

IDEAS AND ACTION

THE article, "What Can Be Done With Words?" in the Feb. 21 issue of MANAS struck a chord with me, since it raises questions with which I have been struggling for some time now. I should like to comment upon the article, and share some of my convictions with you.

My immediate reaction to the question posed in the title was: Not very much. All of our understanding in the behavioral sciences indicates that words count for very little in bringing about any fundamental changes in human behavior. This understanding goes completely counter to the structure of our existing educational system, which rests on the assumption that intellectual knowledge will produce significant human change and development. It also, I believe, goes counter to the hopes and expectations of many writers, propagandists and others who are interested in bringing about changes in human conduct.

It is true, of course, that an "idea whose time is ripe" is a powerful force, capable of bringing about vast transformations of human energies. But a word which has become such an idea is a word which depends not upon the power of written transmission in order to produce its effect. A word which has become an "idea whose time is ripe" is a word which attaches to a deep striving in the personality, a striving which is already operative and waiting to blossom forth. The word does not produce the change; the word is already the result of a change in the society. The speaker of the word has become dissatisfied with existing conditions, and he speaks to those other members of the society who have also become dissatisfied with the society as it is.

Undoubtedly, much good can come from the pen of the great thinker who grasps with a lucid sureness the movement of the times. But much bad can come from his pen too—whether he

intends it or not. And this, not only because he offers wrong solutions or because the movement of the times is headed in the wrong direction. The debacle of the Christian religion and of Marxist Communism shows what can happen to the ideas of great thinkers whose ideas were ripe, but whose followers did not make constructive use of them. The trouble, I think, is that we take the ideas of the great thinker for the reality which those ideas express. We relate to his ideas intellectually, rather than in terms of what they mean existentially. We rarely translate his ideas into reality, but adapt them—even when we accept them—to the reality which already exists. We *think* his ideas, when we should be trying to *live* them.

Part of this distortion stems from the fact that the great thinker himself frequently lives his greatness in his ideas rather than in his life. He too takes the depth and profundity of his ideas as the measure of the truth. And this is perhaps because Western Civilization is a civilization founded upon the written word, upon the intellect. Truth is what is said and propounded, rather than what is lived.

If we were really to learn from the great thinker, we would insist upon learning how he has applied his ideas in his own life. While we would not try to merely imitate *his* application of his ideas, we would learn a lesson from that application. Instead of allowing the great thinker to keep his private life a matter of only his concern and nobody else's, we would insist that the great thinker's thought was inseparable from his life and could not be understood except in connection with and application to that life. We would never rest content to take the thinker's ideas as the measure of his greatness. We would insist upon measuring that greatness in terms of the *total practice of the thinker's life*.

Erich Fromm writes (in *The Art of Loving*, pp. 79-80) that the emphasis upon the "right thought" in Western Culture "led to the emphasis on 'believing in God' as the aim of a religious attitude. This, of course, did not mean that there was not also the concept that one ought to live right. But nevertheless, the person who believed in God—even if he did not *live* God—felt himself to be superior to the one who lived God, but did not 'believe' in him." Too many of us *believe* in truth rather than *live* it.

You close your article with a reference to Carlyle's ode to hero-worship. This, of course, is the logical consequence of placing so much emphasis upon the great idea. If truth is found in the great idea and in its appropriation, then our homage goes out to the promulgator of the idea. We honor him, worship him, pay our adulation to him. He is great, he is a hero because he has given us such great ideas. But in forgetting that truth is in the quality of the lives we live rather than the ideas we think, we do ourselves a disservice by using an intellectual measuring stick of truth; and we do the great thinker a disservice, by responding to his ideas as though they were the truth, rather than to the life that he lives. We lead him also to believe that in setting forth some important ideas, he has discovered the truth—when he has, in fact, done no more than to arrive at the first stage of the journey to truth.

All of this shows itself in the distortions of the lives of great men. Erik Erikson, in his classic *Childhood and Society* (p. 360), writes that "the best minds have often been least aware of themselves." They too have been deceived. The emphasis upon great thought is a mutually deceptive enterprise: deceptive for him who thinks it, and deceptive for those who respond to it.

Again, I return to the initial query: "What Can Be Done With Words?" We need to re-evaluate the function of words, of thought in the scheme of things. We need to change our focus—from words and thoughts, to actions and deeds. The man whom we should respect the most is the man

who lives greatness, not the man who merely espouses great ideas. For the great thinker may simply be putting all of his greatness into his ideas—in order to achieve fame, posterity, or for other unworthy motives. It is the man who *lives* greatly who really takes the matter of greatness seriously.

What, then, is the place of writing—and reading—in our lives? What is the place of an admittedly excellent publication like MANAS in our lives? I think one inference we may draw from the discussion that has preceded is that MANAS cannot rest content to espouse the truth as a missionary might do among the heathen—or even as an evangelist does among the saved. This is the inauthentic function of writing—the propagandistic, educational or evangelistic function. And it is profoundly false. Likewise, the reader of MANAS cannot approach the paper with the expectation of "receiving the truth." The truth is something to be lived, not something to be appropriated, as a customer appropriates goods in a store.

The value of speaking the truth as one sees it is in *communicating* to others who have a similar quest and who see the truth in pretty much the same way. Not propaganda, not education, not enlightenment—but communication: this is the function of writing. And the solidarity of men in quest of the truth is a lived experience—not a verbal experience. It is by seeking such communication that we learn "what can be done with words." Then our words become the *means* to experiential truth—in this case, the truth of communication and solidarity—rather than substitutes for it.

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HARRY ZITZLER

What might be useful, in respect to this letter, are some additional or different perspectives, rather than an attempt at systematic analysis or reply. The value of many of Mr. Zitzler's criticisms is quite obvious; on the other hand, the

implications and consequences of some of his suggestions should be clarified by further investigation.

Our immediate response upon reading his letter was to recall two in particular of the volumes in Ignazio Silone's trilogy—*Bread and Wine* and *The Seed Beneath the Snow*. There is a parallel between Silone's conclusion in these books and our correspondent's point. As readers of Silone will recall, the leading character of this socio-political drama is Spina, a social revolutionary who had returned to Italy to work underground for a revolt against Mussolini's fascist state. Spina is a brilliant analyst and critic who devotes much of his energy to exposing the injustice and corruption of the regime in power, proposing that it be replaced by a socialist society. His work is largely theoretical, in that it involves the use of generalization and arguments from principle. In time, however, Spina finds that his writing is without effect upon the Italian people. They neither understand nor are they interested in what he says. A terrible corruption has overtaken them. The speech of common communication has been so debased by lies and propaganda that even the ordinary words of daily intercourse among the people of the towns and villages no longer have much meaning. They do not deal in *truth* with one another. Deception and betrayal are casual, almost expected. Words are signs of obscure, ulterior intent, not direct communications. In such a situation, theoretical writing in behalf of the common good has no hope of gaining an audience. Discovering this, Spina revises his plans. He stops writing and begins a course of action which, he believes, will be a model for the establishment of simple trust among human beings. *Bread and Wine* reveals and sets the problem, and *The Seed Beneath the Snow* presents the solution. Some day, Spina hopes, it will be possible to return to the larger ideas of social philosophy, but first it is necessary to restore to communication the moral integrity upon which meaning depends.

The point, here, is that words become ineffectual by being misused. The conclusion of the social sciences that "words count for very little in bringing about any fundamental changes in human behavior" needs to be placed in a context of the study of cultural conditions. The simplest instance of a cultural environment is the family. The child who grows up in close relationship with parents or elders who use words with deliberation and conscientious attention to honest communication will develop a very different attitude toward words from that of the child who is exposed to careless and irresponsible speech.

If you expand this illustration to the entire social community, you begin to see the complex and on the whole debasing influences to which the process of communication is subjected. When the behavioral sciences measure the role of words in the determination of behavior, they also measure these influences indirectly. One should always ask, "What would be the *ideal* circumstances under which to study the role of verbal communications?" This question would be difficult if not impossible to answer, but it ought to be asked anyway, if only as a means of avoiding unqualified conclusions.

A central problem of the advertising business is to find words and other means of communication which have not worn out their impact on the continually bombarded "consumer." The object is to create a favorable emotional response to the product that is advertised, leading to its purchase. A clever advertisement is one which sneaks up on the blind side of the consumer, gets under his guard and sets his reflexes for buying the product. For the advertising man, success in discovering such devices is an exercise in professional virtue. "Angles" and "gimmicks" are the values of his career. Rarely does he attempt direct communication. He lives on side-effects, on the cumulative result of subconscious impressions. He appeals to vanity, feelings of status, fear, possessiveness, and the psychological laws of

association. The processes of political persuasion are often frighteningly similar to the practice of advertising and sales promotion. The anti-utopias of the modern novelist, such as Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*, and Skinner's *Walden Two* carry these tendencies to their logical conclusion, displaying the ultimate corruption of the use of words and the means of communication. The result is the reduction of "action" to the most primitive level.

Any estimate of the role of words, to have validity, will have to take this vast complex of "cultural" influences into account, and to note, at least in passing, the survival of small sub-cultures composed of people who use words seriously as direct communications, in which words and ideas have a better chance to be taken as having meanings and ends in themselves. It is at least conceivable that the cadres of the revolutions of the future will be found among these sub-cultures. The practice of the Gandhian groups of the present, which is to give studious attention to telling the truth in all relationships, is a case in point. As time goes on, the words of these people are given extraordinary respect. It may be said that the respect is won, not simply by the truth-content in the words, but by the consistency between word and act. This is of course true. But to insist upon an immediate and obvious relationship between words or ideas, and actions, would be to condemn ideative expression to a very limited field.

Sometimes the relationship between thought and act is extremely subtle and complex. Take for example the case of Soetan Sjahrir, one of the leaders of the Indonesian Revolution. Two attitudes (among others, of course) were manifested by Indonesian patriots in their struggle with the Dutch. One group practiced non-cooperation, the other bargained and cooperated. Sjahrir cooperated in certain relationships, and was not admired for it by many of the true-blue revolutionists. This made it impossible for him to hold posts of public importance after the

revolution was complete. Sjahrir explained his behavior more or less as follows: Non-cooperation is an act of respect for your opponent. You appeal to his perceptions of justice and by noncooperation oblige him to consider the moral ground of his policies. But Sjahrir did not believe that the Dutch administrators were susceptible to this appeal. He was unable to respect people who had held him in confinement for eight years as punishment for a simple desire to bring education to his people. So he bargained and cooperated with the Dutch in order to go on with his work, which he regarded as important and basic to the future of Indonesia.

You may disagree with Sjahrir about this decision, but if you read the man's book, *Out of Exile* (John Day), and read John Payne's book reporting on the Indonesian revolution (*Revolt of Asia*, John Day, 1947), it will be very difficult not to grant him a full measure of integrity and manifest devotion to his people. *His* action was consistent with *his* principles.

Well, this example is hardly far afield from our correspondent's ideas. We do not offer it simply to support his point, but rather to show that occasionally it may be quite difficult to understand a man's behavior in relation to his ideas. It is of interest and instructive, of course, to compare a man's acts with his words. But we may not always be able to do it with justice. There is the further consideration that it could become quite tiresomely self-righteous to go about feeling qualified to demand an accounting of other people for what we presume to be their "inconsistencies."

Then there is the fact that few good men believe that their practice keeps up with their ideals. To make an intellectual convention out of a man's self-defense of his private life, or that aspect of his life in which he attempts to put his ideas to work, sounds a bit presumptuous. It is conceivable that the best men will be unable to defend themselves, by reason of an essential

modesty and longing to do far better than they have done.

Of course, the practical "applicability" of a man's ideas will vary with fields of work. It seems easy enough to separate a mathematician's work from his private morality. But even here there are problems, of the sort described by David Lindsay Watson in *Scientists Are Human* (London: Watts, 1938).

The question arises: What would we presume to determine in examining the life of an individual? Is it for the purposes of moral judgment, to decide whether we should brand him "hypocrite" or not? Is it to assess the correctness of his judgments in a practical situation? Or is it simply to form an impression of whether or not he is worth reading?

All these judgments require criteria somewhat more reliable than an ordinary rule of thumb. There is such a multiplicity of standards on the basis of which people make judgments of other people that one hesitates to concede in principle the right to make them. We have had a lot of experience, recently, with the practice of establishing "guilt by association." There are people who cannot even get a hearing for their ideas because of some past action (which may or may not have a pertinent significance), so that the sound reason in what they say falls on deaf ears. Our correspondent would of course reject this application of his idea, but any proposal which leads to the formation of judgments of other human beings must be evaluated in terms of its possible abuse as well as its proper use, and the ease with which use may turn into abuse.

Mr. Zitzler is of course right in insisting that truth is a lived, not a verbal experience. The substitution of verbal formulas for experienced verity is one of the cultural bad habits of Western civilization, due in large part to centuries of stress on creed and dogma in orthodox forms of Western (Christian) religion. (Edmond Taylor's *Richer By Asia* is a good book on the psycho-social consequences of this aspect of Western religion.) What must be avoided, however, is

allowing the idea of "action" to be interpreted according to some consensus or convention—even a "radical" convention. Every human being, writer or not, has both the right and the obligation to define for himself the meanings of "integrity," "consistency," and "action."

This is a region of inquiry which needs extensive exploration. If other readers contribute their views, there should be opportunity to extend the discussion further. Meanwhile, some fruitful reading along related lines could be pursued in the early chapters of Simone Weil's *The Need for Roots* (Putnam, 1952).

Letter from **ENGLAND**

ROBERTSBRIDGE.—When an accused elects to defend himself in an English criminal court, it is customary for the presiding judge to assist him, and, indeed, act almost as though counsel briefed on the accused's behalf. This approach to the judicial function has more than once merited and secured the admiration of the legal professions of other States.

In a criminal trial just concluded in London's Old Bailey, in which six accused, one a young woman, were put on trial for offences under the Official Secrets Acts, were found guilty and sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment in the case of the men and twelve months imprisonment in the case of the woman, the record as published in the press does not suggest that the judge, Mr. Justice Havers elected for the customary judicial assistance by the Bench. The charge was not one involving crime in the ordinary sense, but technical offences perpetrated by citizens of the highest moral character, and thus, in some ways, resembled the now almost forgotten criminal trials and prison sentences passed upon that group of women whose agitations yielded for England's women the right to vote in Parliamentary elections. All these accused, under the leadership of the aged Bertrand Russell (more exactly, Earl Russell, and the grandson of a former Prime Minister), were on trial for the offence of invading the R.A.F. base at Wethersfield where aircraft stand ready to take off with atomic bombs. That, as the law stands, these people were guilty there can be no doubt. This admitted, the question now being asked (*e.g.*, in a leader-page article in *The Guardian*) is this: Was Pottle, who conducted his own defence, helped or impeded by the presiding judge? I think there can be no doubt whatsoever about the answer to that question.

Among the witnesses called by the chief defendant, Patrick Pottle, secretary of the Committee of 100, the Ban the Bomb

organization, were Bertrand Russell and Dr. Linus Pauling, both Nobel prize winners, and Sir Robert Watson-Watt. Dr. Pauling had flown from California to testify. The examination by Pottle of these very important witnesses was conducted by a running series of interruptions from the Bench. Not being a lawyer, Pottle framed many questions in a manner which ran contrary to the law concerning evidence, in attempting to reveal the purpose of the offences, namely, to make manifest the danger inherent in nuclear armaments. This the accused was unable to do, so that what should have been an important part of his defence was disallowed by the judge.

I quote from the *Guardian*:

The judge's directions and his interventions during the evidence of experts, such as Sir Robert Watson-Watt and Dr. Linus Pauling, prevented the defence from raising the issues of nuclear disarmament, the effects of nuclear weapons and the possibility of an accidental explosion of nuclear weapons. The defence was thus unable to put before the jury its case. . . .

There followed sentences which can fairly be described as savage, and this despite the following rider by the jury: "By a unanimous decision we would like the court to consider leniency." This appeal, alas, fell on deaf judicial ears.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

DISCUSSION OF "SELF- ACTUALIZATION"

THE JOURNAL OF INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY for November, 1959, has an article by Viktor Frankl (translated from the German) entitled, "The Spiritual Dimension in Existential Analysis." Ever since reading Dr. Frankl's book *From Death Camp to Existentialism* (Beacon), we have tried to familiarize ourselves with other works by this unusual psychotherapist. His paper on "The Spiritual Dimension" is a valuable addition to a growing Frankl collection.

The following paragraph gives Dr. Frankl's reasons for implying a Platonic definition of the total human mind or "soul":

One characteristic of human existence is its transcendence. That is to say, man transcends his environment toward the world (and toward a higher world); but more than this, he also transcends his *being* toward an *ought*. Whenever man transcends himself in such a manner, he rises above the level of the somatic and the psychic, and enters the realm of the genuinely human. This realm is constituted by a new dimension, the noetic; it is the dimension of spirit. Neither the somatic nor the psychic alone constitute the genuinely human; rather, they represent only two sides of the human being. Thus, there can be absolutely no talk of a parallelism in the sense of dualism, nor of an identity in the sense of monism.

This approach involves the areas of concern which are characteristic of religions and religiously oriented philosophies—but it does not, so far as we can see, involve any established or yet-to-be-established theology. The great need for such investigations on the part of philosophy-inclined psychotherapists is established in Dr. Frankl's conclusion:

Psychotherapy needs a correct picture of man; it needs this at least as much as an exact method and technique. The doctor however, who overestimates and idolizes method and technique, and who understands his role merely as that of a medical technician, only proves that he sees man as a mechanism, a machine—*l'homme machine* (Julian O.

de Lamettrie)—and does not see the man behind the patient.

I believe that the dream of half a century has been dreamed out. I mean the dream that regarded the psyche as a mechanism and accordingly held that there was a technique for psyche cure. In other words, the dream considered that an explanation of psychic life in terms of mechanisms was possible, and similarly that the treatment of psychic suffering was to be performed solely with the help of psychic technology. What begins to appear in the dawn are not sketches of a psychologized medicine, but of a humanized psychiatry.

Dr. Frankl has much in common, actually, with A. H. Maslow and Carl Rogers, but the present article, "The Spiritual Dimension," has a section devoted to criticism of Maslow's term, "self-actualization." Dr. Frankl feels that the need for a kind of "transcendence" in value-striving may be obscured by the "self-actualization concept of human good." He writes:

Man's primary concern is not self-actualization, but fulfillment of meaning. . . . Self-fulfillment and self-actualization cannot possibly be life's final purpose or man's last aim; on the contrary, the more man directs himself toward them, the more he will miss them. This is true for every subjective condition e.g., pleasure; the more man strives for pleasure, the more it eludes him, and many sexual neuroses have their etiological basis precisely in this law. The hunt for happiness frightens the object away; the pursuit of happiness borders upon a self-contradiction.

Actually, man's concern is not to fulfill himself or to actualize himself, but to fulfill meaning and to realize value. Only to the extent to which he fulfills concrete and personal meaning of his own existence will he also actualize himself. Self-actualization occurs by itself—not through intention, but as effect.

When is man so concerned with self-actualization? When does he, in this sense, reflect upon himself? Is not such reflection in each instance an expression of an intention toward meaning that has missed its goal and been frustrated? Does not the forced striving after self-actualization betray a frustrated striving for the fulfillment of meaning? Here the analogy of a boomerang comes to mind. Its purpose, as it is generally supposed, is to return to the hunter who has thrown it. But this is not so; only that boomerang returns to the hunter which has missed its target, the prey. Likewise, only that man comes back

upon himself and is intent upon his own condition who has forgotten that outside in the world a concrete and personal meaning awaits him, that out there a task is waiting to be fulfilled by him and him alone.

These are interesting points to consider, and we would like to have Dr. Maslow's thoughts on how they may best be treated—though it seems clear to us that Dr. Frankl is not sufficiently acquainted with Maslow's use of the term "self-actualization," and that the concern of both men is similar even though their terms are very different. (If there is one obvious criticism to be made of Frankl's current writing, it is that he has become greatly attached to the importance of his own word coinage.)

An appreciative critic of Frankl, Dr. Ferdinand Birnbaum, one of Alfred Adler's closest co-workers, points out that Frankl's logotherapy is of particular value with "patients whose thinking is concerned with ultimate problems." Birnbaum considers this a teaching of the "art of suffering, suffering for the sake of purification." Frankl himself describes three different psychological situations in which the methods of logotherapy serve as no other psychotherapy will: "(1) Where a patient practically forces his spiritual need upon one, as in cases of religious doubt. (2) Where we are dealing with a person who is equal to discussions of world philosophy, *i.e.*, a person from whom we may expect that 'psychotherapy from the spiritual direction' represents the method of choice. (3) Wherever in the life of the patient in question it is a matter of fate, *i.e.*, in view of crippling and incurable disease, or chronic lingering illness, as well as other unalterable situations."

And does not every human being, young or old, answer in part to one such description? Is not everyone beset by a feeling of suffering "fate," by a search for the realization of full responsibility? by spiritual need? Frankl speaks to and for those who seek some kind of meaningful transcendence, who have come to value that sort of "loneliness" of the spirit which Clarke Moustakas describes. In *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Joseph

Campbell writes indirectly on "loneliness," providing means for an understanding of Frankl's division of man's nature into the *psychic* and *noëtic*:

From the standpoint of the way of duty, anyone in exile from the community is a nothing. From the other point of view, however, this exile is the first step of the quest. Each carries within himself the all, therefore it may be sought and discovered within. The differentiations of sex, age, and occupation are not essential to our character, but mere costumes which we wear for a time on the stage of the world. The image of man within is not to be confounded with the garments. We think of ourselves as Americans, children of the twentieth century, Occidentals, civilized Christians. We are virtuous or sinful. Yet such designations do not tell what it is to be a man; they denote only the accidents of geography, birth-date, and income. What is the core of us? What is the basic character of our being?

COMMENTARY **THE IMAGE OF MAN**

WITHIN weeks there have appeared in MANAS half a dozen or more brief quotations which are clarifying in a particular way: they illuminate what may be thought of as an emerging new image of man. These passages embody ideas which are both questioning and emancipating. A keynote is found in the closing sentences, from Joseph Campbell, of this week's Review: "What is the core of us? What is the basic character of our being?"

A generation ago, no one was asking these questions. Now, "everybody" is asking them. Of course, the questions take different forms. Last week, A. H. Maslow was quoted as saying "that the ultimate disease of our time is valuelessness; . . . that this state is more crucially dangerous than ever before in history; finally, that something can be done about it by man's own rational efforts." Earlier this month (March 7) we took from Czeslaw Milosz the following: ". . . perhaps the rootlessness of man is not so great if, through individual effort, he can, so to say, return home and be in contact with all the people of various races and religions who suffered, thought, and created before him." And Laurens van der Post was heard in the same issue: "It seems to me that people's private and personal lives have never mattered as they do now." Against these may be set the criticism (in this week's "Children"): "Our schools are a precise expression of our culture; . . . they do certainly establish in young Americans common categories of thought and unconscious predispositions. But they do not clarify the meaning of experience."

These are liberating ideas and inspired gropings, and more than gropings: they represent the determined efforts of some of the most thoughtful men of our time to hammer out a more universal feeling of identity and purpose of human beings. With this effort comes a slow transformation of values, and new conceptions of

ends and means. What must result, in time, is a new attitude toward self and toward the world. A man's actions cannot rise above his ideas of the self and the world.

The world now lies, apathetic and almost impotent, in the clutch of a struggle between those who acted with great zeal, but not enough thought, in a revolutionary way, and those who are responding with great fear and anger, but not enough thought.

The end of thought, as Coleridge said, is an act. It is difficult to say which is worse—thought without action or action without thought.

There is this, however, to say: The nature of human life compels some sort of action, if we are to stay alive. The provocatives to thought are not so insistent. A man can stay alive with only a low sort of expedient thinking. Serious thought is a self-generated kind of behavior, and when it is fruitful it leads naturally and inevitably to a kind of action of which the thoughtless man is quite incapable. The claim of an opposition between thought and action is as barren and futile as the war between the generations—both are a sickness of our age.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THE VANISHING ADOLESCENT

EDGAR FRIEDENBERG'S (Dell Pocket edition, 50 cents) book of this title should, we think, be owned by every MANAS reader. It could well appear in installments in "Children . . . and Ourselves."

David Riesman supplies a ten-page introduction which is much more than a "courtesy" preface. Along with the author, Riesman is "impressed" with the exceptional fineness of temper and interpersonal sensibility of the best young people today." He adds, however: "Perhaps it reveals my own defensiveness as parent and teacher that I am both frightened and depressed by the *Lumpenproletariat* of morally and culturally impoverished young whose basic passivity makes heroic demands on those who must daily cope with them in or out of school." Mr. Riesman continues:

With Mr. Friedenberg's main point, I am in full agreement—namely, that traditional adolescence is vanishing, swallowed up at the childhood end by the increasing precocity of the young, their turning of high school into an *ersatz* college or even suburb, their early if somewhat flat maturity as lovers, consumers, committeemen; and at the adult end by the prolongation of the period of training for the increasing numbers in graduate school, a cadre caricatured by the psychoanalyst-in-training who at 40 is still his supervisor's "boy," dependent on his approval for certification, self-esteem, and patronage. Anyone who doubts the knowledgeability of the contemporary American teenager might be startled to realize that Charley Brown, the London evacuee who is the hero of Joyce Cary's *Charley is my Darling*, is 15; to an American reader he seems more like 12.

In Mr. Friedenberg's terms, the fundamental task for young people during adolescence is to achieve "clear and stable self-identification." The opening paragraphs of *The Vanishing Adolescent* summarize the difficulties:

This process may be frustrated and emptied of meaning in a society which, like our own, is hostile to

clarity and vividness. Our culture impedes the clear definition of any faithful self-image—indeed, of any clear image whatsoever. We do not break images, there are few iconoclasts among us. Instead we blur and soften them. The resulting pliability gives life in our society its familiar, plastic texture. It also makes adolescence more difficult, more dangerous, and more troublesome to the adolescent and to society itself. And it makes adolescence rarer. Fewer youngsters really dare to go through with it; they merely undergo puberty and simulate maturity.

There has recently been growing concern about this; adults have noticed the change and gravely remarked the emergence of a beat and silent generation. On the whole, we don't like it; and even those of us who find it a convenience would rather not be credited with having brought it about. Rather, we treat our silent, alienated, or apathetic youth as problems, as psychological or social aberrations from the normal course of adolescence. This evasion, however comforting, is unreal. It is the fully human adolescent—the adolescent who faces life with love and defiance—who has become aberrant.

Real adolescents are vanishing. I do not suppose they will become extinct, but they are certainly struggling to carry a disproportionate load of our common humanity. Many are holding back, and some are getting crushed. My purpose, in this book, is to show why this is so, and what I think we are losing.

There is a curious pathology in contemporary attitudes towards youth, a pathology which Mr. Riesman is adept at pointing out, as when he writes: "The intense subjectivity of many adolescents, along with their partly physiological and partly culturally-conditioned sexuality, makes them a highly salient screen for adults whose own buried subjectivity remains as an unconscious threat to their ambitions for status and security. Such adults unconsciously insist that teen-agers vicariously act out what they themselves ambivalently fear: this is one source of the centrality of the teen-ager today as the symbol at once of the under- and the over-privileged, lacking the material possessions and position of adulthood but romantically clinging to the youth, ardor, and aristocratic integrity and insouciance which the adult has lost or surrendered. Indeed, I agree with the author: in a society which has

increasingly enfranchised women, the poor, even the Negro, the adolescent becomes the favorite rebel without a cause—causeless because society seemingly asks so little of him, merely that he 'grow up,' finish school, and get on the payroll."

The Vanishing Adolescent is not a case-history sort of book; the writing is philosophical and psychological, and Mr. Friedenberg may be alternately accused of being diffuse and excessively technical. But studies of "five exemplary boys," discussed in terms of their responses to a series of questions by the author, illustrate some of the themes of the book. For one thing, by too much emphasis on "social integration" the schools often unhappily influence the young person to self-alienation. Mr. Friedenberg writes:

Our schools are a precise expression of our culture; they do prevent it flying apart; they do polarize our vision in certain directions; they do certainly establish in young Americans common categories of thought and unconscious predispositions. But they do not clarify the meaning of experience.

According to the author, the adolescent sorely misses feeling that certain processes of growth are going on within himself which *will* assist him to clarify the meaning of his life. He is very much affected by the canons of behavior in his particular social setting, tending to know other adolescents as members of a group, rather than as individuals. Instead of being a time marked by increasingly significant discoveries—including that of close friendship or an understanding love between the sexes—the school years are likely to be simply an interregnum without clear point or purpose. At the same time Friedenberg feels that adolescents, however unconsciously, feel an "intense need for status in a society which provides few stable guarantees of respect on which a sense of personal worth can be based." He adds:

We have today many miserable young people who sometimes behave very badly. Whether it does more good or harm to think of this as a "youth

problem" or the "problem of juvenile delinquency" or whatever, I do not know. Nor do I know whether, if we persist in thinking of these young people as a problem, a solution can be found. But I do know that the only good solution must be one in which their integrity and unique characteristics can be treasured and preserved. Some must be punished, no doubt, because they are betraying their own humanity through their behavior, as well as infringing the humanity of other persons. But they must not be smoothly lured into the cooperative folkways of middle-class society, as if the world were one vast Holiday Camp, in which the most important thing was to keep those who were having a bad time from noticing it and making a fuss about it. The fuss about it. The role of the adolescent in adult imagery and feeling is to remind us what might have been expected of adult life. If we find the recollection painful, that is our responsibility—not theirs.

The Vanishing Adolescent closes with a series of recommendations for the community view of the adolescent—and for the school itself:

More emphasis on the sciences, higher standards, stricter discipline: these, of themselves will not help at all. They may hinder. A school that, while raising standards in certain academic areas, treats the student more than ever as an object or an instrument, simply becomes a more potent source of alienation.

What is needed is no program of technical training-cum-indoctrination, but the patient development of the kind of character and mind that conceives itself too clearly to consent to its own betrayal. It takes a kind of shabby arrogance to survive in our time, and a fairly romantic nature to want to. These are scarce resources, but more abundant among adolescents than elsewhere, at least to begin with.

Edgar Friedenberg took his doctorate in Education at the University of Chicago, and now teaches at Brooklyn College. *The Vanishing Adolescent* is the fruit of years of research and reflection—not particularly easy to read, but extremely rewarding for reflection or discussion purposes. To understand why Mr. Friedenberg thinks the adult world is dangerously hostile to adolescents, the reader will need to look at the book for himself.

FRONTIERS Religion and the "Good"

A QUESTION asked by a reader in Cuernavaca, Mexico, enables us to assemble considerations which are often neglected in relation to the role of religion. The question is:

Do you think that Man is inherently good without the aid or directives of religion?

The questioner adds. "Now, do not ask me what I mean by 'good.' Use your own criterion for that word. My reference to religion implies either an organized church or a belief in a Supreme Power."

We are quite willing to use a common-sense or intuitive criterion for the meaning of "good," but the content suggested for the meaning of "religion" does not seem at all adequate. "Organized church" is clear enough, but "belief in a Supreme Power" can have differing and even opposed meanings. It could be, for example, the anthropomorphic deity of old-time Christian religion, or the impersonal, universally operative moral law of cause and effect which the Buddhists term *Karma*. The adjective, "supreme," could be made to apply in either case, but with quite different consequences for human behavior and decision.

But perhaps we can dispose of this equivocation in the question by starting out with other problems. For one thing, common experience at once makes it plain that man is capable of both good and evil. The use of the word "inherently" brings into the question the complexity of man's nature. Can he be *inherently* good, but superficially or occasionally evil? What provokes the good and suppresses the evil, or vice versa? Actually, you can make a substantial case for almost any partisan account of man's nature. You can say, with Hamlet, "In apprehension, how like a god!", or you can construct a comparison where "every prospect pleases, and only man is vile." You can find the noblest of men in

association with one or another sort of institutional religion, and also the most degrading examples of the species with the same affiliation. It follows that the elimination of special pleading from the answer to this question will be extremely difficult. And you could use up all your space trying to balance the evidence for such contradictory conclusions and still arrive at an indecisive answer.

There are certain facts, however, which seem to stand out. Great goodness in human beings is most apparent in individuals. That is, in seeking to illustrate the capacity for good, we gravitate to the records of biography, while evil is most dramatically displayed in the behavior of groups or crowds, or societies which are carried along to evil behavior by a kind of temporary moral blindness which seems to afflict people in the mass. We may, of course, oppose the Nero to the Socrates, the Hitler to the Gandhi, but the point to be made here is the susceptibility of the "ordinarily" good man to evil behavior when under the malign influence of mass psychology of the sort typified by Nazi leadership, etc. Such situations obviously represent great complexity of motivation, showing, more than anything else, the difficulties in the question, but it is necessary to raise these difficulties since historical religion has been as responsible as any other social formation for acts of massive evil and inhumanity to man.

Making still another beginning, let us stipulate that there are moral contradictions in individuals, and similar contradictions in the institutions given form by individuals associated in societies. But there is also a noticeable difference between the contradictions in the individual and those found in institutions. In a single man, the contradictions have a better chance of being resolved by reason of the fact that they arise from a living moral struggle. The institutional forms of this struggle tend to represent accepted compromises of the contradictions, involving procrustean resolutions of the paradoxes in moral choice. The stronger or more powerful the institutions, the more they feed

back to their followers or members the attitudes of accepted compromise and over-simplified answers to unsettled moral and philosophical questions. Historically this has resulted in hideous cruelties performed with either the sanction or the sanctimonious indifference of organized religion.

But what about the manifest presence of "good" ideas in the forms and affirmed beliefs of organized religion? Religious institutions can easily be shown to have a dual role in relation to the members of a given society. In their formative stages, the institutions usually represent the desire of some men to help other men. They are devised as instruments of a special sort of education—education into the meaning of life, the difference between good and evil, and concerning the ends of existence. They have this function in varying degree, with estimates of their success depending upon whether they are judged to conduct a true or a false education in these matters. But religious institutions are also means to political and psychological power for the few. This, we often say, is the corruption of religion, but those who seek power by this means usually declare that they use their power wholly for the good, the help—even the salvation—of their less responsible fellow men. It is here that our "intuitive" or common-sense criterion of the good tends to be inadequate, for it is here that you have to decide whether you agree with Jesus or with the Grand Inquisitor concerning the nature of man (see Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*). This decision is far-reaching and leads to commitment to either a high or a low estimate of the nature of man.

If you side with Jesus, you are likely to take the affirmative answer to the question asked by our correspondent.

Accepting a broader account of the meaning of "religion" than is suggested in this question will help to reach an answer. If you are willing to say that the sources of religion or of religious inspiration are in human beings, and to propose, further, that religious institutions are fallible means devised by men to preserve and spread the

values of this inspiration, then you may add that the separation of man from religion is an artificial and unwarranted separation, creating a false problem. You will say that man, being man, carries his religion with him as an essential part of his being. You will of course admit that the articulation of this religion varies enormously among individuals, proposing that attempts to compensate for this variation result in the formation of religious institutions, which, in turn, lead to still other consequences, some of which we have noted.

You might add, as possibly throwing some light on the question, that an aspect of the presence of religion in individual humans is the degree of their feeling of identity with other people and the rest of life. Attempts to give this feeling a rational ground produce metaphysical doctrines concerning the nature of being, and metaphysical doctrines, when taken over by organized groups of a religious description, are turned into theological doctrines which are formulated around dogmas and finally made the basis of creeds that become "tests" of the true faith. Belief in such "religions" is usually enforced by the claim that they have a supernatural origin.

Reforms in religion, down through history, have almost always been an expression of the deep desire to return the responsibility for religious or philosophical truth to the individual, where it originated, and to reduce or wholly eliminate the spiritual authority of religious institutions. They are attempts to restore or create a feeling of individual capacity to find the truth. But the zeal of these reforming movements to "succeed," or to accomplish their ends in a hurry, usually leads, in time, to the institutionalization of the reform and the creation, in new guise, of the same old institutional barriers to individual religion.