis essentially alien to what is being attempted. One can understand Jayaprakash's reluctance to seize the reins of

control with firmness and vigor, when the movement is actually founded upon the subtle dynamics of self-induced efforts and self-realization.

Quite possibly, Indian idealists need to undertake a program of searching self-analysis in behalf of India as a whole, which would lead, perhaps, to the discovery that closer to the hearts of many Indians than their admittedly high spiritual heritage is the determination to prove that they are not only spiritual, but *practical* as well, and quite as capable as Western nations of great achievements in technology, and quite as deserving of the joys of material acquisition. Complex motivations combining pride with humanitarian purposes could easily make ends of this sort morally plausible. But to take from the West only what is *good* in Western accomplishment will involve a discipline and discrimination that are seldom acquired without long experience and deliberate sacrifice. Indian patriots may know this, but confronting them is the articulate impatience of others who are not the makers, but the inheritors, of the Indian Revolution.