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A STUBBORN BREED

IN his *Myth of Sisyphus,* Camus draws a comparison between the futile, hopeless labor of the hero, and human existence generally. Life is absurd and meaningless, he concludes; and only awareness of this condition raises the human fate to the heights of tragedy. Through consciousness, we vindicate our stark, existential situation.

Yet even as we revel in the cruel but at least unequivocal certainty of this philosophical melancholia, we must ask if we could see anything at all by its dark light, save through the eyes of the unresigned portion of our being. Every denial gains its meaning from some suppressed affirmation, and if affirmation has been reduced to voiceless impotence in Sisyphus, its skeletal or ghostly presence nonetheless gives the myth the dimensions human understanding requires. A similar presence underlies all acts and declarations of negation. Since Nietzsche—perhaps since Pompanatius—man has negated Immortality, God, Idealism, values, even meaning itself—in short, everything that mind has ever declared. But he has never, in fact or in deed, negated the process of mental creation. He may build impressive citadels which another generation will call Augean stables; he may hurl thunderous maledictions at his fate, or, led by another mood, hide his pain behind irony; but he refuses to stem the flow of his thoughts. If the human situation is identified as absurd, thinking about it is not so considered.

In fact, we might assert, beyond risk of contradiction, that the inexhaustible aspect of human nature is man's determination to try to define himself and to describe where he is or should be going. Sometimes this is done with pregnant silences or only faint intimations. If, for example, one shares Camus' view of man living out a futile existence in an indifferent or hostile universe, its face-value reading suggests an even greater futility in philosophizing about him. Yet Camus went on philosophizing. Even if men have at times denigrated in theory the value of their thoughts, their acts communicated quite another judgment and meaning.

Thinking about these things makes for a certain self-consciousness on the part of anyone who contemplates adding to the list of statements about the human condition, or criticizing statements already available. There is now the question: In what way will it be useful to theorize about man's purpose, or the direction in which history seems to be going? Is not the attempt to abstract from experience, to construct conceptual universes, more reminiscent of Sisyphus' labors than indicative of the hidden "object"—life itself?

Existence is an irreducible given: initially, it appears to have been externally imposed on us. But our various conceptual universes—in which we try to find meaning, and which seem to have generated more cause for anguish than for contentment—originate from within. If, with the Gods that condemned Sisyphus (not to speak of the Zen philosophers), we agree that there is "no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor," it follows that man *qua* philosopher often appears in the guise of a Sisyphus who reaches the end of his "rationale" of life by sentencing himself to a hopeless destiny with no salvation in sight.

Such, at any rate, is the indictment that contemporary "scientific" social scientists, under the catch-all banner of Behavioralism, make of philosophy. By constructing a model of man which eliminates the variable of Free Choice—"irrationality" is a factor which will eventually be calculable and quantifiable, once psychology, sociology and related sciences sharpen their methodological tools—the behavioral school challenges the very raison *d'être* of philosophy. It

also removes the need for historical intelligence (as Roderick Seidenberg discovered, to his sorrow, years ago).

Plainly, if philosophy in its broadest sense is concerned with the illumination and justification of purpose, then some kind of indeterminacy must have its place in the universe. But if we postulate that men are "behavioral units" who are totally shaped by forces and factors extrinsic to themselves, and most certainly to any illusory metaphysical human nature, then indeed the scope for speculation about ends and meaning is considerably reduced, if not abolished entirely. Of course, if the new science ever attains its goal of reducing all the "variables" that affect man's behavior to an X-number of determinants, then philosophy will die a natural death. Thus far, this has not been achieved. (So we could maintain that behavioral science, like philosophy, also "creeps in its petty pace from day to day," achieving its own kind of dusty death, but this argument, if won, would be even less than a Pyrrhic victory—only a telling jibe between competitors who are both in flight.)

What will rid our science-afflicted philosophy of this body of pestilential death by abstractions? History, for all the indigestibility of its odd-shaped facts, offers a means of decentralizing the errors of abstract analysis. It breaks in on the nice symmetry with the thumping contradictions of human acts. Yet it may come as a friend. H. Stuart Hughes, in *Consciousness and Society*, contests for the meaning of history, and *any* defense of meaning is a blow struck for philosophy, these days. The current tendency to restrict and diminish the importance of the realm of conscious choice, he says, has not robbed "the historian of his traditional function." The reductive activities of the social scientists can, on the contrary, disclose to the historian the reason why he was drawn to his field.

> This subject matter [Mr. Hughes writes], we now realize, cannot possibly be repetitive. For the essence of history is *change*—and change must be at least partially the result of conscious mental activity. Somewhere at some time someone must have decided to do something.

We are back in the realm of choice, and here the historian and the philosopher meet on common ground. Both have been threatened—if not practically throttled—by the new Scientism which would emasculate man of those faculties which are the *sine qua non* of humanistic investigation. (For an effective defense of the reality of human choice, recognized in current history, see Michael Polanyi's "The Message of the Hungarian Revolution" in the Autumn *American Scholar*.)

The most patent (to us) defect of the anti-humanist trend in social science is probably its—not mere indifference, but—*obliviousness* to history. It cannot even attempt a theoretical explanation of change because it denies certain intrinsic elements of human nature as irreducible, autonomous factors—"independent variables," in the Behavioral language. By rejecting all philosophical speculation about human nature on the ground that it will not submit to empirical verification, Behavioralism has simply driven its (unlovely) metaphysics underground. The refusal to consider "Why?" a legitimate concern of social theory does not alter its importance; it only evades the issue.

There was a time, however, when this evasion was conscious and performed for expedient cause. Writing on methodology in the social sciences, Max Weber pointed out that only as an object could man be made amenable to objective, external, scientific observation. Man as subject escapes this sort of inquiry, yet inasmuch as the mainsprings of human activity are "inner," empirical observation of external behavior, no matter how accurately recorded, will give us a fragmentary view of man. To complete the picture we need to know the "why" of human action. Weber recognized this and suggested that knowledge of these inner springs of action could be approximated by *"verstehen"*—meaning, by intuitive understanding. Yet this sense of the need for symmetry on the part of Weber was soon

forgotten; social science came to ignore and bypass these thorny epistemological problems, with the result that today it is far less effective in explaining any human happening of importance than the work of its founders and predecessors.

What does it mean to speak of man as *subject?* What justification is there for Weber's insistence upon man as subject, in contrast to his object-role? This, after all, is the central issue in the tug-of-war between the "scientific" and the "humanistic" approaches. Well, there is absolute contradiction between human freedom and predictability, as Boethius, opposing another school of determinists, long ago pointed out. Man, the subject, balks at neat categorization and his behavior eludes statistical explanation. Dostoevsky put it well in *Notes from Underground:*

> You Gentlemen have taken your whole register of human advantages from the averages of statistical figures and politico-economic formulas. . . . Shower upon man every earthly blessing, drown him in a sea of happiness, so that nothing but bubbles of bliss can be seen on the surface; give him *economic prosperity* such that he should have nothing else to do but sleep, eat cakes, and busy himself with the continuation of his species; and even then, out of sheer ingratitude, sheer spite, man would play you some nasty trick. He would even risk his cakes and would desire the most fatal rubbish, the most *uneconomical* absurdity, simply to introduce into all this positive good sense his final fantastic element . . . simply to prove to himself—as though that were necessary—that men are still men and not the keys of a piano. . . . The whole work of man really seems to consist in nothing but proving to himself that he is a man and not a piano key.

This is man's real "work"—something that social science has totally ignored. It seems incontrovertible that one cannot say anything about man without speaking of purpose in the same breath. This is what is meant by *subject;* the subject is the man who ponders goals, makes choices, wills. Philosophy is the study of man as subject, and also of his frustrations, conceived as possibly unnecessary or at least mutable. What is philosophy but the constant search for meaning—the ultimate validation of purpose—as well as the examination of the criteria underlying our choices? Both activities are essential if we are to be effective as subjects—or, in another vocabulary, "whole." The lack of consensus on these matters may be simply a here-and-now existential fact, by no means invalidating the whole enterprise. If the latter should be the case, then Sisyphus is indeed our culture-hero, our one true god before all others.

If we generalize as "philosophizing" man's unrelenting attempt to determine his role in the universe, and to judge the direction in which he is or should be moving, there are certain obvious conceptual problems inherent in the endeavor. The most important problem is epistemological: How can we be sure that what we know is knowledge? Can any intellectual formulation of the human situation attain a validity that will account for and then transcend the particular historical and cultural conditions in which it was conceived? Is there a way out of the relativistic trap? Or do all definitions of the self merely reflect context? Must history be collective solipsism? Or is there a kind of philosophic questioning of history that might reveal a continuity with meaning, a pattern containing value?

These questions ought perhaps to remain unanswered. But since the lesson of Sisyphus is before us, we know that men are going to *try* to answer them. There's no stopping them, and there's no stopping ourselves from trying to measure and to learn from—take hope in—what they say. Frank E. Manual's *Shapes of Philosophical History* (Stanford University Press, 1965, $4.75), originally a series of seven lectures, seems an unprepossessed and lucid contribution for our attention.

Manual's book is not only a delight to read; it focuses directly on the close relationship between man's perception of himself and his view of history. The various shapes which philosophical history has assumed reflect the diverse images in

which man has seen himself. The model of man an age adopts sets the outward bounds of the movement of history. Alternatively, our view of time and its direction delimits the measure of man. Philosophizing about history and speculating on the human situation are inseparable; and both seem to be psychological necessities. Prof. Manual writes:

> My position with respect to these philosophies of history is analogous to that of a modern mythographer of the psychological persuasion who may concede that the myths are false in a commonsensical way, but who has to confess that an important part of him still lives in a mythopoeic world. The urge to place himself in a total time sequence—the real impetus to philosophical history—seems to have possessed Western man for more than two thousand years; and it is probably stronger in our culture than in most others we know. This is the empirical point from which I start.

Manual traces the convolutions and peregrinations of this "urge [of man] to place himself in a total time sequence" from the first Christian attempts to mount an offensive against the earlier pagan conceptions of Greek and Roman historians, down to the present. In retrospect, he shows that this confrontation has given rise to two "archetypal shapes of philosophical history," which "are today still recognizable as competing intellectual and emotional alternatives, and we are continually choosing between them." These modes of historical perception are (1) the cyclical, symbolized by Ixion's wheel, and (2) the linear-progressive, epitomized by Jacob's ladder.

What emerges, unmistakably, from Manual's analysis is that the choice between these two views of history is based upon inner, subjective criteria:

> The historical world-views known as philosophies of history are mirrors of the mind and sensibility of the ages in which they were composed, but most magical mirrors. Once an image is frozen upon them, men continue to see their portraits in that fixed image, long after they themselves have changed. . . .
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> If we follow these two shapes of philosophical history, the cyclical and the progressive, from the early centuries of the Christian era through the present, they will reveal themselves to be less a logical than a psychological polarity.

That the position we take with respect to history hinges on how we think about ourselves is the crux. And since thinking about ourselves is a wide-open undertaking, we cannot really expect to achieve "definitive" or generally acceptable statements about the meaning of history for at least some time to come. But since man, in his character of subject, is both the protagonist and the author of history (he makes it, then writes about what he makes), he is understandably concerned to find out how much of it is amenable to explanation and, possibly, to control. Manual asks: "When we finally select an identity for historical man, whose role are we defining, in the most intimate, psychological sense, but our own?"

This choice is always finally based upon what man sees when he introspects. Since introspection sometimes shows gods, at other times devils, so with theories of history, which are constructed along the sliding scale of two great interdependent variables—self-affirmation and self-denigration. And the combinations of the two seem well-nigh infinite. Prof. Manual seems to be saying something like this when he observes that the contrasting shapes of philosophical history "reveal themselves to be less a logical than a psychological polarity." Naturally, with this as the origin of history-making, the question of "objective, scientific validation" in respect to interpretations of history will obviously remain a conundrum without solution until science itself acquires an entirely new meaning. A passage recently quoted from Ortega in these pages has a filling-out pertinence here:

> If history, which is the science of human lives, were or could be exact, it would mean that men were flints, stones, physiochemical bodies, and nothing else. But then one would have neither history, nor physics, for stones, more fortunate, if you like, than men, do not have to create science in order to be what they are, namely stones.

It follows that we have no reason to lament the inherently subjective, and hence formally relativist, nature of every effort to understand human history. Anything else would require us to redefine ourselves as objects, thus putting an end to history. Our lack of certainty in historical studies grows out of the subject-matter, not from our method, which may in its way be very exact—faithful, that is, to what is observed. While it is true enough that the great mass of men seem to have been no more than chattels of fate throughout an immeasurable past, we do not really know much about the inner lives of all those people, while the manifest capacity of some to shape their destiny may be reasonably assumed to be a potentiality of all. A man's a man for a' that. The fact remains, as Stuart Hughes said, that change in history is the result of conscious activity on the part of men acting as subjects.

The shapes of philosophical history which Manual traces out through time are, as he says, "mirrors of the mind"—that is, mirrors of what men are aware of. A larger vision of the pattern of history, then, will require, not a great deal of "research," although this may be useful, but widening and deepening awareness. The epistemological difficulties in seeking this are directly related to the problem of understanding the self. One might say that an account of the human situation in universally valid terms would mean transcending particulars without losing sight of any of them. Perhaps, since each one of us attempts this from a different point on the great curve of growing and changing awareness, the most that can be hoped for is some kind of "family resemblance" in understandings of history. For the present, that seems a great deal to look forward to.

But we can try for a universal vision, anyhow. The very act of attempting to determine the confines of consciousness by going "beyond" them may be the only possible way of extending them! W. Macneile Dixon has given us a more encouraging version of the Sisyphusian situation—

> Our business is not to solve problems beyond mortal powers, but to see to it that our thoughts are not unworthy of great themes.

REVIEW
THE LONG WAY HOME

THERE are probably earlier instances, but the first evidence we recall of self-recognition of unwarranted assumption of "authority" on the part of the psychotherapist is in Trigant Burrow's book, *The Social Basis of Consciousness* (1927). There Dr. Burrow tells how he was conducting a class involving an "analysis" of one of the students, when a very bright but "impertinent" member of the class proposed an exchange of roles—he, the student, would take the analyst's chair, and Burrow would be the student. As the young man bored in at him, Burrow's personal resistance grew to monumental dimensions. The student's easy show of "authority" was unforgivably offensive, it seemed; but Burrow, instead of reacting, honestly concluded that the "chair" of the analyst was a mere symbol of authority which could endow anyone who sat in it with a status to which he had no real claim. He decided that his loss of emotional stability when the roles were exchanged was proof of his own ignorance. He put this realization in the terms of his theoretical synthesis:

> It has not yet been recognized . . . that we who are psychoanalysts are ourselves theorists, that we also are very largely misled by an unconscious that is social, that we too are neurotic, in so far as every expression but that of life in its native simplicity is neurotic.

For general definition, we might call this Taoistic self-discovery. It is an illumination which assumes many forms, but since we are on the subject of psychotherapy, some further illustrations may be taken from this field. Back in 1952 Carl Rogers set down some thoughts which he presented at a Harvard conference that year. Here are some of the essentials:

> My experience has been that I cannot teach another person how to teach. . . . It seems to me that anything that can be taught to another is relatively inconsequential, and has little or no influence on human behavior. . . . I have come to feel that only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning. Such self-discovered learning, truth that has been personally appropriated and assimilated in experience, cannot be directly communicated to another. As soon as an individual tries to communicate much experience directly, often with a quite natural enthusiasm, it becomes teaching, and its results are inconsequential. . . .
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> When I try to teach, as I do sometimes, I am appalled by the results, which seem a little more than inconsequential, because sometimes the teaching appears to succeed. When this happens I find that the results are damaging. It seems to cause the individual to distrust his own experience, to stifle significant learning. . . . As a consequence, I realize that I am only interested in being a learner, preferably learning things that matter, that have some significant influence on my behavior. . . . I find that one of the best, but most difficult ways for me to learn is to drop my own defensiveness, at least temporarily, and to try to understand the way in which his experience seems and feels to another person. I find that another way of learning for me is to state my own uncertainties, to try to clarify my puzzlements, and thus get closer to the meaning that my experience seems to have.

There are elements of high excitement here, for Dr. Rogers seems to be declaring the same kind of discovery that Socrates made, causing the Oracle to call him the wisest man in all Athens. And what Rogers says about "teaching" is exactly what Leonard Nelson says, in other terms, about the teaching of philosophy, in his exegesis of the Socratic Method. Nelson's all-important contention is that the teacher must not "teach" his students anything. The bright teacher, the man of skillful intellect and rich imagination, has a terrible time suppressing in himself the tendency to "instruct" his pupils, to try to make things a little "easier" for them, to lead them over the rough spots. Of students so assisted, Nelson says:

> I stand ready to demonstrate in a Socratic discussion that those students will still lack everything that would enable them to defend what they have learned. The key to this riddle is to be found in Goethe's words: 'One sees only what one already knows."

Here is a first principle concerning the nature of man. And what Nelson says about the

defenselessness of students who have been helped in "what" they think is probably also a major secret of the success of the Synanon Game or small-s synanon. The practice of the Socratic method is to strip those participating of what they only "think" they know, but cannot really defend. The stripping process enables a man to find out what his principles are, and whether they are really good enough. Education and healing are thus seen as an identical process, as they must be, at root. Nelson elaborates:

> It is futile to lay a sound, clear, and well-grounded theory before the students; futile though they respond to the invitation to follow in their thinking. It is even useless to point out to them the difficulties they would have to overcome in order to work out such results independently. If they are to become independent masters of philosophical theory, it is imperative that they go beyond the mere learning of problems and their difficulties; they must wrestle with them in practical application so that, through day-to-day dealing with them, they may learn to overcome them with all their snares and pitfalls and diversities of form. [An] instructor's lecture, . . . delivered "in language molded upon subtle abstractions," just because of its definiteness and clearness, will obscure the difficulties that hamper the development of this very lucidity of thought and verbal precision. The outcome will be that in the end only those already expert in Socratic thinking will assimilate the philosophical substance and appreciate the solidness and originality of the exposition.

Dr. Rogers incidentally verifies another of Nelson's contentions, which is that philosophy needs to get its axioms of ontology and epistemology from psychology. To describe the nature of real learning as Dr. Rogers has done is to produce an axiom of this sort. There are "stately mansion" dimensions added to the hackneyed counsel, "Be yourself," in Dr. Rogers' musings.

Again, we urge readers to get Nelson's book, put out by Dover in paperback ($1.95) last year—*Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy*. And also to read Havelock's *Preface to Plato,* which makes it clear that the deposit of conventional opinions against which the philosopher must contend, and which defeats the educational process, is what Plato is fighting in his objection to the "poets."

There is large encouragement in the fact that powerful intellectual and moral forces in our culture are driving toward these general views with the kind of insistence displayed by water seeking its own level. This is a way of saying that more and more people are becoming determined to "be themselves." An extract from a paper by Richard E. Farson, of the Western Behavioral Sciences Institute, illustrates this trend. Writing on "Paradoxes in Consulting with Community Organizations," Dr. Farson says:

> . . . let me simply list the paradoxes which a psychologist encounters—which I, at least, have encountered, in consulting with organizations.
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> 1. Compared to other consultants, the psychologist knows the least, yet he is expected to know the most.
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> For some reason [mainly, those terrible "poets"], even though they certainly should know better by this time, people expect the psychologist to explain everything, know how to handle any situation, and be able to provide answers to almost any question. Actually, of course, it's just the other way around—we can explain very little, handle very few situations, and we have hardly any answers. Our solid knowledge is meager—some say our science is about where physics was at the time of Galileo.
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> 2. A corollary to the first paradox, however, is that as little as the psychologist knows, it is still a great deal more than the organization is able to accept.
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> People demand a great deal from the psychological consultant, but are unwilling to make use of his ideas and advice when offered.
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> The organization that needs a consultant most is able to profit least. It seems to take a fairly healthy organization even to recognize the need for help, and the more healthy the organization the more growth and change is possible. The analogy with psychotherapy is clear—the psychotherapist just isn't much help to sick people, but healthy people can profit greatly. Thus a consultant can't be of much help to a sick organization, but a healthy organization can make good use of him.

Well, as Nelson says, if you know the stuff beforehand, you can recognize solid merit and originality.

This is not a "pure" illustration, of course. It comes out of the structure of our over-organized, technologized, bewildered, often corrupt, acquisitive society. How can you get any "truth" *that* way? This is equivalent to saying to Dr. Farson that he had better get his beggar's bowl from headquarters (wherever *that* is) and go down to the market place. But the people who say this ought to go there first, themselves. They might find that, unlike the Athenian agora, our market places do not represent concentrations of inquiring minds, but only the blind leading the blind. Meanwhile, it's pretty hard to stop the infectious spread of self-knowledge, once it gets started, and it can get started almost anywhere. And from first to last, this process of its spread, wherever it begins, throws off little flying time-bombs of incidental honesty which home on artificiality and pretense. It seems obvious that an awful lot of these bombs will have to go off before the culture is ready for *pure* Socratic inquiry. But we'll get there, some day.

COMMENTARY
ONE STEP AT A TIME

OUR lead article, intent upon the content of Prof. Manual's *Shapes of Philosophical History*, neglects to speak of what a delight this book is for the reader. Historiography, we venture to say, has not had a writer of such finish and aplomb since Carl Becker with his *Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* and the essays in *Every Man his own Historian.* We might call Becker the last of the great relativists. Prof. Manual has all the sagacity of the relativist for armament against too easy a settlement of the mysteries of history, yet he goes one wary step beyond—as a man must, once the essential lessons of skepticism have been digested. In his last chapter, he looks for what "agreement" may be discerned among the "four groups of philosophical historians" he has been considering, and offers this discovery:

> . . . much to my amazement, I have found that beneath the surface there is a consensus, albeit an uneasy one, among a substantial body of twentieth-century writers who have examined the historical process in its totality and have ventured to predict its future. They are agreed that the next step either must or is likely to entail a spiritualization of mankind and a movement away from the present absorption of power and instinctual existence. Toynbee uses the term "etherialisation"; in Teilhard de Chardin's private language it is hominisation; the Christian theologians speak in more traditional terms of a recrudescence of religious faith; and Karl Jaspers of a second axial period of spirituality like the age of the prophets, of Buddha, and of Confucius. *Consensus populi* was long ago discarded as a criterion of truth; the consensus of philosophers of history may be an even more dubious witness, but there it stands.

Looking back on the horrors of the first half of the twentieth century, one may find it difficult to credit "the assurances of the prophets of the new spirituality," which often seem "utopian, even a hollow joke." So Prof. Manual concludes:

> As a skeptic I am reluctant to receive the witness of the heralds of the new spirit, and yet it is pouring in upon me from so many diverse sources and directions that I am on the point of surrendering my belief in the ordinary evidence of the senses. I stand on the verge of accepting the new dispensation. But in what version? Is this triumph of the spirit a stage in an infinite progress up Jacob's ladder or is it merely another turn of Ixion's wheel? Here doubt assails me without a remedy. . . .

A fairer-minded chronicler of the wonderings of men about themselves could hardly be obtained; and by his own open wonderings, lit by the flame of assimilated scholarship, Prof. Manual shows that he is one of *us*, and therefore to be trusted in what he says.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
IN A FREE SOCIETY

IT is a central point of Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (Beacon, 1964) that modern technological society absorbs, dehorns, and homogenizes the voice of authentic criticism and even cries of revolt. There is a carefully cultivated awareness of fashion, but studied neglect of principle. Radical exhortations may survive, and even be heard, but they have now a kind of "entertainment" value, being presented with modish indulgence by mass media editors who are convinced that no "real" change can any longer take place. As Marcuse says:

> What has been invalidated is their subversive force, their destructive content—their truth. In this transformation, they find their home in everyday living. The alien and alienating *oeuvres* of intellectual culture become familiar goods and services. . . . In the realm of culture, the new totalitarianism manifests itself precisely in a harmonizing pluralism, where the most contradictory works and truths peacefully coexist in indifference.

Well, yes. One can indeed find in staid, middle-class journals ideas which, if logically developed, would shake the foundations of society, tear down respected institutions, and leave a long train of prejudices, fears, and conceits homeless and undefended. Only weakness of intellect, a plain incapacity for logical development, and an unimaginative passivity toward the power of ideas could allow this manifestation of "freedom," which is sometimes also identified as proving that "tolerance" is practiced in the Free World.

This is abstract analysis, pursued by the light of a utopian ideal. But there is a question which needs to be asked: What other kind of freedom is really possible for people who, by their own admission, have such a long way to go before feeling really "free"?

Is the vast jungle of morally neutral economic and cultural institutions in which we all live the "natural" freedom which, for contrast, may be compared to the hard, doctrinal, controlled thinking characteristic of those societies which maintain a hot concern for "truth" and a severe, punitive attitude toward those who openly think otherwise?

If the "system" is held to be entirely responsible for our woes, then we are obliged to regard the operators and supporters of the system as "bad guys," and we must go looking for guilt in *all* its processes. To do this makes it very difficult to remain a human being. Identifying the bad guys takes all your time. But if, in far more than the terms of abstract political theory, the people are responsible for the system, then the system is only a shadow, and beating on it is tilting at shadows, despite the fact that, somehow, it will have to be changed.

Demanding that everybody working for the system be a lot better than they seem often results in not noticing when they *are* better. For example, the Oct. 23 *West* Magazine (a section in the Sunday edition of the Los Angeles *Times)* has in it a warm, sympathetic article about Joan Baez and her Institute for the Study of Nonviolence in the Carmel Valley. Ira Sandperl, a friend and adviser of Miss Baez, runs the school. This passage is a good sample of the article:

> The seminars begin every day at 1 p.m. with 20 minutes of silence. Ira regards meditation as essential to a nonviolent way of life. "It gets you into the habit of paying attention," he explains to the students. The discussion goes on until 6:00 or 6:30, with a one-hour break for time alone. Every day of the session, except for one day spent in complete silence, is like this.
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> The debates rarely wander far from a few basic questions. How is one to live as a pacifist in a murderous world? How far should one compromise with accepted evil—the draft, for instance—and when is one to say no? Might a convinced pacifist ever act violently in self-defense? How would a pacifist society function, and what would happen if it were invaded? What would you have done about Hitler?

> Can nonviolence be politically effective in the United States, which is not occupied India? What is the nature of man?
>
> "I don't know. Nobody has a good answer. I can tell you what I think." Ira advocates unilateral disarmament and the total abandonment of all military defenses. One of his strongest convictions is that the concept of the nation-state is, by its nature, a barrier to any sort of peaceful communality among human beings. He believes in the power of organized passive resistance—against an invading enemy or an oppressive social system—and that violent means inevitably corrupt the most benevolent ends.
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> "When World War II began, Gandhi said to the British: 'I do not fear your defeat. I fear your victory.' And he was right. The Nazi army was defeated, but the Nazi ideals and the Nazi techniques went marching on—to England, to the United States. The Nazis won the war."

What about the young in relation to all this? One thing seems certain. Such questioning, wondering, suggestion of alternatives, lack of dogma, raising of moral principles, is precisely what the young need, and what more and more of them want. This is far from "harmless," from the Establishment point of view. The only honest approach to the conditions of the world today is in uncertainty and wondering and doubt. And honesty has more impact on the young than pretentious confidence. A pretentiously certain man is almost by definition a frightened, confused, and even cowering human being, today. The young—many of them, at least—want no more of that.

Support of the present policies of the Government now has increasingly a ritual air. The *thought* of the time seeks alternatives. You see this even in the commercial press, where the frequency of quietly questioning stories may give better evidence of the views of the editors than the editorial page.

This is the "freedom" a homogenized culture permits, and it is a lot better than none at all.

McCall's for October has an even better story than the one on Joan Baez. Under the title, "Suppose They Gave a War and No One Came?"—the question of a little girl after hearing a description of a Civil War battle—Charlotte E. Keyes tells the story of her son, Gene Keyes, a pacifist activist who has been imprisoned four times. His last sentence "was for three years in a federal penitentiary for refusing induction into the armed services." He told the court: "There is no moral validity to any part of any law whose purpose is to train people to kill one another." Mrs. Keyes beams:

> What kind of oddball is our son, who decided against applying for alternative service as a conscientious objector because "that was selfish—to try to exempt just myself from military duty. It's the fact that my country, and every other country, teaches all of us that murder is right, when we know it's wrong, that I must witness against'?

Mrs. Keyes is "explaining" her son—and explaining, also, how much pain, how much "patience," how much self-questioning, and how much growing back into life it cost her to understand him. At the end, she says:

> As we have watched him grow and climb his high places, we no longer argue with him, no longer call him foolish. We stand by our son.

At the beginning of her article, Mrs. Keyes sets the stage for an account of her son's development:

> Who are all of these "nonviolent agitators," these "peaceniks," these draft-card burners, who are often taunted for not working daily from nine to five, but who many times put in seven days a week, from dawn to midnight, on their chosen work?
>
> We see them on television, picketing the White House or the Pentagon or a missile base, carrying signs and solemnly marching, in silence or gaily singing. Some of them are bearded, and invariably the camera focuses on these and the long-haired ones, although the great majority have neatly trimmed hair and clean-shaven faces.
>
> The peaceniks today are legion—they are ninety years old and fifteen, heads of families and housewives with babies students, young people who have gone back to tilling the soil in their search for basic realities. But a good many, as in the civil-rights movement, are young and unmarried, temporarily school dropouts. The radical pacifists among them

> are usually living a life of voluntary poverty, in order to be free to work for the kingdom of heaven or a truly great society.
>
> No one of them can be called typical. They are all very much individualists. But the one I know best, of course, is my own son. . . .

Well, it isn't quite time to cancel your subscription to *Liberation* and take *McCall's* instead—getting to look at all the pretty ads along with some radical instruction—but what could happen is that a general sense of the deep rationality of protest will gradually be born in the middle classes, as time goes on, thus freeing the radical press for the wider affirmative inquiries that are absolutely necessary to give protest its humanizing content.

FRONTIERS

The "Service" Society

AN issue—or rather series of issues—now being warmed up in Washington by the President's Advisory Committee on the Selective Service Act is not getting the attention it deserves, according to James Reston in the Pasadena *StarNews* for Oct. 18. The committee, headed by Kingman Brewster, president of Yale, is asking various leaders and officials questions such as the following:

> What are the present inequities of the Selective Service System and how can they be modified?
>
> Should we have only a compulsory system of service for the Armed Services alone or a National Service Corps to work in the slums, the hospitals and the underdeveloped countries?
>
> If the latter, should the service include women as well as men, should it be voluntary or compulsory, and should service in non-military activities such as the Peace Corps or the Demestic Teacher Corps defer young people from compulsory military service?
>
> Should a National Service Corps of young men and women deal with the social as well as the security problems of the nation—with the misfits, the dropouts, the hoodlums, as well as the requirements of the military services?
>
> What would such a larger system of nonmilitary as well as military service cost, and how would it be administered?

If the reader can suspend for a while his uncomfortable wondering at the bland mood of omnicompetence—or of potential omniscience—which these questions seem to exude, we might at the outset glance at them against a background of general social theory. It is easy to recall illustrious precedent for such proposals of "total" social organization. Plato (if you happen to think the *Republic* was intended to be taken literally; we don't) could be cited as favoring such arrangements. The Irish poet, George Russell (*Æ*), elaborated a plan for the management and regulated use of the energies of all the young (see *The National Being).* Edward Bellamy's indigenous American Socialism involved essentially an organization of this sort (in form; the morale factor differentiates it considerably). William James seriously proposed it in *The Moral Equivalent to War,* and Gandhi spoke of conscripting teachers for India (since the bright young men in the India of his time were not flocking to the villages to help their illiterate countrymen) .

Now, whether or not you think these authorities good enough to oblige serious consideration of the proposal for a "universal national service," it will have to be admitted that some such arrangement has been forming up in the minds of top-ranking administrators of our society for at least a quarter of a century. Many will remember Charles E. Wilson's recommendations for the creation of a Garrison-State social order, providing total control over the entire human resources of the nation, published in the *Army Ordnance Magazine* toward the end of World War II (March-April, 1944), and at least a few will recall that early in 1945 so nice a place as Oberlin College mailed to every Congressman a "Plan of National Service," endorsed by the faculty and introduced by the president. The plan, of course, was intended to promote security, freedom, and peace.

We seem now to be witnessing what Pitirim Sorokin spoke of more than twenty years ago in *Man and Society in Crisis:* "Totalitarianism is not created by Pharaohs, monarchs, and dictators . . . No matter who is at the helm, and no matter how much the leaders may dislike totalitarianism, an expression of government regimentation is as inevitable as the rise of temperature in influenza or pneumonia; otherwise the particular incumbents will be ousted from office and replaced by more amenable officials."

So much for broad trends and prophecy. We know without looking around that there will be some among the young—perhaps many—who will simply oppose a National Service Act of this sort, should it be passed, thus creating the cadres of a

Permanent Opposition. This resistance movement will no longer have an episodic life—as in the past—but will achieve unbroken continuity at the hands of the State. (Of course, what with Korea and Vietnam, continuity practically exists today, but once national service legislation is on the books a more enduring revolutionary temper is likely to be hammered out by the resisters.) Such a development seems quite inevitable, and will have the practical effect of institutionalizing the alienation already felt by so many. The resisting young will see the Service State, not as the happy social organism in which every bright-faced youngster does his bit, but as a Kafka-designed Leviathan, with advance notices by the Grand Inquisitor, scholarly rationalizations by Clark Kerr, and mournful I-told-you-so's by Roderick Seidenberg, Herbert Marcuse, and Jacques Ellul.

Here we have exposed to view the raw and unhealing wound in the popular response to the Triple Revolution manifesto: The beginnings of a guaranteed occupation with income for everybody, but with continued organization for total war, turning Bellamy's dream into a nightmare.

We have a situation in which fateful decision is pressed upon us before vision is conceived or understanding matured; and while the bare mechanics of social ethics seem provided for, to imagine the spirit of the Good Society gaining hospitality from these arrangements is a feat of which few serious devotees of peace will be capable.

Can it be right to accept the mechanics, to take the form for the substance, and then try to "inject" the spirit as you would lubricate an enormous Rube-Goldberg machine which has an improvised power system for every human need?

Is the dream of a free, peaceful, decentralized society simply "against history," as many people say? Must the vision be sacrificed to the condition, the theory to the fact?

Such questions could go on forever, and probably will. What about an "action" program? Well, "action" in regard to a proposal to the electorate is one thing; action in response to a *fait accompli* by the State or Sorokin's Historical Process is another. And the programming of action, in any event, will depend upon the concepts of social and individual good which underlie the thinking that must come first, and upon the order of "wholeness" that is to be preserved, struggled and sacrificed for. A consensus on these deep issues hardly seems possible, today.

It might be useful to consider that the total service/conscription idea involved in this proposal is an objectification of an unresolved contradiction in the lives of us all, and not the Machiavellian design of ruthless, unfeeling men. We can't stop there, since the evils implicit in the proposal are plain enough to many; and as we said, there is going to be action at various levels of resisting response. You don't need the last word in social philosophy to follow Thoreau.

But there will indeed have to be evolved a *rationale* of opposition, and the hope of rational synthesis, in this instance, is confronted by a dilemma which has gored every social system known to history, with the difference that now the horns are sharper and the untenanted areas where people can start all over again, with plenty of slack in the relationships of men, are practically used up.

It is entirely possible that, as time goes on, even the men who work to put such a program into effect will come to dislike it intensely. And it is certain that their help will be needed to create a better way of living together and solving our problems. So, as the best thinkers of our time keep saying, there is need for Dialogue. This need has seldom been described to better effect than in a passage by August Heckscher in the *American Scholar* (Autumn, 1966):

> The difficulty of reconciling democratic government with the choices of war and peace puts

the final burden on the individual who speaks out strongly for himself, according to the truth as he sees it. The services to the country of a public servant like Walter Lippmann, and of a few influential newspaper editors across the country, have been beyond price in the crisis of democracy through which we have been passing. Even if one disagrees with these dissenters from the war, one must admit that they fulfill an indispensable task. When organized political opinion is confused and impotent and when the processes of democracy seem incapable of providing light without adding to the heat, it is through such men alone that the great argument is maintained. They make it possible for the run of men who are cut off from the general dialogue that ordinarily feeds and sustains them to have views and ultimately to make themselves felt. They make it possible for a public and political opposition to prepare itself so that in due course it can play its indispensable role in a free state.

It may seem an anticlimax to come back in the end to a handful of individuals as the only solution to keeping democracy vital in a time of undeclared war. But the individual has always been at the heart of democracy. The saving remnant has always been composed of the few and the courageous.