

## THE TWO STRUGGLES

THE extent to which we try—righteously, persistently, ruthlessly—to turn the two great struggles of human life into a single contest may be the measure of our unexplained difficulties and continual self-defeats. The fact of the two struggles is hardly obscure. There is the struggle *for* meaning, and the struggle *against* pain. What is obscure is how these two enterprises fit with one another.

There are distinctive rules for each of these great undertakings. The rules are clear enough at the level of gross definition, but eventually they become complicated, misleading, and paradoxical in effect. The confusions multiply when the terms of one struggle are made to do duty for the other as well. Take for example our own system of social order. It was once based upon a sagacious attempt to allow for both regions of struggle. If the term "happiness" be given enough depth to accommodate the idea of the goal of meaning, then the Declaration of Independence is a document which takes cognizance of both sorts of human ends, and the Bill of Rights attempts to establish the principle of freedom in the pursuit of meaning. The reference is admittedly vague. "Happiness" is an idea which submits easily to manipulation, and there are times when public systems of avoiding pain and private methods of seeking truth turn out to be in serious conflict. We are well acquainted with the historical processes by which one-dimensional patterns of social control isolate, confine, and eventually throttle all independent theories of reaching the good life. In fact, we are so well acquainted with the evils of totalitarianism that we usually condemn its arguments without a hearing, instead of recognizing them as half-truths inverted by special pleading.

Because theological establishments exploit spiritual longing, the hunger of men for a life

governed by non-material values becomes a target for devastating scorn. Because "reason" has been used to support the arguments of "scientific materialism," and "rationalization" has come to mean the arrangement of men and machines in relationships which assure maximum productivity, we say that "reason" is the seducer of all that is holy. Because, in our experience, systems of administration tend in the long run to devour the good energies they regulate, and to dissipate what they do not consume, the device of government is declared to be Original Sin, and prickly anarchist wrath tries to lie down with the lamb of communitarian affection.

We are bewildered, in dealing with these problems, by the intangibility of the good that resides in the achievement of meaning. How can mere serenity of life, simplicity of needs, pleasure in human differences, and delight in the growth of one's fellows compete with hydro-electric resources and the resulting flow of mechanical butlers? Of course, the champions of hydro-electric power plants will tell you that they are freeing *everybody* for humane, cultural pursuits; but meanwhile, they say, it is necessary to save the world from the terrible deceptions of a rival team of builders of hydro-electric facilities who promise not spiritual benefits but only gross, materialistic, *socialized* enjoyment of the available power.

The course of the historical developments leading to the present confrontation runs about as follows: Because of the urgency men feel in the struggle against pain, it seems justifiable to them to set aside (temporarily, of course) the quest for meaning; first things first, they say, and they get on with the project of building a material Utopia. At some point, however, they find that they are producing pain as well as its antidotes, but since the project is not finished (it will *never* be finished), they can't stop or change their theories

now, so they talk more excitedly about their wonderful plans for the future. They point to the gains evident on every hand, and they hire some intellectuals to make up plausible explanations for their failures. This works fairly well for a while, but eventually the time comes when the production of new kinds of pain is more evident than the success achieved in avoiding the old kinds, and then angry revolutionary forces emerge to declare new theories of how to eliminate pain. Once again, there is no time to inquire into the failure of the struggle for meaning.

One can see how this doleful spiral could go on forever, but that isn't quite what is happening right now. The present may be unique in history because many of the people who feel revolutionary impulses are at the same time vaguely aware of a possible law of diminishing revolutionary returns. While the secularization of our socio-economic struggle against pain—in deliberate isolation from the individual quest for meaning—proved wildly successful for generations, the divorce has led to illegitimate offspring that, now grown to insolent maturity, threaten our hearths and homes. The very tools evolved for the abolition of pain turn out to be the worst possible pain-producers. After all, nuclear bombs and missiles, napalm, gas, and biological poisons are the most effective defense against political pain that we know how to devise, and while we are going to use them, we say, only because our quest for meaning is threatened by a godless enemy, it is admitted by nearly everyone that the boomerang potential in them is very high. So the new revolutionaries, although still committed to the struggle against pain, have had to take time out to look for methods that are less self-contradictory. The non-violent resister of injustice and militarism is the result.

The difficulty of the new revolutionaries is that their principles will not let them seek power, nor use it in any accustomed fashion, should it be thrust upon them. What, then, do they want? A

just and warless world, they say. We have not got it by violence, so why not try some other way?

But even the first skirmishes in what, with some optimism and daring, we might call the non-violent revolution, instruct us in the lesson which every revolutionary learns, sooner or later, and much sooner if the revolutionary party happens to gain power. The lesson is one of immediate experience. Looking back on his Cambridge days, John Maynard Keynes put the matter in reverse:

We repudiated all versions of the doctrine of original sin, of there being insane and irrational springs of wickedness in most men. We were not aware that civilization was a thin and precarious crust created by the personality and will of a very few and only maintained by rules and conventions skillfully put across and guilefully preserved. . . . As a cause and consequence of our general frame of mind we completely misunderstood human nature, including our own. The rationality which we attributed to it led to a superficiality, not only of judgment, but also of feeling.

The revolutionary is against pain, but in taking measures to put an end to it, he counts without his host. And this is no doubt the reason why, if the Left makes the Revolution, the Right always writes the Constitution. The true radical is simply incapable of devising "rules and conventions skillfully put across and guilefully preserved." He is against pain and he loves his fellow men, but he has seldom understood them, and he hates with all his heart the Machiavellian doctrines of political necessity. The revolution fails by miscellaneous default.

There may be more acceptable versions than Keynes's of the composition of the human race, but no reader of Dwight Macdonald's essay, "The Responsibility of Peoples," of Camus' "Neither Victims nor Executioners," of Sartre's Introduction to Alleg's *The Question* can deny that the facts—of our time, at least—are substantially on the side of Mr. Keynes. Have we, then, to reject the Quaker axiom that there is that of God in every man? Or shall we argue, instead, that if *Deus est demon inversus*, one of these

propositions about man cannot be understood without the other?

In any event, it seems clear that the man who has a plan involving some kind of social system for putting down pain and outlawing injustice must look squarely at the Keynesian verdict. He is, after all, about to tell the people that he knows something of the laws of society and how the Good Life may be created, when the fact is that he knows no such thing. He has his deep intuition of the Moral Law, his fiery commitment to non-violence, and his ennobling faith in the ultimate goodness of man. He has these deep convictions and they are better, and truer, it may be, than any ideas anyone else has, but he has no knowledge, really, of the time-scale in which his dream can be made to work, nor of the obscure alchemical processes that must proceed within a great many human beings in order to make it work.

It is precisely because of the extraordinary honesty of the new revolutionary that he has no over-all plan. His efforts are *in principle* toward the good society, but his action is *ad hoc* against particular evils. If he should become involved in larger social planning projects—particularly those of the modern welfare state—his own disillusionment, or, if not that, severe criticism by his colleagues, is almost immediate. Those big plans which have been denatured by legislative approval and bureaucratic administration soon poison the air the genuine revolutionary has to breathe in order to survive. The routine beneficence of the Office of Economic Opportunity in the South tends to be the kiss of death to Revolutionary Love and spontaneity.

What about trespassers from the other great struggle? Do the people who have focused their life's energies in an attempt to understand the quest for meaning ever move into the arena of the social struggle against pain? Not often, although they are frequently tempted. Erich Fromm, who calls himself a socialist, has in this connection devoted himself mainly to calling for a social situation in which the quest for meaning will be

subject to fewer discouragements and constraints. This means a humanly scaled environment, sometimes spoken of as the face-to-face community. Therapists and educators cannot do their work except under circumstances in which human wholeness can emerge. They are working for *individual growth*, not for some politically attainable change in human relationships, such that greater justice will result. The man with a social program for justice does not think as an educator thinks. He ought to, but he doesn't have to. And if he did, he might become a political failure almost at once. Planning sorties and winning skirmishes in the fight for justice may not necessarily bring any growth at all, although the over-all revolutionary hypothesis declares that it should.

And of course it does, for the pioneers—the people who break new ground. Any man who bets himself—all of himself—on what he believes to be true, experiences personal growth. To be one hundred per cent for anything brings growth. To be one hundred per cent contributes to finding out who you are and what you are in relation to the world. Courage, the right kind of confidence, and a sense of proportion are the result. The man who is one hundred per cent devoted to what he is doing creates for himself on a personal scale a climactic moment of history—a time when acting for justice and grasping meaning become by some wonderful conjunction exactly the same thing. How this works is surely one of the mysteries of human life, yet there can be no doubt but that it works. What may not be realized is that it cannot work for imitators, however devoted, nor for believers, however sure.

There are portions of the world which seem to need kindergartens watched over by endlessly patient teachers instead of democratic constitutions. Yet the argument about who is "ready" for democracy is both silly and arrogant. That the question should seem necessary to raise at all is evidence of some deep neglect of the struggle for meaning. Instead of acknowledging

this, and trying to make up for lost time, we conduct a political argument in a framework of epithets—one side paternalistic and condescending, the other sentimental and unrealistic. The fact is that we *don't know* how to conduct ourselves wisely in relation to people whose cultural learning processes have been suddenly interrupted by our interference, and then displaced by other processes they cannot and often do not want to understand. A situation of irremediable tragedy does not call for upward and onward political action according to the formula we know. It calls for total humility and patient waiting on the struggle for meaning, in both ourselves and the others, to show what is the right thing to do.

But there is never any ideal situation in which people are able to do exactly what they ought to do, in relation to others, any more. For example, no one has even suggested—except for Arnold Toynbee—that the Western nations ought to set about righting the wrongs done to China since the Opium War, more than a century ago, and *then* see what has to be done about the threatening tide of Chinese Communism. No one takes seriously the idea of doing what is *right*. It isn't practical; we haven't time. In our great haste to finish the struggle against pain, we have totally neglected the struggle for meaning, which in one of its departments includes trying to find out what is right.

What, exactly, is involved in the struggle for meaning? Those who concern themselves with education, while admitting that nothing in this enterprise is certain, tell us that their most important activity lies in observing human responses to what they do as teachers. Increase in the capacity to learn is what they are after. They try to heighten the skill and independence of their pupils, as learners and decision-makers. Not conclusions, but the ability to reach them impartially, is what teachers want to see develop in the young.

Now we begin to see why the struggler against pain has so little patience with the pursuer of meaning. Each regards the end of the other as peripheral, incidental, or at best instrumental. If the teacher is not a very bad teacher—if he truly teaches, and is not a mere propagandist—the judgments of men appear in his work as samples of the learning process, never as finalities. The adult human being, of course, must have his own finalities—views, that is, upon which he acts—and it is a part of the teacher's art to illustrate this necessity without indoctrinating his own opinions. He will do this best if he has reached his own opinions by impartial means. For then, while it may please him to get it, he does not *need* the agreement of others. His work is in instruction in the *basis* of agreement and disagreement. Facts, events, opinions are no more than grist to the educational mill.

The struggler against pain regards this attention to the learning process with an eye cocked at historical emergency. Why, he asks, must a man go to school to learn that it is wrong to treat people as second-class citizens because of the color of their skin, or that it is criminal to bomb the villages and children of peasants who happen to prefer tyrants of their own land and race to others who come from a great distance?

To the man who asks these questions, it must be said in return: Why, if these matters are so obvious, are there not more people ready to help you? Why are the deep commitment and endless personal self-sacrifice of workers for peace so limited in effect? This is not to suggest that these heroic efforts are not a necessary part of the historic changes that need to take place, but simply a questioning of the lack of a wider response.

The answer can only be, because there has not been enough serious attention given to the struggle for meaning. A big "emergency" does not stir thinking in people who have not the habit of thinking. Instead, it paralyzes their minds. We have a culture which has been short-circuiting the

learning process to shallow conclusions and immediate ends for at least a hundred years, and now, all of a sudden, because of the resulting inhumanities and worse prospects which have accumulated, we want to put an end to evil with an electric flash of truth. It won't work.

If we want to affect the decision-making apparatus of the social community for good, and to do it without prejudice or coercion, we have first to be sure that a decision-making apparatus still exists. As Bertrand Russell said recently: "The hopes of international peace, like the achievement of internal peace, depend upon the creation of an effective force of public opinion formed upon an estimate of the rights and wrongs of disputes."

But this "effective force of public opinion" has not yet been created. Good people everywhere are crying out for the funds to manipulate it in the "right" direction, but surely, if it existed, you wouldn't *have* to manipulate it!

The opinion-forming agency in the social community must bear at least some resemblance to the meaning-seeking center in human beings. It will not, should not, be stamped into action. It does not respond to hubba-hubba appeals. It has its own rhythm of life, its own methods of discovery, and the condition of its success is total independence of the demands of ardent men with lesser objectives. The organ of meaning-seeking in a society—in which everyone, in principle, has a part—is not a resource for either industry or the State. It serves only itself and the principles of meaning-seeking in the people. Yet it will feel the anxieties of the people and will not be sterile in relation to the forms of action men consider and undertake, but it must remain free to make *its own profound contribution* to whatever the people of that society decide to do. It will safeguard the quest-for-meaning function above all. It will demonstrate from history and psychology, from philosophy and religion, that any enterprise which is willing to jettison the quest for meaning in

behalf of the struggle against pain is basically an enterprise against man.

People usually find some distinctive way of describing the community which gives natural scope to the quest for meaning. "Sacred" is a term that fits, in the context of tradition. "Organic" probably carries this significance for the secular society. "Wholeness" and "self-actualization" reach after the same meaning. It is a question of acting only when you know what you are doing and why you are doing it, and what the consequences will be. This is not a demand for "perfection," but a matter of general thrust and basic intent. Societies which ignore this ideal cannot be good societies.

## *REVIEW*

### A GADFLY WHO BUILDS

IN the introduction to his latest book, *The Conscience of a Radical* (Social Science Institute, 1965; \$3.00), Scott Nearing expresses both the disquieting concern and the ultimate hope of a true radical—one who attempts to "dig to the roots of personal life and social problems":

My conscience is aroused, outraged and anguished by the dangerous drift of mankind toward self-destruction, and by the satanic role which the United States is playing in the fateful drama. My conscience assails me so unbearably that I have no choice in the matter—I must speak out. . . .

I write out of the deep sense of responsibility which rests on evolving humanity to play an increasingly important part in building, improving and beautifying the world. It is certain that the human race is only a tiny speck in the immensity of the life existing in our expanding universe. It is equally certain that every one of us can contribute something to the betterment and excellence of life on earth.

To stir the American citizen to a sense of individual responsibility, then, is Mr. Nearing's chief aim. His analysis of common political labels is interesting:

In the context of our discussion, radicals choose the good and try to live it. Liberals choose the lesser evil and dress it up to look good. Conservatives accept the evil and make no bones about it. Reactionaries want to force the evil on everyone.

Radicals reject disadvantages as a matter of principle. Why, they ask, in a wide range of choices, should a rational human being accept disadvantage, where there is a reasonable possibility of securing advantage? When there is a possibility of standing with good and against bad, why not line up with the good?

Liberals are cagey. "There is no absolute good," they argue. "All life is a mixture of advantage and disadvantage. On balance, comfort will be assured and convenience accommodated by accepting existing conditions with the proviso that Improvements are to be made here and there." Liberals accept the established order in principle and hope to modify it in detail. They lean towards the good, but temporize

with evil. They make the best bargain they can with existing circumstances.

Conservatives are forthright. They accept things as they are and hold the existing line (no matter how bad) against the uncertainties of change with their consequent risks to existing privileges. "Whatever is right," they insist.

Reactionaries try to hold to the lines of past performance. "It was good enough for the Founding Fathers. Surely it should be good enough for you and me."

Radicals stand firm for the good, with its qualitative sequence of "better" and "best." They search for the principles underlying appearances, the causes that are operating to produce observed effects. When they discover the principles they announce them, sometimes insistently, meanwhile doing their best to put the principles into practice.

These assured generalizations could conceivably be annoying to persons unfamiliar with Mr. Nearing's life. Yet here is a man who has proved that it is not only possible to stand firm for the "good" as he sees it—requiring such breaks with accepted opinion as that which brought him under Federal indictment in 1917 for a merciless analysis of World War I—but also that a man with radical views can live a life of personal wholeness.

When he wrote *The Great Madness* while serving as a teacher of economics, the Government charged him with "obstruction of recruiting activities." Though acquitted by a jury, he lost his job and, so strong was the feeling of his conforming colleagues that he was disloyal, or at least some kind of a blackguard, that it seemed unlikely he would ever teach in a university again. Yet Scott Nearing has "taught" all his life, while demonstrating an amazing vitality in building his own economic independence. In 1932 he and his wife, after interrupted teaching stints at small schools and occasional success at publishing, settled in Vermont on a farm they bought for \$300 down—total price \$1100. Though almost fifty years of age, Nearing was determined to create that rare kind of security—self-sufficiency by production on the land. The fascinating story of

the evolution of a "small community" from this initial impulsion is told in *The Maple Sugar Book* (John Day, 1950) . Not only did Scott Nearing make maple sugar "pay," along with some timbering, but he managed a schedule which allowed him to build a spacious house along with eight stone buildings. Laboring on an average of four hours a day, the Nearings saved the time and the resources to go on lecturing tours throughout the country.

The radicalism Scott Nearing exemplifies includes rigorous application of solid Quaker principles, nutritional studies which counsel spartan revision of the American diet, and total rejection of conscription. To be a radical, in other words, according to Nearing, is to discover some truths for oneself and to practice Emerson's lofty injunction: "Let each man speak the utmost syllable of his conviction." Finally, drawing as much as he can upon first-hand experience, he must try to teach what he has learned to others. The leavening value to America of a life such as Scott Nearing has lived can hardly be calculated.

Now at Harborside, Maine, an outgrowth of Nearing's life and unquenchable spirit, is the Social Science Institute which, among other things, keeps available seven of his books.

Nearing, the radical, has proved himself a "practical" man with a wide spectrum of solid accomplishments behind him. He also has his "mystical" side, and the multiple resources of his thought are fused in such passages as the following from *The Conscience of a Radical*:

The earth, the solar system, the universe wait, perhaps impatiently, for humanity's contribution to the life stream, with its maturing reactions upon its natural and social environment and its forward reaching efforts to attain and promote the good life universal.

The time has come for mankind to make a concerted attempt to understand the mechanism of the universe, to contribute creatively to its functions and to guess at its purposes. Man must adopt, adapt, prepare and inspire each oncoming generation to mobilize its full potential and strike out boldly

vigorously and hopefully, blazing the path along which the human race must pass.

Responsible minorities, informed, capable, dedicated and hardworking, must take the lead in every field—music, art research, invention, sport, literature, health, always moving in the direction most likely to advance the best interests of mankind, while making the most efficient and economical use of the natural and social environment. At all times such activities will be limited by the existing level of available theory and practice.

Creative man can follow such a course only by continuously breaking the shell of custom and rejecting obstructive habit patterns, [by becoming] trustee for the well-being of himself and those lives, human and sub-human, directly dependent upon him.

## COMMENTARY

### THE PROBLEM OF IDENTITY

IT is a matter of obvious importance to recognize that, although, in the present, human beings have greater control over their environment and the conditions of life than they have had at any time in the past, this capacity to accomplish change and improve material welfare, instead of bringing more security, is accompanied by a reverse effect. It is as though the release of modern man from the determinisms of physical life has taken away the familiar factors of self-definition, so that he no longer feels reassuring certainty about who he is, and where he is going.

Once impressive ethical justifications of national identity now suffer terrible contradiction from man's incalculable power to destroy in the name of national security. The scarcity of economic goods, which used to permit the measure of a man in terms of how well he gained a livelihood by overcoming "natural" obstacles, is today, in the context of our present potential of great abundance, an increasingly useless frame for judging ourselves and our purposes. Various "brave new world" conceptions of how to think about man and his projects and problems are now offered, but we find them lacking in depth. These utopian proposals sound like invitations to walk the plank into a sea whose tides are manipulated by a technological bureaucracy instead of by the "Nature" we have been used to for all our years on earth. How, we wonder, can we get a *reliable* self-corrective principle back into the scheme of organized human life? This longing has already produced a desperation which appears as fanatical zeal in backward-looking political movements. "Give us our old world," the adherents of these movements say—"the world in which a responsible, hard-working man had something to show for his efforts and knew the rules by which he could establish a self-respecting identity." The complaint continues: "These people who want to make up new rules—who are they, anyhow, and

why should we trust them? Once *they* get control, we'll never know who we are!"

Only superficially is this an argument about social systems and economics. Basically, the issue is religious—or, rather, philosophical, since it concerns the nature of man. The trouble lies deep in the thought-habits of us all—in the acceptance, over a long period of history, of no more important identity for ourselves than that of national and economic man.



## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### UNCHURCHED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

IN the Sept. 2 "Children" Dorothy Samuel voices views in regard to the religious enlightenment of her children which seem to me to require further discussion—and some criticism.

I was brought up in the South. Every Sunday—no matter what—I attended Sunday school. Our family, because of shifting jobs and the Depression, had to move many times during my childhood, but mostly within southern borders. I do not recall once, upon arriving in a new neighborhood, not being asked: "What church do you belong to?" When I was thirteen years old our family moved north and west. At that time I tried out a lot of different churches. In college I even went so far as to venture into a Catholic church with a roommate. The South where we lived was predominantly Protestant and for that reason Catholicism held somewhat of a fascination. Also, my father had been brought up a Catholic and my mother was a so-called WASP (white Anglo-Saxon Protestant). The environmental difference of my parents' religions created an ambivalence within my brother and me from the beginning. After I went through various churches seeking an answer or a social ground to work with, I finally arrived at the status of non-believing.

My ambivalent background put me into a position of being outside the battleground of any religion except my own personal, individual beliefs. I had only my own feelings to defend, right or wrong.

In all the years I was told to go to church, there are only two incidents which had any bearing on my later development. One was the love I felt for an old Negro janitor at one church who sometimes gave me little potted pansies to take home and who let me follow him around and was kind. The other was an experience of being taken by a Sunday school teacher who was a

social or welfare worker to a shanty town to give out some clothing and food. I had never seen anything like this in my life and to this day have never seen such poverty. It was in the height of the depression; this was a camp site of white poor. It was muddy; water was gotten from a ditch which, if I remember rightly, had privies near it. People were living in sorts of tents, in large automobile-like crates—using old license plates for shingles and roofing. We were pretty poor ourselves, but rich in comparison to this poverty. It was almost unbelievable. I begged my teacher to take me with her again to shanty town. She never did, but I did not forget.

I don't agree with Mrs. Samuel that a forced diet of all religions is necessary to make one tolerant—no matter how soft-pedaled the parents' approach may be. It is like having to know every word (literally) in the Constitution before one understands the humane aspects of human rights. I believe that children learn from their parents whatever basic good or bad they may acquire, or rather the seeds for what they acquire. Wherever there are close emotional ties (this can be outside the family unit) in that area, a child will absorb the most.

Mrs. Samuel's children may very well have learned their tolerance from the fact that both their parents were tolerant. Possibly they didn't need to be lugged around to different churches to attain this quality. Children pretty well tolerate an awful lot of experimentation from the parents, and since they don't usually have much vocal capacity to let their parents know that they understand without all the complicated gymnastics, they get hauled from one place to another, given this book and that. Surprisingly, they survive.

Within our own family of four children and two parents I have seen different attitudes grow within different children. Our first two seem to have more doubts and instabilities than the later two. But then the first two had parents that had more doubts and frustrations. In the span of years

between the first two and the last two, there was a change to a very different environment.

None of our children has been *taken* to church. The oldest daughter, when five years old, asked to go to church with a friend for a number of weeks and did. Then the interest waned. She later married a devout church-goer but does not go to church with him.

Our second child showed no interest in church at all.

The two younger children have made adjustments of their own and appear not to feel they are missing anything. They good-humoredly accept people and beliefs as they are, having their own realms of the unknown to conquer by themselves. Their judgment is less tampered with and freer than any of the first four of us.

Previously I mentioned not having remembered an instance of being asked outright my religion (outside of college forms or such) since the time I left the South. Last April I made a trip to Jackson, Mississippi. For the most part I stayed with Negro friends in the Negro community. One day I was taken over to meet a white (native Mississippian). No sooner was I in the house than I was asked if I would like a sandwich and a coke. I sat in the alcove kitchenette and watched the woman slice cold ham. With the knife poised mid-air she asked, "What religious denomination are you?" My answer tightened her face and left the room in dulled silence. It took about one and a half hours of tolerance on both our sides to remove the wall that shot up the instant I said I belonged to no church.

Now this woman had done an astonishing thing in the middle of Mississippi. A number of years before she had convinced a Negro minister's wife that they should pray together once a week. They did just that for two years and after that time their presence together brought a couple more Negro and white women to join them. This went on for four years. Two months before my meeting

with this woman an amazing thing happened as a result of these prayers. The churchwomen of the *whole* state of Mississippi voted to integrate all their meetings.

It upset me to see this woman so visibly disturbed. But somehow it was important for her to see that people outside the church were acting in a humane effort to ease tensions in the world. Her attitude—the conventional religious attitude—is very strong in the South: *your* church and *my* church. It does not for the most part include *ours* or the great realm outside these closed areas of thinking. I explained that I had worked with many churches when there was a common objective. I had truthfully worked more often with Quakers and Unitarians, but also at times with Congregationalists, Episcopalians and Catholics. I also said that I didn't think the churches for the most part lived up to their Christian ideals of brotherhood of man, etc. And until the Civil Rights struggle they had pretty much stayed in the background of dogma . . . and little action. I hoped that the *next* non-believer would not be such a shock to her.

The church itself and most orthodox religions seem to me as aging dinosaurs in a jet age. They hardly function. They are around and good people are watching over them. But like all nearly extinct animals, the aging process is in gear and no amount of shoring up and pasting together is going to stop the natural process of decline. We may continue to step around, jump over, and put up detour signs in front of the carcass, but sooner or later a new species will have to evolve which takes our attention and brings a rebirth of ideas and actions.

I'm 100 per cent for the suggestion that the ideal religious institution would always be doing everything it could to make people need its services no longer.

Mrs. Samuel's exposure of churches and religions to her children coincides with the shoring-up process—explaining everything and then feeling it is acceptable. The same criticism in

relation to education was broached by the reader who defended his position against Paul Goodman's storefront schools. I think both readers accept the concept of *slow* change and an "understanding" of the system. Paul Goodman accepts the human quality in education but refuses to be cubby-holed into a regulated education which moves like water trickling in an old-time dungeon—forever dripping, dripping.

I think both these critics, one in religion, the other in education, fail to grasp the fundamental aspect of change, action, and creativity. Paul is suggesting a storefront which exists in all urban neighborhoods. It could as well be an empty cellar, storeroom or whatever, but a room connected with the community life. The school being an integral part of *student, teacher, neighborhood*. All three teaching each other. It would appear that the main element needed for the setup is a teacher so interested in his work that even if he said *not a word*, his intense interest would reach and permeate both the regular and casual students. In time the students would also develop intense interests. The current stumbling block in education of all kinds is that there are so few people doing it because they love it. It has become a *job*, work, a drug, a paycheck—and intense interests, if they exist at all, are diverted to "after the *job*." The world would not fall apart if such a creative idea as Paul's took over for a bit. It certainly would present some chaotic problems, but since when does the present system not generate chaotic situations that are not in any part solved? There is so little daring, so little creative thought, impulse and curiosity these days—and soooooo much frozen thinking in all directions.

As I sit at my desk, or sometimes lie on the bed reading, wash a few dishes, play a hand of solitaire, I frequently find myself wondering—wondering why I wish to abandon the avenues I find myself wandering or rather rushing along. It may be that in reflection I begin to see a glimmer that the rushing is a machine-belt conveyor rush—that it will come around again and again, and no

one will get off, because each one *thinks* he is going some place. Paul wants to get off the belt. He wants, possibly, to start at the place we were before the belt was invented. He isn't suggesting something newly plucked off the moon—he is suggesting that a few people try to regain an interest in each other, and this process in development would be learning.

What matter of thinking didn't start with a single idea—in a single man's mind; and mainly because nobody heard his single cry in the wilderness, he had to go it alone? Once the idea is recognized the wildernesses begin to be populated with multitudes of human rabbits in every direction. At that time Paul Goodman will have long since left the storefront, and he may very well be out there in the wilderness drawing attention to the rabbits.

I sometimes wonder if there are two kinds of eyes. Both read the same words, see the same situations, but come up with reverse signals. There must be forward and backward impulses which work according to signals put out by the brain, and some of us get them backwards and some forwards—and in puzzlement we wonder, "*How come? Mine must be right.*"

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## *FRONTIERS*

### The Confinements of History

THE twentieth-century reader of history may often catch himself thinking of the past with a certain moral condescension. Those people, he reflects, had no experience of freedom, no thought or even awareness of the many options open to modern man. Conquerors swept across continents, wiping out villages and towns, destroying familiar patterns of existence and demanding new allegiances of the inhabitants of the invaded lands with no more justification than the sudden might of arms. It is not easy to imagine yourself as one of those victimized people. What would you have to live for? And what could you do about your situation, supposing that, by some flash of utopian vision, you could see how things *ought* to be?

The justification for such feelings is obvious enough, but what about the element of egotism in them? It may be possible, for example, to argue that a thousand years from now people will look back upon the present with the same wondering commiseration, being quite unable to think of themselves as living meaningful lives under the conditions we endure.

What is it, exactly, that we have which was lacking in the days of absolute monarchs and despotic conquerors? Well, we say, we have the political freedom represented by our Constitution. But what does this mean in terms of enduring human values? If you watch people acting as citizens, going to the polls on election day, talking over national affairs with one another, arguing about foreign policy, objecting, criticizing, approving, writing letters to legislators, attending city council meetings, campaigning for what they think is good—if you take all these things into account, you see that people enjoy the taste of autonomy, of making decisions, of participating as well as they can in a wide range of actions which affect their own lives. These mechanisms of self-determination may be faulty; they may be subject

to external manipulation; the people may be misled by propaganda and misrepresentation; but after all these exceptions are taken, there still remains the fact that people think of themselves as behaving according to the principles of a free society.

It should be noted, however, that all these exercises of choice within a society organized to make individual decision operative are in some sense means, not ends. While we savor the use of these means which are the substance of practical freedom, there are larger ends of freedom which the political society leaves undefined. Various terms cover these ends, such as "self-realization," "happiness," "cultural achievement," and "spiritual fulfillment," but there is no general cultural consensus on what these words mean. One has only the impression that whatever they represent, their value cannot be enjoyed unless individuals gain them through the channels which our political freedom holds open.

The question to be looked at seriously is whether or not these high human ends are indeed totally dependent upon prior political achievements. It is obvious, of course, that political freedom—as provided, that is, by the Bill of Rights—is intended to prevent any arbitrary limitation on man's quest for happiness, or truth. But by the very reasoning behind all such limitations on the use of political authority, no Bill of Rights can *lead* a man to Happiness. It is therefore at least conceivable that high human goals can be and have been achieved without such political guarantees.

But once this is said, another principle deeply engrained in the thought of modern man demands attention. This is the ethical principle which asserts that what is possible for one *ought* to be possible for all. Here lies the deep moral justification for our loyalty to libertarian political tradition. We cannot diminish our insistence on the necessity for freedom, since the ethical idea of the equality and worth of all human beings depends upon it.

This principle, you could say, is modern man's greatest contribution to the scheme of values which appear in all accounts of the civilized life. The idea of equality cements its companion eighteenth-century ideals of liberty and fraternity into inseparable union. It seems unthinkable to us to divide these principles, and difficult, therefore, to obtain a sense of human reality concerning past epochs of history when they were not valued as we value them.

But there is a question which must be asked: Is the price of our deep emotional conviction of the importance of equality—of the right to opportunity to choose for all men—a compulsive politicalization of *all* thought about human objectives?

Back of the determination of the United States that the affairs of Vietnam be arranged in conformity to American ideas of political freedom is the assumption that all human good and self-realization must come about through the political mechanisms that we believe have set us free. If those mechanisms are allowed to fail there, then the dread infection will spread, and the only possible means to the good life will eventually die out from the world. That is the oversimplified logic behind the present foreign policy of the United States. And, pressed to a wider conclusion, it means that Americans have an unending obligation to remake the entire world in their own image. It is on this ground that we are well on the way to becoming ideological policemen of the world. Our politicalization of the idea of human good leaves us no choice.

How can we recover from this delusion? How are we to recognize the fact that a political system which is good because it *rejects* the use of power in certain directions (the Bill of Rights) cannot be turned into an international police power which *guarantees* rights which, before anything else, are a state of mind?

Already our compulsive politicalization of the idea of human good has curtailed the freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights within the borders

of the United States. If you begin with the assumption that there can be *no* good life without our kind of politics, and that our kind of politics cannot survive except by having greater military power than any other political system, then the division of the world into good people and bad people is a step that cannot be avoided. Inevitably, the next step must be to divide Americans into the good people who see the necessity for taking that first step, and the foolish, deluded, or bad people who refuse to take it. And then the final step in this course of political self-defeat is to attempt to weaken, silence, and eliminate the people who reject the universal police obligations of the "free" society. This kind of thing has already happened in the United States. It is said to be an open secret in Washington that our Government would not *dare* to propose restoration of normal relations with China because of the inability of national leaders to reverse the emotional tide of ideological self-righteousness.

What gives this tide its awesome power? The very nearly total politicalization of the idea of human good, and the impoverishment of our thinking about the good that lies beyond the reach of political means.