

TIDES OF QUESTIONING

INEVITABLY, as strong currents of thinking from the subjective side of human life flow into the cauldron of contemporary philosophy—philosophy as a basis for action, and not only speculation—there are contradictions of theory and conflicts of value to be resolved. The impact of these problems is felt directly in politics, religion, and psychology.

Since the end of World War II, there has been a growing skepticism of political Progressivism and a revival of anarchist thinking. Many men who went into the war experience as conventional "liberals" came out of it with an interest in Herbert Spencer (*Men Against the State*), Albert J. Nock (*Our Enemy, the State*), and in Kropotkin, Bakunin, and Henry David Thoreau. Former Marxist radicals began to exhibit anarcho-pacifist tendencies, as was the case with Dwight Macdonald, whose book, *The Root Is Man*, is a classic of criticism of Progressive political theory. Then, in philosophy, the ruthless atomization of the individual which results from wars between nation-states was a manifest cause of the still undiminished popularity of Existentialist conceptions. These ideas, which stress the immediacy of human values, have strongly modified all serious thought in the West since the War.

The war also brought a new encounter with classical Eastern thought. The dramatic achievement of Gandhian non-violence in the liberation of India brought many Westerners to investigate the roots of Gandhi's thinking in Hinduism and Buddhism. At the same time, the sudden as well as enduring interest in Zen Buddhism could only come as a response to deep hungers in Western artists, writers, and intellectuals generally. Dozens of books and articles have explored resemblances among the insights of Western psychotherapy, Zen

philosophy, and Existentialism (*Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, by Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki, and Richard de Martino is one illustration of this trend). While there has been no new political thinking of note in this period, there has been a great deal of questioning of familiar assumptions on socio-philosophic grounds—the most searching, during recent years, being in the writings of the Indian socialist and *Sarvodaya* leader, Jayaprakash Narayan.

As a result of all these influences, a rich ferment of serious inquiry is under way throughout the world. There are very few "answers," as yet; the wealth of modern thought lies rather in the increasingly explicit statement of dilemmas, in a new spirit of questioning, and in challenges to long-held assumptions.

A recent MANAS article concerned with these developments, "On Being Human" (April 10), has drawn comment from a reader which helps to illustrate or to put into focus some of the intellectual and moral issues of the times. This reader says:

Sooner or later we have to recognize that our search for meaning is itself a consequence of our inauthentic historical existence, of our inability to lead a more wholesome historical existence, of our inability to break away from "the system." Authentic meaning is found, not in a futile quest for ontological meaning, but in the living of a meaningful historical existence. If that is not available now—and to the extent it is not available—our lives will be empty, our needs unfulfilled, our condition meaningless. But no amount of ontologizing will make up for that loss, that emptiness, that meaninglessness. We have to make our historical *lives* better—in fact, not in fancy.

In the meantime, we are faced with the suffering that comes from unfulfillment. If Socrates, Lao-tse, and Thoreau were not "like us," if "they did not seem to fear as we do the dark in which they lived," this is because "they don't have our problems." What are those problems? They are tied up "with personal

need for achievement that overwhelms us with disappointment and desperation when it is not fulfilled." But what is achievement? It is certainly not achievement in the material sphere, of which we have plenty already. No, it is achievement in another sphere—yet not the ontological sphere of which the MANAS writer speaks. . . .

We have reached a new level of human awareness and are frustrated by our inability to achieve—in this, the human sphere, the sphere of human relations. It is in this sphere where our efforts fall so dismally short of realization. And it is here, I would suggest, where we might expend our best energies—not in some ontological world, which can never get us what we want because, within such a world, we are thrown back on ourselves and left just as separate as before.

We must strive and we will suffer. And we must live without demanding fulfillment. Fulfillment will come, eventually. But in the meantime, we must do our best to bring it about, and in the struggle we will find *some* contentment—if not perfect contentment and satisfaction. It is only in a *real* struggle for improved human relations that we will ever find some semblance of wholeness, "infinity," and peace—not in the effort at imaginary fulfillment by way of thought and ontologic reflection, which can never give us any more than a thinking, ontologic satisfaction.

What is plainly at issue in this discussion is the content or potentiality of being "thrown back on ourselves," otherwise characterized by this correspondent as "a futile quest for ontological meaning." Instead of arguing this question "logically," we plan to devote the rest of our space to exploring the possibilities of "ontologic reflection," which we take to mean deliberate thinking about one's "self," or "nature," and similar attention to the larger question of Being in general. (Ontology, by dictionary definition, is "a science or study of being.") The idea will be to stake out for consideration the proposition that such thinking is immeasurably important to the quality of the life a man leads *in* history. This, it seems to us, was a central point of the article, "On Being Human," to which the comments of our reader apply.

The key idea of this proposition might be phrased: The unexamined self is not worth serving.

For a start, we might look at the idea of the self which typifies criminal and anti-social behavior. Charles B. Thompson's paper, "A Psychiatric Study of Recidivists" (*American Journal of Psychiatry*, November, 1937), is useful for this purpose. Dr. Thompson's conclusions are based upon his examination of a large number of "repeater" criminals during his work in the Psychiatric Clinic of the Court of General Sessions in New York City. He found, in general, that

a repetition of crime proceeds from a certain automatic behavior pattern or set-up in the individual organism which will react whenever the appropriate and familiar stimuli are encountered. This pattern is apparently not altered by imprisonment or punishment, no matter how often imposed or how long, nor do our present methods of re-education influence it. . . . beneath all crime there exists what is commonly known as aggressiveness or competition. . . . this reaction of competition obtains also in the lives of all of us—in business, sports, diversions and family contacts—and has an equally pathological obsessive quality.

Whenever the repeater is able to put his feeling into words, it is to express a justifiable defense of his action—his right—since he feels that what he has done is in accordance with his own standards and rights. For the most part, even with the intelligent offenders, their behavior is automatic—because it is reflex—whether in revolting against a normal job, or in perpetrating an unlawful job. They act automatically as a direct symptom of society as a whole. In this broader setting, the egocentricity of the overtly antisocial or criminal individual appears in a different perspective. Criminals present merely an exaggerated form of the ego-preoccupation that characterizes the individuals of our "normal" society, and, in our attempt to deal with them, we are confronted with a problem in community behavior. In the absence of a clear accounting of this community problem, we can only expect the supply of antisocial individuals to continue to pour into our courts and prisons; and we cannot hope that our present legal and correctional procedure will fundamentally alter the behavior reaction of the individuals we have called repeater criminals. Our responsibility, then, is to reckon broadly with those

factors within ourselves which determine antisocial trends throughout society and of which the behavior of the recidivist is but one aspect.

We take the injunction to "reckon broadly with those factors within ourselves" as an injunction to "ontologic reflection."

Dr. Thompson gives a useful account of the way in which the uncritical image of the "self" is formed by a cultural conditioning process:

At [a] very early period of his life, each of us as an individual is conditioned to react with a special affective content to the stimulus word "you" or, as he himself feels it, "I," and the picture or image denoted by this word comes to have more importance than everything and everyone else in the world.

After constant re-emphasis by our social environment, this image of one's self becomes an artificial center about which all else rotates. . . . Each one becomes so conditioned that his thought automatically is "how will what is going on in this moment cause *me* gain or loss?" Normal individuals then are conditioned to a self-preoccupation—egocentricity—and to self-acquisitiveness.

This conditioning process early results in the isolation of each individual. This "I" is not the total organic personality nor is the coincident "good" the basic need of organismic man. Accordingly, the criterion for what is good or bad is continually shifting. What is good in the eyes of one person may be bad in the eyes of another and *vice versa*. So that what we are trained to do is to present continually an *appearance* of doing what is held to be "good" or approved as conceived by the person or persons before us at the moment, or to give the appearance of feeling that fits in with the circumscribed opinion presented by the community, with its traditional thought patterns and prejudices. . . .

However prevalent throughout society, man's affective response to this image or stimulus word "I" does not represent health or wholeness, for this "I" is a secondarily acquired image which has been inculcated in the individual and superimposed upon the organism's total personality. Though held in common by everyone, this image contrasts each individual with all others. It is the basis of man's self-preoccupation, of his oppositeness, his self-acquisitiveness or competitiveness in other words, it is the basis of the personality traits which in their extreme form characterize the recidivist.

In considering the problem presented by this analysis, you can take either a subjective or an objective point of view. Actually, one has to see it both ways, but one of these views will inevitably prevail or become primary. The objective view will be that of the social planner or designer of systems. He will attempt to formulate plans for another kind of "conditioning." This will involve the proposal of some positive image of the human self, to take the place of the aggressive, competitive image which is at the root of anti-social behavior. On what will that image be used? On whose psychometric measurements? On what self-analytical reflections? The idea of the self always comes back to ontological reflection, to metaphysical doctrine or dogma. And if this idea is to be generalized and indoctrinated by some class of social managers, how shall we distinguish it, *formally*, from such metaphysical or pseudo-metaphysical doctrines as those of authoritarian religion, or Nazism, or Communism? We are not speaking of the content of the doctrines to be proposed, but of the idea of a conception of the self which is promulgated as some kind of psychological expedient by social planners.

If, on the other hand, you leave the idea of the self *contentless*, by reason of the argument from religious or philosophical freedom, then how will you establish a "dynamic" for change in human behavior?

The subjective view of this problem—the view which is implied by Dr. Thompson—will work as an individual provocative to ontological reflection. It will lead to serious self-examination. It will produce new psychologies and new philosophies—such as, for example, are already in currency in the thought of such men as A. H. Maslow and other of the self psychologists—Carl Rogers and Clark Moustakas and Kurt Wolff, to name some of them. These men, as leaders in the field of ontological reflection, are fertilizers of the thought of many others.

Ontological reflection is not only the subjective, meditative quest for knowledge of pure

being. This may and will most certainly enter in, but any effective thought about the self can hardly exclude critical review of the self in action. *Ideas*, as Richard Weaver remarked in a book of that title, *Have Consequences*. Ideas of the self have consequences in human behavior. The self is not only the self in *potentia*. It is also the self in *actu*.

We turn to the "ontologic reflections" of a man who devoted his entire and enormously productive career to "the living of a meaningful historical existence"—Edward Bellamy. This is neither to endorse without qualification Bellamy's social theories nor to embrace any particular doctrine he proposed, but to suggest something that can, we think, be easily defended: that a dozen or so Edward Bellamys, in any society, anywhere, any time, would elevate, refine, and in countless ways benefit the social and cultural life of their contemporaries. More of such men, we submit, are what is needed to bring the good society into being. In evidence, we suggest a reading of Arthur E. Morgan's book, *Edward Bellamy* (King's Crown Press, 1943).

When he was twenty-four years old, Bellamy set down his philosophical thinking in an essay entitled, "The Religion of Solidarity." Toward the end of his life he wrote: "I should like this paper to be read to me when I am about to die. This tribute I may render without conceit to the boy who wrote it. It . . . represents the germ of what has been ever since my philosophy of life." Early in this paper, Bellamy launched upon an ontological rapture:

How often in the brooding warmth and stillness of summer nights, when the senses are fairly oppressed with natural beauty, and the perfumed air is laden with voluptuous solicitations, does the charm of nature grow so intense that it seems almost personal, while under its influence the senses are sublimed to an ecstasy. It is then that some almost palpable barrier seems to hold back the soul from merging with the being toward which it so passionately tends. . . . So far as this universal and strongly marked instinct can be distinctly interpreted, it indicates in human nature some element common with external nature, toward which it is attracted, as

with the attraction of a part toward a whole, and with a violence that oftentimes renders us painfully conscious of the rigorous confines of our individual organisms. This restless and discontented element is not at home in the personality, its union with it seems mechanical rather than chemical, rather of position than of essence. It is homesick for a vaster mansion than the personality affords, with an unconquerable yearning, a divine discontent tending else-whither. . . . The mind is aware of a discontent that, but for its conscious impotence, would be indignation that it should be thus unequal to itself. It has aspirations of a god with the limitations of a clod. The soul that seeks to enfold and animate the universe, that takes all being for its province, and with such potential compass and desire has for its sole task the animating of one human animal in a corner of an insignificant planet.

What, then, is the view of human nature thus suggested? On the one hand is the personal life, an atom, a grain of sand on a boundless shore, a bubble on a foam-flecked ocean, a life bearing a proportion to the mass of past, present, and future life, so infinitesimal as to defy the imagination. Such is the importance of the person. On the other hand is a certain other life, as it were a spark of the universal life, insatiable in aspiration, greedy of infinity, asserting solidarity with all things and all existence, even while subject to the limitations of space and time and all other of the restricting conditions of the personality. On the one hand is a little group of faculties of the individual, unable to cope with the few and simple conditions of material life, wretchedly failing, for the most part, to secure tolerable satisfaction for the physical needs of the race, and at best making slow and painful progression. On the other hand, in the soul, is a depth of divine despair over the insufficiency of this existence, already seemingly too large, and a passionate dream of immortality, the vision of a starving man whose fancy revels in full tables.

Such is the estate of man, and such his dual life. . . . This dual life, personal and impersonal, as individual and as universal, goes far to explain the riddle of human nature and of human destiny.

One comment seems pertinent. Bellamy did not allow this manuscript to be published until the end of his life. While in explanation he called it "crude and redundant," there is a further explanation, we think, in the fact that few men are willing to bare the secret heart of their convictions

to a cold and critical world. There is a parallel case in the "ontologic reflections" of Carl Jung, who also delayed publication of a kind of thinking which, he said, had pervaded his whole life. In posthumously published material Jung counseled:

A man should be able to say he has done his best to form a conception of life after death, or to create some image of it—even if he must confess his failure. Not to have done so is a vital loss. For the question that is posed to him is the age-old heritage of humanity: an archetype, rich in secret life, which seeks to add itself to our own individual life in order to make it whole. . . . Overvalued reason has this in common with political absolutism: under its dominion the individual is pauperized.

One could add, for a more extended course of reading of this sort, Tolstoy's *My Confession*, portions of Thoreau, extracts from William Blake, and from others who, in the course of their lives, found the means to enrich their fellows not only in flights of the ontological imagination, but also in the spirit of human freedom.

The point is that, when we come to making plans for the good society, we can settle for nothing less than the kind of space and time in which men of this order have their being. Or such, at any rate, should be the ideal. What we have in the way of a living tradition of respect for the human individual comes directly from the thought of such men. It is the *feeling* of the value of the human essence that gives enduring resolve to both the great dreamers and the great reformers. This feeling can not be codified by constitution-makers, although the vision so inspired may lend a certain majesty to their utterance when the exaltation it brings is no borrowed emotion, but authentically their own.

REVIEW

A PLATONIST ON CHRIST

EDITH HAMILTON, author of *The Greek Way* and *Echoes of Greece*, first wrote an account of "Christ and his interpreters" in 1948. Titled *Witness to the Truth*, this book has now been made available as a paperback by W. W. Norton. MANAS readers, we think, are likely to be interested in the approach to Christ provided by a study of Greek philosophy. It has often been suggested, not only by Miss Hamilton, that Greek Christianity and Roman Christianity were at opposite psychological poles. In Erich Fromm's terms, the Platonic Christianity of such men as Origen and Synesius was "humanitarian," but when Constantine appropriated the Christian religion for the faith of the Empire, using the dramatic "blood symbol" of the crucifixion, the spirit of Platonism was lost entirely, and authoritarianism became the rule.

In her introduction to *Witness to the Truth*, Miss Hamilton indicates why "the Greek way," in terms of philosophy, was to lead men to seek within themselves the heroic spirit—or "spiritual vision," to use a more familiar term. Plato was not concerned with "evil" but with a man's potentiality for good. Miss Hamilton puts it this way:

Platonic philosophy aimed at turning mankind away from baseness, "to lift up the wing of the soul," Plato wrote, "which is renewed and strengthened by the love of the good, the true, the beautiful." Impotence and insignificance were as little stressed as baseness. "All things," he said, "poverty or sickness or any other misfortune will work together for good to him who desires to be like God as far as the nature of man allows." That voice is not heard now in philosophy. Plato's solution was to become like God; the solution of modern philosophy is to die. That is the real fulfillment, we are told, of what Aristotle called "excellence much labored for by the race of men."

It is not surprising, then, to find Miss Hamilton's criticisms of "Christ's interpreters" similar to those of Erich Fromm. Christ as the

symbol of the hero-man who transcends physiological limitations was effectively buried by theology. Here are some interesting sentences from Miss Hamilton's first chapter:

Christ must be rediscovered perpetually. It is easy to read beautiful words of his and be moved by them, to accept him vaguely, not scrutinizing closely what has been recorded about him, preferring not to see him sharply in the clear air of truth. It is easy to keep him remote, put away in an atmosphere of unreality where his definite and practical demands to change the basis of human life can be dimmed into a kind of nebulous good will which exacts nothing in particular. But to study the records we have of him, to look at him closely and think out what he really meant, is dismaying because what he demanded Christians do not do and have almost never done. St. Matthew says, "It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master." Christ's disciples have not been as their master. The Christian life as we see it and live it is an easy life. All this and heaven too.

It is remarkable that almost no one outside of the gospel record gives any help toward understanding him. The noble army of saints and martyrs are splendid witnesses to his power over the hearts of men, but they are not marked by their resemblance to him. In that great host St. Paul stands foremost and, astounding proof that he is—to the miracle Christ can work within the heart, how different was his temper of mind to that of his master. Even the disciple Christ loved best, who had known him in the intimacy of the daily life of the road was eager to call down fire from heaven to burn up some inhospitable people, never doubting that Christ would approve.

From these insights we can see why a man like Thomas Jefferson could be regarded as a Christian and *not* a Christian, why Gandhi may be regarded as a Christian and not a Christian, and why this may even be true of certain modern psychologists. Dr. Fromm, for instance, in distinguishing between authoritarian and humanistic religions, clearly feels that every human being can be a genuine "witness to the truth." He would also link Plato and Christ in the humanistic tradition. The following from Fromm's *Psychoanalysis and Religion* is pertinent here:

Man's aim in humanistic religion is to achieve the greatest strength, not the greatest powerlessness;

virtue is self-realization, not obedience. Faith is certainty of conviction based on one's experience of thought and feeling, not assent to propositions on credit of the proposer. The prevailing mood is that of joy, while the prevailing mood in authoritarian religion is that of sorrow and of guilt.

Inasmuch as humanistic religions are theistic, God is a symbol of *man's own powers* which he tries to realize in his life, and is not a symbol of force and domination, having *power over man*.

Illustrations of humanistic religions are early Buddhism, Taoism, the teachings of Isaiah, Jesus, Socrates, Spinoza, certain trends in the Jewish and Christian religions (particularly mysticism), the religion of Reason of the French Revolution. It is evident from these that the distinction between authoritarian and humanistic religion cuts across the distinction between theistic and nontheistic, and between religions in the narrow sense of the word and philosophical systems of religious character. What matters in all such systems is not the thought system as such but the human attitude underlying their doctrines.

It is no criticism of Miss Hamilton to point out that her exaltation of Christ is achieved by exalting qualities which Socrates also possessed. Significantly, the second chapter of *Witness to the Truth* is entirely devoted to Socrates, and the Socratic-Platonic point of view forms the basis for her "rediscovery" of the meaning of the life of Jesus. While numerous passages seem to indicate Miss Hamilton's identification with humanistic Christianity, the sentences and paragraphs that ring with true fervor have nothing to do with God as the Supreme Being nor with the crucified and resurrected Christ. But to the extent that Jesus was Socratic or Platonic—and the Sermon on the Mount has such qualities which no theology can hide—he is shown by Miss Hamilton to be one of the great "witnesses to the truth" in whom all men see something of the Real—which, having been seen, can never quite be forgotten. The following passages seem to embody the author's deepest feeling about Socrates (and doubtless, Jesus as well):

Men are not able, it is not in them as human beings, if once they see the shining of the truth, to blot it out completely and forget it. We needs must

love the highest when we see it. That is the great Socratic dogma.

This was a new religion. Its centre was the soul. In that world of shaken moral values where people were saying, "Life is too short to find out if there are gods or not. Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," Socrates came declaring that morality had an unshakeable foundation. The good, "that through whose presence the good are good," could be found by all. Morality was "of the nature of things"—human nature. "A man in his dark strivings is somehow conscious of the right way." Goethe was truly Socratic when he said that. Each soul, Socrates believed, had the seed of divinity, the potentiality of finding the underlying reality, which in another aspect is God, and of realizing the moral order. Therefore, each was of supreme importance. "The things of men," he said, were what a man should be concerned about. Cicero understood him when he wrote, "He brought philosophy down from heaven into the cities and homes of men." He himself would altogether have agreed. Yes, he would have said, because those are the places of importance, the places where men dwell. Philosophy, which is the love of the truth, must come down and live with mankind, the only seekers and discoverers of it. Men have the highest destiny. They can know the truth.

Socrates loved the truth and so he made it live. He brought it down into the homes and hearts of men because he showed it to them in himself, the spirit of truth manifest in the only way that can be, in the flesh.

COMMENTARY

SOME GOOD GENERALIZATIONS

IN *Liberation* for April, a symposium on Henry David Thoreau raises such questions as "Was Thoreau an anarchist?", "Was he a pacifist?" The contributors show the value of pursuing inquiries of this sort, mainly by contrasting intelligent with unintelligent generalizations. For example, Dachine Rainer says:

It serves no useful purpose to seek to establish the qualities of a *pure* anarchist. Like bohemianism, which it overlaps, anarchism has tangential complications. It has always seemed advisable to me to maintain an inclusive rather than an exclusive definition. . . . The literature of anarchism is widely divergent in subject and content, and no one, certainly not Thoreau, ever set down a blueprint for anarchism, although *Walden*, incidentally, remains one of the best we have. Thoreau worked things out for himself. If we come, whether in his way or in one of our own choosing, as close to solving our personal or social dilemmas as did Thoreau, we may count ourselves fortunate, indeed—and anarchists, certainly.

Such observations raise the level of generalization about Thoreau from a sectarian to a humanist level. Victor Richman comments to the same effect:

It would be best, I think, to lay aside the question of whether or not Thoreau was an anarchist, and to content ourselves with recognizing that he was not satisfied with the way men are governed, nor where government leads them.

Equally unimportant is the argument that Thoreau was not a "pacifist." Thoreau's philosophy is not the same as Tolstoy's or Gandhi's, if that is what is meant by pacifism. However, it is clear that Thoreau reacted against manifestations of violence in his own society and that his support of John Brown, . . . is comparable to the support some pacifists give to Castro or Robert Williams. Pacifists are not so much critical of violence as they are of systems or philosophies which depend upon violence for their existence, and they will not hesitate to stand behind forceful revolutionaries, while at the same time offering nonviolent solutions.

Staughton Lynd speaks of Thoreau's faithfulness to an extremely difficult ideal:

My purpose in writing about Thoreau was to point to something in our own lives: the tension between an absolute ethic and the demands of social revolution. I think that Thoreau faced up to this tension with great integrity and sensitivity. He was "responsible," in the sense that he made himself vulnerable to demands of kinds of reality as diverse as a sunrise and a fugitive in the night.

CHILDREN

... and Ourselves

BUDDHA'S DHAMMAPADA

[In search of an inviting yet clearly defined approach to the relation of education to religion, we come to one basic idea—that the human mind, whether of a child or an adult, can learn nothing new, discover nothing worth knowing, if the experience of religion is sectarian. One may *believe*, of course, but that is an entirely different matter.

To explore man's inner need for a feeling of transcendence and of the permanence of the self or soul, does not, however, require a theological point of departure. One can turn to the scriptures that have moved countless people according to rote and find that they also move him, but through his spontaneous reaction.

Great scriptures are in one sense like the music of the poetry which has reached into the hearts of so many that it has blended into the common human heritage. If these "scriptures" are approached without notice of any sectarian position, they may be found to say much of both psychology and philosophy, as well as of religion. This sort of "comparative religion" can be natural to all men, and, through parents, to all children.]

AMONG all Eastern scriptures and philosophical treatises, "the teachings of the compassionate Buddha" lay best claim to universality. One need not be versed in formal logic nor conversant with a special metaphysic to explore the rich meaning of Buddha's statements and metaphors. In group discussions of the *Dhammapada*, everyone may find something to say, while the student who reads the *Dhammapada* in solitude will soon discover how many productive trains of thought arise from a single verse or phrase.

Most of us believe that great truths may be briefly stated, that profundity and simplicity should go hand in hand. Never entangled by abstruse webs of terminology, Buddha apparently knew how to unveil philosophical mysteries by the use of images that even children can understand.

During the past fifty years, the relevance of Buddha's perceptions to a "science of soul" has

become increasingly clear. This Indian sage, perhaps more than any other man, provided a meeting-ground for all extremes of persuasion—gnosticism, unbelief and cautious skepticism, the spur of intuition, and the rigors of logic.

In the *Dhammapada*, while Buddha both affirms and denies unequivocally, verses often contain, in sequence, the *converse* of what is first said. We find, therefore, that the sharp delineations of "good" and "evil" which characterize familiar religious forms are supplanted by various "on the other hands" and "yes, buts." It is clearly this quality of the Buddha's thought which arouses the admiration of Westerners.

A man who had enjoyed Freud's personal tutelage reported that the founder of psychoanalysis called Buddha the greatest psychologist of all time. In any case, there are logical reasons for the favor Buddha has found among modern psychotherapists. Four sentences from the last two pages of "The Downward Course" in the *Dhammapada* provide sufficient illustration:

A blade of kusa grass wrongly handled cuts the hand; asceticism wrongly practiced leads downward, to hell.

They who feel shame when there is no cause for shame [as well as] they who feel no shame when they ought to be ashamed—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines.

They who fear when there is no cause for fear [as well as] they who do not fear when they ought to fear—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines.

They who discern evil where there is no evil [as well as] they who see nothing evil in what is evil—both enter the downward path, following false doctrines.

We may well feel that in this brief passage the essential key to Buddha's outlook stands revealed. To speak of those whose trouble arises from failing to "discern evil" where there is evil—this is also the talk of church and temple. To speak of those whose trouble arises from "discerning evil"

where there is no evil, who feel shame where there should be no shame—this is the language of psychotherapy. Clinicians still encounter psyches warped by distorting conceptions of sin. Buddha has his own backlog of priestly distortion to face, and his "point, counterpoint" method of instruction, in perfect balance itself, encouraged balance in those who listened. "Evil" is not to be feared, in other words, but *understood*, which, in turn, is accomplished only by breaking out of the traditional categories of Right and Wrong. Do we, today, really need anything more desperately than to find a way of retaining ethical awareness while rejecting codified morality and its accompanying self-righteousness?

There is no better illustration of the riches of the *Dhammapada* than that afforded by the first sentence: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought: all that we are is founded on our thoughts and formed of our thoughts." This is the story of man, not of only individual man, but of humanity, and the history, perhaps, of planetary evolution. And if "all that we are" includes the physical structure of our corporeal instruments, the implication is that Cosmogogenesis, also, originates in a state, quality, and condition of mind. The first two verses of the *Dhammapada* ask a man to examine the proposition that all evil, pain and suffering are directly traceable to his own state of mind. Next, lest concern with his responsibility for evil and pain overwhelm him, the converse is pointed out—that happiness, too, grows inevitably from certain conditions of mind. Here, as elsewhere throughout the *Dhammapada*, Buddha says that if a man speaks or acts purely, "happiness pursues him like his own shadow that never leaves him," thus paying his respects to the ideal of happiness.

The next two verses reveal the first great step in Buddha's logic, by examination of that greatest of all evils, hostility. *If* "all that we are is founded on our thoughts and formed of our thoughts," those who indulge feelings of hatred towards others *will themselves partake of the nature of*

hatred, and suffer the consequences in "both this world and the next." But those who root out all feelings of hostility, Buddha says, "rejoice exceedingly," and feel the purity, the goodness, and the love of life. The man of hatred constantly laments, while the man who has conquered hatred is "happy here, happy hereafter."

Christ also taught the way of love as the antidote to hatred, but Buddha's psychological emphasis is different. He does not ask man to "love his neighbor," but merely asks him to comprehend the fact that he builds his own happiness or unhappiness with every thought he thinks and each word he utters. Love of neighbor, performance of one's duty—these are to flow naturally from man's conviction of his own integrity and responsibility. Buddha, therefore, approaches ethics chiefly by induction. He preaches, not goodness nor virtue in itself, but simply the need for self-understanding. When Buddha remarks that "rains pour into an ill-thatched house; desires pour into an ill-trained mind," he is not attacking vagrant desires, but pointing out that uncontrolled desires leave man devitalized—"him verily doth Mara uproot as a gale a weak tree," continuing that "who so lives disciplining himself, unmindful of pleasures, his senses restrained, moderate in eating, full of faith and dauntless energy—him verily Mara doth not overturn as a gale doth not overturn a rocky mountain."

The imagery is effective, showing that Buddha's conception of the "good" life is one of energy, vitality, and joy in the role which, in time, will lead the individual to become a Buddha in his own right.

FRONTIERS

The Lonely Revolution

. . . We ask people to consciously reject the idea that democratic values can be defended or international problems solved by military means in the world today.

We ask people to turn their knowledge, skill, and insight away from developing military technology, away from seeking rationalizations of nuclear deterrence, away from planning for organized violence.

We ask people instead to join with us in a continuing attempt to construct alternatives to organized violence; to see that these alternatives receive a hearing by our government and our fellow citizens in the press, in correspondence, and by the spoken word; to direct their attention steadfastly to the problems of finding other solutions in an unremitting struggle for life.

From the BEAR MOUNTAIN STATEMENT
Council For Correspondence
March, 1960

Portion of a letter:

. . . and I can't worry about the possibility of nuclear war. It is a function of so many wheels within wheels, that I can only put my faith in the validity of the wheels: the possibility of tooling them up to greatest human efficiency. I have no faith in the outsiders, the appealers-to-reason, the alarmists. I see them as outside the process. . . .

Portion of an answering letter:

I am sorry to hear that you "can't worry about the possibility of nuclear war." It is a probability, not a "possibility." I see a war coming, I do not see any clear or likely way out of it, and I *am* worrying about it. Certainly my private fears are reflected in this premonition, but there is more to it than my individual view-of-the-world. I wish the world were not so inexorably "we," that I might pursue personal goals and explorations independent of the pervasive manias of deprivation and wars of deprivation, that it were possible to be an "I" in this world of so many living dead. Millions of people are standing in my living room, snarling at each other and waving bombs in threats. There seems to be no way to show

them that they are about to commit suicide, or any way to escape from the disaster they are building up to. We need more time than we have. With enough time we might be able to avoid this suicide and go on with other than problems of survival. We might learn to play, dance our individual dances, and elaborate celebrations for existence. We might explore wonder; we might be able to love.

The "insiders" will not be able to stop this war because they are captives of and investors in the fear and obsolescence of their nations and the abstractions their nations will die and kill for. They have had to give up the precious personal qualities (so that they would fit into the power structures) that they desperately need now. They are riding an avalanche and tell each other that they have it under control.

The "outsiders" will not be able to stop it because they have no power and no way to come by power. They are lost in vague dreams of utopias that, for the most part, are not utopian at all. The idiom of India and Britain, the historical and psychological matrices Gandhi exploited, do not seem to translate well into the terms of forces shaping the Cold War. The "outsiders" have no popular appeal and therefore no way of mobilizing the base of political power: millions of people in motion.

We have realists who cannot dream and dreamers who cannot find the real. We need a nation of realistic dreamers. I wonder if there are any philosopher-kings out of work? We really do not need any more Great Leaders; we need populations of human beings who can sustain the privations and terror of being leaderless, of belonging to no one or no thing. Such people would be qualified to choose leaders. We need to grow into Maslow's self-actualizers who would not be inclined to choose a leader at all. Neither our dead nor our unborn will forgive us this looming war, this final act of dehumanizing the planet.

More importantly, how can we forgive ourselves this apotheosis of hate?

The answer, if there is one, is in another or third force that is neither "inside" nor "outside." Survival

lies in the direction of another way based on millions of personal dissatisfactions and searches. Millions of individuals will have to penetrate despair and come through it with templates for a future that is truly human. There seems to be no collective stomach to break up the collective fixations and pursue the kind of personal searches I have in mind. The level of action will have to be internal and personal. Probably it will be rare for one person to be able to really help another in the effort. What has to happen cannot be communicated directly, if at all. Still, the essential quality of what does happen persists from generation to generation in the diverse accounts of people who have found ways to Be, change, and love. If it cannot be communicated, then it can be allowed to happen. But this takes time and time is what we "don't have plenty of." Anyone in the fruitful phases of his searches will, at best, be a living example of the fact that it is possible and valuable to become human. We have to look each to his own search. This is probably as pointless as composing sonnets while walking up the steps to the guillotine. But it is better than walking up these silently.

You hope for "efficiency." There is already too much efficiency. Play is inefficient, but when man plays he is most fully human. We are more *homo ludens* than we are *homo sapiens*. When the adult is able to create, love, and play he is valuable to himself and to those around him. But then he is terribly inefficient. We must decide if we really want to be human or not. We are always trying to be what we are not because we cannot sustain either the joy or the sorrow of being what we are. We do not know what is human. We are deeply, tragically afraid of what is human. We cherish most of all that which is the most destructive of humanity: the forms of hate that seem to remove us from joy and pain and replace it with power. We lose the ability to feel and gain the impression that since we cannot feel we are powerful. We imitate our machines, but fall short because machines are superior to us in efficiency. There are some things I can do that no machine can do. And these are the things I want to do.

The "wheels within wheels" in which you have faith are, at least, indestructible and designed to

continue functioning after the holocaust. The Bell System, for example, is laying an underground cable for "defense" from coast to coast. I suppose this is so that the BANG in the East will be heard in the West, and vice versa. Or perhaps the safe cable will be for crickets and rabbits (high radiation resistance), so they can keep in touch after the bombs have fallen. Then, too, there is an insurance company that has made well-advertised provisions to store all its records in a blast-and radiation-proof vault. The dead will be able to collect on the dead; all the paper will be safe.

We have surrounded ourselves with the instruments and institutions of dehumanization. All of us will have to say *No* to this somatic and emotional negation. Most of what we all assume to be "normal" activities of our civilization and everyday lives are in fact negations of the human. All of us will have to learn to say *No* to these assumptions before we will be able to find ways to affirm our lives and find forms, new forms, for affirming the truly human: we will have to say *No* to *No*. This negation of negation is really an early species of affirmation, and not analogous to the infernal paradox of the hater of hate contributing to the structure of hate.

Courage is the key here. But where does it come from and what is the nature of this courage? This is part of what we will all have to learn and find, somehow. Courage is the prerequisite for bringing the dehumanizing processes to a rest; then out of the terror of that resting place (terror, because we have not built the original negations for nothing) we will find that we have to learn again, and for the first time, what is in fact human and what is not.

We need a revolution. I can describe some aspects of it, but I cannot see ways to bring it about. It will be a bloodless, warless revolution fought with weapons stranger than the most exotic bomb or death-ray. There will be no barricades to defend, no Molotov-cocktails to hurl, no defense plants or war bonds, no ritual trials and executions, no fun at all. It will be a lonely revolution. Its harbingers are old; it has been a sustaining dream for centuries; it is where we have to go, what we will have to do, what we will have to become if we would survive now. The old

dream has become a reality waiting, with no alternatives, if we want to live at all. Millions of people will have to confront themselves and each other, their mortality, their joy, their pain, their Life, the relentless novelty of their future, the finality of the loss of their past, and the pervasive, terrible fears about these confrontations. We will have to exchange magic for the possible. We will have to give up the caricature for the real thing. We will have to come to love the Now of our lives more than all the dreams of the future built on the losses of the past. We will have to go as far as we can in knowing and accepting wonder, the apocalypse of the everyday, and in finding the courage to love the origins of this wonder and improbability in existence and in ourselves.

Nothing less than this will do now. Neither law, nor political organizations, nor social institutions, nor religious rationalizations, nor governmental machinations, nor hope built on anything less will hold back hate and the elaborations and sophistications of hate. A nation, a world, is no better than the collective morality, the sum of the humanity, of the base of political and social power. A majority of people will have to discover that it is more exciting to love than to war, that it is possible to substitute joy for all the surrogates they have used to fill up the emptiness of despairing for joy, that pain is an opportunity to define and use the essential reasons for being alive, that the dreams of power and invulnerability in hating are ghosts and will not flower.

All these things find a locus in fear, and fear is tricky. It forges some men and destroys others, and we do not know very much about why it does one or the other to any given individual. There will be casualties in the lonely revolution: the mentally ill, the people who choose a dead-end alternative to fear. But insanity is more reversible than death, and we can find ways to limit the casualties and rehabilitate them.

How to wake the dead without killing them! The lonely revolution will have its psychic casualties and this tragedy may be only slightly less than the tragedy of a nuclear war. Yet, given a real choice between life, death, and insanity most will choose

life—if the choice can be really seen for what it is. The key is fear; it must be mastered. The answer is in love; it must be made real and available. The age of anxiety has evolved into the age of terror. We must choose between an age of love or the end of the ages.

At this apex we must choose the Spring of Love, or the Winter of hate. I hope we have enough time. Time is the problem, not the probability of choosing wisely. People will seek each other out after their trials and searches and not before, with any success or mutual augmentation. Healthy human beings do not gather, except for certain kinds of celebrations. The hand pointing, points back to the man looking outside himself for answers that are only found in himself. Each of us will have to answer alone. Death is the target and each of us arrows already in flight. But the only real horror is in the death-in-life all around us; if you do not see it, you are a part of it. I do not live so that I might do this or that, or see this place or another place, or own this thing or some other thing. My life is why I want to live. I am "worrying" about a nuclear war because it may very well interrupt and end a process I enjoy and value in itself. I am excited by awareness; I am enthralled by consciousness and movement, by feeling the rush of air that any arrow feels. The process of becoming is a holy thing to me; it builds Being. This moving circle increases. I want my life, my life as it unfolds and as I follow it through making it and being made by it. These are the things at stake in choosing between war and peace, between hate and love. I think this is worth "worrying about. . . ."

WILLIAM MATHES

San Francisco, Calif.