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THE INFORMED CONSCIENCE

THE broad, generalizing intelligence of Paul Goodman is hard to beat. One purpose of generalization is to illuminate meaning in areas of decision and action, and to succeed in this the generalizer must choose for consideration matters and problems which a great many people are aware of and concerned about. Otherwise his conclusions will remain "academic." He must be able to demonstrate that he has a comprehensive grasp of the commonly accepted if erroneous opinions about these problems, and to describe in a not distantly superior manner the familiar feelings and reasoning which shape such views. He must know how to avoid provoking quibbles and irrelevant dissent. Finally, he must be able to bring to bear on the "accepted knowledge" of the time the strong light of fresh insights and perspectives in order to show, as dramatically as possible, where and how this knowledge is misleading, yet how it might remain useful within the reorienting framework of a larger vision. Generalization which has this purpose will require the marshalling of various unpalatable and neglected facts and exposure of miscalculations and mistakes which typify the blindness of the age. With a large audience, such as Goodman is fortunately able to attract, this means finding and using for his facts some illustrations with meanings or implications which don't need a lot of argument or "interpretation," but which jump up for recognition like the point of a good joke. This sort of thing can't be done in a mean spirit. Arrogance is completely out, and self-righteousness is a block. No one ever helped anybody to *see* anything important without having a noticeable generosity of mind.

Paul Goodman, we think, succeeds pretty well in these departments. In his article, "Can Technology Be Humane?" (*New York Review of Books,* Nov. 20, 1969), he puts together a large number of indisputable facts, shows that the dominant enterprises of the present, piloted by respected and influential authorities, are nearly all on collision courses; and then, by adding a historical analogy, he reaches what seems an extremely likely conclusion—one which, despite the self-destructive tendencies he has so clearly identified, has some hope and promise in it.

His thesis is that science and technology cannot be abandoned—at any rate they will not be—and that the problem, then, is to make them both subservient to canons of authentic benefit to man. The first part of his article is devoted to showing that a good human society is bound to be one which decentralizes power, which relies more and more on the autonomous intelligence of individuals, who develop best in small, non-power-structure social formations. He heaps up illustrations to prove that the good qualities of civilization practically all arise in such environments. He shows that past social and cultural achievements degrade as they are centrally organized, and as human skills and capacities are exploited by managers whose chief objectives are power and the accumulation of wealth. This collection of evidence becomes Goodman's ground for claiming that the guiding principles of a good society must be moral principles. The government and regulation of the practitioners of technology must be *self*-government and *self*-regulation—no other control can work. Technologists, in short, must learn to be moral philosophers. They must know enough about human life and society and the sources of goodness in human life to refuse to do what will be manifestly bad for human beings. Knowing facts and dynamics is not enough. They must practice the virtues. This, Goodman points out, is what ecology is all about, and ecology bids fair to be the most important science of the future.

Ecology is *normative* science. Technique may be value-free, but technicians dare not be.

Goodman's main point is that the growing dissent and revolt of the present, especially among the young, contains the promise of a great moral or religious reform. In evidence of this, he proposes that the rejection of science, not as method or technique, but as a *religion,* has already begun within the scientific community itself, just as, hundreds of years ago, the Lutheran Reformation began within the religious community. This may explain some of the ambiguity in the unrest we see and feel all about.

How did science acquire "religious" status? Through its half-deliberate, half-accidental role of religious reformer. Why is it now losing its religious authority? First, because it never really measured up to this role—exposing the pretenses of what had become a fraudulent basis for "morality" is not enough; and, second, as science became chiefly a means to power, and hired out to the highest bidder, it lost its meaning as natural philosophy and stopped being liberating in effect. This transformation is described by Goodman:

> For three hundred years, science and scientific technology had an unblemished and justified reputation as a wonderful adventure, pouring out practical benefits, and liberating the spirit from the errors of superstition and traditional faith. During this century they have finally been the only generally credited system of explanation and problem-solving. Yet in our generation they have come to seem to many, and to very many of the best of the young, as essentially inhuman, abstract, regimenting, hand-in-glove with Power, and even diabolical. Young people say that science is anti-life, it is a Calvinist obsession, it has been a weapon of white Europe to subjugate colored races, and manifestly—in view of recent scientific technology—people who think that way become insane. With science, the other professions are discredited; and the academic "disciplines" are discredited.
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> The immediate reasons for this shattering reversal of values are fairly obvious. Hitler's ovens and his other experiments in eugenics, the first atom bombs and their frenzied subsequent developments, the deteriorization of the physical environment and the destruction of the biosphere, the catastrophes impending over the cities because of technological failures and psychological stress, the prospect of a brainwashed and drugged 1984. Innovations yield diminishing returns in enhancing life. And instead of rejoicing there is widespread conviction that beautiful advances in genetics, surgery, computers, rocketry, or atomic energy will surely only increase human woe.

But why must this reaction against science have such an emotional, *all-or-nothing* character? The question has great importance, but for an acceptable answer we need more of the background of facts which Goodman provides. He opens his article by telling about a strong protest against the direction in which a great deal of science and technology is going, made by scientists themselves. The March 4, 1969, work-stoppage and teach-in called by teachers and students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was a demonstration by some of the brightest, ablest young men in the country. They were joined by students and teachers in some thirty other major universities and technical schools, making that day a nation-wide protest "against misdirected scientific research and the abuse of scientific technology." This wasn't an all-or-nothing rejection of science; it was an effort on the part of scientists and technologists to keep their profession and activity from becoming a disgrace and a travesty of its humane pretensions. Clear evidence of the anti-human effects of important areas of scientific practice had already aroused members of the profession to various forms of action, but the general picture kept on getting worse and worse. Goodman writes in summary:

> After Hiroshima, there was the conscience-stricken movement of the Atomic Scientists and the founding of their Bulletin. The American Association for the Advancement of Science pledged itself to keep the public informed about the dangerous bearings of new developments. There was the Oppenheimer incident. Ads of the East Coast scientists successfully stopped the bombshelters, warned about the fall-out, and helped produce the test ban. There was a scandal about the bombardment of the Van Allen belt. Scientists and technologists

> formed a powerful (and misguided) *ad hoc* group for Johnson in the 1964 election. In some universities, sometimes with bitter struggle, classified contracts have been excluded. There is a Society for Social Responsibility in Science. Rachel Carson's book on the pesticides caused a stir, until the Department of Agriculture rescued the manufacturers and plantation-owners. Ralph Nader has been on the rampage. Thanks to spectacular abuses like smog, strip-mining, asphalting, pesticides, and oil pollution, even ecologists and conservationists have been getting a hearing. Protest against the boom has slowed up the development of the supersonic transport. Most recent has been the concerted outcry against the anti-ballistic missile.

Returning to the March 4 event, Goodman continues:

> The target of protest has become broader and the grounds of complaint deeper. The target is not now merely the military, but the universities, commercial corporations, and government. It is said that money is being given by the wrong sponsors to the wrong people for the wrong purposes. In some of the great schools, such funding is the main support, e.g., at MIT, 90 per cent of the research budget is from the government, and 65 per cent of that is military.

Well, all this is informative, but it doesn't do much to explain the all-or-nothing psychology of the young, which Goodman has also described. We need his historical analogy for this. What really tore it for Martin Luther, what made him totally uncompromising in his rejection of Rome and all its works—what made him call the Church the whore of Babylon—was the hypocrisy he recognized in the justifications and apologies for what was going on. Ordinary human weakness we can live with. Ignorance, mistakes, even stubborn foolishness, can be borne with patience, perhaps good will. But *hypocrisy* succeeds only through deliberate betrayal. You can't deal with hypocrisy at all; it shuts out reason with debased argument; you can only walk away from hypocrisy, have nothing to do with it. Relations with a system whose spokesmen have trained themselves in the language of hypocrisy are hardly possible unless you are willing to be something of a hypocrite yourself. So, for those whose contacts with the wartime technological society are practically all through its publicists and spokesmen, the all-or-nothing solution begins to seem a compulsive necessity. The young experience only the society's public relations front, which means the lies and deceptions about the war, and the war is plainly a "scientific" nightmare—napalm is a technical *triumph.* There are the shallow come-ons and transparent distortions of commercial advertising, and an endless touting of the "progress" brought by scientific technology to satisfy abnormally stimulated wants at a time when a large part of the world lacks even bare necessities. Meanwhile, in our prosperous land, so many goods and services have been over-promoted and over-produced that a new kind of technology must be quickly improvised to cope with the massive *glut* that now afflicts our health and well-being. One need only list the applications of terms like Waste, Congestion, Pollution, and Noise to catalog the after-effects of a technology that threatens to make life intolerable no matter what we do. Here Goodman, with some irony, proposes a simple restorative virtue which at once marks him as a subversive. It isn't that he advocates socialism or anything like that. He just points out that some *modesty* would help:

> Currently, perhaps the chief moral criterion of a philosophic technology is modesty, having a sense of the whole and not obtruding more than a particular function warrants. Immodesty is always a danger of free enterprise, but when the same disposition is financed by big corporations, technologists rush in with neat solutions that swamp the environment. This applies to packaging products and disposing of garbage, to freeways that bulldoze neighborhoods, high-rises that destroy landscape, wiping out a species for a passing fashion, strip mining, scrapping an expensive machine rather than making a minor repair, draining a watershed because, as in Southern California) the cultivable land has been covered by asphalt. Given this disposition, it is not surprising that we defoliate a forest in order to expose a guerilla and spray teargas from a helicopter on a crowded campus.

Goodman, incidentally, makes what seems exactly the right answer to C. P. Snow:

In *The Two Cultures,* C. P. Snow berated the humanists for their irrelevance when two-thirds of mankind are starving and what is needed is science and technology. They have perhaps been irrelevant; but unless technology itself is more humanistic and philosophical' it is of no use. There is only one culture.

Our chief source of encouragement, Goodman believes, lies in the fact that the scientists themselves—some of them—are demanding a more humanistic science and technology. Biologists like Barry Commoner and Catherine Roberts are increasingly outspoken in this direction, and the reform in scientific epistemology. launched by Michael Polanyi is acquiring distinguished collaborators and supporters. Some deep change of polarity in scientific thinking itself is under way, and behind it are the moral stirrings of which Goodman writes:

Science has long been the chief orthodoxy of modern times and has certainly been badly corrupted, but the deepest flaw of the affluent societies that has alienated the young is not, finally, their imperialism, economic injustice, or racism, bad as these are, but their nauseating phoniness, triviality, and wastefulness, the cultural and moral scandal that Luther found when he went to Rome in 1510. And precisely science, which should have been the wind of truth to clear the air, has polluted the air, helped to brainwash, and provided the weapons for war.

People who know something of the wonderful history of science and who have used their own talents to apply scientific knowledge for human benefit are simply unable to react to scientific abuses in an all-or-nothing way. They know from personal experience that science can be much more than the hired man of arrogant political power or greedy commerce and blindly expanding industry. But such intelligent individuals, if they would like to see an end to the emotional rejections of the young, must take on the sort of responsibility that was assumed by Luther. They must themselves oppose and expose the *hypocrisy* behind the Public Relations claims of the monstrous science-guided and science-powered enterprises of the times. They must learn to turn their undeniable abilities to clear critical understanding of how science and technology have extended the radius and penetration of meanness and indifference and cruelty, and admit that the revulsion of the young is not without cause. As Goodman says:

Many of those who have grown up since 1945 and have never seen any other state of science and technology assume that rationalism is totally evil and dehumanizing. It is probably more significant than we like to think that they go in for astrology and the Book of Changes, as well as inducing psychedelic dreams by technological means., Jacques Ellul, a more philosophic critic, tries to show that technology is necessarily over-controlling, standardizing, and voraciously inclusive, so that there is no place for freedom. But I doubt that any of this is intrinsic to science and technology. The crude history has been, rather, that they have fallen willingly under the dominion of money and power. Like Christianity or communism, the scientific way of life has never been tried.

Goodman's final point is that the best protesters, the ones important to listen to, are those who are themselves deeply entangled in the activities of science and technology. The authentic reformers of an age are people who wrestle with the moral contradictions they find *in their own lives,* in order to determine what can or ought to be done. His final paragraph is this:

The interlocking of technologies and all other institutions makes it almost impossible to reform policy in any part, yet this very interlocking that renders people powerless, including the decision-makers, creates a remarkable resonance and chain-reaction if any determined group, or even determined individual, exerts force. In the face of overwhelmingly collective operations like the space exploration, the average man must feel that local or grassroots efforts are worthless, there is no science but Big Science, and no administration but the State. And yet there is a powerful surge of localism, populism, and community action, as if people were determined to be free if it makes no sense. A mighty empire is stood off by a band of peasants, and *neither* can win—this is even more remarkable than if David beats Goliath; it means that neither principle is historically adequate. In my opinion, these dilemmas and impasses show that we are on the eve of a transformation of conscience.

Well, people who fancy themselves tough-minded realists could say that Goodman is arguing here from big intuitions and mere historical analogies, that it is "all very interesting," *but* . . . . And that is where the catch comes. The tough-minded really have nothing more to say after their "but." The fact is that they are not tough-minded enough to go on, nor clear-sighted enough to recognize that this is a moment in history when saying nothing more gives consent to a collision course. It was Luther's inward necessity of speaking out that began the Reformation. Luther was only one man, but when he did speak out he found that a lot of other people felt as he did; and when he stood up to be counted, *they* began to stand up, too. What did Luther stand for? In terms of the utmost simplicity, he stood for *self-determination* in the moral qualities of human life. A man, he said, can choose between good and evil, if only because he *must.* So Luther symbolized the awakening of conscience for the Western world. Then he tried to institutionalize the gain, but that didn't work. It never does. Yet the awakening—something which took place *inside* a whole lot of people was nonetheless real. This is the kind of thing that Goodman is talking about. And conscience, today—because of the intellectual catharsis of the scientific revolution—has now a better chance of avoiding relapse into another consolidating "system." The many present inquiries into identity and selfhood, into creativity and the dynamics of self-actualization, have obvious bearing on this possibility.

Who, after all, will maintain that a deep alteration of human attitudes and values is not on the way? To help it along, we need to hear from as many men of *informed* conscience as we can. Goodman is certainly doing his share.

REVIEW
THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV

The generality of men, without thinking about it, inhabit a conceptual world of two species, the good people and the bad. In stories for children and in popular fiction conflict is between representatives of these two species: it may be Cinderella and her wicked sisters, or the cops and the robbers, or the proletarians and the capitalists.

At the highest literary level, by contrast, every individual is shown to contain within himself both good and evil alike, so that the conflict between the two is an inner conflict. This is exemplified by Shakespeare's tragic heroes. Macbeth, for instance, is a noble character who, having succumbed just once to an impulse of the evil within him, is never able to recover.

Dostoyevsky, more than any writer I know, was preoccupied with good and evil in these terms. The Brothers Karamazov *presents the conflict between the two as it goes on inside each of the three brothers. The inner conflict is, in fact, the theme of a novel that achieves greatness even in failure. This paradox of greatness in failure is the point of the following informal diary-note that I made after a recent reading of the novel.*

30 November 1969

TODAY I finished rereading *The Brothers Karamazov,* my first rereading, I daresay, in thirty-five years, although I had read it several times before, regarding it always as one of the two or three greatest novels I knew. Rereading it now, I found the greatness there but largely unrealized. It is a promise that is sustained and developed through the first nine of the twelve books (and an Epilogue) into which the novel is divided. The rest, after the moving and self-contained interlude of the schoolboys that constitutes Book Ten, is a long dénouement in which the characters and the themes sink to the level of ordinary fiction, leaving the promise unfulfilled. It is as if Dostoyevsky had, at this turning-point, lost his purpose and his way.

Alyosha. From the beginning, the youngest of the brothers, touched with something like divine grace, represents the capacity some individuals have of living on a spiritual plane above the sordid existential world they inhabit physically. As Father Zossima, the saintly elder of the local monastery, makes plain, this grace and this capacity imply a vocation in the existential world. The elder sees that tragedy lies just ahead for the Karamazov family, but especially for Dimitri, and Alyosha's mission is that of sanctifying it. However, destined in the first half of the novel to perform a saintly mission, by the final chapter the grace the reader originally saw in him has evaporated and he has sunk to the level of a mere scout-master lecturing his troop on the importance of behaving honorably. This happens because the novelist had to carry his story on to an end beyond the point where he had lost his original inspiration. Alyosha, in the first half of the novel, embodies one of the main themes which, like his spirituality, is also lost in the long denouement. He is engaged in an inner conflict between his sense of divinity, nourished by his relationship with the elder Zossima, and the intellectual doubt that there is a God to validate the sense of divinity. Here is a fragment of his dialogue with Lise in Book Five, Chapter I (all quotations are from David Magarshack's translation, Penguin, 1958):

> "My brothers are destroying themselves," he went on, "and my father, too. And they are destroying others together with themselves. What we have here is 'the earth-bound Karamazov force,' as Father Paissy expressed it the other day earth-bound, unrestrained, and crude. I don't even know whether the spirit of God moves over that force. All I know is that I, too, am a Karamazov. I a monk, a monk? Am I a monk, Lise? I believe you said I was a monk a moment ago."
>
> "Yes, I did."
>
> "And yet, I don't think I even believe in God."

If the banalities of Alyosha's lecture to the school-boys, with which the novel ends, are

supposed to represent the resolution of this conflict, a conclusion like Voltaire's "*il faut cultiver notre jardin,"* then it is an unintended mockery that represents the deterioration of Dostoyevsky's vision after such an inspired beginning.

Father Zossima. In Part One, the dying elder represents in its full development the grace that is already in his heir, Alyosha. Among the most moving chapters of the novel is Chapter 3 of Book Two, in which the elder ministers to the suffering peasant women who have come to him for spiritual comfort, reassurance, and hope. Here we see him actually performing the mission that Alyosha is to inherit.

The elder's performance is not fraudulent. It does represent the salvation of suffering women by lifting them up to a plane above the mere existential. But the questioning theme remains. Does this divinity represent a God who presides over us, or is it somehow self-generated, a subjective inspiration merely?

The measure of Dostoyevsky's greatness is that, powerfully moved by the divinity, he still does not shirk the question. As the elder's death approaches, everyone who believes in his spiritual incorruptibility expects, simply out of a sense of the fitness of things, that by some miraculous dispensation it will mitigate the ugliness of his bodily corruptibility in death. The entire community, and the reader himself, are therefore shocked when, before even the normal lapse of time after his death, his corpse begins to infect the surrounding air with the odour of corruption. Perhaps one could say that the man's divinity was real but doubt whether it represented the fatherhood of God. Here, again, one of the principal themes of the novel is posed in its first half, to be left unresolved and forgotten in the second.

Ivan. Alyosha is moved by the spirituality that pervades his being, but troubled by doubt of the existence of God. The spirituality predominates, however, and he acts according to it rather than according to the doubt. Ivan, on the other hand, is a philosopher rather than a saint. He begins with the doubt. Seeing the horrors that even innocent children suffer in what is called God's Creation, and the frauds that are necessarily imposed on a weak and gullible mankind by those who presume to speak in God's name, his sense of justice and all the compassion in his nature rise up to reject the Creation that is attributed to God. But he has the philosophical depth and perception to appreciate a point that, it seems to me, has escaped even the world's greatest philosophers, although some existentialists have come close to it. I shall attempt to put that point in my own words.

Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am," a statement that appeals to us as virtually the only incontrovertible statement possible in the realm of philosophical belief. I have deliberately added the qualification "virtually," which philosophers in the Cartesian tradition omit, because the statement seems to me susceptible of some extrapolation without losing its incontrovertibility. For example: "I think nobly, therefore nobility is." Ivan is aware that, even if there is a world outside himself, and even if that world takes no account of injustice or suffering, a sense of justice and compassion are part of his own being: therefore justice and compassion are. The full conclusion of this line of reasoning may be stated simply: "I know the divinity within me: therefore divinity is."

The greatness of Ivan is represented in the three chapters of Book Five in which he and Alyosha talk together at dinner in the "Metropolis restaurant." He tells Alyosha that he has long passed the point of asking "whether man has created God or God has created man." "What is so strange," he says, ". . . is not that God actually exists, but that such an idea—the idea of the necessity of God—should have entered the head of such a savage and vicious animal as man—so holy it is, so moving and so wise and so much does it redound to man's honor."

In the three chapters I refer to here Ivan shows his greatness in the greatness of the philosophical vision that is his. He is a tragic philosopher at the highest level. This is to say that Dostoyevsky himself was at this level, since Ivan and Ivan's thought is his creation.

As in the case of Alyosha, however, the greatness of the original characterization is not sustained. Ivan's intellect cracks and crumbles, until he ends as a pitiful lunatic.

Dmitri. In the prefatory note "To the Reader," Dostoyevsky announces that his novel is to be a biography of Alyosha, whom he refers to as its hero. This must have been his original intention, and the fact that he did not discard the prefatory note after having completed the novel suggests how seriously, in the decline of his own inspiration, he may have taken the concluding chapter in which Alyosha, all his distinction lost, delivers his banal lecture to the school-boys, a message on the level of *The Rover Boys at School.* Perhaps with Dmitri and Ivan overtly fallen, he persuaded himself that this lecture represented the summation of the insights that had distinguished the first half of the novel. This is hard to believe, but after a man has been working three years on a novel in which he has long ago lost interest he may no longer be capable of viewing it with critical judgment, or he may simply be too tired to care.

Dmitri, not Alyosha, is the central character. A man governed by powerful and obsessive passions (as we say, an "ungoverned" man), lacking both the education and the intellect of his brother Ivan, he represents as no other character in fiction does a paradox inherent in the polarity of good and evil. The paradox is that good and evil are what they are because of each other, that there could be no good in the absence of evil or evil in the absence of good. It is precisely when a man with a rare capability of appreciating the sublime plunges into the utmost degradation that it inspires him most fully; while the most disciplined adherence to a virtuous life may provide the conditions in which thoughts of evil-doing are at their most enticing. The greatness of Dmitri throughout most of this history is that, while he succumbs to the impulses of self-indulgence, behaving on occasion with a revolting brutality, he even more than Alyosha or Ivan has Christ within him. The reader is given reason to expect that he will pass through degradation and the most intense suffering to the ultimate realization of the divinity in man.

One of the most impressive scenes in the novel comes in Book Two, when the Karamazovs assemble in the monastic quarters of the older Zossima, who has undertaken to mediate in the quarrel between the unbridled Dmitri and his equally unbridled father. The two quarreling Karamazovs create a scandal by the violence of their interchange in front of the holy man, who has only a few hours of life remaining to him. The scene comes to its culmination and its end, however,

> in a most unexpected way. The elder suddenly rose from his seat. Alyosha, who had almost completely lost his head with anxiety for him and everyone else, was just in time, however, to support him by the arm. The elder stepped in the direction of Dmitri and, reaching him, went down on his knees before him. Alyosha at first thought that he had sunk down from weakness, but that was not so. Having knelt, the elder prostrated himself at Dmitri's feet with full conscious deliberation and even touched the ground with his forehead.

At this stage of the history, the reader has only elusive intimations of why the elder prostrates himself before a man who, to all outward seeming, is a rake and a scoundrel. But as the story develops it becomes plausible to assume that the elder was bowing before the image of Christ which he saw in the sinner.

After the brutal murder of the older Karamazov, and with the evidence overwhelming against him, Dmitri is apprehended and cast into prison. It happens that, while he had been moved to commit the crime and had almost done so, he had not in fact committed it. Nevertheless, he cannot hope to escape conviction and a sentence

of hard labor in Siberia for much of what remains of his life. Faced with this catastrophe and these consequences, he has had an inspiration that came to him first in the form of a dream and that has invested him with a sense of mission. He, too, discovers the divinity that resides in the inner man, who is so much more important than the outer one. To Alyosha, who visits him in jail, he says:

> During these last two months, Alyosha, I've felt the presence of a new man in me—a new man has arisen in me! He was shut up inside me, but he would never have appeared, had it not been for this bolt from the blue! It's awful! And what does it matter if I spend twenty years in the mines hacking out ore with a hammer? I'm not afraid of that at all. It's something else I fear now—that the new man that has arisen within me may depart.

He goes on to foretell how he can serve mankind, contributing to its redemption through his fellow convicts in the mines, and he interprets his dream as signifying the responsibility that he, like all men, has for the sufferings of mankind, of the little children especially, and of the big children too. "And I'll go for all," he says, "for someone has to go for all." .

However, Dmitri, too, is troubled by the question whether there is a God, and by doubts of his ability to sustain the mission that came to him in the dream. He is afraid that he will "run away from suffering," that he will "run away from crucifixion."

This is Dmitri's greatest moment. From it he too declines, like his brothers. Well before the end there will no longer be any question of his mission, or of his determination to escape to America so that he can live there with the woman of his passion.

So the inner divinity fades from each of the characters as the novelist loses his inspiration. It is not that the decline of Alyosha, Ivan, and Dmitri is implicit in the human condition, or in the circumstances of the novel, or in their characters. It is not that Dostoyevsky intended a cynical commentary on human nobility. It is simply, I feel sure, that at a certain point he lost his way, his vision faded, his theme and his characters vanished from it. All that was left, then, was a plot to be spun out to its end, like the plot of a mere detective story written by an extraordinarily gifted professional.

There are other great themes and characters of suffering humanity that inspire the first half of *The Brothers Karamazov* (although I do not, for the most part, concern myself with them in this note). There is poignant exploration of the human conscience, especially the sense of guilt for crimes that one cannot be sure one had not wished or intended, although others had committed them, and the consequent implication, so vivid for Dostoyevsky, of being personally responsible for all the sins of mankind. But these elements of moral and spiritual concern, together making one theme, fade out long before the end, leaving merely a plot to be concluded.

The Brothers Karamazov, then, may be regarded as a depressing failure, an undertaking ineffable in its beginnings that collapses before its implicit achievement is realized. Here, however, in the word "implicit," a saving paradox emerges. For, implicit in the novel as it actually is, the reader apprehends the novel that it started out to be; and this other, unwritten novel is one of the enduring masterpieces of the world's literature. It belongs to the class of those works that, once comprehended, change the reader's life—as it did mine when I first read it some forty-five years ago.

LOUIS J. HALLE

Geneva

COMMENTARY
THE SOUL'S ENORMOUS CLAIM

PROBABLY no one will dispute what Louis Halle says about good and evil in his brief preface to this week's Review article: "At the highest literary level . . . every individual is shown to contain within himself both good and evil alike, so that the conflict between the two is an inner conflict." By exhibiting the workings of this conflict in human beings, the novelist wins our respect and attention. He also lays claim upon our moral potentialities—we cannot read such works without inner response. The artist bids us rise to the level of his vision. His work, we can say, is only superficially representation; its true business is invocation. And afterward, as Mr. Halle shows, the reader is himself something of a Dostoyevskian man.

If there is such a thing as demanding and compelling compassion in the reader, Dostoyevsky accomplishes it. There is much evil done in his novel, yet you cannot withhold your sympathy from the evil-doers. They are so plainly *men*. It is sometimes painful to be taught to let one's heart go out to an evil-doer. We have little practice in it; our practice and, indeed, our instruction, have been in another direction. A great deal of what we are authoritatively told about "life" has for its covert purpose making us comfortable while shutting certain people—often a great many people—out from our sympathies and concerns. A great novel—*The Brothers*, at any rate—succeeds in making us uneasy in submitting to these limitations—not directly, but by having far larger intentions.

Dostoyevsky is no ordinary, fretful moralist impatient to change our habits and tame our passions. He is an explorer, intent on the protean odds which seek out, confront, and wear away at the nobility in man. He wants to show how the heroic strain will still announce itself, even in irremediable defeat. That lonely sound, unheard save by the Promethean imagination, repeats the ancient promise of Hercules that he will come one day to set the Titan free. Who can believe this? Well, the books about men who do not even try to believe it are known as trash.

In a land of people chastened and upheld by the vision of Dostoyevsky, stern judges would hang their black robes in closets and step down from the bench. They would have eyes only for lost innocence, the repressed and manacled good in the rebels brought before them. The pulpits, too, would probably empty, for who with only fine words could sanctify what is now recognized as a prison environment? And so, with hardly time for the collection of one's belongings, the social structures would crumble— a prospect which condemns the hope of putting down Zeus or unthroning Jehovah to remain a dream.

Yet, as Mr. Halle says, Dostoyevsky's "unwritten novel is one of the enduring masterpieces of the world's literature." Although its dénouement, as originally conceived, remains something "laid up in Heaven," there is still a hidden portion of our being with residence there. How else could a man say: "I know the divinity within me: therefore divinity is"?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
WHAT IS A NATION?

IN an epoch when sanity happily prevails—when people are not bewildered by the symptoms of a universal identity-crisis—it would no doubt be a natural and uncontested part of education to provide an answer to this question for the young. Today, however, when there seem hardly any but anxious or angry opinions on the subject, teaching nothing at all about it is conceivably preferable to passing along our worry and confusion.

The confusion is plain enough. For example, there are a lot of people who actually believe that mere nationality solves satisfactorily the problem of who people are, and that being part of a nation automatically takes care of things like the need to find out the meaning of human life and how to make it really worth while.

Does any nation *really* claim this? Well, you can point to pretty strenuous efforts in this direction. An influential unit of the American nation, for example, the State of California, is now in the midst of an ill-starred attempt to settle such matters for the students in public schools. The California Board of Education last May voted to adopt an 81-page report providing "morality guidelines" for California's public schools. An account appearing in the *Dixon Line* for December gives the coloring of this report and relates its uncertain fate:

> Written by an aide to the arch-conservative superintendent of public instruction, Dr. Max Rafferty, the "morality guidelines" consisted of a "Back-to-the-Bible" approach as well as attacks on the U.S. Supreme Court, the United Nations, mental health programs and sex education in the schools.
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> When the acceptance of this report became public information, the resultant furor, including stacks of mail, was such that one month later the board ordered a rewriting of the report by a committee.
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> Selected to appoint this committee was the Rev. Donn Moomaw, a member of the board and pastor of Southern California's Bel-Air Presbyterian Church, of which Gov. Ronald Reagan is a member.
>
> Rev. Moomaw is a huge man who used to strike terror into the hearts of football opponents of UCLA, for whom he functioned as an All-American line-backer. He was formerly associated with the silly Graham preaching team, and was once the center of controversy for having used public high school assemblies to try to convert students to Christ.

The California Board of Education is burdened with a further embarrassment in having to decide whether the Biblical account of Adam and Eve as the origin of the human race should be included among suggestions provided by the Board for guidance to the state's schools in building a "science curriculum":

> Two board members, both physicians, protested that this framework [a recently completed 205-page study] failed to include the story of Adam and Eve as the probable vehicle of the beginning of human life. Dr. John Ford of San Diego, seconded by Dr. Thomas Harwood of Needles, argued that since the Bible story "has never been proven wrong, I think we would be remiss if we didn't include it."

Everything in California, as its residents well know, is "bigger and better," so why should confusion be an exception?

Well, what is really wrong? Why is the Board in this trouble? It is not simply that (in the persons of two members) the Board thinks that the Bible story may be "true"—such matters are usually in some sense arguable. The trouble lies in the Board's ridiculous idea that it must actually *decide* or even weigh such final, problematic questions. The Board, in other words, has delusions of grandeur. It seems to imagine that spiritual sovereignty can be acquired by winning an election. This thing has to be settled, it seems to think, or our children will go out into life unprepared. We can't have that. And since the voters have given the Board authority to make the decisions, it must decide. What's wrong with that?

Where, originally, does this line of thinking come from? There is not much doubt about either its origin or its stubborn persistence. It begins with the natural feeling of every parent, every responsible adult, that children need some help and direction concerning who they are—concerning what loyalties, duties, and responsibilities are natural and right for them to accept, and concerning how beliefs in these matters are selected and justified. A good person

will naturally say to himself: You just can't leave *blanks* for the answers to these important questions; and there is a sense in which he is absolutely right.

No doubt Mr. Rafferty is in office, today, because he was able to persuade a lot of people that *he* wouldn't let all those vital matters be neglected. Rafferty's thinking may not be the greatest, they may have said to themselves, but it is bound to be better than just *blanks.* Nobody's perfect. So they voted for Rafferty.

At this point one is supposed to produce critical evidence that *bad* thinking, doctrinaire thinking, traditional thinking—thinking which in fact is not thinking at all—is indeed worse than *no* thinking. Well, vast quantities of such critical evidence have been assembled—the libraries are filled with it—but people don't pay enough attention to it; that, or something is lacking in what it shows. The collection of critical evidence began, you could say, back in the twelfth century with Peter Abelard's *Sic et Non,* and it is still going on. And one must admit that critical thinking has led to substantial improvements—to, for example, the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States (which, however, the California Board of Education seems to regard as nullified by its solid fundamentalist backing). But what we are now faced with is the fact that these improvements turn out to be largely temporary. Mr. Rafferty wins elections on a platform of filling in the blanks. He may be filling them with nonsense, but the *vacuum* is real.

It is time to acknowledge, in short, that critical thinking, while necessary, is not sufficient. You can prune with it, but you can't fertilize with it. On this question of what the "nation" is, for example, there has been a whole century of brilliant criticism—enough to blow sky-high every sort of political delusion of grandeur there is. There is now an overwhelmingly convincing case, on both moral and political grounds, against the power, structure, and behavior of the modern nation-state. Actually, you hardly need to "read up" on the case any more: the whole argument is absorbed simply by looking around. There is also the communitarian and Gandhian criticism of the State, which is the only criticism joined with positive inspiration, involving workable conceptions of transition—a criticism without *Götterdämmerung* or nihilist overtones—but it now seems that at least a generation is required for its persuasions to become manifest to a sizeable number of people. Meanwhile, children keep on getting born, and start going to school, and you can't really hand them Frank Lindenfeld's *Radical Perspectives on Social Problems* for an answer when it seems time to explain to them what "nation" means!

Even if *we* knew the righteous answer to this question, there would still be the practical problem of getting new books printed, paying for them, and then you would have to persuade people to use them. A great many people might not *want* to use them, being more impressed by Mr. Rafferty's delighting simplicities. There's a man who knows how to explain things to a crowd! Who is responsible for leaving the explanations for Mr. Rafferty to make?

Probably the only thing to do, if you are a teacher, is to use the best books you can find—the ones, that is, which lay emphasis on the *vision* which had so large a part in bringing people together on this continent—and then to add your own, hand-made collection of the expressions of that vision. The contradictions and failures to live up to the vision can be considered, one at a time, as they need attention. Vision is *always* better than reality; children can understand that; and to claim the right to a vision is not the same as claiming it to be a realized fact, which is the fatal and self-betraying mistake of the nationalists and the chauvinists. On the other hand, to forget about the vision and to depend upon the iconoclasm of critics alone will in the long run leave the affirmative longings of the people all the deep matters critical thinking neglects—to be met with vulgarized perversions of completely stationary ideals—and then the blanks get filled in by people who don't even know the difference between what is and what might be.