

## WHAT IS A "REASONABLE" PROTEST?

THIS is a time of Protest. The frequency of demonstrations and appearance of issues generating protesting actions have been increasing in almost geometrical progression during recent years. While, with a little effort, one could easily find signs of protest, *somewhere*, during very nearly every year of modern history, the fact is that today the idea of protest is in the air, and young people seem to acquire something of this spirit simply by exposure to the educational process. The sense of there being things wrong comes with adolescence and grows into overt expression during the college years. A thoughtful comment on this development, as a recent phenomenon, appeared in an article by Henry May in last summer's *American Scholar*. Discussing "The Student Movement," he wrote:

A few years ago many professors, I among them, were deploring the passivity and complacency of American students and of American life, and wishing for a revival of campus radicalism. Somewhat wryly, we are forced to realize that radicalism never comes in the shape or size one has asked for. It is the breath of life, and it is full of danger. Our campus now is lively and dangerous. Divided between hope and anxiety, I can look for comfort only to the very considerable reserves, in Berkeley and elsewhere, of intelligence and honesty.

The aim of the protester is to be understood, and, from being understood, to bring about changes. A protest may have a wide or a narrow focus; sometimes it has both. A strike, for example, is directed against a particular employer. The strike is supposed to make the employer understand that his production will stop—has stopped—and will not be resumed until he meets the demands of the strikers. A wide-focus strike may be against an entire industry, and in this case the reaction of the social community in general may be crucial to the cause of the strikers, as

setting the temper of public opinion, affecting the attitudes of the newspapers and the politicians.

When the appeal of the protester is to a wide audience, the effectiveness of his action may depend a great deal upon what level of understanding he hopes to achieve. For example, the protest actions of the civil rights demonstrators in the South gain instinctive assent among a very large number of white Northerners. They see that rights they take for granted for themselves are being denied to Southern Negroes. The demands of the Negroes are immediately understood as just, and there is wide support for the civil rights movement. This temper in large segments of the population obliges political leaders to side with the civil rights movement and to compromise less on the issues which it represents.

The student movement, however, presents a more diffuse focus of issues. To a great many people, the protest of a fairly comfortably fixed generation of students who enjoy, as it is said, the unparalleled advantages of a great public university, seems incongruous. What, it is asked, have they to complain about? But besides the Free Speech Issue, which seems irrelevant to some critics, or of minor importance to others—why don't they just *study*? it is asked—there is the underlying criticism of the mechanization of education, and even its dehumanization, which the typical reader of newspaper reports of student unrest can hardly be expected to understand. He, alas, thinks the educational opportunities afforded by state universities are a major adornment of American civilization, and not something to protest against.

There are also protests that men make, because they must, with almost no hope of being understood, and certainly no hope of being

understood by many. Here the individual integrity of the protester is at stake. The conscientious objector in wartime is perhaps such an individual. His protest may have several levels, but the most important one is that he will not take part in war, he will not kill or cause to be killed. He will hold this position, even though he is not understood at all. It is fair to say, we think, that in countries which execute war-resisters, their protest is not understood "at all," although, in another perspective, considering the enormity of putting to death men who are perfectly harmless—whose crime is hardly more than that of establishing a moral contrast between their own behavior and that of the requirements of their nation—this kind of protest may in time have a profound effect on many people. There are, then, protests which require a measure of popular understanding to achieve their ends, and other protests which arise from more profound motivation and serve both individual integrity and a high, perhaps presently unattainable, ideal for all mankind.

Let us regard the matter of incongruity from another point of view. Take for example the "protest" implicit in Arthur Miller's play, *The Death of a Salesman*. What is the play about? A simple answer would be that it is about the self-defeats which are accomplished by true believers in the shallow doctrines of acquisitive materialism. But how different this explanation is from the impact of the play itself! A generalizing moral judgment often has an effect opposite to its intentions. In the play, however, the agony—and the catastrophe—of Willy Loman becomes a tragic realization for the spectator, who needs no moralizing phrases to explain what has happened to the salesman. Willy is betrayed by the very clichés which shaped his career—he is done in, emasculated, destroyed by his own credo. He is as much a victim as any martyr ever thrown to the lions, save for his pathetic lack of principles. Mr. Miller's protest is understood. The play has no incongruity. It was understood by American audiences with the same shock of recognition that made the inmates of San Quentin understand and

appreciate—even "participate" in—a performance of *Waiting for Godot* done for them by a San Francisco repertory company.

But in certain audiences in Europe, *The Death of a Salesman* aroused a very different response. In Frederick Wakeman's story, *A Free Agent*, a Greek girl who had fought in the Resistance is being questioned by American counterespionage agents. At one point, in desperation, she exclaims:

Oh, how can a Greek explain herself to an American? Did you know your tragedy, *Death of a Salesman*, was a comedy in Athens? Audiences laughed, though with exasperation, at your Willy Loman. He had a car, his own house, even that certain sign of wealth, a refrigerator. Food in plenty. What on earth was his problem? It was not a Greek tragedy. . . .

Her point is similar to the middle-class American's critical judgment of the Berkeley campus revolt, although more perceptive in content.

A few months ago, a student of the University of New Mexico, in Albuquerque, burned, not his draft card, but his social security card. He explained to puzzled witnesses that he regarded the social security card as a symbol of coercive forces requiring him to *work*. And later on, to friends, he explained further that he saw his act as a Dadaist protest—he was mocking, as well as protesting, the superficiality of modern ideas of respectability and "virtue." Silly, isn't it? On the other hand, this "demonstration" acquires some substance of validity if you recall that the main evidence of bad character in the charge against Max Juke, ancestor of the famous ("infamous") Juke family, whose wastrel and criminal progeny has been taken as proof of hereditary transmission of traits of "character," was that he "lived by hunting and fishing and was averse to taking any kind of steady job." No doubt an IBM card version of the employment record of Thoreau would give a similar impression of his character to many people.

You could say that the University of New Mexico student was protesting a stereotyped idea of "good" human beings and what they "ought" to do, and that we have only to look at the Soviet system to see what can happen when such stereotypes are carried to extremes and given the force of law. In Russia, a year or so ago, the poet, Iosif Brodsky, was sentenced to five years in prison chiefly because he could not produce at his trial evidence that he had worked at a "regular" job for very long—his claim that writing poetry was "work" being found unacceptable by the Soviet court. (A transcript of Brodsky's trial was somehow obtained by the *New Leader* and published in the Aug. 31, 1964 issue.)

However, if you go on collecting examples of "protests" in recent history, without seeking, at the same time, some general principles of order and evaluation, while you may be able to justify each protest in some narrow critical context, the final result will be almost total confusion. There is surely an important difference, for example, between a degraded stereotype of the virtue in work, and the original of this idea in the conception of work as the outward expression of the dignity of a useful life, and all the associated moral insights, such as the Quaker idea of "right livelihood," the virtue of the man who "pulls his own weight," and the related social-ethical principle that "the laborer is worthy of his hire." Protests that cannot be related to ends which are demonstrably or intrinsically good may have some kind of critical validity, but they often lead in fact to nihilistic results. Hannah Arendt's brilliant study, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, is filled with illustrations of this process. Take for example the familiar response of blatant vulgarity—common among the young—to tiresome and often plainly hypocritical middle-class "respectability." This is indeed a form of protest, but when turned into a social "philosophy," it may be made to underwrite the most inhuman outrages. Describing the cultural matrix in which the Nazi revolution took place, Dr. Arendt speaks of the 1920's as a time when

"the nineteenth-century ideologies had refuted each other and exhausted their vital appeal," with the result that life was pervaded by "an atmosphere in which all traditional values and propositions had evaporated." It was a time, therefore, during which it grew "easier to accept patently absurd propositions than the old truths which had become pious banalities, precisely because nobody could be expected to take the absurdities seriously." She continues the analysis.

Vulgarity with its cynical dismissal of respected standards and accepted theories carried with it a frank admission of the worst and a disregard for all pretenses which were easily mistaken for courage and a new style of life. In the growing prevalence of mob attitudes and convictions—which were actually the attitudes and convictions of the bourgeoisie cleansed of hypocrisy—those who traditionally hated hypocrisy and had voluntarily left respectable society saw only the lack of hypocrisy and respectability, not the content itself. The following passage by Rohm [chief of the Nazi storm troopers] is typical of almost the whole younger generation and not only of an elite: "Hypocrisy and Pharisaism rule. They are the most conspicuous characteristics of society today. . . . Nothing could be more lying than the so-called morals of society." These boys "don't find their way in the world of bourgeois double morals and don't know any longer how to distinguish between truth and error." The homosexuality of these circles was also at least partially an expression of their protest against society.

Since the bourgeoisie claimed to be guardian of Western traditions and confounded all moral issues by parading publicly virtues which it not only did not possess in private and business life, but actually held in contempt, it seemed revolutionary to admit cruelty, disregard of human values, and general amorality, because this at least destroyed the duplicity upon which the existing society seemed to rest. What a temptation to flaunt extreme attitudes in the hypocritical twilight of double moral standards, to wear publicly the mask of cruelty if everybody was patently inconsiderate and pretended to be gentle, to parade wickedness in a world, not of wickedness, but of meanness!

Another example of the lengths to which protest against hypocrisy may go is found in the response to Celine's *Bagatelles pour un*

*Massacre*, in which the author proposed the massacre of all Jews. Dr. Arendt comments:

André Gide was publicly delighted in the pages of *Nouvelle Revue Française*, not of course because he wanted to kill the Jews of France, but because he rejoiced in the blunt admission of such a desire and in the fascinating contradiction between Celine's bluntness and the hypocritical politeness which surrounded the Jewish question in all respectable quarters. How irresistible the desire for the unmasking of hypocrisy was among the elite can be gauged by the fact that such delight could not even be spoiled by Hitler's very real persecution of the Jews, which at the time of Celine's writing was already in full swing.

The problem, then, is to find some affirmative measure for acts of protest. A protest, simply as a condemnation of evil, too easily becomes emotionally self-defining as the "right" thing to do, until—as with a war which begins with the claim of rectification of some terrible wrong—it ends by losing connection with any rational good, turning into a mindless, nihilistic frenzy. As Randolph Bourne said years ago, "They fight because they fight because they fight."

Putting off to another time the obvious question of different *kinds* of protest and the various levels of evil or wrong that may be protested, we might say that there are two ways of getting some general frame of affirmative conviction in which to consider what is a "reasonable" protest. We start, of course, with intuitive feelings about the good. How may that good be served? Remarkably clear answers to this question are obtained from the study of history. But answers are also available from philosophy in connection with the psychology of human development. For a historical approach, books to begin with would be Ortega y Gasset's *Revolt of the Masses* and his *Toward a Philosophy of History*. And since our subject is Protest, Everett Dean Martin's *Farewell to Revolution* and Irving Babbitt's *Rousseau and the Romantic Tradition* should be on the list. A more recent volume, which we shall quote here (in a Beacon paperback, 1962), is Peter Viereck's *The*

*Unadjusted Man*. Then, for a brief but rather complete study of Gandhi's theory of protest, which we call "philosophical" because it rests on the idea of soul development or moral evolution, there is the compact volume, *Selections from Gandhi* (edited by Nirmal Kumar Bose, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, India, 1948). Since the Gandhian analysis involves an extensive study in itself, and since Gandhi's philosophy seems self-sufficient, we shall not explore it here, except to say that the Gandhian protest is always as much in behalf of the higher human interests of its opponents as it is in behalf of the protesters. (Erik Erikson recently quoted Kenneth Boulding as saying that "Gandhi had done more good to the British than to the Indians.")

To set the question in historical terms, then, we quote from Mr. Viereck's first chapter, where, having taken from Riesman the idea of "autonomy" as representative of the good life, the author makes this criticism and comment:

Ultimately autonomy may mean rootlessness and lawlessness, in contrast with Goethe's truth that "law alone can give us liberty." Even short of that extreme autonomy by itself is not necessarily either creativity or liberty, nor is other-directedness necessarily their opposite. All depends upon what that "other" is; to conform to the Athens of Pericles is not the same as conforming to Middletown. It may be equally other-directed to conform with those who call two plus two four and those who call two plus two five, but the Unadjusted Man is delighted to commit the former kind of other-directedness and loses no liberty thereby. He is not self-analytically concerned about how autonomous his ego feels at any given moment. He is more concerned with what kind of roots, *beyond* the ego, his values and rival values are anchored in. The concepts "roots" and "archetypes" firmly distinguished the Unadjusted Man from the three otherwise extremely valuable classifications made by Riesman (other-directed, inner-directed, autonomous). The meaningful moral choice is not between conforming and nonconforming but between conforming to the ephemeral, stereotyped values of the moment and conforming to the ancient, lasting archetypal values shared by all creative cultures.

Archetypes have grown out of the soil of history: slowly, painfully, organically. Stereotypes have been

manufactured out of the mechanical processes of mass production: quickly painlessly, artificially. They have been synthesized in the labs of the entertainment industries and in the blueprints of the social engineers. The philistine conformist and the ostentatious professional nonconformist are alike in being rooted in nothing deeper than the thin topsoil of stereotypes. . . .

The traumatic uprooting of archetypes was the most important consequence of the world-wide industrial revolution. This moral wound, this cultural shock was even more important than the economic consequences of the industrial revolution. Liberty depends upon a substratum of fixed archetypes as opposed to the shuffling about of laws and institutions. . . .

When a mechanized society makes the individual part of the mass, it does not thereby increase his sense of organic belongingness but replaces it with two things; first, the mutually isolating cash nexus; second, the synthetic, mechanical, inorganic belongingness of external stereotypes, mass-produced by the entertainment industry or by statist social engineers. It is a liberal oversimplification to see the contrast as the free individual versus the shackles of traditional unity. The real contrast is between an archetypal, organic unity of individuals and a stereotyped, mechanical unity of the masses.

Mr. Viereck quickly explains that by "organic unity" he does not mean unity which absorbs and swallows up the individual, relieving him of responsibility, but a kind of unity in which "the basic unit must always remain the individual, his identity as a personality as well as responsibility ethically."

It must be openly and emphatically admitted, at this point, that these quotations leave us with vitally important blanks to fill in. We may *feel* the validity in what Mr. Viereck says, but we still have to embody concrete meanings in what he calls "lasting archetypal values shared by all creative cultures." We know vaguely what he is talking about, but it is difficult to be sure. He may mean, for example, the intuitive relationships which prevail in what the sociologists call the "face-to-face" community. He certainly means the undemanding, mutual accountability of friendship

as distinguished from the contract and the law. And he means that instinct and those traditional ideas of human goodness which make a man treat other men as ends in themselves, and never as means to less than human or merely ideological ends. He probably means the idea of education as the way in which individuals become self-sustaining, morally independent decision-makers, and people who look upon their lives as an opportunity for inner enrichment and service to the common good—activities which are terminated only by death. And he means, therefore, along with other things we haven't mentioned, those forms of human association which grow up in a society as the means of fostering all these qualities, as against the institutions which not only do not foster them, but discourage and prevent them.

These are the qualities of life we—everyone of us—long for, and they are the things we do not know how to get. Yet it is notable that the student revolt at Berkeley was based upon this longing, and was a protest against institutional barriers to its fulfillment. Further, there was a deliberate attempt on the part of the students to give even the *ad hoc* forms of their protest as much as they could of the content sought by this longing. If this description of the student revolt at Berkeley be allowed, then, by the criterion we have suggested, it was a reasonable form of protest. It never lost sight of the affirmative good of which the students felt deprived.

What other protests have there been in recent years that might similarly qualify? The French Communities of Work were and are an outspoken protest against the cash-nexus style of human relationships, and the buying-selling (GNP) conception of human progress. Inspired, initially, by the vision of one man, these people banded together to create for themselves, within the larger matrix of the acquisitive society, a form of economic enterprise which they used to set themselves free, culturally and personally, instead of letting the pursuit of their material needs

become an all-demanding strait jacket controlling their intellectual and emotional lives. Synanon is a triple-barreled protest—first, a protest against a cultural environment which makes it seem not unreasonable to resort to the use of narcotics for escape; second, a protest against the popular idea that people in trouble are entitled to blame others for their troubles; and third, it is a protest against the bureaucratic claim that people who have contracted the habit of using heroin have no right to prove that stopping using it can be a private enterprise, or that correcting in themselves the flaws that led to the addiction needs neither the coercion nor the supervision of the state for its success.

Let us argue, then, that a "reasonable" protest is a protest which arises in people in consequence of their endeavor to act affirmatively for some well-defined and reasonably explained good, and when, in so acting, they encounter obstacles that cannot by reason be justified as representing a greater or independent good of more importance. And, adopting the Gandhian plank, we might add that the reasonableness of the protest becomes increasingly undeniable when it can be shown that, as it succeeds, *everyone* gains—if only, in some cases, through a better understanding of what is both reasonable and good. But we should not say "only." What could be better than this?

## *REVIEW* TOO MUCH WITH IT

A READER with an eye for needed criticism observes that our lead article for last Nov. 5—"Are We Ready to Hear?"—neglected to notice Marshall McLuhan's curious admiration of television. The comment is just, since the writer of this article used from Mr. McLuhan's *Understanding Media* passages which he believed pertinent, while more or less ignoring other parts of the book. However, having now read Mr. McLuhan's chapter on television, we find the author not quite the blind enthusiast of this medium that our reader suggests, although what the book says has deeply disturbing aspects. Mr. McLuhan seems mainly interested in explaining the special kind of impact TV programs have on viewers. In one place he does this by recalling how effectively John Kennedy used television:

With TV, Kennedy found it natural to involve the nation in the office of the Presidency, both as an operation and an image. TV reaches out for the corporate attributes of office. Potentially, it can transform the Presidency into a monarchic dynasty. A merely elective Presidency scarcely affords the depth of dedication and commitment demanded by the TV form. Even teachers on TV seem to be endowed by the student audiences with a charismatic or mystic character that much exceeds the feelings developed in the classroom or lecture hall. In the course of many studies of audience reactions to TV teaching, there recurs this puzzling fact. The viewers feel that the teacher has a dimension almost of sacredness. This feeling does not have its basis in concepts or ideas, but seems to creep in uninvited and unexplained. . . . The banal and ritual remark of the conventionally literate, that TV presents an experience for passive viewers is wide of the mark. TV is above all a medium that demands a creatively participant response.

What can Mr. McLuhan possibly mean by this use of the word "creative"? So far as we can tell, he means that television has brought electronic fulfillment of a "unified sense and imaginative life"—a goal which, he says, "had long seemed an unattainable dream to Western poets, painters,

and artists in general." "Such," he adds, "was the message of Blake and Pater, Yeats and D. H. Lawrence, and a host of other great figures," who

were not prepared to have their dreams realized in everyday life by the esthetic action of radio and television. Yet these massive extensions of our central nervous systems have enveloped Western man in a daily session of synesthesia. . . . For good or ill, the TV image has exerted a unifying synesthetic force on the sense-life of . . . intensely literate populations, such as they have lacked for centuries.

Not content with this overwhelming tribute, he suggests further that the atomizing effects of industrialism, with consequent separation of man from man, which have been attended by futile attempts to solve social problems by mechanical homogenization and the reduction of differences, may now be effortlessly overcome by the impact of the television image:

Without moralizing, it can be said that the electric age, by involving all men deeply in one another, will come to reject such mechanical solutions. It is more difficult to provide uniqueness and diversity than it is to impose uniform patterns of mass education; but it is such uniqueness and diversity that can be fostered under electric conditions as never before.

There is also this curious deduction of encouragement:

Since electric energy is independent of the place or kind of work-operation, it creates patterns of decentralism and diversity in the work to be done. This is a logic that appears plainly enough in the difference between firelight and electric light, for example. Persons grouped around a fire or candle for warmth or light are less able to pursue independent thoughts, or even tasks, than people supplied with electric light. In the same way, the social and educational patterns latent in automation are those of self-employment and artistic autonomy. Panic about automation as a threat of uniformity on a world scale is the projection into the future of mechanical standardization and specialism, which are now past.

One more quotation and we have done. Mr. McLuhan disposes of most of the critics of television by calling them electronic "illiterates." They may be so, but his book could be read as

providing them with complete justification. Of complainers of the "violence" on TV, he writes:

The spokesmen of censorious views are typically semiliterate book-oriented individuals who have no competence in the grammars of newspaper, or radio, or of film, but who look askew and askance at all non-book media. The simplest question about any psychic aspect, even of the book medium, throws these people into a panic of uncertainty. . . . Once these censors became aware that in all cases "the medium is the message" or the basic source of effects, they would turn to suppression of media as such, instead of seeking "content" control. Their current assumption that content or programming is the factor that influences outlook and action is derived from the book medium, with its sharp cleavage between form and content.

Mr. McLuhan seems to oscillate between impatience with people who are unlikely to grasp the meaning or importance of his psycho-technical analysis of media, and scientific dispassion respecting what he regards as the transition from a book-reading civilization to an electronic-image-saturated mass. There are moments when his heralding of this great change resembles Clark Kerr's acceptance of the multiversity and the "knowledge-industry" substitute for the liberal ideal of education. He, and we, may not like it, but there it is.

Most of all, however, we are moved to call for protest against the electronic simulation—if that is what it is—of an invitation to "creative" participation, leading to a "unified sense and imaginative life." Curiously enough, the best protest we have read comes from a writer who agrees with Mr. McLuhan on certain important points. The British novelist, Storm Jameson, in an article in the *Winter American Scholar*, agrees, for example, that "We are living on the frontiers of an age in which the printed book is being overtaken by the new electronic mediums very much as the handwritten manuscript was overtaken by print." She agrees, also, that so far as the creative writer is concerned, "the medium is the message." In her words:

It is plainly not because miracles of technology are used to disseminate rubbish that they are the serious novelist's enemies: he has always—since the onset of semiliteracy—had to keep his head above the flood of trash. The new mediums are his enemies *because they exist*. Because they are creating mental habits that are not simply unlike, but directly opposed to the habits of a man who sits down to take part in a dialogue with the writer of the book in his hand. The point, the crucial point, is the incessant flow of sounds and images into millions of eyes and ears, and the instantaneous appearance to them of events taking place anywhere in the world. Radio and television speak to the mass man, to a mass that is learning new habits with the docile facility of a circus pony, and we attend them as, in the days before newspapers, villagers attended to the town crier. Or if we do not attend, we are deliberately holding ourselves aloof, trying stubbornly to keep the habits of a past age, trying to erase the electronic factor in our lives, to retreat into an artificial oasis of silence.

People need to read Mr. McLuhan's book, if only for its comparison of the effects on the human psyche of the various media. But they ought not to read it without reading, also, Storm Jameson's article, "The Writer in Contemporary Society." Miss Jameson will save you from being carried away by Mr. McLuhan. She writes:

There are two sorts of possible communication. There is the communication of information, which television in one way and the computer in others can deliver with incomparable speed and efficiency. And there is the communication of a profound insight into the human condition. I am sure, in the marrow of my writer's bones, that this will not be provided by even the most advanced machines. . . .

## COMMENTARY

### AFFIRMATIVE "NEGATIVISM"

IT'S hard to beat historical intelligence when you have a subject like "protest" to argue about. In the *Saturday Review* for Dec. 18—a remarkably fine issue, on all counts— Henry Steele Commager, a leading American historian, writes on "The Problem of Dissent." After noting that Attorney General Katzenbach has declared that there is no question about the right of students to protest, in any nonviolent manner, against policies they consider misguided; and adding that such protest is not only a right but a necessity, if democracy is to function, he continues:

People who ought to know better—Senator Dodd of Connecticut for example—have loosely identified agitation with "treason." Treason is the one crime defined in the Constitution, and the Senator would do well to read that document before he flings loose charges of treason about. Students have the same rights to agitate and demonstrate against what they think unsound policies—even military policies—as have businessmen to agitate against TVA or doctors against Medicare. When, back in New Deal days, distinguished lawyers publicly advised corporations to disregard the Wagner Act and the Social Security Act on the ground that they were unconstitutional, when distinguished medical men called for the sabotage of Medicare, no one called them traitors. Businessmen and doctors and lawyers, to be sure, funneled their protests through respectable organizations like chambers of commerce, or the American Medical Association, or the American, and state, bar associations, or resort to well-paid lobbyists to express their discontent; students have no such effective organizations nor can they support lobbying. To penalize them for their weakness and their poverty is to repeat the error of the Cleveland administration in arresting Coxe's army for walking on the grass, or of the Hoover administration in sending soldiers to destroy the pitiful bonus army. The rich and respectable have always had their way of making their discontent heard; the poor and the unorganized must resort to protests and marches and demonstrations. Such methods have not customarily been considered un-American.

In general, protests are a legitimate and necessary form of action when they represent the only alternative left to people who are prevented from doing what they want and believe that they ought to do. The best understood protests are those made by people who are living manifestly affirmative lives—or rather, this ought to be the case. The fact is that an affirmative, constructive life may not be well understood, these days, so that protesters have not only to point to the wrongs they object to, but to convince people that things they have more or less accepted all their lives are indeed "wrongs." This turns the protest into a long-range educational program, and one extremely difficult to conduct. Many contemporary protesters are really trying to change people's idea of the good.

This has to be recognized, if we admit the claim that protests should be grounded in affirmation. Otherwise, with some shallow reasoning, one could reject any kind of protest, simply by calling it "negative." The position of the protester is that he can't get through to people with his affirmation in any other way. Judging from the general quality of modern life, with its many, third-rate substitutes for affirmation, there is a good initial possibility that the protester is right.

# CHILDREN

## . . . and Ourselves

### RELIGION AND STATE—SYNTHESIZING PERSPECTIVES

#### II

LAST week's notice of the new "Religious Studies" programs in state universities and colleges pointed out that the epoch-making Supreme Court decision of 1963 invited a philosophical rather than a sectarian approach to religion. The fact that conservative religious bodies such as the National Council of Churches accepted the wisdom of the decision against public prayer and bible instruction was in no small part due to the influence of the late Paul Tillich. As the eminent "senior theologian" of Union Seminary, Tillich demonstrated that theology, so long on the defensive in an age of science, was free to pursue creative philosophic search. Although Tillich redefined God as "the power of being, the ground of all being," and was unwilling to ascribe any other attribute to deity, he did not take the somewhat bombastic position of the current "God is dead" school. His view of religion was challenging without being combative. *Life* for Nov. 5, summarizing Tillich's position, emphasized his subtlety:

He even developed anti-authoritarianism into what he called "the Protestant principle," which is that no human institution can claim a monopoly of truth about the divine.

Religion he described as an "ultimate concern," making virtually everybody religious by definition: even an atheistic statement shows concern for ultimacy, since "genuine atheism is not humanly possible." He believed that doubt was not only inevitable in the human quest for divine truth but was even part of that truth. . . . Real life was his theological specialty. He was particularly expert in art and in depth psychology which he treated as manifestations of religion. "Religion," he said, "is the substance of culture and culture is the form of religion."

It is clear that there are always available two approaches to religion—(1) indoctrination in specific beliefs, and (2) education seeking the psychological meaning in great scriptures and traditions. It is also clear that the two approaches are mutually exclusive. Since the Constitution of the United States places primary emphasis on the right of the individual to find his own faith, its true defenders are obliged to oppose indoctrination. Indoctrination never can lead to increasingly thoughtful citizens, nor can it accelerate individual assumption of responsibility. One sort of Christianity, for instance, believes in the individual's innate capacity for self-government, and another sort does not.

Speaking of the role of metaphysics in education, Robert Hutchins (in *The Higher Learning in America*) emphasized the need of each individual to be a philosopher:

The higher learning is concerned primarily with thinking about fundamental problems. "A man who really participates in the progress of the sciences, must do so when the time of education is past." In the university he must come to grips with fundamental problems.

Metaphysics, the study of first principles, pervades the whole. Inseparably connected with it is the most generalized understanding of the nature of the world and the nature of man.

I am not here arguing for any specific theological or metaphysical system. I am insisting that consciously or unconsciously we are always trying to get one. I suggest that we shall get a better one if we recognize explicitly the need for one and try to get the most rational one we can. We are, as a matter of fact, living today by haphazard, accidental, shifting shreds of a theology and metaphysics to which we cling because we must cling to something. If we can revitalize metaphysics and restore it to its place in the higher learning, we may be able to establish rational order in the modern world as well as in the universities.

A study of first principles, in turn, leads to evaluation of accepted modes of behavior—including local laws and national policies. While the politician may find incredible the idea of a necessary connection between metaphysics and

politics, a Supreme Court justice may be expected to look behind the law to some ultimate principle of right which the law was originally intended to articulate. In an essay titled "The Society of the Dialogue," William O. Douglas writes on the means for recognizing such connections:

Whether *the law* or a popular mood restricts talk and debate, when traffic in ideas is slowed, a nation is changed. New and different ideas may then even seem dangerous; inventive genius is thwarted and some of the dynamism of the Society of the Dialogue is lost.

If the Dialogue is to flourish, the First Amendment must be accepted in full vigor, as distinguished from a role fashioned from day to day to fit the mood of the dominant group. Ideas make men free; the real un-American is he who suppresses them. Yet whatever the Constitution says, whatever the judges rule are not important if our communities do not honor free expression. If that is to come to pass, we must accept moderation in debate and discussion, the role of an opposition, the right to dissent. If the Society of the Dialogue is to flourish, our people must reflect a spirit of respect for the First Amendment, a tolerance even of ideas that they despise and of their advocates. If that kind of regime is to be established, we must accept a moral responsibility to make the First Amendment work for all groups, not just for one faith, one race, or one ideology. That means a vision broad enough to permit discourse on a universal plane; only then will we be able to communicate with a multi-ideological world.

Also relevant to this sort of "dialogue" are some remarks by Scott Buchanan:

The immunity and protection for religion that is assured in the First Amendment has lost much of its meaning, or perhaps never discovered its meaning, because religious sectarianism has allowed its internal quarrels to eclipse the high transcendent aims and its civic functions. Religion has followed its familiar propensity to allow its practices to sink to the level of religiosity; it has often redoubled its efforts as it has lost sight of its ends. When religion is healthy, its philosophical and theological explorations shed light on both individual and common deliberation. Faith seeking understanding stretches the private and public mind. In healthy religions dogmas are questions that draw all minds into the search. The by-product is the enriching of deliberation, and

religion teaches that there is no end to the possible enrichment. Congress shall make no law touching an establishment of religion or the free exercise thereof because the sources of the citizen's enlightenment must not be cut off. If the decadence of the religion continues, and dogmas continue to become devices for closing minds, there may come a day when this part of the First Amendment will have to be rewritten to enable the revival of religion or some substitute for it that will keep the top of the deliberative mind open.

To seek the essential psychological meaning of religious affirmation and experience may amount to a novel view of the relationship between religion and society. As A. H. Maslow puts it, non-sectarian thought removes the confinements of tradition from the original affirmations of great teachers; and further, by understanding the universal element in "peak experiences" the "dichotomy between higher and lower" is transcended. Dr. Maslow writes:

If you will permit me to use this developing but not yet validated vocabulary, I may then say simply that the relationship between the Prophet and the Ecclesiastic, between the lonely mystic and the (perfectly extreme) religious-organization man may often be a relationship between peaker and non-peaker. Much theology, much verbal religion through history and throughout the world can be considered to be the more or less vain efforts to put into communicable words and formulae, and into symbolic rituals and ceremonies, the original mystical experience of the original prophets. In a word organized religion can be thought of as an effort to communicate peak-experiences to non-peakers, to teach them, to apply them, etc. Often, to make it more difficult, this job falls into the hands of non-peakers. On the whole we now would expect that this would be a vain effort at least so far as much of mankind is concerned. . . .

I do not wish to be understood as reducing religion—either theistic or non-theistic—to a code of ethics only. These perspectives need to be translated or rendered in such a way as to reach the minds of the young before they are grooved by conventional religion—either led into sectarianism or by reaction made to reject any concern with "spiritual values."

## *FRONTIERS*

### Dimensions of "'Existential Psychology`'

AN article by Thomas C. Greening in the *Journal of Existentialism* (Summer, 1965) examines the mental attitudes which lead toward self-actualization, as contrasted with other attitudes which prolong immaturity and childishness. Dr. Greening's point of departure is an analysis of Voltaire's *Candide*:

Existentialism has discovered that in some respects human infancy lasts anywhere from thirty to seventy years longer than previously believed. Few human beings have ever been successfully weaned; most of us seek a reassuring Dr. Pangloss, an eternally beautiful Cunegonde, and, even in disillusionment, hold out hopes for a quiet garden to cultivate.

The popular volume, *Games People Play*, by Eric Berne, M.D. (Grove, 1964), is a humorously effective exposure of the devices by which many people avoid the confrontations of responsibility and self-evaluation. In Dr. Berne's opinion, the privileged few who can afford space on the psychoanalyst's couch often play a sort of "game," and so may the analyst or psychiatrist. A simple way of characterizing this game is that the player forever seeks a means of placing the responsibility for his dissatisfaction on external causes, and the therapist will sometimes cooperate. In Dr. Berne's words, the ramifications of the desire to escape from awareness of self and responsibility present a "somber picture in which human life is mainly a process of filling in time until the arrival of death, or Santa Claus, with very little choice, if any, of what kind of business one is going to transact during the long wait." Yet a dimension of life beyond "game-playing" may be found. Dr. Berne adds a note which, while decidedly qualified, is nonetheless optimistic:

For certain fortunate people there is something which transcends all classifications of behavior, and that is awareness; something which rises above the programming of the past, and that is spontaneity; and something that is more rewarding than games and that is intimacy. But all three of these may be

frightening and even perilous to the unprepared. Perhaps they are better off as they are, seeking their solutions in popular techniques of social action, such as "togetherness." This may mean that there is no hope for the human race, but there is hope for individual members of it.

Participants in the behavior-response "games" described by Dr. Berne play them, clearly, not because they are "fun," but to avoid responsibility. The existentialist psychologists we have been reading all reach agreement in a simple formulation: People surrender their freedom as a protective device; as long as they are conforming to the values accepted by their culture, family, or circle of acquaintances, it is not necessary for them to seek the *intrinsic* value or appropriateness of any experience. The "awareness for certain fortunate people which transcends all classifications of behavior" requires a separation from ethnocentrism. The self-actualizing person, says Carl Rogers, sees "man as a process of becoming, as a process of achieving worth and dignity through the development of his potentialities; the individual human being as a self-actualizing process, moving on to more challenging and enriching experiences, the process by which the individual creatively adapts to an ever-new and changing world."

But it would be oversimplification to speak of this kind of liberation as a release from feelings of blame or guilt. The man who feels need for growth, instead of wanting to rationalize his character deficiencies, may feel guilt intensely, but it will be guilt of a different nature. By making honest appraisal of his motives, he is able to feel that his sense of blame or guilt will be relieved as he passes through a necessary phase of self-transformation. In other words, ethnocentric guilt is so diffuse that its origin may never be found. J. F. T. Bugental's *The Search for Authenticity* has these interesting passages:

If we seek to avoid guilt, we deny our identity. If we fear the weight of responsibility, the possible condemnation, we deny our choice and distort awareness. Thus is born neurotic guilt and anxiety. In the confusion of blame and guilt, lies much that

destroys our authenticity of identity. Blame that attributes fault to the *I-process* is existentially invalid; more, it is not-sense. Guilt, which relates to the choices we have made, is inherent in our being, but it need be neither crippling nor depressing. Guilt is a part of the dignity of being a man. Were there no responsibility attaching to our choices, no guilt inhering in our identity, we would be inconsiderable, as unmeaningful as the chance scrawlings of a mad infant.

The dread of blame stems basically from the existential anxiety of guilt and condemnation. Oppressed by the sense of concern the person comes to regard each action as fraught with the possibility of new blame and as a threat to his identity. Blame seems to imply defect or fault in the person himself rather than in his action. Children who are raised with heavy emphasis on blame and shame (the two often go together) become preoccupied with assessing the rightness or wrongness of each thought, each word, and each deed. The intrinsic utility, appropriateness, or effectiveness of any action is obscured as attention is focused on its rectitude, whether real or fancied.

The inauthentic response to blame is a surrender of freedom. Non-being is evidenced in the blame-laden person's inability to carry his birthright of freedom and his relinquishing of it to his accusers, whether actual or projected. Surrender of freedom may take either active or passive forms. An example of the active form is the sort of blind rebellion against all standards or principles in which some engage. The more passive form of surrender of freedom is that of blind conformity. Here the person yields up his identity and wipes out his individuality for the seeming protection against guilt and responsibility afforded by undistinguished uniformity with the social code.

This line of analysis leads directly to the area where psychology and philosophy meet—and where questions regarding "religion" or "spiritual values" may be approached without recourse to dogma. As Dr. Bugental says: "It will be apparent that these speculations bring us to the borders and the realm of metaphysics and religion. I regard this as a tremendously exciting and encouraging development. Too long has psychology tried to deny centuries of man's devoted, intelligent effort to know the meaning of his being through the avenues of religion."

Just as the "self-actualizing" psychologist enters philosophic realms by an inner attraction, so are thoughtful Christians turning to a reconsideration of philosophy. The tone of an essay by Karl Jaspers, "The Present Task of Philosophy" (*Philosophy and the World*, Gateway, 1963), is indicative:

Philosophy exists wherever thought brings men to an awareness of their existence. It is omnipresent without being specifically identified. For no man thinks without philosophizing—truly or falsely, superficially or profoundly, hastily or slowly and thoroughly. In a world where standards prevail, where judgments are made, there is philosophy. There is as much of it in the cohesive faith of the Church as in a conscious, self-contained philosophical faith; there is philosophy even in the belief of the unbeliever, in nihilistic disintegration in Marxism, in psychoanalysis, in the many precepts for living that are now popular, such as anthroposophy and others. The very rejection of philosophy goes back to a philosophy that is not aware of itself.

Here philosophy is seen as an inevitable activity of each human mind—the only question being whether we pursue it creatively or defensively. Jaspers concludes:

The spirit of meditation, the capacity for penetrating self-analysis, the way of unbiased thinking, an openness for all substantial possibilities—all of this cannot be directly taught, but it can be awakened and trained in the comprehension of great philosophizing. How it will come about is incalculable. Men have to be given scope for it. Their fulfillment of the scope depends on every individual.