

DECENTRALISM

[This discussion and advocacy of decentralization, by Paul Goodman, first appeared in more extended form in *Liberation* for December, 1964. It is a portion of Mr. Goodman's forthcoming book, *People or Personnel: Decentralizing and the Mixed System*, to be published by Random House in April. —Editors.]

THROUGHOUT our society, a centralizing style of organizing has been pushed so far as to become ineffective and wasteful, humanly stultifying, and ruinous to democracy. It is so in industries, governments, labor unions, schools and science, culture and agriculture. In a centralized system, the function to be performed is the goal of the organization rather than of any persons (except as they identify with the organization). The persons are personnel. Authority is top-down. Information is gathered from below in the field, is processed to be usable by those above. Decisions are made in headquarters, and policy, schedule, and standard procedure are transmitted downward by chain of command. The system was designed for disciplining armies, for bureaucratic record-keeping and tax-collection, and for certain kinds of mass-production. It has now pervaded every field.

The principle of decentralism is that people are engaged in the function they perform; the organization is how they cooperate. Authority is delegated away from the top as much as possible and there are many centers of decision and policy-making. Information is conveyed and discussed in face-to-face contacts between field and headquarters. And each person becomes aware of the whole operation. He works at it in his own way according to his capacities. Groups arrange their own schedules. Historically, this system of voluntary association has yielded most of the values of civilization, but it is thought to be entirely unworkable under modern conditions and the very sound of it is strange.

If, lecturing at a college, I happen to mention that some function of society which is highly centralized could be much decentralized without loss of efficiency or perhaps with a gain in efficiency, at once the students want to talk about nothing else. From their tone, it is clear that something is at stake for their existence. But the serious and hard questions are asked with a tone of skeptical wistfulness that *I* will be able to resolve all difficulties.

Let me here discuss the usual objections.

Decentralization is not lack of order or planning, but a kind of coordination that relies on different motives for integration and cohesiveness than top-down direction, standard rules, and extrinsic rewards like salary and status. As an example of decentralist coordination, the anarchist Prince Kropotkin, who was a geographer, used to point spectacularly to the history of Western science from the heroic age of Vesalius, Copernicus, and Galileo up to his own time of Pasteur, Curie, Kelvin, and J. J. Thomson. The progress of science, in all branches, was exquisitely coordinated. There were voluntary associations, publications, regional and international conferences. The Ph.D. system guaranteed that new research would be speedily disseminated to several hundred university libraries. There was continual private correspondence even across warring boundaries. Yet in this vast common enterprise, so amazingly productive, there was no central direction whatever.

Most other big objective values, like beauty or compassion, have also thrived by voluntary association and independent solitude (although the technique of theological salvation has tended to be centralist). Almost by definition, the progress of social justice has been by voluntary association,

since the central authority is what is rebelled against. And of course, to preserve liberty, the American political system was deliberately designed as a polarity of centralist and decentralist organizations, limiting the power of the Sovereign and with in-built checks and balances at every level.

But we must also remember that in its early period, celebrated by Adam Smith, the free enterprise system of partnerships and vigilant joint stockholders was, in theory, a model of decentralized coordination, as opposed to the centralized system of mercantilism and royal patents and monopolies that it replaced. It placed an absolute reliance on the voluntary association and on the cohesive influence of natural forces: Economic Man and the Laws of the Market. Pretty soon, however, the stockholders stopped attending to business and became absentee investors or even gamblers on the Stock Exchange. And almost from the beginning in this country, notably in the bank and the tariff, there was a revival of state monopolies.

A student asks, "But how can you decentralize air-traffic control?"

You can't. Many functions are central by their nature. Let me quickly enumerate some of the chief kinds.

Central authority is necessary where there are no district limits and something positive must be done, as in epidemic control or smog control, or when an arbitrary decision is required and there is no time for reflection, or when we have to set arbitrary standards for a whole field, but the particular standards are indifferent, *e.g.*, weights and measures or money.

Central authority is convenient to perform routine or "merely" administrative functions when we have more important things to do.

Central organization is the most rational when the logistics of a situation outweighs consideration of the particulars involved. These are all the cases of ticketing and tax-collecting, where one person

is like another; or the mass-production and distribution of a standard item that is good enough and that everybody needs. Besides, there are monopolies that must be regulated and licensed by central authority (or nationalized). Some monopolies are natural or become so by circumstances, like urban water-supply. Some enterprises become monopolistic because they are so heavily capitalized that competition is prohibitively risky or wasteful.

Finally, automatic and computer technology is by nature highly centralizing, in its style and in its applications, and this is a massive phenomenon of the present and immediate future. Where it is relevant, this technology should be maximized as quickly as possible and many such plants should be treated as monopolies. *But perhaps the profoundest problem that faces modern society is to decide in what functions the automatic and computer style is not relevant, and there sharply to curtail it or eliminate it.*

There have always been two strands to decentralist thinking. Some authors, *e.g.* Lao-tse or Tolstoy, make a conservative peasant critique of centralized court and town as inorganic, verbal, and ritualistic. But other authors, *e.g.* Proudhon or Kropotkin, make a democratic urban critique of centralized bureaucracy and power, including feudal industrial power, as exploiting, inefficient, and discouraging initiative. In our present era of State-socialism, corporate feudalism, regimented schooling, brainwashing mass-communications, and urban anomie, both kinds of critique make sense. We need to revive both peasant self-reliance and the democratic power of professional and technical guilds.

Decentralizing has its risks. Suppose that the school system of a Northern city were radically decentralized, given over to the parents and teachers of each school. Without doubt some of the schools would be Birchite and some would be badly neglected. Yet it is hard to imagine that many schools would be worse than the present

least-common-denominator. There would certainly be more experimentation.

Invariably some student argues that without the intervention of the Federal government the Negroes in the South will never get their civil rights. This may or may not be so; but certainly most progress toward civil rights has come from local action that has embarrassed and put pressure on Washington. And the Negro organizations themselves have been decentrally coordinated; as Dr. King has pointed out, the "leadership" is continually following the localities. But the basic error of this student is to think that the "States Rights" of the segregationists is decentralist (although an authentic regionalism would be decentralist).

Decentralist philosophies have prized stability, "rootedness," subtle awareness of environment, as a means to the integration of the domestic, technical, economic, political and cultural functions of life, and to provide a physical community in which the young can grow up. The Americans have always been quick to form voluntary associations—De Tocqueville mentions the trait with admiration; yet Americans have always been mobile, usually going *away*, individuals and families leaving communities that did not offer enough opportunity, in order to try new territory known by hearsay. Historically, the country was open at the margins, because of either the geographical frontier or new jobs that attracted immigrants. When people settled, they again formed voluntary associations.

At present, however, the country is closed at the margins, yet the physical (and social) mobility is even greater. Negroes migrate north because the share-cropping has failed and they are barred from the factories; Northern middle-class whites move to the suburbs to escape the Negroes; farm families have dwindled to eight per cent. Unfortunately, none of these groups is moving *to* anything. And much moving is ordered by the central organization itself; national corporations send their employees and families to this or that

branch; universities raid one another for staff; promoters and bureaucrats dislocate tenants for urban redevelopment.

Neglected, such conditions must end up in total anomie, lack of meaningful relation to the environment and society. There seem to be two alternative remedies. One was proposed forty years ago by LeCorbusier: to centralize and homogenize completely. The other alternative is to build communities where meaningful voluntary association is again possible; that is, to decentralize. This has, of course, been the wistful aim of suburbanism, and it continually appears in the real estate advertisements. But a suburb is not a decentralist community; its purposes, way of life, and decisions are determined by business headquarters, the national standard of living, and the bureau of highways. The hope of community is in people deciding important matters for themselves.

A student raises a related objection: Decentralism is for small towns, it cannot work with big dense populations. But this objection has no merit. In important respects, a city of five millions can be decentrally organized as many scores of unique communities in the framework of a busy metropolis.

Usually, in modern urban administration, the various municipal functions—school, job-induction, post office, social work, health, police and court for misdemeanors, housing and rent control, election district, etc.—are divided into units only for the administrative convenience of City Hall. The districts do not coincide with one another nor with neighborhoods. A citizen with business or complaint must seek out the district office of each department, or perhaps go to City Hall. And correspondingly, there is no possible forum to discuss the coordination of the various functions except at the very top, with the Mayor or before the Council.

Decentralist organization would rather follow the actuality of living in an urban community, where housing, schooling, shopping, policing,

social services, politics are integrally related. Each neighborhood should have a local City Hall. Such *arrondissements* could have considerable autonomy within the municipal administration that controls transit, sanitation, museums, etc., whatever is necessarily or conveniently centralized. Taxes could be collected centrally and much of the take divided among the neighborhoods to be budgeted locally. The say of a neighborhood in its destiny can be meaningful only if the neighborhood has begun to be conscious of itself as a community. For this, mere "consent" or "participation" is not enough; there must be a measure of real initiating and deciding, grounded in acquaintance and trust.

The question is not whether decentralization can work in dense urban populations, but how to make it work, for it is imperative. The increase of urban social disease and urban mental disease is fundamentally due to powerlessness, resignation, and withdrawal. People's only way to assert vitality is to develop symptoms. The central authorities try to cope as stern or hygienic caretakers; the citizens respond by becoming "community-dependent"—in jail, in the hospital, on relief; that is, they become chronic patients. With many, this has gone on for two or three generations.

Yet there is a limit of urban density and urban sprawl beyond which *no* form of social organization, centralist or decentralist, can cope. For example, the density of population in Harlem, 67,000 persons per square mile, is nearly three times that of New York City as a whole. Even apart from other unfavorable conditions of the Negroes, such crowding itself is pathological, overstimulating yet culturally impoverishing, destructive of solitude, excessively and brutally policed.

A student hotly objects that decentralism is humanly unrealistic, it "puts too much faith in human nature" by relying on intrinsic motives like interest in the job and voluntary association. This objection is remarkably off-base. The moral

question is not whether men are "good enough" for a type of social organization, but whether the type of organization is useful to develop the potentialities of intelligence, grace, and freedom in men.

More deeply, of course, the distrust of "human nature" is anxious conformism. One must save face, not make a mistake in any detail; so one clings to an assigned role. But unfortunately, the bigger the organization, the more face to save. A fatal hallmark of decentralist enterprises is their variety in procedure and persons; how can one *know*, with a percentage validity, that these methods and persons are *right*?

The centralizing style makes for both petty conforming and admiration for bigness. The more routine and powerless people are, the more they are mesmerized by extrinsic proofs of production and power. An enterprise that is designed on a small scale for a particular need of particular people comes to be regarded as though it were nothing at all. To win attention and support, it must call itself a Pilot Project, promising mighty applications.

Yet there are also forces in the other direction. I must assume for instance that it is not a social accident that I am writing a book on the subject of decentralization.

In principle, there are two ways in which an over-centralized system can become more mixed. Either voluntary associations form spontaneously because of pressing needs to which the central system is irrelevant or antipathetic; or the central authority itself chooses, or is forced, to build in decentral parts because its method simply is not working.

Certainly there are major trends toward spontaneous do-it-yourself associations. We have already noticed the spontaneity, localism, and decentralist federation of the Negro civil-rights movement, as opposed to the more conventional maneuvering of the Urban League and the older NAACP. But this is part of a general spread of

para-legal demonstrating, boycotting, and show of power that clearly express dissent with formal procedures that are not effective. Nonviolent activism is peculiarly epidemic; it immediately provides something to do rather than being merely balked—a beautiful feature of it, perhaps, is to balk the authorities—yet it does not require forming political parties or organizing private armies.

But there is a similar tone within the political framework. Contrasted with older "reform" movements which were devoted to purging the bosses and grafters, the new urban reform movements rapidly constitute themselves *ad hoc* for a concrete purpose, usually to block outrageous encroachments of governments or big institutions. Unfortunately, they usually do not then have a counter-program; they stop with exercising a veto, lose steam, and eventually lose the issue anyway.

All this kind of ferment is what Arthur Waskow calls "creative disorder."

But, also, in my opinion, the startling strength of know-nothing movements in the country is importantly due to justified dissatisfaction with the centralization, exactly as they claim when they reiterate the slogan "Government must not do what people can do for themselves." By "people" our reactionary friends seem mainly to mean corporations, which are not people, yet I do not think that liberals and progressives pay attention to the underlying gripe, the loss of self-determination. The liberals glibly repeat that the complex problems of modern times do not allow of simplistic solutions; but what is the use of solutions about which one has no say, and which finally are not the solutions of one's own problems?

I do not notice any significant disposition of central powers to decentralize themselves. Nevertheless, there are actual examples to show how decentralization *can* be built in.

The management of a giant corporation—General Motors is the classical example—can shrewdly decide to delegate a measure of autonomy to its corporate parts, because more flexible enterprising is more profitable in the long run. Naturally, these motives do nothing at all for the great majority of subordinates.

More interesting for our purposes is the multifarious application of industrial psychology. For the most part, the psychologists are decentralists and have taught the opposite wisdom to "scientific business management." Rather than subdividing the workman further, they have urged the efficiency of allowing more choice and leeway, asking for suggestions from below, increasing "belonging." To give a typical example: it has been found to be more productive in the long run for half a dozen workmen to assemble a big lathe from beginning to end and have the satisfaction of seeing it carried away, than to subdivide the operation on a line.

An attempt to build in decentralization is at present occurring in the New York school system. Because of a combination of near-riots in poor neighborhoods, some spectacular run-of-the-mill scandals, and the post-Sputnik spotlight on upgrading, a new and pretty good Board has been appointed. Deciding that the system is over-centralized, these gentlemen have resuscitated twenty-five local districts—averaging forty thousand children each!—and appointed local Boards with rather indefinite powers, to serve as liaison to the neighborhoods.

One of the Manhattan boards, curious to know what its sister-boards were doing, convened a meeting of the five Manhattan boards, and they agreed to exchange minutes. At once the central board protested and forbade such attempts at federation. "If you issue joint statements," they pointed out, "people will think that you speak for the school system." "What can you do about it?" asked the locals; "since you have called us into existence, we exist, and since we exist, we intend to act." I mention this incident not because it is

important in itself, but because it is at the heart of the constitutional problem of centralization and decentralization.

In such discussions, the students keep referring to "your system" or "the decentralist system." But I am not proposing a "system." It is hard to convince college students that it is improbable that there *could* be a single appropriate style of organization or economy to fit all the functions of society, any more than there could be a single mode of education ("going to school") that suits almost everybody, or that there is a "normal" behavior that is healthy for almost everybody.

It seems to me as follows. We are in a period of excessive centralization. It is demonstrable that in many functions this style is economically inefficient, technologically unnecessary and humanly damaging. Therefore we ought to adopt a political maxim: to decentralize where, how, and how much is expedient. But where, how, and how much are empirical questions; they require research and experiment.

In the existing over-centralized climate of opinion, it is just this research and experiment that we are not getting. Therefore, I urge students who are going on to graduate work to choose their theses in this field.

New York.

PAUL GOODMAN

REVIEW

SOME MORAL SIMPLICITIES

THE appeal of *The Philosophy of Sampattidan (Gift of Wealth)*, by Srikrishnadas Jaju (published by Sarvodaya Prachuralaya, Thanjavor, India) is explicitly and almost exclusively to the moral sense in human beings. It is a work which first appeared in Hindi in 1953, and is now available in English for the first time (except for some chapters printed in *Sarvodaya* in 1959). Basically, it is an expression of the Gandhian view of social economics, of which all the assumptions are religious or philosophical. Anything but a total rejection of acquisitiveness, a complete detachment from things is regarded as morally defective, and to the extent that the economic system allows for a lingering possessiveness, this is regarded as a kind of moral compromise in the service of the weak.

For example, a foreword by Vinoba makes this statement:

All wealth belongs to Rama (God). Offer of one-sixth of wealth is a mere token. One should give away all his wealth to the society and take back from it only a little for the bare needs of his body. But no such arrangement exists now in the society and there is no immediate possibility for such a social arrangement. At present it is a question of only giving one-sixth, and consideration of giving away the rest later.

And Gandhi, writing on the "Doctrine of Equal Distribution," by which he means "that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs, and no more," proposes that this ideal can be realized only in a non-violent society:

Let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through non-violence. The first step toward it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life. There would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of

life. When he has done all that is possible in his own life, then only will he be in a position to preach this ideal among his associates and neighbors.

Indeed, at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them. For, according to the doctrine, they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbors. How is this to be brought about? Non-violently? Or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore the non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for society. In this argument, honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed.

At first glance, these "prefaces" to Srikrishnadas Jaju's work may seem out of touch with the hard facts of life. Objections based upon the experience of the West attend every sentence of what is said. But what must be recognized is that these are theories or doctrines based upon a spiritual conception of human life. The writers refuse to compromise their position at all. It is simply a first-things-first expression of what is held to be *right*. It has been so long since any Westerner proposed such a theory that reading Gandhi and Vinoba creates an other-worldly mood, as though they were speaking to the Apostolic Age, or to some imaginary medieval group of people. Yet what is said has the power of its purity and simplicity. And it is clear that Gandhi *believed* human beings are capable, in principle, of realizing such ideals.

It is in the context of this high estimate of the potentialities, and of the moral obligations, of mankind that the argument of this book develops. The author defends the view that the wealth of the wealthy does not really belong to them. He says, in effect, with Proudhon, that property is theft. Land is the gift of nature, and wealth is not the creation of any individual, but has a social origin. The author says:

Tracing the origin of wealth of those rich, one will find that it is either in the pocket of the poor or in the labour of the laborers. It is not by their own efforts and yet they are called its owners. It is the poverty of the poor who are not getting full returns for their labor, which adds to the wealth of the rich.

The ground of all the contentions of this book is an absolute faith in the moral law. Its vision is put thus:

Several nations have tried to build a new social order through means of violence and many continue to follow the same way. Some other nations have thought it fit to bring about the social and economic change through legislation. Many thinkers have some picture of a new society, some aspects of which are clear and others hazy. We envisage a society free from any kind of exploitation and the least authority of the State. In the ideal society, the individual will do physical labor and will try to be as self-reliant as possible. In this order of society economic and social disparities will disappear. Self-interest will yield place to the interest of the whole community and the competitive spirit will yield to cooperative life. All will consider themselves as members of one joint family. In fact, the social order will be that of the large human family.

This is a Sarvodaya order of non-violent society, approximating to Ram Raj or the Kingdom of God that we dream of.

One interesting effect of this forthright argument is the holes it punches in conventional Western conservative doctrine, which is often linked with a narrow version of Christian belief. While Jesus, quite plainly, was of the same radical persuasion as Gandhi—have "all things common" was his advocacy, too—the "atheism" of Western revolutionary movements has led to the identification of religious orthodoxy with private enterprise and a strong defense of the rights of property. But the Gandhian movement is revolutionary in another way. Since it abandons violence and relies wholly on moral suasion, little room for self-righteousness is left to the holders of economic power. No one threatens them, in the Gandhian scheme of things, and they are made to suffer only by the embarrassments of conscience. With the "spiritual" resources of the argument for private acquisition gone, there remains only the

cold intellectual comfort of conservative economic doctrine. And the conservative elitist judgment of "human nature" tends to be put to shame by the voluntarist practice of those who become persuaded of the Gandhian view.

A vast moral ferment is potential in the thinking of such men as Vinoba, Jaju, and Jayaprakash Narayan. What Western critics of such ideas may be overlooking is the deep hunger for unequivocal moral verities that is developing in the West. The schizoid purposes of Western ideologies cannot last forever.

COMMENTARY

THE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

A CULTURE with life in it is a culture which continually questions its own assumptions. However, for this to go on successfully, the culture must have learned the importance of honoring the questioning frame of mind. This, you could say, is the real project for twentieth-century Americans. It is our version of, "Seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

A lot of people are now asking questions. Take the content of this issue of MANAS. Paul Goodman is an extraordinarily skillful questioner. He is not an angry but a questioning man, so versatile that it is reasonable to say he has a da Vinci quality. He asks about housing, architecture, and community planning. With his brother, Percival Goodman, he wrote *Communitas*, a modern classic on the subject. Once you start thinking about the *living* side of human beings in society, the questioning goes out in every direction. Goodman is a poet, a novelist, and a psychologist. With F. S. Perls and Ralph Hefferline, he wrote *Gestalt Therapy*. He is a teacher, as this week's lead article shows. He is also an active citizen who participates in the political life of his community. (See *The Society I Live in Is Mine*, published a few years ago—a series of notes, letters, and essays showing how Goodman questions the establishments of political authority.) He is also a pacifist and a practicing anarchist—stances which, when articulate, throw out questions all the time.

Gandhi was of course a questioner. His counsels of perfection proclaim the possibility of the impossible. His life was devoted to trying to figure out how to make the possible in personal and social arrangements frame the pursuit of the Impossible. When such ventures are successful, you do not get what critics claim you get—a compromised situation: you get, instead, an *open society*. The closed society is always made up of

people who are willing to settle for the merely possible. For them, the word *transcendence* has no real meaning. This week's Review amounts to a deep questioning of the morality of this settlement.

In "Children," quotation from R. D. Laing's *Peace News* article questions the integrity of familiar forms of parental "love" and exposes the drive for conformity in certain practices in child education. Only habitual questioners are able to read people like Dr. Laing without feeling disturbed.

Then, in *Frontiers*, a distinguished President of the United States is revealed as a man who wanted the questioning that enthusiastic cultural pluralism is bound to excite.

The acceptance of questioning makes a view of life beyond all 'isms and all ideologies. The problem, of course, is to work out and embody in social relationships a conception of order so rich in daring that its administrators will not feel it is threatened or subverted by searching questions. The life of such a society would be in its dialogue. The rules for conducting the dialogue would be legally expressed in a positive declaration of principles rather than a restrictive "bill of rights," although some limit to authority would have to have definition. The point, here, is that when the right to question is reduced to a last-ditch struggle against proliferating "controls," the battle for questioning—for a continuing dialogue—is already almost lost. All that remains is a desperate attempt at dialogue about the right to question. This makes a prejudicial atmosphere in which the important questions themselves can hardly be heard. There can be no free thought in a forum framed by fear.

The legal system, however, is only the external shell of the culture. The important indices of its condition appear in the major social institutions. Take the schools. In the schools of the United States, teachers who conduct a brave struggle to preserve the questioning frame of mind find their efforts dangerous to their personal

welfare. The more searching the question, the more easily it is dragged into the narrow forum framed by fear. For the most part, the good questions lead us only to seeing the need for understanding the dread of questioning—a mood which tends to make all other questions irrelevant.

To locate the problem of dread in practical terms, we may repeat two paragraphs from Lewis Feuer's *New Leader* article on the trouble at the University of California. He wrote:

What economy or educational purpose is served by gathering together on one campus 27,000 students and 1,700 professors? The bureaucratic channels are multiplied, the structures of committees become top-heavy and their functioning inefficient; the committee captains tend to be professors with little interest in their research or teaching who are making a full-time career of bureaucratizing on committees. Anonymous functionaries become influential because the very multiplicity of committees and their changing personnel favors their strategic role. . . .

We are finally faced with the "contradiction" of the Modern University. Every bureaucrat will have his corresponding beatnik, every IBM machine will have its corresponding neo-Luddite rebel, organization will have its counterpart in alienation, the Multiversity will evolve into a Nulliversity. Shall we allow these "contradictions" to deepen until they breed a directionless generational uprising, or shall we intervene against the so-called inevitabilities and do what we can to revive the idea of universities as centers to human wisdom?

These paragraphs are filled with last-ditch versions of the questions which have been ignored in American education for at least two generations. At this point, it takes a man with a lot of practice in asking questions to find out the best way to ask them, today. It should be obvious that the future of the United States, and of the world, is in the hands of determined and undiscouraged questioners.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

EDUCATION AND VIOLENCE (*Continued*)

RESPONSE to an earlier discussion under this heading (Dec. 16, 1964) suggests that readers will be interested in the views presented by a British psychoanalyst, R. D. Laing, in *Peace News* for Jan. 22. His title is "Massacre of the Innocents." The theme is that parental techniques of "management" teach children to submit to force in the form of psychological violence. Dr. Laing begins:

From the moment of birth, when the stone-age baby confronts the twentieth-century mother, the baby is subjected to forces of outrageous violence, called love, as its mother and father have been, and their parents and their parents before them. These forces are mainly concerned with destroying most of its potentialities. This enterprise is on the whole successful. By the time the new human being is fifteen or so, we are left with a being like ourselves. A half-crazed creature, more or less adjusted to a mad world. This is normality in our present age.

Love and violence, properly speaking, are polar opposites. Love lets the other be, but with affection and concern. Violence attempts to constrain the other's freedom, to force him to act in the way we desire, but with ultimate lack of concern with indifference to the other's own existence or destiny.

My theme is that we are effectively destroying ourselves by violence masquerading as love.

Let us suppose that we live in two worlds, an inner world and an outer world. This is already simply a way of talking, because what I refer to as the inner world is not located in space "inside" the body or the mind, but it is a way of talking that has become established and it will serve our present purpose well enough, as long as we do not take the distinction between inner and outer too literally. By inner, I refer to our personal idiom of experiencing our bodies, other people, the animate and inanimate world: imagination, dreams, fantasy; and beyond that to reaches of experience that, once more for want of a better word, I shall call spiritual.

When the idea of love is identified with establishing a child's status and its "correct"

functioning in society, the result is a ceaseless psychological pressure which Dr. Laing calls "violence masquerading as love." While legitimate aids to the self-discipline the child really needs would develop along lines chosen by the young individual for himself, this *kind* of permissiveness is rarely thought of, let alone practiced. In Dr. Laing's opinion: "The average man over twenty-five—allow me this fiction—is almost totally estranged from inner experience. He has little awareness of the body as a subjective event. He has little capacity to invent what is not, that is, of imagination: he has usually totally forgotten his whole world of experience before the age of seven, often later." Dr. Laing thinks that excessive parental protectiveness confines the creative imagination and prevents the kind of self-discovery which genuine love would try to assist:

We act inwardly on our experience at the behest of the others, just as we learn to behave in compliance to them. We are taught what to experience and what not to experience, as we are taught what movements to make, and what sounds to emit. A child of two is already a moral mover and moral talker and moral experimenter. He already moves the "right" way, makes the "right" noises, and knows what he should feel and what he should not feel. His movements have become stereometric types—enabling the specialist anthropologist to identify through his rhythm and style, his national, even his regional, characteristics. As he is taught to move in specific ways, out of the whole range of possible movements, so he is taught to experience, out of the whole range of possible experience.

The anthropologist of today is no longer regarded as merely a student of ancient cultures and the habits of primitive tribes (see in last week's MANAS A. H. Maslow on Ruth Benedict's "synergy," a concept leading to harsh evaluation of the most "advanced" contemporary cultures). When the man in the gray flannel suit mourns his diminished individuality (part of the price paid for his split-level home), or when Whyte's "organization man" finds himself committing sneaky acts of violence to advance his status, he is really regretting a loss of innocence. His human ability to empathize has somehow been

ground out of existence by the wheels of modern progress. The perceptive psychologist, therefore—or, we might say, every thoughtful man of integrity and human concern—is something of a cultural anthropologist, one who becomes aware of the alienating factors in present-day society. And he begins to see, as have so many teachers, that the rigidities of public education could be more easily coped with by the young if society itself were more pliable and tolerant of creative endeavor. But the regimented home and regimented classroom are now worse offenses against children than they were during the nineteenth century, simply because life outside the school room is so tightly organized. A quotation from a modern anthropologist, Jules Henry, justifies the title of Dr. Laing's article ("Massacre of the Innocents"):

The observer is just entering her fifth-grade classroom for the observation period. The teacher says, "Which one of you nice, polite boys would like to take (the observer's) coat and hang it up?" From the waving hands, it would seem that all would like to claim the honour. The teacher chooses one child who takes the observer's coat. . . . The teacher conducted the arithmetic lessons mostly by asking, "Who would like to tell the answer to the next problem?" This question was followed by the usual large agitated forest of hands, with apparently much competition to answer.

What strikes us here are the precision with which the teacher was able to mobilise the potentialities in the boys for the proper social behaviour, and the speed with which they responded. The large number of waving hands proves that most of the boys have already become absurd; but they have no choice. Suppose they sat there frozen?

A skilled teacher sets up many situations in such a way that a *negative attitude can be construed only as treason*. The function of questions like, "Which one of you nice, polite boys would like to take (the observer's) coat and hang it up?" is to bind the children into absurdity—to compel them to acknowledge that absurdity is existence, to acknowledge that it is better to exist absurd than not to exist at all. The reader will have observed that the question is not put, "Who *has* the answer to the next problem?" but, "Who *would like to tell* it?" What at one time in our culture was phrased as a challenge in

skill in arithmetic, becomes an invitation to group participation. The essential issue is *that nothing is but what it is made to be by the alchemy of the system*.

In a society where competition for the basic cultural goods is a pivot of action, people cannot be taught to love one another. It thus becomes necessary for the school to teach children how to hate, and without appearing to do so, for our culture cannot tolerate the idea that babies should hate each other.

FRONTIERS

With Discrimination Toward None

THE strong feeling—approaching veneration—accorded the memory of our late President, John F. Kennedy, by citizens with little concern for politics may derive from the fact that here was a man who, whatever else he thought, cherished a vision of the brotherhood of all races and peoples. At the time of his death, Kennedy was vitally concerned with the creation of a national cultural center—as a means of encouraging the idea that non-nationalistic, nonpartisan communication may be established through the arts. He was also preparing a book on the need for revision of antiquated immigration laws which work injustice on so many individuals and families of "foreign" extraction.

The *Saturday Review* for March 28, 1964, printed an article written by the President shortly before his death, on the subject of "The Arts." A few paragraphs indicate both the optimism and the idealism which pervaded his thinking:

Other countries have their national theater and opera, permanently situated in the capital and singled out for their government's special concern. Better fitted to the needs of the United States is the idea of the Cultural Center, a great stage hospitable to the best coming from this country and abroad, an institution encouraging the development of the performing arts in all their diversity of origin and variety of form. I earnestly hope that the backing of citizens across the country will make possible the fulfillment of these plans.

To work for the progress of the arts in America is exciting and fruitful because what we are dealing with touches virtually all the citizens. There will always be of necessity, in any society, a mere handful of genuinely creative individuals, the men and women who shape in words or images the enduring work of art. Among us, even this group tends to be enlarged. "I hear America singing," said Walt Whitman. He would certainly hear it singing with many voices if he were alive today. Outside the group of active participants stands the great audience. Perhaps no country has ever had so many people so eager to share a delight in the arts. Individuals of all trades and professions, of all ages, in all parts of the country,

wait for the curtain to rise—wait for the door that leads to new enjoyments to open.

This wonderful equality in the cultural world is an old American phenomenon. Tocqueville, in the 1830's, described how on the remotest frontier, in a wilderness that seemed "the asylum of all miseries," Americans preserved an interest in cultural and intellectual matters. "You penetrate paths scarcely cleared," said Tocqueville. "You perceive, finally, a cleared field, a cabin . . . with a tiny window." You might think, he continues, that you have come at last to the home of an American peasant. But you would be wrong. "The man wears the same clothes as you, he speaks the language of the cities. On his rude table are books and newspapers."

The cabin with its tiny window has vanished. Yet we might expect to find its counterparts today in homes that would seem quite as remote from the arts. The suburban housewife harassed by the care of her children, the husband weary after the day's work, young people bent on a good time—these might not appear in a mood to enjoy intellectual or artistic pursuit. Still, on the table lie paperbound reprints of the best books of the ages. By the phonograph is a shelf of recordings of the classics of music. On the wall hang reproductions of the masterpieces of art.

To further the appreciation of culture among all the people, to increase respect for the creative individual, to widen participation by all the processes and fulfillments of art—this is one of the fascinating challenges of these days.

There is little doubt that John Kennedy's abundant optimism respecting the future of America was based upon faith in the educative potential of every citizen. He was a strong advocate of adult education in all its aspects and his position in relation to Civil Rights legislation grew from the conviction that the state owes the individual every opportunity for learning—just as the individual owes society a willingness to broaden his own understanding and perspective.

The *Saturday Evening Post* for Oct. 3, 1964, contains extracts from an introduction prepared by Kennedy for a booklet presenting the case for revision of existing immigration laws. A purpose of this short volume was to establish the fact that political clashes of opinion on immigration policy did not focus upon the *number* of "foreigners" to

be permitted residence in the United States, but rather concerned the inequitable apportioning of quotas and various "tests of admission." President Kennedy wrote:

Because of the composition of our population in 1920, the system is heavily weighted in favor of immigration from Northern Europe and severely limits immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and from other parts of the world.

In short, a qualified person born in England or Ireland who wants to emigrate to the United States can do so at any time. A person born in Italy, Hungary, Poland or the Baltic States may have to wait many years before his turn is reached. This system is based upon the assumption that there is some reason for keeping the origins of our population in exactly the same proportions as they existed in 1920. Such an idea is at complete variance with the American traditions and principles that the qualifications of an immigrant do not depend upon his country of birth, and violates the spirit expressed in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal."

Furthermore, the national origins quota system has strong overtones of an indefensible racial preference. It is strongly weighted toward so-called Anglo-Saxons, a phrase which one writer calls "a term of art" encompassing almost anyone from Northern and Western Europe. Sinclair Lewis described his hero, Martin Arrowsmith, this way: "a typical pure-bred Anglo-Saxon American—which means that he was a union of German, French, Scotch-Irish, perhaps a little Spanish, conceivably of the strains lumped together as 'Jewish,' and a great deal of English, which is itself a combination of primitive Briton, Celt, Phoenician, Roman, German, Dane and Swede."

Yet, however much our present policy may be deplored, it still remains our national policy. As President Truman said when he vetoed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (only to have that veto overridden): "The idea behind this discriminatory policy was, to put it baldly, that Americans with English or Irish names were better people and better citizens than Americans with Italian or Greek or Polish names. . . . Such a concept is utterly unworthy of our traditions and our ideals."

In calling for the repeal of limitations on immigration, as contrary to the spirit of the Founding Fathers, Kennedy was applying his faith that a world without rankling partisanship could

be established through the steady increase of educational opportunities. Practical achievement of any form of world government must indeed await the progressive discovery that there is one human language underneath the tongues and customs of differing nationalities and political systems.