

ISSUES IN THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE

ONE of the difficulties in thinking about the steps that must be taken to put an end to the prospect of all-destroying war is the tendency to adopt a we-or-they point of view—not in relation to the opposing nuclear powers, but in relation to those who wish to rely upon military force for their security, and those who are ready to abandon the weapons of war for the stance of non-violence. The line that may be drawn between these two groups is clear enough; in fact, the difference between their views is dramatic and highly controversial, but the question of how much difference there is between them as human beings is too easily passed over in the heat of argument. You get to thinking about the agony of the last great war—of the reports on the effects of strategic bombing of large cities, of the story of the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and what it did to hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians, and you wonder: What can be wrong with these people? How can they feel *justified* in contemplating another war in which these horrors would be multiplied beyond calculation? Not just the matter of "survival" is at issue. It is rather a question of what we—or they—are willing to think of doing to other human beings, regardless of cause or purpose. War is a monstrous evil, the compound of all crimes, and, what is worse, the corruption of the mind and the emotions with high-sounding justifications of the policy of war.

An inability to imagine what war is like is no doubt part of the trouble. To this must be added an unwillingness to imagine what the next war would be like, since reliance on military means of defense is morally much easier when there are no long thoughts about the horrors of war. Then there is the well established habit of dealing with large and complicated events and entities by means of symbols and oversimplified abstractions. National tradition is in part a doctrine of the

proper relations of these symbols and of what is to be done when those relations are violated.

For example, China's war with Great Britain in 1840 resulted when the Chinese Emperor, not liking the opium trade which British merchants were pursuing in China, ordered his commissioners to confiscate large quantities of the drug brought to China in British ships. In England, the people were told that the Union Jack had been "insulted," and that war against China was the only recourse for honorable men. At this time the Chinese had no knowledge of the power of European military methods and they fought bravely, but defeat was rapid and certain. The people were terrified by the sudden inroads of the invading force, and some Chinese mothers drowned their children in wells rather than have them fall into the hands of the "foreign devils." This brief conflict gained the British Hong Kong "in perpetuity," four open ports, and a treaty which was silent on the question of the opium trade. Of this small imperialistic foray, Justin McCarthy, English historian, remarked: "Reduced to plain words, the principle for which we fought in the China War was the right of Great Britain to force a peculiar trade upon a foreign people in spite of the protestations of the Government. . . . In dealing with China the ministry never seems to have thought the right or wrong of the question a matter worthy of any consideration." And to the English people at home it seemed only "as if the safety of English subjects and the honor of England were compromised in some way by the high-handed proceedings of the Chinese government."

We do not recite this incident of Britain's past in an eagerness to spread guilt around, but to illustrate how unquestioning may be the acceptance of a war on the part of a civilian population, so long as the conventions of

righteous war-making are given some attention. The American sallies in the Caribbean and the Pacific at the turn of the century would have served as well. As we recall, before asking for the declaration of war in the conflict with Spain, President McKinley prayed all night, and when dawn broke serenely announced his military intentions. The idea of Christianizing all those heathen in the islands was what finally made him choose the righteous course of war.

It is now a bare sixty years since the Spanish-American war—only a few moments in universal history. The grandfathers of the present generation could all have fought in that war, while its fathers crossed the Atlantic in 1917 to rack up another victory for American arms. World War II was perhaps the turning point in history, so far as eagerness for war is concerned. But the conventions of war-making still exist in all their strength, and a revolution in conventions is not something that can take place without extraordinary changes in human attitude, as a result of a great deal of thinking and nonconformist discussion and action.

The discussion and the action are going on among the intelligent few, but conventions are heavy things to lift and change. Meanwhile there is the great mass of people "out there" who have only the slightest of personal reasons to change their ideas. One of the central facts of the mass society is that the great majority of its members dislike to think of the possibility that The Government may be *wrong*, that the conventions are no longer adequate or even rational, that the time has come to question some of our national traditions. It is not only a matter of deciding to doubt the validity of time-honored rules. Worse than this is the prospect of having to give up the sense of competence which the manipulation of familiar symbols and abstractions allows. If you are going to consider seriously the idea of abandoning war as a national policy, you have to be prepared to acknowledge that the defense of the "national honor" may be at the same time an

act which will frighten some mothers, somewhere, into throwing their babies down wells. It means leaving the well-known territory of symbols and entering the no-man's-land of dark and horrifying possibilities.

What we are really talking about is the re-creation of institutions. The symbols and abstractions which justify war are the psychological handles of our national institutions. We have for quotation a text on institutions:

No human being or society, however self-sufficient and rational it may appear, can live without institutions that deal with those aspects of life that cannot be defined rationally. No community can be left indefinitely outside in the night of the human spirit in the beast-infested jungle which lies beyond the conscious fortifications which civilization raises for *us* in life.

This is Laurens van der Post, and we think he is right about institutions. When you ask a man to agree that his nation should unilaterally disarm, you are either inviting him (*a*) to become a saint like Gandhi, which means to convince himself as an individual of the profound metaphysic of ends and means; or (*b*) to adopt a new set of conventions, along the lines of the thought-out program of non-violent resistance to armed aggression or any form of social evil. Gandhi's philosophy was essentially that the hidden and unknown aspects of life *are* rational, and can be anticipated in the rational terms of the law of Karma. This is a faith and a feeling about the nature of the universe. It takes a strong man to adopt this attitude and live by it. It is a view, however, which has the inspiration and support of a basic emotion of civilization—the brotherhood of man. The second alternative, that of non-violence as a way of life, is an attempt to institutionalize for common and community use the Gandhian vision. Small groups all over the world are trying to train themselves in the practice of new institutions of non-violence. The activities and work of some of these groups have been reported in MANAS.

These, we might say, are the only available alternatives, at present, to the institutions which accept, prepare for, and promote war. And it seems an undoubted fact that unless people can find their way to adopting these institutions—or, at any rate, some of the half-way houses between outright war and outright non-violence, that are now being evolved—they will draw back in terror from the idea of a nation which lays down its arms. But it is not only, of course, the prospect of armlessness that frightens them. After all, ninety-nine per cent of the people never carry arms. It is the absence of the familiar symbols that they cannot abide. They have difficulty in imagining the horror of war, but little trouble in imagining the break-down of a society which is without the tools of war. They know of no mechanisms to take the place of the tools of war, and they are not about to settle for "theories."

It is time to return to the "we-or-they" problem. While it is natural enough for those who have definitely crossed the line and gone over to the no-war, non-violence camp to think of themselves as having "seen the light," while all the rest remain in darkness, the extremity of the issue may tempt them to attitudes of self-righteousness, and the habit of referring to people who do not share their opinions as "incomprehensible" or suffering from moral blindness. The fact, however, is that the emancipation from outworn institutional views takes place quite unevenly in most human beings. The pacifist movement has itself had interesting instruction in this fact, through experience of the subgroup of institutions which characterize the peace churches. Some of the leaders of these churches have been willing to behave in curiously irresponsible ways in *social* relationships, since their devotion to "God's Will" as they understood it made merely "human" obligations seem hardly important. It is quite possible, after all, for the rejection of violence to be an institutional rule, as distinguished from an authentic ethical compulsion, although drawing the line here may become quite difficult if not altogether a fruitless task. The point is that the

Good People are not entirely separated from the Bad People—not yet, at any rate—by the choice between the military means and non-violence. It is quite conceivable that a man who personally could, and in some circumstances might, assume all the burdens of the total rejection of war, will be restrained from moving in this direction by a sensitive awareness of the desperation that millions would feel if they were stripped of the armies which are marshalled for their defense. There can easily be an all-or-nothing extravagance in persons who are deeply preoccupied with their own personal virtue and who, on occasion, are attracted by the glamor of martyrdom. In moral behavior, the ultimate test is in motive, and very few of us ordinary human beings can be quite sure of our motives.

It is a great pity that the survival of the human race seems to depend, in so many ways, upon definite side-taking. You are supposed to be for or against the Russians—nothing in between. You are expected to eschew the appearance of compromise on the issue of preparation for war—no halfway measures will work here, either. And of course, they won't. You can't go to war in a state of ambivalence, not because you'll be more likely to die, but because you can't be a good soldier if you're half-hearted about it. The man of undecided mind will lose on either front.

And yet, where is the man wise enough to be sure of the absolute righteousness of his motives? The answer, perhaps, is that while we cannot be sure about our own righteousness, we can recognize the need for whole-heartedness in whatever we do, and respect the same wholeheartedness in others, whatever they do. This seems the only humanly decent position to take. At least it removes some of the curse from the inevitable side-taking that is characteristic of the public decisions of the present. Quite likely, the worst thing about the present moment of history is that its emergencies convincingly represent the most important decisions a man can make as *group* decisions. This turns the events of

the present into a kind of social conspiracy *against* the individual. By the crises of the hour, the individual may be prevented from recognizing that the group decisions, the side-taking decisions, are always the low-grade decisions, never the truly important ones in human life.

Again, it is the old situation described by Aristotle, the situation of the man whose nature is supposed to be exhausted by his membership in the political state. In Aristotle's day, it was only the rare individual, the man of distinct philosophical interests, who had concerns beyond those of the state. Today, however, the very essence of our best political thinking is to the effect that the most important aspect of man's life is beyond the concerns of the state. But the crisis of the age is driving us back into the atmosphere of total politics and the primacy of side-taking and group decision. This, you could say, is the guilt we all participate in, regardless of the side we choose to be on, and the best possible reason for purging our minds of all traces of self-righteousness.

The best leaders the human race has are the men who refuse to ally themselves without qualification with any political group, for they, at least, are preserving the highest quality of human beings—*independent, individual thinking*—even when and while their private decisions throw them into one or another of the warring camps. A handy illustration of this sort of leadership comes in the person of George Orwell, author of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen-Eighty-Four*. Orwell was commonly known as a socialist, but, as John Wain asks in a current review (in *Encounter* for October) of a book about Orwell, "What kind of a Socialist was he?" Part of the answer is given in the opening paragraphs of the review:

That he [Orwell] was a man of the Left, no one has ever denied; he wrote with a passionate, stinging pity of the sufferings of working people during the depression, he saw the struggle against Fascism as primarily a fight by the poor and oppressed to protect themselves against the hired bullies of the rich; he risked, and almost lost, his life fighting against

Franco in Spain. Yes, he was Left. But not many conventional representatives of left-wing opinion have shown any eagerness to claim him as an ally. Some years ago, when I was very green about political attitudes and the swirling loyalties that surround them, I innocently lent several of Orwell's books to some neighbors of mine who were Socialists of the old-fashioned "progressive" Russophil kind, the sort of people who in 1950 were still busy whitewashing Stalin and blaming all international squabbles on the West. I thought touchingly, that if they were "socialists" they would naturally enjoy Orwell, with his defense of the underdog, his dislike of big business and big bureaucracy, his suspicion of the bourgeoisie and admiration for the working class. When they returned the books with an angry and contemptuous dismissal, I was bewildered; not for some years did I learn, and then only gradually, how bitter was the hatred Orwell aroused among party-minded Communists and fellow-travellers. The most high-pitched abuse of Orwell has always come from these people. . . . The Marxists are right to dislike Orwell, since it is part of their creed that Left-wingers who don't agree with them are far more objectionable and dangerous than Right-wingers. (The reactionaries can simply be swept away, whereas the Socialists breed confusion, spread error, and generally mess up the neatly ruled page.) And whatever kind of Leftism Orwell held, it wasn't *their* kind.

He was not a revolutionary. He had no hatred of the past, and no confidence that a golden millennium could be created by abrupt political action. Though mildly anti-clerical, he showed no vindictiveness towards religion or the churches. He gave it as his opinion in 1943 that "The major problem of our time is the decay of the belief in personal immortality." . . .

Later on Mr. Wain suggests that it was Orwell's full-hearted devotion to "the idea of human brotherhood" that kept him a socialist or a Leftist. And it was, at the same time, his feeling for the common man which made him observe in 1939: "The common man is still living in the mental world of Dickens, but nearly every modern intellectual has gone over to some or other form of totalitarianism. From the Marxist or Fascist point of view, nearly all that Dickens stands for can be written off as 'bourgeois morality'." As we know from Orwell's later books, when the law of group-decision became the paramount rule of

order in the Communist movement, he became Communism's most devastating critic. As Wain says of one of his novels:

His [Orwell's] villains are those who, by whatever means, prevent their ordinary human brothers from enjoying life in a simple and spontaneous way. They make their victims ill, or hungry, or frightened; they immure them in prison or holiday camps. No doubt Orwell would have admitted readily enough that a holiday camp is a much better place to be in than a prison, yet the juxtaposition of the two has a serious point. In the modern glass-and-concrete world, even the free are captives. The ordinary citizen has no more chance of enjoying himself in a quiet, uncomplicated personal way than a convict in prison.

This is the sort of truth you cannot learn from politics, but only from studies of the limitations of politics. And yet, Orwell was plainly a "socialist." The thing that needs to be remembered is that for many generations, and to this day, the socialist movement has always attracted men who are looking for a focus for their feeling of human brotherhood. If rival political movements could honestly show that they serve the same ideal, and give an equally intelligible account of *how* brotherhood is implemented in their proposals, we would not be obliged to go to the socialists for examples of self-sacrificing altruists and men who are impersonally committed individuals. This is no endorsement of socialist political theories, but a simple fact of history.

What we need, in order to make peace, is more men like Orwell who stick to their ideals and who break with institutional arrangements whenever they become enemies of the ideals they are supposed to cherish. War and preparations for war are bad things and need to be opposed, but the root of all opposition to bad things lies in the strength of being *for* the good things, and this for-ness has a viable life only in men of independent spirit. The institutionalized will-to-good is blood-brother to the fear which makes men cling to the war-system and its outmoded securities.

REVIEW

WALT SHELDON'S JAPAN

TOUR OF DUTY (Popular Library paperback) is, we think, an outstanding novel—not alone because of its fresh approach to the enigmas of the Orient which strike the Western mind, but also because Mr. Sheldon shows us, against an Asiatic backdrop, typical enigmas in the Western mentality. Sheldon's first novel, *Troubling of a Star*, was concerned with a jet fighter pilot in the Korean war who became a "conscientious objector" at the height of his fighting career. The issues were clear, and Sheldon's character took a clear stand. In *Tour of Duty*, among the occupation forces at an American airbase in Japan, the ethical problems are more complicated, with the result that this novel allows the dramatic to give way to the thought-provoking.

The present reviewer has always reacted strongly against generalizations in regard to any nation, race or religion, and for this reason can only report Mr. Sheldon's generalizations without endorsement. However, when an author is as fair-minded as this one, his Big Statements must earn something of their keep as points of departure. In one passage, a European and an American discuss what they consider to be the typical complications of the Japanese psyche. The European sums up Japanese problems in peace and war in this manner:

"I love the Japanese preoccupation with nature. The houses which open so easily to let the outdoors into the room. And their careful concern for your feelings when you are a guest. Their constant lookout to keep you from becoming in any way uncomfortable or embarrassed. I love their sincerity—their sentimental seriousness. Did you know that very few Japanese understand or appreciate sarcasm as we use it? Those who do have been touched by the West anyway. I think that is significant."

Fliegel thought for a moment, then sighed. "But all of this charm is unstable. It is likely to explode and disappear like one of their volcanoes, one of their villages in a typhoon, one of their houses in fire and wind. It takes only the right pressures to destroy

whatever the Japanese have built for themselves, spiritually or otherwise. Tell me—what happened to their morality in World War II when Japan's soldiers were loosed on defenseless towns very far away from home? There were people who could not believe the reports of the atrocities—I among them, at that time—for they had known only the fine character of the Japanese. And they have a fine character."

"Then what makes it so fragile?"

"It is superstructure. Shell. Outer behavior made necessary by outer circumstance—primarily the terrible crowding on these tiny islands. Over eighty million people with only as much land as your state of California, and nearly half of it not arable. One must, of course, behave in a special way to keep from digging his elbow into his neighbor's ribs all the time. But there is no *inner* compulsion,"

Sheldon then gives us several versions of "the ugly American"—and takes us far enough inside him so that we can see something of ourselves in this unattractive stereotype. The jet fighter ace is both a hero and a child, the administrator in the story both conscientious and a conniver, while any man who endeavors to think and think fairly has a full time job in appraising the relationship between the occupation forces and the people of Japan. The lack of "individualism" expressed in the above-quoted passage is shown to have its counterpart among the Americans, and finally we realize that Sheldon dissects the "national character" in order to demonstrate that the failure of individual integrity is the same everywhere, just as is its hope of revival. The American parallel for the "Japanese character" passages comes in material like the following:

A realization came to Randock, not all at once, and not even in words that he could have formed on the spot if he had wished to communicate this. All his life he had had certain beliefs, and while it would have been difficult for him to list all upon demand they formed, in sum, the pattern of his ethics, his ideals. He believed in what were generally called the Christian virtues, though he thought it rather fatuous of a good many Christians to claim a monopoly on them. He believed in love and kindness and decency, in an attitude of something other than sheer aggressiveness, in beauty and warmth and the absence of pain, in laughter and selflessness and

sacrifice, and in—so help him—faith, hope and charity. The *feminine* virtues? Perhaps so. They were there to temper masculine strength. Yes—that was it. The inner force that spurred men to action was a terrible power, a moral atomic force, to be used sparingly and wisely, not to be made a way of life, for the more you used it the more it got out of hand. In the end it would destroy not your enemies, but yourself.

Yes, he saw it very clearly now, but he could take no joy in it.

In the background, of course, are Hiroshima, and Nagasaki. And before this? How difficult it was for any Westerner, especially an American, to understand the feelings which sustained the kamikaze attacks of World War II! Take for instance, the following from the report of a Japanese kamikaze officer (*The Divine Wind*, Bantam Books, 1960):

At the time, our planes and pilots were both in short supply. We had no alternative but to try for maximum effective destructiveness from their expenditure. If the pilots had entertained a hope of survival, their determination and singleness of purpose would have weakened. This would lessen their chance of success in hitting the target, and they would but die in vain.

A world without strife will come only when every man has learned to curb his desires. Assuming that the strongest of these is man's desire to live, you may say that this desire cannot be governed. Therefore, if our wish is for a peaceful world, it would be well to study the spirit of the kamikaze pilots.

How do you explain such behavior? By contrast, how do you explain the A-bomb which dropped on Japan, except in tactical terms? Sheldon has a passage which embodies a great deal of sympathy in regard to the Asiatic phase of World War II and, for that matter, all wars:

He thought of the delicacy and fragility of things Japanese. There was, he thought, with a kind of sickening horror, something inevitable in the fact that the most terrible of all bombs had been dropped on Japan, for nowhere else were the people so constantly braced for disaster, nowhere else did anyone make a national philosophy out of a phrase like "*shikata-ga nai*," which meant: "It can't be helped—there's

absolutely nothing can be done about it." And in thinking of this he felt the usual uneasy guilt most Americans undergo when they think of the bomb, and wondered if the Japanese felt guilt for any of the terrible things they had done, and then wondered why everybody couldn't by agreement erase all guilt on both sides and start all over again.

COMMENTARY MORE ON FREEDOM

FREEDOM is probably the most interesting and the most important question that human beings can discuss, but its problems come so close to the fundamental reality of human life that the investigation of this subject tends to create intellectual confusion. Discussion of freedom can hardly be avoided, however, since the complex of meanings it represents is involved with all major human longings. What might be useful here is to try to catalogue some of the difficulties surrounding the subject.

We might start by saying that man lives by pursuing his purposes, and is able to feel that his life is *real* only if he can choose among alternatives in seeking these fulfillments. Thus the feeling of freedom is the primary functional value in human life. You might say, then, that freedom is a means, not an end, and this is so; but one of the chief illusions in human life is the assumption that its ends can be final. Since ends are never exhausted, but will always beckon on the horizon, the means to human ends, which is freedom, is an ultimate value.

We spoke of illusions in human life. No argument is needed to support the statement that men often have illusions about their ends. They may be and are *wrong* about the ends they pursue. To obtain a particular end is often to lose one's taste for that end. Psychologically speaking, seeking it is more satisfying than gaining it. It is for this reason, no doubt, that men intuitively place so high a value on freedom. Without freedom they would have no opportunity to change their ends. It is the process of life, more than the goal, which we really savor.

This is the psychological situation in regard to freedom.

Historically, men have practical ends for the seeking of which they demand their freedom. They want the necessities of life. Nomadic peoples make rules about hunting grounds.

Agricultural peoples make rules about the proprietorship of land. The rules are supposed to secure their capacity to seek their economic ends. Industrial societies develop much more complicated rules, but the purpose is the same—to secure the right or freedom of men to pursue their economic ends.

Parallel to this development runs the human effort to formulate a theory of reality and illusion, of philosophical meaning. The fact that men create endless difficulties for themselves by pursuing illusory ends is a puzzle to philosophers. The purpose of the philosopher—and there is something of the philosopher in every man—is to learn how to distinguish between illusion and reality in human ends. Some men, but not many, would rather make an important discovery in philosophy than eat regularly.

Thus there is a hierarchy of purposes or ends in human life, and the ranking of purposes varies greatly among human beings.

In the past, it has been the role of established religion to codify into some kind of moral law the ranking of human ends. When this happens, the need for freedom in deciding which are the most important ends seems to diminish. Authority *tells* everyone the proper rank and order of human purposes, so what need is there for private freedom to make such decisions? This sort of alliance between organized religion and the makers of the rules which govern the pursuit of practical ends is of course well known and infamous.

Now the problem of freedom has become enormously complex. To the different sorts of freedom men want to pursue their ends are added the institutional pressures of historical necessity and revolutionary emergency.

There is a natural longing to make freedom simple, once again. So it is argued by revolutionists that the only way to destroy the wicked compact between the selfish makers of economic rules and the astute managers of

religious authority is to make human purpose one-dimensional. If you define human reality as economic reality and human morality as economic justice, you can eliminate the deceptions of theology and banish the illusions of men, with one great revolutionary act.

Of course, human reality is not entirely economic reality, nor are the illusions in human life created solely by theological invention, but you can *say* they are, and even believe that they are. Meanwhile, there is the enormous moral force of the will-to-justice to sanction the oversimplification. And you can always point out that the freedom to think for yourself about the hierarchy of ends is not really freedom, since thinking about the hierarchy of ends is "religious" or "metaphysical" and therefore concerned with unreality. This argument completes the new alliance between the new authority on the hierarchy of ends and the makers of the rules about "practical ends."

The sophisticated revolutionary will probably rejoin: "So what? In the meantime we did justice to the millions." This is an interesting position. To do justice, you must forbid the practice of philosophy. The equation is quite simple: To do justice you must have power. Authentic philosophy always questions the right of power. It does not necessarily *deny* the right of power, but it questions it. And the questioning of arbitrary power has the consistent effect of disturbing it, weakening it. Briefly, philosophy examines the hierarchy of ends implicit in the exercise of power. It evaluates the rank and arrangement of those ends. If the power is rooted in dogma, it cannot survive this questioning, since questioning is contagious among human beings, and people with the habit of questioning are bound to develop their own ideas about the hierarchy of ends, the rationale of power, and will finally destroy the dogma by refusing to nourish it with their loyalty and devotion.

There is only one answer that power can return to this analysis. It is the answer given by

the Grand Inquisitor to the returned Jesus in the Spanish dungeon. It is an answer that ought to be read over at least once a year (in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*), to keep its accents and persuasions familiar.

Of course, there are no Edens of perfect philosophic freedom anywhere on earth, these days. You can meet the Grand Inquisitor almost anywhere. The only place you *won't* meet him is in those small gatherings of people who are determined to renounce the exercise of power over their fellows. Now the rejection of all power is plainly quite impractical. You can't have *anarchy*, we say. Perhaps not, but what you can do is stop putting into prison the harmless people who insist that they will never use power against other human beings. Why are they put in prison? Because they threaten the *morale* of power. They keep on asking disturbing questions. But would you want to live in a world where people were completely prevented from asking questions like that? What about the hierarchy of ends in this case? Aren't they *right* to insist upon asking those questions? This is the freedom which, we propose, is and ought to be *absolute* in scope. What good, finally, are all the other freedoms, all the other "social goods," if this right to think, to speak out, to ask questions, is denied?

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

NOTES AND QUOTATIONS

QUOTABLE passages sometimes occur in unlikely places. For example, in connection with last week's discussion of "discipline" and "permissiveness," and deviant behavior, we ran across some pertinent material in John D. MacDonald's popular "suspense novel," *The End of the Night* (Crest, 1961). Mr. MacDonald seems pretty much of a mass production writer. His books are written to sell—and they do—but along with the formula for success this author often develops themes of social and psychological significance. In *The End of the Night* we are invited to consider how it is possible for even the most terrible of crimes to arise from a chance combination of various confused personalities—which means, of course, that responsibility can hardly be precisely assigned. In this case, one member of the gang held responsible for a murder is being questioned by his attorney as to his feelings regarding the killing. The young man is intelligent, well educated, but has been adrift for so long that his "social conscience" is not operative:

"He was a human being, Kirby."

"I know, sir. With desires and aspirations and an immortal soul. But in the scheme of things, that joker was just about as significant as a gob of spit on a wet sidewalk, and just about as attractive."

"Oh, then you admit the existence of some scheme of things?"

"Don't you, sir?"

"Of course I do! Describe to me what you'd call a valuable person."

"Well . . . somebody who's willing to live way out, sir. Somebody who doesn't go along with the whole cruddy regime. Somebody who's willing to try to bust the race out of this big trap we've gotten ourselves into. Like Sandy says, somebody who can give love without keeping a set of records on it."

"Do you consider the four of you to be valuable people, Kirby?"

"I don't want to sound disrespectful, sir, but that's a pretty stupid question."

"I take it you don't call yourself valuable?"

"We're all just as nothing as that Beecher."

"But you felt capable of judging him?"

"Who judged him? He was all creep. He wasn't a rare specimen. There's twenty million of him, all so alike you can't tell them apart."

"Kirby, what I'm trying to do is reach you—find some common area of agreement, so we can talk."

"I understand, sir, but we never will."

"What do you mean?"

"The pipes are clogged. The semantics are bad. Take an object—pencil, automobile, bank vault—we can agree fine. But when you get onto love and guilt and hate, we just can't follow each other. The words don't mean the same things to me they do to you."

"Kirby" is played up by the press and TV as inhuman or subhuman, but his own lawyer, though repelled by Kirby's callous attitude, is not so sure how he should be classified.

The lawyer reflects:

A monster? If he is indeed a monster, we have created him. He is our son. We have been told by our educators and psychologists to be permissive with him, to let him express himself freely. If he throws all the sand out of the nursery-school sandbox, he is releasing hidden tensions. We deprived him of the security of knowing right from wrong. We debauched him with half-chewed morsels of Freud, in whose teachings there is no right and wrong—only error and understanding. We let sleek men in high places go unpunished for amoral behavior, and the boy heard us snicker. We labeled the pursuit of pleasure a valid goal, and insisted that his teachers turn schooling into fun. We preached group adjustment, security rather than challenge, protection rather than effort. We discarded the social and sexual taboos of centuries, and mislabeled the result freedom rather than license. Finally we poisoned his bone marrow with Strontium 90, told him to live it up while he had the chance, and sat back in ludicrous confidence expecting him to suddenly become a man. Why are we so shocked and horrified to find a child's emotions in a man's body—savagely, selfish, cruel, compulsive and shallow?

There are of course many versions of the proper characteristics to be exhibited when one "has become a man." Hitler's Storm Troops and

the Hitler Youth were certainly promising in respect to the characteristics held to be "ideal" for the master race. The Kamikaze pilots of World War II exhibited a climactic development so far as Shinto and Emperor worship were concerned. But whenever the equation of good and evil is theoretically solved in the simple terms of violent conflict, the impetus to action is primarily on a hate-fear basis, and the psychologists consistently remind us that this is the road to psychosis. If we move from such extreme examples as the Nazis and the fanatical Japanese flyers to ordinary life, it is possible to detect, even in our own culture, similar psychological components. The common denominator is clearly any negative conditioning or orientation of the psyche which rushes past considerations of the good and the true in a power dive of belief that the not-good and the not-true must be exterminated.

Many "deviant" youths are intelligent and sensitive, and they may be maturing, but in terms of a fundamentally negative outlook on both their immediate surroundings and the world environment. Of course, there is nothing encouraging in this sort of development, which could easily end in nihilism. What is notable is that the youthful mind is apt to revolve around schemes to outwit the System. Why? According to George Orwell, there may come a time when only those deviants who are determined to outwit the System have any chance of preserving their individuality. And it is perhaps on this ground that so many writers instinctively find themselves defending the delinquents and the beats of our time.

As we have previously remarked, youth is offered various "rites of initiation" from which to choose, but these avenues to maturity seldom provide any real choice beyond the perpetuation of the attitudes of the tribe. So when one wants to become *self*-initiated—which is, incidentally, a necessary attitude in what Joseph Campbell calls "the cycle of the hero"—he is most apt to work from the assumption that whatever the "tribe" is

doing is stupid and that any non-tribal behavior can hardly be any worse than the empty role-playing of that vast majority who believe, above all, in Security.

FRONTIERS Inquiry into Freedom

FREEDOM: *Promise and Menace*, by Scott Nearing (Social Science Institute, Harborside, Maine, 1961), is two things. First, it is a scholarly pursuit of the meaning of Freedom, with particular attention to social, political, and economic meanings. Second, it is a tract for the times, intended to expose, reprove, and check the sloganization of the idea of freedom for propaganda purposes. In terms of method, this book belongs with Mr. Nearing's earlier work, *Economics for the Power Age*, a useful text for all those who would undertake the study of economics without any preconceptions except those of a basic humanist orientation.

Mr. Nearing's personal encounter with the problem of freedom goes back to 1917, when he published a study of the causes of World War I, entitled *The Great Madness*. Because of this work he was indicted by the Federal Government on a charge of obstructing the recruiting activities of the draft. While the jury acquitted him, Mr. Nearing found that he could no longer practice his profession of teaching in conventional ways. For his exercise of freedom of opinion during the war, American society, as he put it, responded by "taking away his means of livelihood and stripping him of influence and respectability."

The thing that lends a noticeable dignity to everything that Mr. Nearing has said and done since that time is that he has never complained of his personal circumstances. Instead, he found a means to continue his profession of teaching without formal employment from any educational institution. He developed an agricultural project which enabled him to live in the interstices of modern technological society without participating in any of its major weaknesses or corruptions. He not only supported himself in this way, but found time to write a number of important books, to edit a newsletter on "World Events," and to contribute to radical magazines. (Insight into Mr. Nearing's personal career may be obtained by reading *The Maple Sugar Book* [John Day, 1950], by Helen and Scott Nearing, and *Living*

the Good Life [Social Science Institute, 1955], also by Mr. and Mrs. Nearing.)

In speaking of Mr. Nearing's writings as a whole, we should like to propose, as our opinion, that what seem Mr. Nearing's uncritical sympathies for socialist forms of society (or rather his neglect of their limitations) do not represent any built-in bias of his mind, but rather an impatience with the moral indifference and self-righteousness of much of Western political thinking. We cannot prove it, but we strongly suspect that, given an intellectual environment of impartial inquiry, his opinions on international affairs would assume more symmetry and be less an attempt to batter away at Western political conceits. We are led to this view by the absence of partisanship in his predominantly theoretical books such as *Economics for the Power Age* and the present volume, *Freedom: Promise and Menace*.

It is certain, at any rate, that the reader who starts in with Mr. Nearing's latest book will soon come to appreciate its insistent questioning and will eventually find it necessary to think through to fresh conclusions at least some of his own assumptions on the subject. Mr. Nearing's general views are put clearly in his last chapter:

For the most dangerous elements of the population, the power-seekers, free-booters, predators and plunderers, freedom will mean self-seeking in the narrowest sense, coupled with absence of responsibility for the sequence of events set in motion by their irresponsible adventuring. Hence the importance of accuracy in expression and usage in any discussion of freedom, its promise and menace. The freedom cult is more voluble and vociferous today than it has been at any time in the past half-century and more dangerous to the general welfare.

Freedom as idea and freedom in action are generally useful and advantageous. At times they are of paramount importance. There are present-day circumstances under which freedom is of primary concern. But these times and circumstances are not universal in industrial society. Freedom, whether for individuals or for any social group (including the nation), is not necessarily advantageous. Before any project or program involving freedom can be given the green light, the question should be asked: freedom for which individual or group to do what? When?

Where? Employing what means? In pursuit of what purpose? In other words, there can be no unqualified or blanket endorsement of freedom. . . .

Man seeks to enlarge the area in which he may choose, decide and act as a result of individual effort and through group (political) guarantees, arrangements, adjustments. In each generation he contends with nature, with society, with himself—to hold what his forebears gained and to enlarge the areas of his thinking and acting. In one period the advocates of greater freedom make gains. At the next shift in the relations of social forces these gains are eroded by tyranny or swept away by power-seizure, civil strife, war, revolution, At each stage the course of social advance shifts, now toward freedom, now toward restraint. . . .

Mr. Nearing is an empiricist in his study of the use men make of the idea of freedom. He finds, as any thoughtful man is bound to find, that "freedom" is a much misunderstood and misconceived term. Only in abstraction is it an absolute value, and then in relation to equally abstract absolute ends. In practice, freedom is subject to endless relativities of meaning, modified as much by the subjective interests and longings of human beings as by their external circumstances and problems. In a given epoch, freedom obtains one broad definition, in another age, the definition changes. Meanwhile, politics makes use of the longings of an age, formulating its slogans about freedom in response to those longings. It is this practice, essentially, which Mr. Nearing finds objectionable, and which he seeks to expose. In addition, there are all sorts of deceptions which men practice on themselves in the pursuit of freedom.

But what remains, after due reflection on the subject, is the fact that freedom is really a symbol of the longing of human beings for fulfillment, and since the idea of fulfillment varies with individuals and cultures, with notions of the political good and with the needs and deprivations men experience, so freedom is as protean as truth.

Actually, we shall not have much solution of the problem of freedom without a careful metaphysical analysis of the human situation and a generalized stipulation concerning the ultimate good of man. This is high philosophy, and not really the subject-

matter of Mr. Nearing's book. His contribution is rather one which looks closely at unexamined assumptions about freedom and which arrays before the reader common practices in recent history alleged to be in behalf of freedom.

If we were to look for a fault in this book, we might find it in what seems the implication of one of the quoted paragraphs, where it is said: "Before any program involving freedom can be given the green light," etc. Now the problem, here, is, who shall determine the criteria for allowing the green light to a freedom project? What values have priority in deciding which freedoms should be encouraged and which should be made subject to careful restraint?

It is in this region, it seems to us, that freedom must be granted absolute scope: In the area of primary decision as to those values which are to be chosen as the principle of control of all the relative freedoms. This is the liberal idea, the original genius of the Humanist movement born of the Italian Renaissance. Perhaps we err, but it seems to us that Mr. Nearing implies that we already *know* what those values are, or that arbitrary judgments may be enforced concerning guiding principles of decision whenever revolutionary emergency demands this exercise of political authority. A view of this sort could easily be twisted into the claim of infallibility for the party in power. Once this claim is seated, and accepted by apologists for the State, all the relativities of the freedom-restraint equation become minor habitations of absolute authority. Systems of this sort are anti-human in their primary philosophical assumptions, and will eventually become anti-human in political practice, unless, by reason of the fact that the men in power are themselves human, the assumptions are changed.