

## ONCE GREAT EXPECTATIONS

SHALLOW optimism can have disastrous effects in both personal and social life. The American people are peculiarly vulnerable to these effects for a number of historical reasons, not the least of which is the wealth of a continent of initially great natural resources. Some of our optimism was based on the delusion that these resources would last forever. Another reason is pride in the political sagacity of our ancestors, which we apparently thought would continue to operate without embodied renewal. There is of course the pride in the American talent for production, construction, and acquisition. Finally, there is the well-established "chosen people" complex, once grounded in the self-righteousness of Protestant religion, but now deriving from much vaguer origins.

It now appears that these several inheritances have been milked dry. Everywhere there is dissatisfaction, and bewildered feelings that things are not going well at all, any more. Bill Moyers supplied a common denominator which is probably as accurate as any when he said, in *Listening to America* (in *Harper's* for last December):

There is a myth that the decent thing has almost always prevailed in America when the issues were clearly put to the people. It may not always happen. I found among people an impatience, an intemperance, an isolation which invites opportunists who promise too much and castigate too many. And I came back with questions. Can the country be wise if it hears no wisdom? Can it be tolerant if it sees no tolerance? Can the people I met escape their isolation if no one listens?

Moyers found the people anxious rather than "alarmed," but he speaks of the country at large, since there are numerous individual alarmists who sound shrill warnings, and find much at which to be alarmed. There is also the widespread feeling, especially among the young, that the core and

operative center of the nation, which conducts its affairs, runs its business, governs, plans, and builds—in a word, the Establishment—is now almost always wrong. It doesn't just "make mistakes," but is *inherently* wrong. Yet only a few years ago, this word was almost unknown, there being no necessity felt to find a scapegoat for the ills of a social order which, whatever its superficial troubles and defects, was essentially "all right."

From the historical point of view, the high enthusiasm of the Enlightenment had its final and most optimistic expression in the United States. For generations American youth have been raised on the doctrine that here, in the New World, was the Frontier of modern civilization. Here in America was devised the greatest Constitution formulated by man. Here the Pilgrim Fathers had settled to practice their religion without constraint. Here the greatest strides were made in the application of science and invention. Here were forged the weapons and the power that saved old Europe twice from dark, tyrannical forces. What further evidence of the virtue of Americans and of the American State could be needed?

The bewilderments and anxieties of the present spring from the fact that these achievements can no longer be savored, while their fruits are wasted by a meaningless war which almost no one can believe in. It is more and more difficult for the ordinary man to identify himself with his country with any sort of emotional content. He cannot understand what is happening, yet those eager to explain what is happening all seem to be "extremists" of one sort or another.

Past generations were brought up on encouraging declarations of how much more we of the modern age know than the people of other

ages. History books seemed written at an apex of high attainment, offering measured praise to those who led the gradual climb from ignorance and moral darkness to our estate. Then, suddenly, the very foundations of our certainty seemed insecure. It began to be said by undeniably reputable men that we live in a "sick" society. Indeed, America was no longer "the promised land," but was increasingly disliked, even hated, and its power feared. America's core of central institutions became a target for contempt, its name an epithet. One might say that from believing in it too much, the temper of popular feeling has begun to turn toward not believing in it at all. Another kind of cataloguing now goes on—no more a list of "achievements," but of blunders and defects. Many current books are written with feelings of deep grievance if not betrayal. *This*, they seem to say, is not what we had learned to expect!

But what if our troubles are mainly the result of having had mistaken expectations? Of relying too much on systems, of accepting too easily the confident appraisals of a glorious future to be arranged for all by the industrialists and technologists and public-spirited thinkers? What if the prevailing conceptions of human good during the past one or even two hundred years have been false, distracting, and misleading?

This, in fact, is the conclusion reached by such humane critics as Lewis Mumford and a few others, and the fate predicted by men of the great Humanist tradition, such as Tolstoy, Gandhi, Emerson and Thoreau. These are thinkers for whom our "progress," while they still lived, left us no time for, and now, when we can see that they were right, there is too much anger, too much scapegoating, for very many to listen to them carefully. Once we did little more than cheer each other on, but today, everybody is merely "diagnosing" everybody else. We know a great deal about what is wrong, but *health* remains the thing that is seldom understood.

Increasingly, civilization itself is called a sickness, and cultures are said to be forms of local

aberration. There may be something to this criticism, yet the wholesale style of such accusations has a paralyzing effect. On the other hand, it can be no accident that the most impressive forms of psychotherapy; today, seem to occur under circumstances which in themselves are small social revolutions—in places isolated from the mainstream society where conditions of "health" have some chance of being established.

There is much discussion today of the creative process in human beings. What is "creation"? Quite simply, it is putting pre-existing materials together in fresh and original ways, such that something comes into being that did not exist before—something useful, something good, something beautiful. The creative person cannot be bound by habit. The flow of the originating power in a human being is mysterious, yet a little is known about it, or about the people in whom it seems to flow most freely. Maslow wrote at length about this, and some others. Lawrence S. Kubie, a psychiatrist of note, published a book on the subject in 1958—*Neurotic Distortion of the Creative Process* (Noonday paperback, 1961)—in which there is a chapter on the role of education in producing neurotic distortion. Since this discussion places a heavy burden of responsibility on the schools for the inability of the young to create freely, which is first of all the capacity to *change themselves*, Kubie's analysis forms an important part of the new criticism of organized society, and we shall give attention to it here. But first we need to know what Dr. Kubie means by "neurotic." In one place he says, "Any moment of behavior is neurotic *if the processes that set it in motion predetermine its automatic repetition*, and this irrespective of the situation or the social or personal values or consequences of the act." Earlier he had written:

The measure of health is flexibility, the freedom to learn through experience, the freedom to change with changing internal and external circumstances, to be influenced by reasonable argument, admonitions, exhortations, and the appeal to the emotions; the freedom to respond appropriately to the stimulus of

reward and punishment, and especially the freedom to cease when sated. The essence of normality is flexibility in all of these vital ways. The essence of illness is the freezing of behavior into unalterable and insatiable patterns.

Then, in the chapter on education, Dr. Kubie says:

The great cultural processes of human society, including art and literature, science, education in general, the humanities and religion, have three essential missions—namely: to enable human nature itself to change; to enable each generation to transmit to the next whatever wisdom it has gained about living; to free the enormous untapped creative potential which is latent in varying degrees in the preconscious processes of everyone. It is my belief that in all three respects all of our great cultural efforts have failed. . . .

The failure of education to make it possible for Man to change is due to a specific component in human nature: to wit, that psychological rigidity which is the most basic and most universal of the neurotic process—far more universal than are those more obvious quirks which comprise the clinical neuroses. Indeed, this neurotogenic rigidity is so universal that it is popularly accepted as normal even among many psychiatrists and analysts, as though the mere fact that everybody is rigid in one or more aspects of his personality meant that rigidity is normal. Cavities in the teeth are not normal merely because everybody has cavities. Nor is a cold normal because everybody catches cold. Actually, this psychological rigidity, which is a manifestation of the masked but universal neurotic ingredient in human nature, constitutes the major challenge not only to education but to any general forward movement on the part of human culture.

What becomes apparent is that Dr. Kubie is considering human beings as they ought to be considered—as individuals, and not as parts or mechanisms in a larger social process in terms of which progress is conventionally measured. He speaks of "the basic failure of the race as a whole, plus the failure of men as individuals, to evolve and change psychologically." Finally,

. . . there is the failure of traditional methods of imparting that wisdom about living which would be manifest in socially creative and individually fulfilling lives of work and play and love. We dare

not pretend to ourselves that we have solved this problem. Thus we know what kind of behavioral conventions tend to conserve any association of men in a livable society. We call these ethical principles. Yet we cannot claim that we know how to perpetuate and inculcate such ethical principles or how to seat them firmly in the saddle in human affairs. Instead we know that out of unsavory soil some people grow up to be ethical, while others become unethical from equivalently favored circumstances.

Dr. Kubie's analysis of the schools as bearers of neurotic influence is detailed and long; we can give only one passage:

The schoolroom and the school as a whole confront the child with surrogate parents and siblings. If we were naively optimistic we might expect that schools would long since have seized on this as an opportunity to explore each child's responses both to parental authority and to sibling rivalry, so as to help him to understand himself in these basic relationships and thus to achieve a capacity for mature self-direction. Instead, in most schools the structure of school "society" is such as to allow the child merely to relive blindly the buried hates and loves and fears and rivalries which had their origins at home—sacrificing understanding to some limited degree of blind "self-mastery." Schooling tends rather to accentuate whatever automatic patterns of child-to-adult and child-to-child relationship each child has brought to his school years, and not to change them. The schoolroom as we know it tends neither to balance nor to neutralize these conflict-laden feelings, nor to render them less fixed and rigid by bringing them within the reach of conscious selection, direction, and control. Self-control as taught is limited to a control of the secondary consequence of these conflicts, never directed at their inner sources. The exceptions to this are rare. At best, most schools today constitute a pragmatic test of the extent to which a student as he comes to them can either accept or reject or modify or exercise authority.

The concluding section of this chapter includes a rather wonderful discussion of "The Role of Self-Knowledge," in which Dr. Kubie asks:

Can there be wisdom, even about the objective world around us (considering how many distorting fantasies we project onto this outer world) in the absence of wisdom about the inner world from which these projections arise? It is my conviction that

education without self-knowledge can never mean wisdom or maturity; and that self-knowledge in depth is a process which like education itself is never complete. It is a point on a continuous and never-ending journey. It is a process which must go on throughout life, if at all; and like the fight for external freedom, it demands eternal vigilance and continuous struggle.

At this point, one is constrained to ask: Can we expect education of this sort from public schools?

In view of the anger and ridicule now directed at conventional institutions, at "the Establishment," and at very nearly every social formation we have inherited from the past, it seems also time to ask whether all these intensely moralistic condemnations are appropriate. No society, it seems obvious, can be *all* "growing tip." It is probably possible to have a society more hospitable to human growth, but the advocates of "total revolution" seem curiously innocent of history, and of the rapidity with which suddenly created revolutionary institutions freeze into rigidity and brutally severe control. Truly free institutions are possible only in an atmosphere of trust and among people who have learned not to expect more from mere institutions than the small help and ordering functions that they can provide.

It seems clear that the role of institutions would be very different in a society which did not place so much childlike faith in their supreme capacity to guide civilization onward in the march of progress. When Dr. Kubie speaks of the failure of "our great cultural efforts," should he not add that this failure may be largely due to misplaced trust and unwarranted expectations?

What we call the "great middle class," or designate as its socio-political representative, "the Establishment," may be a completely inevitable social formation, given the very structure of human society, and the extremely small number of people who seriously set out to gain "self-knowledge." The Establishment is not and cannot be a *pioneering* body. And if it attempts to

become an instrument for the forced growth of human beings, it will surely turn into a hideous tyranny, like, perhaps, the Soviet Establishment under Stalin during its most evil days. The Establishment is the expression of conventional order and conventional belief, while pioneers, if they are true pioneers, are always representatives of postconventional morality—of the *autonomous* moral life. The best that can be expected of the Establishment is that it will not block the emergence of aspiring individuals into the postconventional way of life. The only way to prevent the Establishment from abusing its power is by expecting comparatively little of it, and holding its sovereignty and prestige to a minimum. This can hardly be accomplished save by the education of the entire population in the direction of a self-reliant, independent conception of the good life and individual responsibility.

This, incidentally, would describe the Socratic enterprise from start to finish. Socrates went about his lonely business cheerfully, displaying none of the proud contempt for ordinary men that became characteristic of some of those who claimed to be his successors—Diogenes of Sinope for example. And Socrates had far too much knowledge of human nature to expect that the quest for self-knowledge would be undertaken by everyone who came along. As he explained in the *Theætetus*, there were those who felt no need of his art as a midwife of ideas, so that he sent them off to the Sophists, among whom they would feel more at home.

Socrates practiced enormous patience and tolerance, but also enormous persistence, with the result that he has been able to stand as an unblemished symbol of the noble life for more than two thousand years. And as Robert Cushman says at the conclusion of the first chapter of *Therapeia*, a work which considers the entirety of the Platonic philosophy as therapy, "Socrates was surely responsible for establishing for the Western world the foundational distinction

between nature and culture, that is, between necessity and responsibility."

A similar Renaissance seems in the making today. The cycle of "collectivist" progress and morality has largely exhausted itself, and the energies of thoughtful men are more devoted to questions which turn on the nature of the individual, it being increasingly evident that social progress and social harmony are rooted in individual lives and cannot be attained except through individual understanding and growth. The agony brought by failing institutions is really the agony of neglected individuality, projected on a statistical scale and reflected in institutional terms.

In an age of restored individuality, perhaps, we shall not feel it necessary to condemn our institutions as carriers of neurosis and perpetuators of rigidity, since we will not have expected them to make up for the immaturities of human beings. Those who demand "total revolution," on the ground that the society is sick, irreclaimably destructive in its tendencies, and needing an entire new beginning, might do well to ask themselves if they are demanding of the social totality an order of achievement that they could not possibly accomplish themselves—a *total change*, that is, in their way of life! No doubt total change is needed, but the only lasting change in the lives of men is the change that begins inside human beings and works its way outward, slowly but surely, to affect in subtle and finally in far-reaching ways all the affairs of men and society.

## *REVIEW*

### THE GANDHIAN ENTERPRISE

IT is now nearly twenty-three years since the death of M. K. Gandhi. During that time, two men have emerged in Indian affairs to reaffirm his vision and continue his work. There are others, of course, but these two have particular capacities to inspire and lead. One is Vinoba Bhave, known to the world chiefly for his activity in the Bhoodan and Gramdan movements, which have accomplished so much to restore land to the landless farmers and workers of the villages of India. The other is Jayaprakash Narayan, a younger man who early in the 1950's quit active participation in socialist politics to join with Vinoba in the work of the Gramdan and Sarvodaya movements.

We have for review a book made up of articles by Jayaprakash Narayan, *Communitarian Society and Panchayati Raj*, published by Navachetna Prakashan, Box 116, Rajghat, Varanasi 1, India, at a price of 18 rupees, for which, if one writes to India for it, \$4 would probably be an appropriate conversion to American money, and include shipping, etc. The book is edited and has an introduction by Brahmanand.

A reading of these papers and addresses makes clear the heavy burdens under which Gandhian reformers labor in India. And yet, there is a sense in which what must be done there presents a more clear-cut picture than can be obtained of the needs, say, of the United States. The Gandhian objective is the restoration of community life, which involves the threefold program of returning political power to the people, bringing them the educational help they need to overcome their poverty, and assisting them, initially by practical means, until they regain their self-reliance and economic independence. This is essentially a characterological undertaking. It has little or nothing to do with power, save that it requires the

removal of outside oppression and economic exploitation. It has everything to do with the generation of cooperative attitudes and the birth of hope and vision in a people ground down for centuries by political oppression and weakened by social decay. The means for this restoration is through the creation of independently functioning social infrastructure at the primary level—in the villages—as contrasted with the prevailing political theory of the West, which results in an "atomized mass society" ruled by competing power groups rather than by the people themselves. The community view is basically different. Community life cannot survive militant political factions and endless conflict situations. It does not deal in ideological abstractions nor can it cope with struggles for power. Its business is the meeting of human need. As Narayan says:

This view treats man not as a particle of sand in an inorganic heap, but as a living cell in a larger organic entity. It is natural that, in this view, emphasis should be laid more on responsibility than on right, just as in the inorganic view it is natural that it should be the opposite. When the individual lives in community with others, his rights flow from his responsibilities. It cannot be otherwise. That is why, in Gandhiji's sociological thought, the emphasis is always laid upon responsibility.

How is "community" to be restored? Discussing this at the theoretical level, Narayan writes:

In the West, where the community has almost wholly ceased to exist, the frustrations of the mass society resulting in a new moral consciousness will perhaps in time replace the present political system based on the struggle for power, with a system based on harmony and cooperation.

In India and perhaps in all the developing countries of Asia and Africa, however, the situation is more favorable. The small primary community, the village and the township still exists. True, there is little of true community found at present in the village, but at least, the physical shell of community is there. The task is to put substance into the shell and to make the villages and townships real communities. But if a political system is introduced into the village, that further disrupts the already largely disrupted community, the result would be not

development of a feeling of community and harmony but just the opposite. It is for this reason that Gandhiji rejected parliamentary democracy, which he termed the tyranny of the majority and laid stress on *gram raj* (which logically embraces *nagar raj*) as the basis of self-rule. That is why he recommended the process of decision-making to be through a process of consensus-making and emphasized the role of a detached moral force based on popular sanction and derived from selfless service, as a unitive and corrective force in the democracy of his conception.

This is a social order in which acquisitive self-interest is no longer the driving force, but the spirit of the common good. That, as Narayan suggests, "a new moral consciousness" may eventually bring such developments to birth in the West is not so wild a speculation as it may seem to some. The "two thousand" communes which have sprung up spontaneously in the United States in the past ten years are certainly an indication of basic changes in attitude on the part of the coming generation.

Continuing, Narayan anticipates objections:

It might be urged, as is actually done, that in the organic or communitarian society, the individuality of man would tend to be submerged in the community and he might not be able to enjoy that freedom which is essential for the dignity and development of the human personality. Contrarily, it might be urged that it is only in the society which treats the individual as a unit in the political system and bases the political structure on individual votes, that there is the highest possible freedom enjoyed by the individual. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is exactly in the mass society, which falsely proclaims the sovereignty of the individual, that the individual is alienated from himself and becomes a nameless digit, which the political and economic masters manipulate for power and profit and glory. The individual in the modern society is a victim of social and economic forces over which he has little control. On the other hand, it is only in the community, in which the sense of community has developed, that the individual is a distinct personality living with other personalities, and has the possibility to develop to the highest being. The relationship between the individual and the community, as Gandhiji has expressed it, is the readiness of the individual to die for the community and the community for the individual. To the extent to which this attitude is developed on both sides, to

that extent there is individual and social development. The task is to discover the best social, political, economic, cultural, and educational processes and institutions that would achieve that objective.

These are some of the implications of *Panchayati Raj*, as I see them.

The *panchayat* is the traditional form of village government in India, originally made up of five elders, to whom disputes were brought and who were relied upon for practical wisdom in ordering village life. This changed with the advent of British rule. The 1911 edition of the *Britannica*, for example, says that in the Madras presidency the chief duty of the *panchayats* or village committees was "to attend to sanitation." The British established the rule of centralized power, reducing the scope of local authority until it became little more than an agency of the central government. It was this relationship which Gandhi sought to change by declaring, again and again, that the best government is the least government, and by working all his life to revive the morale and integrity of the villages as the primary social units of self-government. But during his lifetime the task was barely begun, and after his death, while lip-service was given to the ideal, little was done to implement the conception. As Jayaprakash Narayan relates:

During the freedom struggle, because of Gandhi's formative influence upon the political thinking of those who fought for freedom, it was more or less taken for granted that *gram raj* [village rule] would be the foundation of *Swaraj* [self-rule]. In other words, the concept of political and economic decentralization was axiomatic with the fighters for freedom. But when the Constitution came actually to be constructed, that concept somehow was forgotten or, to be more precise, remembered only as an afterthought. The present widespread practice in the ruling circles of showering praise on Gandhi and neglecting him in practice seems to have had its beginnings right at the outset of our freedom when Gandhiji was still present in flesh and blood.

What government did not, would not, or perhaps could not do—given the circumstances of India's past under the British, the cultural inheritance of British rule, and perhaps the

intoxications of sudden political power that came with independence remained for Vinoba Bhave to attempt, with the Sarvodaya movement and Bhoodan, or gift of land, which later became Gramdan, or gift of villages. As Narayan put it in an address ten years ago:

Vinobaji is trying to do something which Panditji [Nehru] as Prime Minister cannot do, and which Shri Dey as the Community Development Minister cannot do, and which you, as officers of the various departments in the States, cannot do. We are interested not only in the things you are interested in but our policy is one of direct approach to the people, their minds and hearts, serving them and helping them. For instance, you are all the time emphasizing that land reforms should be expedited and that they should be good and not a sort of "make-believe." Most of the land reform Acts of States are, I should say, an eyewash. They have not gone far enough. Now, you want to bring about socio-economic changes, changes in human relations and changes in social relations by legislation. What we are trying to do is to bring about these changes directly, by going to the people, so that the life of the community is established on the basis of social justice, brotherhood, cooperation, or in whichever way you wish to describe it. . . .

Now the position is that we have already distributed in the Bhoodan movement 9 lakh acres of land. In contrast, as a result of all the enactment in States, not more than 3 lakh acres, or at most 4 lakh acres of land, have been distributed. You can compare the results achieved by the direct appeal and by legislation. [A lakh is 100,000,]

This is all very general. Readers interested in how activities of this sort work out in practice might look at the review of *Social Work and Social Change* (Porter Sargent, 1968) by Sugata Dasgupta, a sociologist and associate of Jayaprakash Narayan in directing the Gandhian Institute of Studies (in MANAS for May 15, 1968), and turn, also, to the notice in MANAS for Jan. 14, 1970 of the extensive report in *People's Action*, published in New Delhi, on village development in India, as pursued by present-day Gandhians in the Sarvodaya movement.

A thing to remember, in reading about the struggle of the Gandhians to restore community

life in India, is that while externally the problems of India are very different from those of the United States, there is also a sense in which they are much the same. The great need in both countries—and in every country in the world—is for a regeneration of moral attitudes. The workers for this cause seem always to be few. They are few, today, in India, and they are few in the United States. Here, except for Arthur Morgan and one or two others, hardly anyone has recognized the extreme importance of the restoration of community life, as a regenerative moral force. In both countries, people throng to the cities because of the economic shortcomings of the countryside. Vigorous rural life is a thing of the past in the United States, as in India. The extent to which this is at least a major symptom, if not a cause, of the social disorders of the time has yet to be measured.

This book by Jayaprakash Narayan is addressed to Indians and speaks so especially to their problems that some American readers may find parts of it unrewarding. Yet its spirit speaks to all the world, as Gandhi did. An earlier volume, *Socialism, Sarvodaya, and Democracy*, published in this series, may have a wider appeal to readers in the West.

## *COMMENTARY*

### **THE GANDHIAN SOCIETY**

To what is quoted in this week's Review, we should add some generalizations by the editor of Jayaprakash Narayan's book on Communitarian Society, outlining the Gandhian society of the future as JP envisions it. Mr. Brahmanand writes:

Jayaprakash visualises a chain of communities, beginning from the primary community to the world community; all are organically related; yet they are independent. The primary communities will form a regional community. Each single primary community will do all that may be possible with its internal resources. But there will be many things that will be beyond the resources and competence of the primary community. For instance, each primary community may be able to provide for a primary school, primary health service, small irrigation works like wells and village tanks, and village industries. But a number of primary communities may cooperate together to provide a high school, an indoor hospital, a power station and servicing center, larger industries, larger irrigation works, etc. Thus the regional community comes into existence by an organic process of growth. The circle of the community is widened.

Thus it will be seen that the regional community is not a mere sum of the smaller communities constituting them. It is an integrated community in itself. In other words, at the regional level there is an integration of institutions and activities of the primary communities; the village panchayats are integrated into the regional panchayat; the village cooperatives into the regional cooperative union; the primary schools into the regional high school; the village youth and cultural associations into the regional ones; the village plans into the regional plan, etc. Just as in the internal administration the primary community is autonomous, so in spheres in which the primary communities have delegated their powers to the regional community, the latter is autonomous. The need to delegate powers arises from the fact that the primary communities are unable by themselves to do everything that needs to be done. The regional community, however, is not a superior or higher body that can control, or interfere with, the internal administration of the primary communities. Each in its sphere is equally sovereign.

Regional communities form districts, districts comprise provincial communities, and provinces combine to make the national community. With the help of the Sarvodaya movement, a beginning is being made to establish strong and healthy primary communities, which are the basis of all further developments in India, in the Gandhian view. Concluding, Mr. Brahmanand says:

"I consider it as a new kind of society and social order," said JP. He regrets that the development of the panchayati raj is not taking place in order to pave the way for agro-industrial communities. This may not be possible in Western countries where megalopolis has come to stay for hundreds of years. It might be difficult for them to reverse the whole process, though it has retarded the balanced growth of individuals and society. But India offers a congenial soil for JP's concept of panchayati raj, for it suits the genius of the people of this country.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves MORAL EDUCATION

THE decisions of the courts, while not exactly bearing on "morality," are sometimes revealing straws in the wind. The following, for example, was reported in the Los Angeles *Times* for Dec. 14 of last year:

. . . for the time being the draft continues. Resistance continues. And court rulings in favor of resisters continue. In the most important of them so far, the Supreme Court ruled last June [the Welsh decision] that a defendant who objected to war in any form, but was unable to base his claim in religious beliefs, should be legally exempt.

That was a landmark decision. It brought things to the point at which an Episcopal priest who counsels would-be draft dodgers in New Jersey could report that he had a resister who built his case on the current popular music.

This evader was "a very sincere person," the priest said. And furthermore, "The youth subculture, the songs and music, play a very important part in reaching the decision (to resist). Many more have been aided in coming to their decision by Bob Dylan than by the Bible."

In other words, the courts already have ruled in effect that being a sincere Bob Dylan fan is just as valid as being a sincere Jesus Christ fan when it comes to beating the draft.

While this account is a bit lighthearted, and there is never any reason to refer to conscientious objectors as "draft dodgers" or "evaders," since they are neither, there is no question but that religious orthodoxy is no longer regarded as the sole source of moral decision in the United States. The Seeger Decision (1965) also made it plain that the United States is now a country of many faiths, including the convictions of men of humanist persuasion and freethinkers, so that no one organized collection of beliefs can be said to be representative of "morality," here. It is a question, of course, whether inherited religious beliefs have much to do with morality, anyway.

This is a question which is central to a symposium, *Moral Education in a Changing Society*, with ten contributors, edited by W. R. Niblett, of the University of London Institute of Education, and published in paper by Faber & Faber (London). (In the United States, this paperback is likely to be about \$2, and the hardback edition \$5.)

One of the contributors, A. R. Vidler, sets the problem at the outset of his essay, "Religious Belief Today and its Moral Derivatives." He begins:

When Samuel Butler, the author of *Erewhon* and *The Way of All Flesh*, was a young man, it was intended that he should become a clergyman. As a way of preparing himself he worked as a lay assistant in the parish of St. James's, Piccadilly. He lived among the poor and used to conduct a class for lads. One day he discovered that some of them had not been baptized, and this discovery moved him to inquire whether there was a correlation between the moral character and conduct of the lads and their being baptized or unbaptized. He found that there wasn't any such correlation. In fact, some of the nicest lads were unbaptized. Butler professes to have been so disconcerted by this incongruous revelation that he not only abandoned the intention of becoming a clergyman but decided that the case for religious belief had collapsed. No doubt weightier factors were really at work in his decision, and I suppose a competent theologian might have persuaded him that his presumption about the effects of baptism was unwarranted. For theologians have never subscribed to the pragmatic and evangelical test, "By their fruits ye shall know them," except when it has suited their apologetic purposes.

Mr. Vidler finds Butler's argument a bit simple-minded, as no doubt it is, yet is mainly concerned to show, himself, how difficult it is to relate moral behavior with professed belief. The aftermath of the French Revolution, he recalls, was widely taken as evidence that atheism and unbelief would foster immorality, yet in the nineteenth century, Victorian agnostics "who rejected Christian dogma, were paragons of moral rectitude and ethical earnestness." However, he adds what must be added—a view maintained by many, today—that "while there may be a

hangover of moral rectitude in individuals who have jettisoned religious belief, yet in a society in which religious belief has been weakened or destroyed, the disintegration of morality is bound to follow sooner or later." Curiously, no one has said this more clearly than Bertrand Russell, who dealt with the problem quite comprehensively in an article in the *Nation* for Jan. 9, 1937:

In former days men wished to serve God. When Milton wanted to exercise "that one talent which is death to hide," he felt that his soul "was bent therewith to serve my maker." Every religiously minded artist was convinced that God's aesthetic judgments coincided with his own; he had therefore a reason, independent of popular applause, for doing what he considered his best, even if his style was out of fashion. The man of science in pursuing truth, even if he came into conflict with current superstition, was still setting forth the wonders of Creation and bringing men's imperfect beliefs more nearly into harmony with God's perfect knowledge. Every serious worker, whether artist, philosopher or astronomer, believed that in following his own convictions he was serving God's purposes. When with the progress of enlightenment this belief began to grow dim, there still remained the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. Non-human standards were still laid up in heaven, even if heaven had no topographical existence.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the True, the Good and the Beautiful preserved their precarious existence in the minds of earnest atheists. But their very earnestness was their undoing, since it made it impossible for them to stop at a halfway house. Pragmatists explained that Truth is what it pays to believe. Historians of morals reduced the Good to a matter of tribal custom. Beauty was abolished by the artists in a revolt against the sugary insipidities of a philistine epoch and in a mood of fury in which satisfaction was to be derived only from what hurts. And so the world was swept clear not only of God as a person but of God's essence as an ideal to which man owed an ideal allegiance; while the individual, as a result of a crude and uncritical interpretation of sound doctrines, was left without any inner defense against social pressure.

We have quoted Russell at length, because his analysis seems so well put, and so illuminating of the problems which have become various sorts of historical crises. It might be added that very few

nineteenth-century figures were themselves aware of the processes that were going on around them. Amiel was one man who did, and Tolstoy was another, as his *Confession* makes luminously clear. If we face the situation squarely, it seems evident that there is really no solution at all except individual versions of the solution Tolstoy himself found—and how, one wonders, can this be explained to the many who find themselves in such desperate moral turmoil, today? We chose Mr. Vidler to quote because he seems to have something of an answer, at least in principle. Later in this essay he says:

I presume that our task should be to encourage people to ask themselves the most important questions, not to thrust upon them a comprehensive set of answers with a "take it or leave it" attitude.

Is there a common point of entry for a faith for today? In the vast estate of knowledge and experience is there one place where there should, so to speak, be written up the words "Inquiries Here"? Is the great question upon which people's attention should first be fixed the existence of God, or the scientific view of the universe, or what? I should myself say that questions about the nature of *man* are the starting-point for a faith upon which morality must be grounded, and I will try to indicate how this approach might be developed.

. . . human beings are . . . the only entities in the world who ask questions about it. . . . human beings are capable of asking questions which go beyond their immediate needs and environment. They are capable of asking what is the meaning of their existence, what is the purpose of the world in which they find themselves, and what is their beginning and their end. Man is capable of rational thought. He is self-transcendent, which means that he can, as it were, step outside his immediate concerns and see himself and his fate as a problem, as an immense question-mark. . . .

The second peculiar characteristic of human beings is that they are free to choose, to decide what they will do, and what they will think. . . . They are free to choose and to act only within the conditions provided by the world and by the circumstances in which they are placed. But within those conditions and limits they are genuinely free to choose this or that, to initiate things, to originate courses of action. . . .

But there is a third characteristic of human beings which makes their freedom of choice much more important than it would otherwise be: I mean their sense of moral obligation or responsibility, which raises the question: to what or whom are they responsible?

In a finely developed argument, Mr. Vidler shows that moral obligation leads to recognition of the importance of respecting the moral freedom of other men—of honoring their *integrity*, or the potential in every human of integrity. Then:

What is the source of this obligation to respect the integrity of myself and of every other individual human being? It does not arise from the fact that in experience I find all human beings so splendid that I cannot help treating them like that, for I do not find either them or myself so splendid, and it is all too easy not to treat them like that.

A fourth quality distinctive in human beings is man's capacity to have deep bonds and relationships for his fellows, shaped by understanding and love:

What is peculiarly human is the capacity to achieve a kind of personal relationship one with another, a kind of community, of fellowship, of love—call it what you will—in which each freely commits himself to live and work with the other, without imposing or forcing his will on the other, but respecting and responding to the other's proper autonomy and individuality: a relationship in which each individual is regarded as unique, unrepeatable, and irreplaceable. . . .

Well, this is not a "faith" that anyone could disseminate, but the questions that arise concerning these realities of the nature of man are surely the raw materials out of which a workable morality could be made. Perhaps that is all the help we shall ever get from anyone else, in matters of *ultimate* importance. We should, however, add a brief note on something said by the final contributor to this volume, Marjorie Reeves. It is that those who live lives which have no deep commitment in them, are living only "provisionally"—"for the uncommitted person is only a half-made person." And the best advice concerning moral education is found in the editor's essay, which offers this quotation: "to treat young

people as if they were a different race from ourselves . . . is bad for us and bad for them."

## *FRONTIERS*

### A Penalty of Ecological Knowledge

BOTH hard and paper cover copies of Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* have long been available, and may still be, but in 1970 still another edition of this valuable book was put into print, this time with the addition of eight essays from another posthumously published volume by Leopold, *Round River*. Both books were edited by his son, Luna Leopold, since *Sand County Almanac* was still in draft when the author died in 1948 while fighting a brush fire on a neighbor's farm; and the other book, *Round River*, came out in 1953 as a collection of essays which had appeared in various journals. The present paperback edition, offering all of the first and much of the second book, is woven into a single text under the first title. It is published by the Sierra Club and Ballantine at 95 cents.

Leopold was both a tough- and tender-minded man. While the delight to be found in his writing is such that he ought not to be "classified," it can be said that he was a pioneer conservationist and ecologist, and a founder of the Wilderness Society. Born in 1887, he joined the U.S. Forest Service in 1909, eventually becoming Associate Director of the Forest Products Laboratory. He founded the profession of game management and taught it at the University of Wisconsin. At the time of his death he had for a short time been adviser on conservation to the United Nations.

There is flashing humor, resilience, and bite in his prose. Somehow he makes his attitude toward nature so clear that his books are treasured almost above all others by lovers of nature. The roster of those who especially admired his work include some of the most distinguished men of our time, not to exclude Rachel Carson! We have reviewed and often quoted from the earlier editions of this book, and now offer some sample passages from the "Round River" additions. First this:

The outstanding scientific discovery of the twentieth century is not television, or radio, but rather

the complexity of the land organism. Only those who know the most about it can appreciate how little is known about it. The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant: "What good is it?" If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not. If the biota, in the course of aeons, has built something we like but do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering.

Have we learned this first principle of conservation: to preserve: all the parts of the land mechanism? No, because even the scientist does not yet recognize all of them.

In Germany there is a mountain called the Spessart. Its south slope bears the most magnificent oaks in the world. American cabinet makers, when they want the last word in quality, use Spessart oak. The north slope, which should be better, bears an indifferent stand of Scotch pine. Why? Both slopes are part of the same state forest; both have been managed with equally scrupulous care for two centuries. Why the difference?

Kick up the litter under the oak and you will see that the leaves rot almost as fast as they fall. Under the pines, though, the needles pile up as a thick duff; decay is much slower. Why? Because in the Middle Ages the south slope was preserved as a deer forest by a hunting bishop; the north slope was pastured, plowed, and cut by settlers, just as we do with our woodlots in Wisconsin and Iowa today. Only after this period of abuse was the north slope replanted to pines. During this period of abuse something happened to the microscopic flora and fauna of the soil. The number of species was greatly reduced, i.e., the digestive apparatus of the soil lost some of its parts. Two centuries of conservation have not been sufficient to restore these losses. It required the modern microscope, and a century of research in soil science, to discover the existence of these "small cogs and wheels" which determine harmony or disharmony between men and land in the Spessart.

It sounds as though he means we should go around in fear and trembling for what may result from what we do, and in a sense he does mean just that. But with a great deal of common sense. At the end of the essay on natural history he says:

We shall never achieve harmony with the land, any more than we shall achieve absolute justice or

liberty for people. In these higher aspirations the important thing is not to achieve, but to strive. It is only in mechanical enterprises that we can expect that early or complete fruition of effort which we call "success."

When we say "striving," we admit at the outset that the thing we need must grow from within. No striving for an idea was ever injected wholly from without.

The problem, then, is how to bring about a striving for harmony with land among a people many of whom have forgotten there is any such thing as land, among whom education and culture have become almost synonymous with landlessness. This is the problem of "conservation education."

And so, in another place, he says:

One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise.

One thing people who read *A Sand County Almanac* are likely to do is to make those with an ecological education feel a little less lonely. Almost certainly, they will be ready to make at least *some* contribution to getting at what Leopold calls "the root of the problem." This he explains by saying: "What conservation education must build is an ethical underpinning for land economics and a universal curiosity to understand the land mechanism. Conservation may then follow." No book that we know of does as much as *A Sand County Almanac* toward preparing the reader to participate in both aspects of conservation education.