

CONTRADICTIONS OF RELIGION

THE impartial scholar of religion and religious history has an almost contradictory role. He is expected to look for some kind of truth or fact in conjunction with religious belief and behavior, but not to confine his objectivity by becoming a partisan adherent of any particular faith. If anyone should be forward enough as to ask him what *he* believes, his reply may be so general that it seems to entail no vitally important decisions about the meaning of life. Yet he would have no profession without the reality of religious commitment—the kind of conviction that shapes and changes history. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a world of men wholly without religious belief. In one way or another, the very structure of society rests upon it. There seems a sense, then, in which the unbelieving or faintly believing scholar is a kind of parasite; he maintains a lofty stance above the battle, yet is himself an élite camp-follower; the controversies over which he presides as a dispassionate umpire provide him with food and drink. In any event, men who gave substance to his field of studies were not at all the unengaged sort of person that he seems to be. What then can he *know* about what they meant?

But this is unjust. There must be, that is, men who strongly suspect that behind the religions of the world there lies an undiscerned and perhaps undiscernible reality which they would like to get at, or at least get closer to, and who decide that the comparative study of what men have believed seems a reasonable way to pursue this search. Meanwhile, it's obvious enough that with so many "beliefs" in contradiction and sometimes bitter competition with each other, they cannot all be "true." So an initial withdrawal from beliefs as such can hardly be objected to. And a man's reluctance to give a brief "statement" of how he is trying to reshape his uncertainties into a few positive affirmations can hardly be criticized,

either. Maybe he doesn't know what to say. Arthur Morgan put this aspect of the present human situation with a precision that seems to cover the necessities of the case for the individual:

I want to determine belief and opinion by evidence, yet I have intuitive affirmations which I will trust rather than to trust my own personal experience as a guide. . . . The agnostic is the man of balance. Never one side of a question but he sees the possibility of the other side. . . . But the agnostic *life*—the life whose emotions, whose vital sensibilities question whether life is good or not—this is an unbalanced life.

Two closely related conclusions might grow out of reflection on this view. First, it is the expression of a mind determined to find its own way. Inherited views deserve inspection, but are to be judged on their merits. Second, there are not many men in the world with the energy and daring to think things through to this new starting point for the determination of meaning. From the majority of men, the past exacts only tribute, and cannot for this reason have intelligent respect.

About fourteen years ago, the literary critic, Edmund Wilson, wrote for the *New Yorker* an article, "The Scrolls from the Dead Sea," later issued as a small book. This year, in the *New Yorker* for March 22, 29, and April 5, he published three more articles on the subject, bringing the discussion up to date. Extensive portions of the later articles are devoted to an account of the reaction of denominational scholars to the scrolls. Their discovery has been, to put it mildly, upsetting to orthodoxies of every description. Speaking of his first article and the book, Mr. Wilson says:

The reception by the clerical world of the work I have mentioned above was for me a~ educational experience: I gained from it more understanding than I ever had before—since I have no affiliation with any Church—of the doctrines and the attitudes of the

various religious bodies. The religious group that was least disturbed by the implications of the scrolls was the American Unitarians, who were then having a controversy among themselves as to whether or not they were Christians and who welcomed with something like glee anything that might seem to weaken the pretensions of the more fundamentalist Churches. The groups that were most disturbed were the Orthodox Jews, the Catholics, and the "Establishment" of the Church of England.

Each group saw in the scrolls a threat to time-honored claims. While scholars might remain secure in the presence of new facts about the time of Jesus, ordinary believers whose faith was in simple conventions expressive of divine revelation could not easily adjust to the idea that the discovery might—just *might*—add to or subtract from the original stuff of Christian belief. The Catholics seemed especially upset: "To attempt to fill in with more historical facts the human context of Christ's career is to risk impairing the legend which is cherished by the ignorant populace and which, if the Church is to maintain its authority, this populace must not be allowed to question." Mr. Wilson reviews the responses of partisan scholars in some detail, showing in each case what stake in tradition seemed threatened, even though, in his view, the anxiety of Christians is not in the least justified by the implications of the now translated scrolls. Quite evidently, any suggestion that spiritual truth is susceptible to amendment through historical discovery is objectionable, and misses are nearly as bad as hits. After noting how emphatically some Christian scholars stress the *differences* between the scrolls and the New Testament, he says:

Now, no responsible writer has ever denied the differences between, on the one hand, the views attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, with their acceptance of the poor and proscribed, their preaching of love and forgiveness, as well as Paul's opening the Faith to the Gentiles, and, on the other hand, the theology of a narrow Jewish sect who regarded themselves as an elite—though they sometimes speak cordially of "the simple"—and the apparently fierce bellicosity of their Teacher of Righteousness. Though the Messianic literature of

the Sect does seem to prepare the way for the appearance of some such figure as Jesus—it must always be remembered that *Christ* is simply the Greek for *Messiah*; that is, the *Anointed One*—and though some of its words and conceptions are to be found in the literature of Christianity, the divergences are so plain between the scrolls and the sayings of Jesus, with no unmistakable bridge from one to the other, that no evidence has yet been produced which should shake the belief of many that Jesus was the son of God in a special, literal sense, and that the tremendous power of the Gospels is explicable only by this.

Why, one wonders, isn't this enough? Why must the work of impartial scrolls scholars, whom Mr. Wilson has come to admire, be treated with such scorn by the orthodox? Is it because belief of this sort experiences discomfort in the presence of *any* free exercise of reason? At issue, one might say, is the idea of Divine Incarnation, yet this conception is found in most intellectual religions in the world, and cannot be said to suffer threat from rational analysis. Faiths far more ancient than Christianity are built upon this idea, which is illustrated in Hinduism by the incarnations of Vishnu and by a similar doctrine in Buddhism. The difficulty is doubtless that the Incarnation, in Christianity, happened *just once*—a single event which cannot be the object of reason.

Yet there seems substance to the claim that higher meanings for human life require acceptance in some form of the idea of Transcendence, and of the presence, here in the world, however hidden or mysteriously cloaked, of a transcendent reality. In any event, the hungering longing that a reality *Beyond* should exist is used to make the case for supernaturalism, sometimes in blatant defiance of reason. This case will probably continue to be made, in spite of its weakening influence on the mind, until the scope of the rational is successfully extended to include metaphysical conceptions of transcendence which are in harmony with an evolutionary version of the nature of man.

Where might models for such a religion or philosophic faith be sought? The answer must be that they are not likely to be found on the surface

of religions which have or have had a multitude of "followers." Popular religion, it seems clear, tends to be religion in decline, or religion in vulgar dilution, and the man who looks persistently for the truth behind religion seems always to find this out; whereupon he is called upon to make a fateful decision: either to keep his discovery to himself, or to attempt a religious reform and to accept the fate of a Jesus—or a Socrates—for his pains.

It is not difficult to see, when we look back on history, that conceptions of transcendence have been of the essence in inspiring of high human achievement. Commitment beyond self-interest has always been the key to greatness. Sacrificial devotion to god-kings brought cultures into flower as well as led them to ultimate betrayal. The finite symbol is a Janus who looks in two directions—up and down. Comparative religion studies the symbols, but what it ought to study is what responds and corresponds to them in man. Most symbols, even though we plainly cannot do without them, need to be outgrown, yet if we fail to grasp their importance while they still retain unassimilated meanings, we can have only a history which swings back and forth between barren iconoclasm and unreasoning, passionate belief.

How is this costly oscillation to be avoided? Socrates made one of the best tries in all Western civilization. He taught a transcendental rationalism, capable of profound religious reading, yet hardly susceptible to dogmatic interpretation. Ernest Becker describes his effort well:

It was Socrates who saw that mass opinion and the easy praise of one's fellows unmanned the Athenians of his day, prevented them from being free and noble citizens. . . . Socrates wanted man to be autonomous, to follow his own idea of justice and right, provided he reasoned it out carefully. He saw that reliance on the justice of others was the great danger for a brotherhood of free men, and rather than stop his peculiar attempts to awaken his fellows from their uncritical sport, he preferred to die. In other words, he saw that his historical mission was to attempt to save society by making it self-critical, and

he was willing to be a martyr in this unprecedented cause.

What is the case for the other side? It is the case for orthodoxy, for not unsettling the minds of people with questions or publicizing facts which might disturb their beliefs. Established religious institutions, it is said, stand between the people and the terrors of the Unknown. To undermine the authority of traditional belief is to unfit people for coping with life. No one has improved on the statement of this case since Doestoevsky put it into the mouth of the Grand Inquisitor in the *Brothers Karamazov*. The old man accused the returned Jesus of expecting people to be *heroes*, a charge which was accurate enough—Jesus *did* invite his followers to become heroes.

Yet the Inquisitor's case makes use of certain undeniable facts, which Mr. Becker also summarizes well in a comment on what he regards as Socrates' ignorance or naïveté:

Man needs to rely on the judgment of others, in order to earn his own feelings of worth. He needs to protect himself in the social encounter; he needs to save his "face", he needs to perform, in a word, in the shared social fiction, in order to earn social honor, social approval, and social protection. Socrates intuited these things; he saw that they meant the decay of free society, because they made of man a social automaton. But one thing he could not see, and historically, it proved the most important of all, because it explains why his enjoinders to his fellow Athenians failed. He could not see how deeply rooted the mechanics of playing at society is; he could not see how much the individual self is a function of the social group; he could not see how deep "social performance" goes, how it is rooted in the anxiety of man, the anxiety to be accepted and honored.

Well, perhaps he couldn't see. Yet it is possible to argue with equal force that Socrates had become persuaded of the reality of untapped inner resources in all men (see the *Theatetus*), and believed they were equal to overcoming all these de-individualizing tendencies. Plato gives a technical sample of these resources in the *Meno*. However, Plato nowhere promises any immediate

historical result for the Socratic enterprise. It was simply the only thing to do.

A point needing to be made is that we know very little, actually, about the potentialities of human beings in general, mainly because most of our historical experience has been under social systems designed to suppress them. The awakening of individuality has seldom been a popular managerial objective. Nor was the time of Socrates an ideal moment in Athenian history. It was an age of increasing moral disorder, but this didn't discourage Socrates much. He expended his efforts on individuals, keeping on until his very last breath. This is a further point supporting conviction of Transcendence. You keep on working whether or not you can see "results." You leave such depressing calculations to the statistical sociologists and other extrapolators of closed system thinking.

There were plenty of people around in Socrates' time who explained to him why what he was trying to do would never work. He heard them out, but they didn't influence him. He was, you could say, a Reality Therapist. He knew better than to tell the people he was trying to help that their efforts were doomed to failure. He knew about self-fulfilling prophecy. Any fool with an abacus could count failures. Let other people discourse learnedly about "norms"; he was after wonderful deviations. People complained to Socrates about how wormy life was, but he had seen some butterflies and knew that they came from worms. He wouldn't settle for a worm's-eye view. Of course, the people with an acceptable educational background always say that the story about *Psyche* is just an old myth and that sound worm psychology shows that the time has come to hire the Grand Inquisitor to keep the worms in line. Some of them are "getting ideas." We can *control* Him, they say. We've made these rules. But they don't control him. They can't, because they *become* him.

At this point, the *fabula* breaks down. Mysterious instructions for becoming a butterfly

are written in the organic memory of the caterpillar, but high human becoming is a voluntary affair. There are moments in history when realization of this seems to burn through the rind of failing systems of control and men begin to ask themselves what they must do next. The present is evidently such a time, marked by feelings of despair at the breakdown of even the most promising rationalizations of the worm's-eye view. A name has been given this state of mind by Viktor Frankl, in the expression, "existential vacuum," an emptiness which he finds to be the result of two facts:

First, in contrast to an animal, no drives and instincts tell man what he *must* do. Second, in contrast to former times no conventions, traditions, and values tell him what he *should* do; and often he does not even know what he basically wishes to do.

Is it, conceivably, the case that the existential vacuum is a long-term consequence of failing to learn from people like Socrates? That there are timetables in nature for free, imaginative action by men, just as there are metabolic rhythms for physiological growth? Suppose, further, that premonitions of the future course of human development sometimes sweep in upon masses of men, whether they have made themselves ready or not; that when they are unready an insistent but mixed-up emotionalism begins to dominate their lives. Tough-minded skeptics are already much troubled by the displacement of modern unbelief by extravagant and shallow doctrines of human possibility. It is as though a lot of people were saying to themselves, "Yes, we're ready to become butterflies," but totally ignoring the fact that those delicate creatures have subtle muscular systems and that without the disciplines which develop them there can be no flight. This new sort of chiliastic nonsense can hardly be termed "progress."

Yet there are also promising signs. Already the humanistic psychologists are applying a kind of empirical method to transcendental states of mind—taking note of the qualities shown by human beings when they are at their best.

Consider, for example, some observations on "Creativeness" by A. H. Maslow in *Eupsychian Management* (Irwin, Homewood, Ill., 1965). They seem to speak directly to the modern condition, showing how what is deemed weakness from the viewpoint of external order may be precisely the requirements of an inner flowering:

. . . creativeness is correlated with the ability to withstand lack of structure, the lack of future, lack of predictability, of control, the tolerance for ambiguity, for planlessness.

Here-now creativeness is dependent on this kind of ability to forget about the future, to improvise on the present, to give full attention to the present, e.g., to be able fully to listen or to observe.

This general ability to give up future, structure, to give up control and predictability, is also characteristic of loafing, or of the ability to enjoy—to say it in another way—which itself is also essentially unmotivated, purposeless, without goal, and therefore without future. That is to say, in order to be able to listen totally, in order to be able to immerse oneself, to be all there in the here-now, one must be able to give up the future in the sense of being able to enjoy. . . . self-actualizing subjects can enjoy mystery, futurelessness, ambiguity, lack of structure. They can be contrasted with Kurt Goldstein's brain-injured subjects as well as with the obsessional neurotics in whom there is such a tremendous need for control, for prediction, for structure, for law and order, for an agenda, for classifying, for rehearsing, for planning. In other words, it is as if these people were afraid of the future and also mistrusted their own ability to improvise in the face of an emergency, of something that would come up unexpectedly. This is then a combination of a lack of trust in one's self, a kind of fear that one does not have the ability or the capacity to face anything which is unexpected, which is not planned for, which is not controllable and predictable, and so on.

. . . these are all safety mechanisms, all fear and anxiety mechanisms. They all represent lack of courage, lack of confidence in the future, lack of confidence in one's self. It takes a certain kind of courage, which is simultaneously a kind of justified trust in one's self and a justified trust in the goodness of the environment and of the future, to be able to face an unexpected, an unknown, unstructured situation without any guards or defenses, and with an innocent faith that one can improvise in the situation.

This, let us note, is the language of transcendence without any of the charged words of eschatological tradition. Creative people act, in other words, *as if* their true interests lie in the Eternal, or that aspect of the eternal which is somehow present here. The fact of the matter is that very nearly all our past has been structured, however poorly or unfaithfully, around the acts and inspiration of such creative individuals, who on rare occasions appear in groups. This is a major irony of history, that its problems consist in having to painfully undo what men have mistakenly done in the name of justice and common good, carefully taking out the freedom in order to make the system fully predictable and the future a sure thing.

REVIEW

MODERN WAR-RESISTANCE

A RECENT appeal for help by the West Coast branch of the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (437 Market St., San Francisco, Calif. 94105) has in it the following statement:

West Coast CCCO has trained several hundred draft counselors in the past year. Staff has served as consultants in assisting with the development of dozens of new counseling centers. . . . The need for informed counseling on draft-related matters is not limited to young men who are civilians. If men have a change of heart or simply cannot continue in the military any longer, their situations are serious. During the past year there has been a ten-fold increase in the number of military men coming to this office for help—from ten a month to well over a hundred. At Fort Ord alone it is now believed that over a hundred men are currently seeking discharges as C.O.'s. There are presently only a handful of counselors prepared to deal with this complicated area. Clearly this is inadequate. Two full-time people in the field are needed.

Wars have been going on for a long time, but secular alliances of people to put an end to war are barely fifty years old, so that easy judgments about what these groups may ultimately accomplish can be termed premature. Already there is an extensive literature of war resistance. Men who reach the conclusion that "wars will cease when men refuse to fight them," or who find themselves simply unable to commit harmful acts, eventually discover that they are part of a world-wide "movement," the anti-war movement. In the present, that movement is gaining strong support from events, and may be exercising a greater influence for peace than is generally realized. Yet it had the most modest beginnings in small pacifist groups which emerged in England and the United States during World War I. Christian religious pacifism, of course, dates back to the Middle Ages.

The forms of the present anti-war movement, however, are directly traceable to the pacifists and

conscientious objectors who opposed World War II. A book that has just come out, *Rebels Against War—The American Peace Movement, 1941-1960* (Columbia University Press, 1969, \$10.00), by Lawrence S. Wittner, begins with description of the prevailing mood of the 1930's, when the emotional reaction to the first world war and to finally published revelations of that war's futilities and betrayals dominated liberal opinion. The author then shows how the rise of Nazi power gradually reduced the popular American commitment to peace until only the most determined pacifists remained unchanged in view. Pearl Harbor accomplished further reductions, but something had happened to people's attitudes toward war in the years between. As Prof. Wittner says:

Yet despite the melting away of millions of peace adherents with the arrival of war, a substantial core of Americans remained pacifists during World War II. The United States government classified as C.O.'s 42,973 of the 10,022,367 males ordered to report for induction. If this same ratio is projected to the nation's population, omitting children, then the number of absolute pacifists in the nation must have numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Oddly enough, although more general opposition to war prevailed in the country during World War I than during World War II, the number of absolute pacifists was much larger in the second great conflict than in the first. The percentage of young men inducted as C.O.'s by Selective Service tripled, while the percentage of those imprisoned (and classified as C.O.'s) quadrupled.

Prof. Wittner estimates that there were about half a million pacifists in the United States at the time of the outbreak of the second war. He gives further figures on draftees:

Although the Selective Service System did not keep accurate or complete records on conscientious objection, it estimated that during the 6½-year life of the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940 it ordered the induction of 25,000 men classified I-A-O (noncombatant), 11,887 classified IV-E (alternative service), and imprisoned 6086 C O.'s who either refused induction or did not meet the narrow requirements of the law.

The author points out that although the 1940 conscription law was intended to avoid the pattern of imprisonment imposed on C.O.'s during World War I, the percentage of C.O.'s imprisoned was four times as great.

From one point of view, the young men who became conscientious objectors and chose alternative service in CPS (Civilian Public Service) Camps anticipated in character formation the students of the present—the youth who are turning away not only from war but from the style and intentions of the technological society. The C.O.'s had much higher intelligence ratings than army enlisted men. In one group of alternative service camps—

The largest numbers represented were formerly employed as teachers and college instructors, social workers, artists, and actors. Two psychologists who measured the vocational interests of C.O.'s found that they tended to be "more interested in artistic and social service occupations . . . and distinctly less interested in . . . business" than non-pacifists of comparable age and education. Another psychological study of C.O.'s found them to be "idealists" and "radicals." Typical of this new breed of pacifist was Lowell Naeve, a twenty-four year-old artist and former pupil of Diego Rivera, sentenced to prison for tearing up his draft card and mailing it to Secretary of War Stimson.

The bulk of this book is devoted to the post-war efforts of pacifists to relate their energies to the forces of social change. For C.O.'s coming out of prison and the camp system, filled with first-hand impressions of the stupidities, cruelties, and wastefulness of the wartime administration of state power, this meant undertaking the difficult task of affecting a public opinion based on very different ideas about the uses of power. Revolutionary anarcho-pacifism found expression, eventually, in the direct action demonstrations and civil disobedience confrontations of the Committee for Non-Violent Action, and through various alliances with the Civil Rights movement. Prof. Wittner details the development of forms of militant action which began to receive public notice in 1957 with the first of a series of acts of

civil disobedience—a protest on the grounds of an AEC bomb project in Nevada, on the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. The voyages of the *Golden Rule* and the *Phoenix* followed, contesting the right of the Government to bar sea-going craft from the nuclear test-zone area in the Pacific.

Prof. Wittner sets the tone of the chapter called "The Peace Movement Reborn, 1959-1960," with a quotation from A. J. Muste:

Political scientists and politicians . . . have conceived of the realm of politics or power as largely autonomous. . . . It followed that the moral imperative, the "normative principle" of love, operated only tangentially and superficially on political Institutions and struggles.

Every problem became one of strategy rather than ethics. How much do you have to give away before you can be practically effective, until finally there isn't anything to give away any more. . . . In one realm this concept of power as autonomous leads to the nihilism of Hitlerism and Stalinism and in another realm to the nihilism of nuclear war and war preparations. . . .

Our *political* task is precisely, in Martin Buber's magnificent formulation, "to drive the plowshare of the normative principle into the hard soil of political reality."

How is this accomplished without compromise of principle? That is the difficult question that pacifists try to find answers for. Their critical case, these days, becomes stronger with every year of a period when the realities of modern war make presidents and even generals sound like pacifists when they point out that there can be no victory from the use of weapons capable of erasing the entire human race. As Prof. Wittner says:

. . . despite its internal strains, the peace movement in 1968 reached an unprecedented position of power. Outrage led to protest, protest to a mass movement, and a mass movement to considerable influence in the political life of the nation. For the first time since World War II, large numbers of Americans appeared to consider the "sentimental" pacifists more honest and realistic than the "tough-minded" generals. The sensitivity of the peace movement to the realities and complexities of

international affairs at last began to be matched by a corresponding rise in political strength.

Part of this success, of course, is due to the extreme unpopularity of the Vietnam war. But some kind of basic change seems nonetheless to be continuing. War is now pretty much of an obvious evil in itself, no longer manageable even in theory as a tool for responsible men. Once this view of war is adopted, it becomes very difficult, if not emotionally impossible, to reverse one's opinion about it. So, as time goes on, the national confusion arising from this irreversible change will almost certainly increase. War brings one kind of emotional simplicity that psychologists like to talk about. But when enough people arrive at the same kind of finality in the rejection of war, another kind of simplicity of life will become possible. Prof. Wittner's book is a balanced, accurate, and thorough account of a period which may some day be regarded as a major turning-point in history—a time when a significant portion of mankind began to take peace-making seriously.

COMMENTARY EVEN AT HARVARD

READERS puzzled by the student seizure of the administration building of Harvard University last April, ending with police action to eject the students in a "bloody melee," and in a student strike which briefly paralyzed the university, would do well to read the article by J. Anthony Lukas in the *New York Times Magazine* for June 8. The *Times* writer, a Harvard graduate with grateful memories, began by being puzzled, too. His long, intensely interesting report is filled with flashbacks to his own student days, emphasizing how changed are both the world and Harvard since 1955 when Lukas graduated. In that year, Harvard's President, Nathan Pusey, declared in a speech that the fundamental responsibility of a university lies in "the pursuit of learning almost for its own sake." Then he added:

It is possible for a university without being aware of it to slip into a servile relationship with the culture in which it finds itself and so betray its real reason for being. This danger . . . is apt to grow as colleges and universities look increasingly to government and business for the sustenance they must have to keep alive.

Right here, for the protesting students, is the heart of the matter. Mr. Lukas muses nostalgically about the complete personal "freedom" he enjoyed at Harvard, then shows that this has nothing to do with the protesting students' case:

Federal financing for Harvard certainly has increased sharply—from 7.8 per cent of its budget in 1954 to 37.8 per cent last year. With this, the radicals argue, has come not only an emphasis on research but precisely the kind of servility Pusey warned against.

Once willing for R.O.T.C. to exist for those infantile enough to "want" it, Lukas cannot now remain indifferent to the claim that "R.O.T.C., C.I.A. contracts and less obvious features . . . subtly mold Harvard men for corporate roles after graduation." And he is not favorably impressed by the reproach to the student radicals made by

William L. Marbury, a member of the Corporation (Harvard's chief governing body), in a statement to the *Baltimore Sun*:

"Slapping R.O.T.C. in the face is like slapping a lion in the face. It is a crazy thing to do, especially at a time when every university is dependent on Federal funds."

All the issues get attention from Mr. Lukas. The students, he says in his conclusion, "are seeking a new kind of freedom which offers fresh options: freedom which allows them to nurture a spontaneous personality, a warm community, a humane and just society." While not approving all they did, he knows and sympathizes with what they mean.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves THE ONLY USEFUL DISCIPLINE

IN the first issue of *Designcourse*, a new quarterly published by the Purdue Research Foundation, Jon Dieges describes three classes he is teaching in Berkeley, California, all concerned with the future cities of the world. One class, "Design of Alternative Futures," is conducted in the University Department of Architecture and is a continuation of a course Mr. Dieges taught at the University of Southern Illinois, under the inspiration of Buckminster Fuller. Another class, held in a Berkeley junior high school, is called "Environmental Design and the Future." The third class, "Designs for the Future," is in an elementary school, also in Berkeley.

We have seen photographs of these elementary school children working on design projects, with their intense interest quite apparent; now, with Mr. Dieges' text, we are able to make a brief report. He describes the basic approach:

In these classes, we are not reforming curricula. Curriculum reform is itself a myth because it is the concept of "curriculum" and all that it represents that must be abandoned. We need to orient directly to the serious problems of the environment. When a student becomes deeply committed to working on one of these problems, he discovers that the problem has its own logical development. He knows when he has really begun, and he knows when he has finished and can move on to something new. He also discovers that his original conception of the problem, which implies its solution, may have been erroneous, and he may have to work in a completely different area, for which mobility he needs freedom from traditional coursework and preconceptions.

Therefore, we find that experimental courses are also myths because it is the concept of "course" itself which must be abandoned. Only when we orient ourselves directly to the pressing problems of environment, with each student seriously undertaking an important, interesting area of research, will our schools and universities become vital, alive places to work.

This conception of education recalls the "Core Program" inaugurated by Franconia College some four years ago. The "core" topic becomes the heart of the student's educational program. It is chosen as a "significant moment in decision-making." Following is some description of the Core Program which appeared in "Children" for March 31, 1965

The first of such "moments" was the decision of Athenian democracy to put Socrates to death. In this context, students read and discussed Plato's *The Enthyphro*, *The Apology*, *The Crito*, *The Phaedo*, *The Meno*, *The Symposium*, and selections from the *Republic*; also Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War*, and Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. The second year began with more recent decision-making moments: Roger Williams' determination to leave the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the ratification by the State of New York of the United States Constitution. Four more core starting-points will be selected from among the historical changes represented by Darwin, Marx, Freud, Camus, Eichmann, Malraux, Truman.

It seems obvious that the interest generated by this effort to comprehend a fateful decision in history will always outrun a curriculum prepared by others, and soon make the student independently at home among the materials of historical research.

Similarly, Mr. Dieges' comments concerning his sort of teaching have wide application:

Education is still awaiting this big revolution—this turn toward self-discipline and individual, in-depth research coordinated with a cooperative group project. We have found that even 5th and 6th grade students are eager and fully prepared to make this transition. They are anxious to work on problems ranging from electric cars to animated representations of man's evolution on the face of the Earth. These young children are more acutely aware than adults of the implications of Apollo 8 in changing our whole view of ourselves and our planet. They want a learning environment that acknowledges these big changes. Most elementary schools are large enough that those students wanting to work on a particular subject area (such as learning Spanish) can recruit a teacher to work with them every day for an intensive few weeks, in a "total" learning environment. Children will learn their subject of interest much more thoroughly this way, because they will not be

distracted by constantly ringing bells authoritarian teachers, and lack of any secure place to work. Then they will see that love of one's work has its own discipline.

In another place he says:

These classes will recognize that the only true discipline is self-discipline—the discipline which arises from an intense interest in one's work. Therefore, the teacher's energies will not go into discipline, but into helping each student discover that work which most interests him at a particular time. His due dates and work schedule will be derived from the necessities of the work itself, and from the need to cooperate with the other students in producing the coordinated whole of a model city of the future. Some projects will require more time than others, but because it is the student's major preoccupation he will be thorough and not dabble, going half-heartedly from one superficial project to another.

The purpose of these classes is to nurture the discipline and productiveness of in-depth research. We will use the university and elementary and secondary schools as information resources, as they properly should be, not as places for a predetermined sequence of steps represented by the usual curriculum that prevents you from working on things that really interest you. There will be no fear of over-specialization. Young people are naturally comprehensive, and one phenomenon of in-depth research is that the deeper one goes, the more one sees how one's work is related to other areas, not only in methodology but in content. In a world whose ecology functions as a spherically interlaced system, every process has its stages occurring all over the surface of the planet in the biosphere. For example, the production, containing, processing, consumption, and disposal of food is one interrelated process having a vast impact on ecological relationships; you cannot design something for one part of it without reference to another part.

The vision and stimulus of this program are plainly evident. We have, however, one general question to raise, which may or may not apply. Will the prefabricating magic of the Buckminster Fuller level of technology have a tendency to shut out awareness of the very different order of "problems" that E. F. Schumacher is concerned with in the underdeveloped countries? Nations with advanced technologies like the United States typically contribute a sort of "aid" which

American specialists are good at, but does not touch the basic rural requirements of a population which is still mostly peasants who need better hand tools, better water supply, and can move toward industrialization and the conditions and services of the modern city at a very slow rate. Then there is the report of the studies (published in *Architectural Design* for August 1963 and August 1968) of self-help housing by the penniless "squatters" who have settled near South American cities. Using odd and strange materials, these people build homes which depend upon endless ingenuity for their design and construction, resulting in a "sense of autonomy and self-determination for both individuals and communities in making their own environment directly." The writers of these reports (quoted in *Frontiers* for June 18) conclude:

The person, as the member of the family and of a local community, finds in the responsibilities and activities of home-building and local improvement the creative dialogue essential for self-discovery and growth. The *barriada* is ground for living that the housing units, marketed or allocated by mass-consumption society, do not provide. . . . That the mass of urban poor in cities like Lima are able to seek and find improvement through home-ownership (or *de facto* possession) when they are still very poor by modern standards is certainly the main reason for their optimism. . . . The mass-designed, mass-produced environment for an increasingly homogenized market of mass-consumers are no more than assemblies of goods devoid of existential meaning.

These are human considerations in the planning of cities for the future which may deserve more attention, perhaps, than anything else. How to keep technology from making life cut and dried for people who are not technologists, and may have little interest in moving in this direction, is a question which should be made to haunt all planners, even young ones, who are relying heavily on the miracles of modern technological achievement and mass production.

FRONTIERS

New Pamphlet on Gandhi

THE world needs no instruction in the power of evil. We have every sort of object-lesson in how it works, with numerous texts on the subject, from primers to graduate studies. We know how its impulses are communicated, how its angers multiply, and witness daily demonstrations of the quick responses it can obtain from both individuals and masses of men.

What we lack is corresponding knowledge of the power of good. One thing seems clear—the play of good influence takes place at a level in man's nature considerably different from the level where the dynamics of evil perform efficiently. Our ignorance, then, of the operation of good—to put it technically—comes partly from neglect of moral psychology. In the context of conventional education, of course, the expression, "moral psychology," is practically a contradiction in terms. The common view is that you use "value-free" science to find out the facts about how things work, and then, after you know, you manipulate the morally indifferent factors of "reality" to produce what you think will be good.

Today, the far-reaching disasters which come from following this plan are becoming unmistakable. There is even the possibility that substantial numbers of people are ready to consider another theory of truth. But "theory" is hardly the word to use in this connection. A kind of existential awareness is probably what is involved.

Close to the beginning of a new Pendle Hill pamphlet, *Gandhi Remembered*, by Horace G. Alexander, there is this paragraph:

This man, the leader of India's revolt against British rule, was the creator of a new force in politics: disciplined, nonviolent mass action against systems felt to be unjust and immoral. His exploits in the field were so widely known, and the character of the man so widely felt that, when the news of his assassination, on January 30, 1948, was reported,

people wept in the streets of towns and villages all around the world.

Something like that happened, also, when Einstein died. Greatness of vision, simplicity of intention, and transparently altruistic purpose seem to be the ingredients of men who exercise such influence. Perhaps, if there were more of them, the world would soon change for the better. Conceivably, the one important thing to be said in behalf of "modern progress" is that its world-wide communication systems make it possible for the quality of such men to become known to countless millions. Some principle of moral psychology is involved here. Their vision enables others to stand on tiptoe and peer over barriers which they otherwise would have continued to think insurmountable. Such men inspire people to look for more humanity in themselves. It can hardly be denied that men touched by Gandhi's influence became better men—more capable, more self-respecting. They learned to increase the coefficient of humanizing resolve in their own lives.

This pamphlet by Horace Alexander is probably the best brief account of Gandhi's life and work that exists. It is only thirty-two pages, yet it seems somehow complete. There is this on Gandhi's work in South Africa, after he found his vocation from personal experience of discrimination against Indians:

There was something unique about the quality of his leadership which enabled him to achieve extraordinary results. For the Indians he led were in no sense a united people. They came from various parts of India. They had no common language. Most were Hindu by religion, but some were Muslims, some Parsis, some Christians. Most were illiterate, and accustomed to harsh treatment, including floggings by their European masters. Yet Gandhi was able to identify himself so closely with them, and he showed such purity of motive and such trust in all of them, that, when the time came for common action, not only men but women cheerfully underwent prison sentences, returning to prison again and again. Gandhi by this time had read not only the New Testament where he was profoundly affected by the Sermon on the Mount, but also Tolstoy, with whom

he had some correspondence, Thoreau, and John Ruskin. Under the immediate influence of Ruskin's book, *Unto This Last*, he gave up his legal work and settled on the land given to him and his family by a wealthy South African of German extraction, Kallenbach. They christened the tract "Tolstoy Farm." Here Gandhi became a farmer, a nurse, and a teacher; later, in India, he spent some time every day spinning cotton. He was a profound believer in the dignity and the moral value of manual work.

Even from this brief account of Gandhi's life the reader comes to recognize the almost incredibly extensive influence of the man; somehow, he was able to help other people to *see the point* of his commitment to truth and nonviolence, and to realize that his respect for other human beings—even those with whom he was in radical disagreement—grew out of his own confidence in the power of truth. Gandhi's strength was not something "special," inaccessible to other men. It is, he maintained, a power available to all. This was the preachment of his life. He showed a law of relationships among men founded on the higher possibilities of human behavior, but depending absolutely on a stance voluntarily assumed. This was his practical application of the idea of faith in man. These are Mr. Alexander's concluding paragraphs:

Gandhi had strong views about ends and means. He had no use for short cuts. Once convinced that the right way to bring freedom to India was by non-violent action alone, he would rather wait many years than resort to the alluring short cut of violence. Evil means, he was convinced, always spoilt the end they were intended to promote: violence used in achieving the goal would lead to the enthronement of violence, and to reliance on coercion when the supposed "victory" was won.

He believed that the modern world, especially the western world, has gone astray by placing too much emphasis on human rights. Man has no inherent rights, he said; rights can be earned only by fulfillment of duty. Let each contribute all he can to the community; then only let him begin to think of his rights.

Conflict there will still be between one nation, one class, one group, and another. Let those who have faith in the justice of their cause demonstrate

their conviction by self-suffering, not by attempting to coerce or to destroy the "enemy."

His dream for India was to see the country composed in the main of villages, providing the world with essential foodstuffs; villages with thriving handicrafts, where the village community was knit together in brotherly affection, without the divisions caused by wealth or caste or religion. Cities there must also be, but the cities and their big industries and the financiers must not be allowed to dominate the life of the village. He saw the peasant, the countryman, as the pillar of all true community. The farmer produces the primary essentials of food and raw materials. He outlives the comings of and goings of wars and revolutions. His silent, continuous cultivation of the earth keeps the whole body politic healthy.

Gandhi Remembered, issued on the hundredth anniversary of Gandhi's birth, may be purchased by sending 55 cents to Pendle Hill Publications, Wallingford, Pennsylvania 19086.