

## THE POLITICS OF VISION

ANY useful discussion of the politics of vision, today, will have to be mainly concerned with its frustration and decline. It is obvious that the politics of vision needs a new start. It is hardly working at all, in the present. Or if it is working, its developments are in such out-of-the-way places or on so small a scale as to be imperceptible to us.

What is the politics of vision? Here we mean by this expression the application of the idea of man and his good that was born and put into operation during the eighteenth century. In the light of this vision, the goal of politics was nothing less than the good, the self-realization, of the entire human race. National states and their institutions might exist, and indeed be needed, but they were conceived as means, instruments of access, for the achievement of universal goals. The vision began with a conception of the individual. He was a being with natural rights, because he was a man. All men had those rights. The purpose of government was to declare those rights and to implement their use. Political institutions were evolutionary forms, endlessly mutable, for the expression of the rights of man. Self-determination was the highest good. As Richard Price said in his *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty*: "As far as, in any instance, the operation of any cause comes in to restrain the power of Self-government, so far Slavery is introduced." The credo of the new spirit was that "the inner forces of growth and life can be trusted." Men in whom these forces burgeoned were now ends, no longer means. They would create institutions to serve their ends, changing them according to the light of a progressive science fostered by education. As Thomas Paine said, "the moral principle of revolution is to instruct; not to destroy." For a summarizing view of the politics of vision, it is

difficult to improve upon Richard Price's characterization of the American Revolution as an event which "opens up a new prospect in human affairs, and begins a new era in the history of mankind." The new social order being created in the Western hemisphere, he foresaw, would provide "a place of refuge for oppressed men in every region of the world; and by laying the foundation there of an empire which may be the seat of liberty, science and virtue, . . . there is reason to hope these sacred blessings will spread, till they become universal and the time arrives when kings and priests shall have no more power to oppress."

This was written in 1784. We turn, now, to a paragraph written late in 1965—the opening passage of a book to be published this month by Hill and Wang, *Peace in Vietnam: New Approach to Southeast Asia*. It is the work of a team of Quaker scholars and specialists conducted under the auspices of the American Friends Service Committee. This book begins:

The scene was a small square in the city of Hue, South Vietnam, on a summer day in 1965. The place was known as a rendezvous for American GI's and Vietnamese girls. A couple of military police were on duty to keep order. On this day one of them had supplied himself with some candy for the children who played in the square and crowded around the Americans. As he started his distribution in a friendly mood, a swarm of youngsters, jumping and reaching, pressed about him. With a laugh he tossed the candy out on the cobblestones. Immediately the children descended like locusts, each intent upon grabbing a piece. A young Vietnamese schoolteacher happened by at this moment and seeing the scrambling children he spoke to them in stern and emphatic tones. He told them to pick up the candy and give it back to the American. After some hesitation they sheepishly complied. Then, facing the soldier and speaking in measured English with a tone of suppressed anger and scorn, he said: You Americans don't understand. You are making

beggars of our children, prostitutes of our women, and Communists of our men!"

We shall not argue the accuracy of this agonized reproach. We shall not weigh the extenuations claimed by tired but well-meaning real-politickers who have large quantities of practical information on the necessities of this military stroke. We are not interested, here, in giving credit to the moral sufferings of the command-decision-makers, who must harden their basically humane hearts in behalf of the larger destiny of the free world.

The accuracy of the schoolteacher's human response to this situation is of a piece with the general humanistic consensus as to the failure of the politics of the eighteenth-century vision throughout the world. It is a judgment, not merely of American foreign policy, but of a whole range of assumptions about the ways and means of nation-states and the moral personifications which they have inherited from the eighteenth-century dream. Somewhere the vision has been lost; only an empty politics remains.

Where did the vision go? For the most part, or in our time, it has exhausted itself in a delirium of scapegoating. For the great national states, and the institutions of these national states, have not turned by progressive stages of social evolution into willing matrices of utopian well-being. Even national states constitutionally endowed with all the mechanisms of self-determination have developed ugly flaws and schizoid tendencies. Even by the middle of the nineteenth century there were angrily formulated diagnoses to explain who had betrayed whom in the name of the eighteenth-century vision. But while the eighteenth-century revolution was mounted on the promise of human potentiality, with righteous wrath a very secondary ingredient, the nineteenth-century critics and revolutionaries reversed this order of emotional resources. They sought culprits with anger and very little else. If you do not have a new inspiration, what can you do but hate the betrayers of the old, and avenge its loss? There

was *talk* of an end to all states, but states were instruments of power, and the revolutions we know how to make do not take place in a vacuum. Moreover, political power achieved in the name of the vision of human good has never been known to abdicate because of high moral perception of the inadequacy of its instruments.

On the day that the men who believed themselves caretakers of the politics of vision said to themselves, "Well, we know now that the state is not a very good instrument for the establishment of a better society, but it is all we've got, and we must make the best of it"—on that day, *the vision died*. It died of suffocation by the "lesser of two evils" compromise of its inheritors.

We used to be able to talk about countries as though they were moral units. It made some sense, for a while, to talk about the good countries and the bad countries. The good countries had adopted the politics of vision; the bad countries hadn't. If you lived in a good country, you could be a patriot and participate in the politics of vision. If you lived in a bad country, you were either a victim or an exploiter—there were no positions in between.

This was handy for understanding history. It was a formula on the basis of which the common man could make moral decision. But in the twentieth century it no longer served. In 1914, for example, the French working classes had a difficult choice. Would they practice solidarity with the working classes among the Germans and honor the international movement of proletarian revolution, or would they defend the sacred altar of their own revolution of the eighteenth century—from which all political blessings had come? Well, they weren't sure what the German workers would decide to do—the Germans, after all, were uninstructed, having made no revolution of their own. So the French workers opted for war, assassinated their great pacifist leader, Jean Jaures, and, being filled with revolutionary virtue, exacted a bitter price from the defeated Germans after it was over.

The Americans exercised the Good Country theory with a bigger and better flourish, getting all the mileage they could get out of the Manifest Destiny doctrine, which they read as a flattering portion of Natural Law. You don't need the Lesser of Two Evils theory if you can believe in Manifest Destiny. Manifest Destiny is the Tough-Guy-with-Missionary's-Heart-of-Gold re-vision of the Politics of Vision, and for us it has done service for something more than a century. Next comes the Lesser of Two Evils theory, which has no vision in it at all.

An obvious objection to the Good Country theory is that it has only an all-or-nothing meaning in relation to war. And the objection would be less important if war had not become the chief instrument of national policy. Short of war, you are able to say—we did pretty well here, but were quite wrong over there—and promise to do better. But you can't talk like that if you are going out to kill a lot of people. You can't shake the confidence of the soldiers and their mothers and fathers with only half-virtue and confessions of error. You don't *dare* tell the truth. You have to be without moral misgiving (scruple?) if you are going to commit, say, half a million lives to righteous military action and maybe commit the Bomb, too, if things don't go as well as you hoped.

"The people," as it is plain to see, are not as sophisticated as their leaders. They are not ready for the neo-orthodox decadence which explains that you may have to sin politically in order to survive spiritually, and they still believe that their country embodies the Politics of Vision. What else can they believe? Being human, they have to believe in something.

There is the further important consideration that they are partly right—more right than their manipulating leaders—in this belief. If, because of what seems to you the apparently *total* moral wrong of the war in Vietnam, you tell them this is not a good country any more, they won't believe you and they won't listen to you. And if you try

to list the evil things we do you'll just get into a long argument, and reach no helpful conclusion, since however the list adds up the decision at the end is still the *total* decision between war and peace, and the people can't live with moral ambivalence any more than you can. The task is to spread around some understanding of how a good country gets into the habit of making very bad decisions. This will amount to total reconstruction of the national image.

On the whole, American peace-makers take their model from Gandhi. There is a sense in which Gandhi had a comparatively simple problem, in contrast to ours. Gandhi had positive access to a new politics of vision for the Indian people. Furthermore, the British were *invaders*. No argument here. Gandhi could concede that the British had strong characters and were often good administrators without weakening his case against the wrong of their invasion of India and staying there when they weren't wanted by Indians. It was a nice, clean situation, from the viewpoint of the moral emotions. You didn't have to hate the British, but they had to go. There wasn't any moral theory worth mentioning, no sophisticated version of the politics of vision, on the basis of which they could claim a right to stay.

The problem of the peace movement, today, is in finding a way to renew the Vision without mixing it up with the old politics that only pretends to vision, and this is a very difficult problem indeed. It may involve almost total re-education of ourselves in regard to the agencies of human progress and human good. We see now why William Godwin, one of the eighteenth-century architects of the Politics of Vision, opposed a national system of education, pointing out that it tended to "perpetuate its institutions." The trouble with a national system of education is that it cannot possibly do anything else.

The psychological reality of this situation seems to be that either you find a way of making the Vision separate from the old politics and its dependence on all-or-nothing moral judgments, or

you alienate yourself not only from the bad but also from the good in the country. It is the all-or-nothing thinking which results from war which accomplishes this alienation. Peace-makers as much as others tend to this kind of thinking, if only from the apparent hopelessness of exercising a significant influence on national policy.

Readers who wonder why the protest movements of today are not more effective would do well to read the chapter, "One-Dimensional Society," in Herbert Marcuse's book, *One-Dimensional Man* (Beacon Press, 1964). Here the author shows that what Dwight Macdonald speaks of as the "homogenization" of culture has produced a flattened-out society in which radical "protest" is often regarded with indifference or mild and hardly disturbed curiosity. Everything is so "right" with us that we need no alienated radicals to tell us our sins. Our sins—and we have them, being regular guys and first-class hellers—don't really bother us at all. Marcuse describes the processes of accommodation:

Invalidating the cherished images of transcendence by incorporating them into its omnipresent daily reality, this society testifies to the extent to which insoluble conflicts are becoming manageable—to which tragedy and romance, archetypal dreams and anxieties are being made susceptible to technical solution and dissolution. The psychiatrist takes care of the Don Juans, Romeos, Hamlets, Fausts, as he takes care of Ædipus—he cures them. The rulers of the world are losing their metaphysical features. Their appearance on television, at press conferences, in parliament, and at public hearings is hardly suitable for drama beyond that of the advertisement, while the consequences of their actions surpass the scope of the drama. . . . It is a rational universe which, by mere weight and capabilities of its apparatus, blocks all escape. In its relation to the reality of daily life, the high culture of the past was many things—opposition and adornment, outcry and resignation. But it was also the appearance of the realm of freedom: the refusal to behave. Such refusal cannot be blocked without a compensation which seems more satisfying than the refusal. The conquest and unification of opposites, which finds its ideological glory in the transformation of higher into popular culture, takes place on a material ground of increased satisfaction. . . . loss of

conscience due to the satisfactory liberties granted by an unfree society makes for a *happy consciousness* which facilitates acceptance of the misdeeds of this society.

What Marcuse is saying is that the assumptions and rationale of the technological society have been so thoroughly absorbed by the inner life of modern man that the idea that any undertaking which involves so much of the technological apparatus as war may be seriously wrong is emotionally unacceptable. The moral question of the war, it may be, cannot be understood until this virtually "organic" involvement of the people in its processes is somehow exposed as the master self-deception.

Something like this view of American culture forms the background of an article by Edward Richter, in a publication called *Venture*, which is devoted to the proposal of a Peace and Freedom Corps that will undertake restorative peace activities in Vietnam. Fairly well along in his argument, Richter observes:

Our worst enemy is our unconscious trust of a culture most of us agree is radically "sick." We are paralyzing ourselves by illusory ambitions: our tactics for changing America are dictated by the terms the culture offers us for changing it. Our "paranoia" is ideological, not tactical, and I suppose it has not taken tactical shape out of a very understandable fear. Our talk of "peace candidates" in 1966, our pins, teach-ins, bumper stickers, sloganeering, newsletters, marches, self-immolations, governments-in-exile, assemblies of unrepresented people, pickets, conventions, workshops, conferences, letters-to-the-editors, encounters with newspaper lies and police brutality, our fertile field of organizations (this year we had a bumper crop!) are all symptoms of fear, are all symptoms that we are bound to the institutions that made this war possible. . . . My deepest conviction is that we have been trapped into doing what this superficially free but profoundly violence-and-war-committed culture expects of us. Indeed, perhaps the war in Vietnam *needs* the traditional peace movement; perhaps we are in a dance of death with a war system the solidarity of whose consensus is reinforced whenever we waltz together in "protest."

The middle classes, the liberals, the opinion-makers, the media, the politicians, even the

organizational hierarchy of the Freedom Movement, have been culturally immunized or jaded by our tactics. Their novelty is gone. The civil rights movement has exhausted them, as tactics they are no longer challenging to the volunteers who effect them. The American people as a popular mass are simply unreachable directly, not only because nowadays our tactics are too easily dismissed but because in this culture the sociology of persuasion is indirect and institutional. We haven't the troops to take on the American people (assuming we tried to "get to them" interstitially); we haven't the credibility, money or organization, we haven't the time, even assuming the culture had the liberal-democratic institutions through which we might work our will; I wonder if we even have the moral strength to live side-by-side with American institutions and protest against them with revolutionary intent; and we haven't the alternative, the projects of nonviolent life-systems into which those who wish to live can "transfer" and thereby creatively escape what we are asking them to reject. . . . We are being reduced to a free speech movement, and while free speech is dear it is true nevertheless that in our big media culture, speech as such is neither free nor powerful enough to effect historical results. . . . Let me risk being crude for the sake of making a point: I am not altogether unsympathetic with the popular judgment of us, manipulated and outrageously unfair as it is. The media would not be able to achieve such results if we had not handed them a culturally-described handle for so doing: we *march*, we *debate*, we *talk*, we *write*, we *burn draft cards*, we work for peace as if we were living in a world carved out by John Stuart Mill while real men, women, and children are making and unmaking history in the hell of organized warfare.

Before I speak specifically about peace activism in Vietnam I would remind all anti-war and anti-imperialist groups that making empire is a traditional, time-honored route for a vigorous culture. Empire is an honest option, after all, and I'm sure that an American empire would be no better or no worse, no more or no less humane, than a Roman one. If the Peace Movement wishes to announce a new and better way of making history, if it brings glad news, if it has an optionable alternative to empire, then it had better soon find its rock and make its moves. Otherwise moral obligation will compel us to work within the empire in order to humanize it. The choice is not forever.

Here, by an escalating fever of self-contempt—or is it more an expression from a

pacifist Gethsemane?—we reach a kind of high jinks demand for action. The peace-loving heavens must open with the "glad news" of how to put a stop to war *right now*. The cry is for a power-system, preferably nonviolent, to take the place of the corruptions of the wornout politics of the eighteenth-century vision, which now finds its deepest commitment in mastery of the techniques of counter-insurgency and its highest philosophy in "democratic" apologetics for apparently unending police actions in both hemispheres.

The provocations are great, the desperation real, although, just possibly, this confrontation may represent the first in a long series of lessons in failure—something with which optimistic Americans have had little experience and practically no tolerance for at all. History, unless it be very obscurely, is not yet on the side of the peace-makers. One wonders if history will *ever again* be on the side of those who think they can accomplish good with power. For, make no mistake, the peace-movement Mr. Richter is talking about will endeavor to exercise power: "A movement that aims to affect history must acknowledge its will to be a power-system; perhaps a nonviolent system, but a power over events nevertheless." How this proposition would work out, in competition with the omnipresent reflexes of the one-dimensional society, is more than we are able to understand.

But what of the other idea—the proposal of a "nonviolent life-system" as an alternative to the existing cultural situation?

Somewhere, in every program of peace-making, there has to be manifest commitment to faith in the human spirit. And if the high qualities of that spirit can not be coerced, it becomes obvious that they must be invited. So far, the invitation has been mainly by the youthful exuberance of the picket line, or from the deeper camaraderie of jail and prison. A life-system is more than this. It involves home-and community-making. It has a positive lore and culture beyond the strategy and tactics of revolt.

Obviously, there are missing parts to our puzzle. A keystone is absent from our arch. We need the collaboration of moral forces that are not yet generated, of persuasions that have little embodiment in human practice and cannot be displayed. The "fronts" of peace action where Mr. Richter sees such sorry performance may be, for all their practical failure, an indispensable means of generating deeper insight into human need. At any rate, they have done this for him, as the following description of the proposed Peace and Freedom Corps makes plain:

A Peace and Freedom Corps would not be the sort of peace activism that could lend to McNamara the pretext for heavier-than-usual bombings or the shipment of additional troops. The Corps is less inherently provocative of violence than are the demonstrations. . . . We ought not, it seems to me, to be preoccupied with the idea of "success." Our commitment should be to work in the present doing what we can to repair what the majoritarian commitment has destroyed in Vietnam. . . . we are too few in numbers as a beginning, and as a consequence we are, at the moment, outside the possibility of some kind of multiplier effect on the American mass public. What we need are tactics appropriate to our cause, consistent with our size, unexploitable by the culture for its own ends, of service to the oppressed Vietnamese (who need allies as desperately as did the Negroes), and tactics that will equalize within the movement what the leaders and the rank-and-file feel and know. We need institutional bases of our own, we need a common experience, a nationally shared ordeal, an expiation, and an experience of war.

I suggest a Peace and Freedom Corps as a starter. If we are going to make a new social system radically different from the one we have, then we must begin somewhere. And the sooner the better.

(Readers interested in further information concerning an independent peace corps to work in Vietnam should write to the Emergency Committee for Vietnamese Relief, Box 370, Berkeley 4, Calif.)

## *REVIEW*

### PACKAGED "ENLIGHTENMENT"

THE December 1965 issue of *Etc.*, a quarterly journal published by the International Society for General Semantics, is entirely devoted to articles on "The Psychedelic Experience." In a foreword to these discussions, the editor, S. I. Hayakawa, wryly admits his dislike of the whole undertaking, explaining that the large volume of unsolicited manuscripts on the subject has practically forced him to publish a selection of them. This special issue of *Etc.* was edited by Dr. Robert E. Mogar, associate professor of psychology at San Francisco State College and director of the Institute for Psychedelic Research. There are six papers in all, each followed by the critical comments of another writer.

Since the editorial observations of Mr. Hayakawa touch on matters which, as he points out, are hardly considered by the contributors, we repeat a few of the things he says:

I am far from convinced of the therapeutic or "spiritual" value of the psychedelic experience. Indeed, I cannot get rid of the feeling that this issue is likely to do the world as much harm as good. In the present climate of opinion, with hallucinogens like LSD available on almost every college campus in the U.S., the glowing accounts of "consciousness-expanding" experiences resulting from their use under controlled conditions and responsible supervision are all too likely to be seized upon as justification for their uncontrolled use without medical or scientific supervision of any kind. . . .

The most interesting semantic point made by contributors to this issue is that under the influence of psychedelic drugs, one is "freed" from the categories and symbolizations through which our experience is ordinarily presented to us, bundled prepackaged, and labeled in terms of the linguistic conventions (and therefore perceptual habits) of the culture. To "transcend" these cultural imperatives is asserted to be an "expanding" of consciousness, so that one sees afresh—presumably as if one is a little child again.

But is such "transcending" necessarily beneficial? . . . The process of abstracting, of creating classifications and making the symbols that stand for

them, are the normal and necessary survival mechanisms of the human class of life. What is so wonderful about suspending this great, uniquely human process, except where the process has gone awry? As Weston La Barre said in this connection, "It is not immediately evident that an *abnormal* toxic functioning of an adaptive organ, the brain, is necessarily a *supernormal* functioning. . . ."

However, we live in an advertising culture. ROLAIDS offers us instant relief from indigestion. CLAIROL offers instant youth and beauty. The new MUSTANG makes instant Casanovas out of Casper Milquetoasts. Is it any wonder that there lurks in many of us a hope that a product can be found that offers instant relief from all spiritual ills— instant insight, instant satori? . . .

But perhaps my basic reason for distrusting the dependence on "mind-expanding" drugs is that most people haven't learned to use the senses they possess. . . . I say, why disorient your beautiful senses with drugs and poisons before you have half discovered what they can do for you?

The field of psychedelic exploration seems to be divided between sober-minded scientific investigators of the psychological factors and processes which appear to be involved, and impassioned advocates whose sense of dramatic discovery often makes them sound like the founders of a new cult or religion. There are obvious analogues between the "rite" of taking the drug under the proper "controlled conditions" and religious "initiations" of various sorts; indeed, such correspondences are by no means prejudicial, but the critical issue has to do with the kind of insight that is achieved, the agency by which it comes about, and the kind of autonomy which results for the subject. These questions are not easily settled save by broad and extremely general criteria of long-term human excellence and achievement. It is of interest, therefore, to note that the champions of the psychedelic experience do not seem to come from the ranks of those whose published works give unmistakable prior evidence of philosophic maturity, practiced intellectual discipline, and notable originality. Aldous Huxley, of course, may be regarded as an exception to this rule, but the question of whether

his writer's art was amplified by drug-induced experience can hardly be settled through debate, and his own testimony on this point, if it exists, need not be compelling.

The dependence of the subjects (should we call them "neophytes"?) of these experiments on practiced "guides" might be expected to add an emotional factor of loyalty and trust, in relation to the sponsors of the experience; in any event, the strong feeling-tone with which questioning or criticism is met bespeaks the vulnerability of persons who give their psyches into the care of others. In such circumstances, the rapid development of a doctrinal literature concerning the *correct* way to undergo this experience seems practically inevitable. One writer, Richard P. Marsh, observes:

If the experience is approached in an attitude of scientific curiosity combined with a sort of reverence for the possibilities of human inwardness, the results will be quite different from what they will be if one takes the drug as though he were going on a binge. Since one's attitudes are shaped so much by one's language and may even be inseparable from it, it matters how one chooses to speak about the experience before, during and afterward. It matters also whether one takes the drug with the half-guilty expectation of going out of his mind or in the serene confidence that he will be brought to himself.

In short, the drug experience is like any experience, its meaning lies primarily within the person, not within the drug, which merely liberates. What it liberates into, insanity or ecstatic insight, depends on the subject and the circumstances.

This writer gives a lyrical account of his own first psychedelic experience:

He underwent the experience of birth, felt himself transformed into mythological persons, floated graciously through lovely caverns of sparkling ice and splendid, gold-encrusted gothic cathedrals, and watched in awe as jeweled patterns formed and reformed in an endless variety of living mandalar shapes, fourfold marvels of incredible beauty modulating into endless variations of themselves, dissolving into spinning galaxies of infinite dimension and significance, or lapsing into marvelously unique free-forms dancing in total

spontaneity through unpredictable patterns of absolute wonder.

Mr. Marsh, who is professor of creative arts at San Francisco State, seems convinced that by this means the subject may penetrate through the rind of the superficial "game-playing" self to the Unitary Self, and he says that anyone to whom this has happened "can have no doubts." This ultimate Subject he identifies as "consciousness itself: the Tao, the Nameless, the Way. . . ."

In his paper, Timothy Leary maintains that the psychedelic experience is the same as the "ecstasy" that has been sought for ages by mystics and visionaries. He draws on Tantric Hinduism for orientation in this cosmos of inner experience—which is said to have a number of "layers"—and, because of similar help obtained, declares G. I. Gurdjieff to have been "perhaps the greatest psychologist the West has produced in two thousand years."

Mr. Leary, to the considerable discomfort of some of his colleagues, writes mainly to expose his certainties, not his theories, about the psychedelic thaumaturgy. A Rand Corporation psychologist, William H. McGlothlin, says that the reader of Leary's paper "shortly finds himself afloat in Leary's highly personalized fantasy world," and concludes that Leary's "assertive style and the lack of evidence or even systematic argument make the paper unconvincing as theory." A review of *The Psychedelic Experience* (a new book by Leary, Metzner, and Alpert) contributed to this issue of *Etc.* by W. W. Harman (of Stanford University), takes note of the adoption by its authors of the *Bardo Thödol*, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, as the basis of a manual for conducting and participating in psychedelic experiences. The reviewer cites their confident announcement that this work is "the means of providing the enlightenment to any volunteer," and he condemns as "utter nonsense" the further extravagant promise of instant "illumination" to be obtained with the aid of the



manual, "without further suffering on the age-long path of normal evolution."

Mr. Harman also wonders about the suitability of interpreting the *Bardo Thödol* in terms of the mechanistic bias which becomes obvious in the authors' text—which says, in one place, "With your ego left behind you, the brain can't go wrong"—and he deplores the propaganda motif in the volume. While regarding it as "a valuable account of explorations with the psychedelic agents," he sees the book's most serious shortcoming as a "glossing over of the hazards of indiscriminate dissemination of these powerful chemicals."

All in all, the movement for psychedelic "liberation" may constitute a severe testing of the intuitive resources of humanistic psychologists who remain skeptical of this proposal for "releasing" human consciousness by subdivision? and giving the initiative in the enterprise to substances that can be bought in a bottle (with a little difficulty) at the store. This new, new version of the advantages brought to mankind by modern technology is subtler by far than the claims of the commodity multipliers and creature-comforts purveyors, and the appeal of spiritual delights climaxed by a chemical "illumination" that will dispense with long years of personal striving is likely to be persuasive to anyone able to believe that the universe is constructed for his effortless ease and translation. The scientific investigation of the effects of these drugs is probably in order, but this is quite different from letting the drugs take charge, and then rewriting science, religion, and philosophy according to the way they make people *feel*. It is surely appropriate here to recall that the Enlightenment achieved by the Buddha under the Bo tree involved neither a proprietor nor a proprietary, and to hazard the opinion that included in the range of tantalizing visions which attended his ordeal were all the possibilities of psychedelic "expansion of consciousness." But the Buddha was his own man, and they left him unmoved.

## *COMMENTARY*

### **BEWARE THE POLITICS OF CONFUSION**

ANY new theory of the good society, and how to get it, must grow around the core principle of the good of the individual, which was the foundation of the eighteenth-century political vision. The confusions and dissensions among men of good will, today, are plainly due to lack of a coherent and generally acceptable conception of the individual and how his potentialities ought to be honored and served.

We have come a long way in experience since our declaration of the "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" postulate of the good of human beings. Against the complex background of the modern, mass society, this principle is filled with ambiguity. And you have to add to the resulting confusions the fertile yet by no means unambiguous reflections of Proudhon, Marx, Freud, Sartre and Camus, in the West, and the inspiration of Gandhi and the criticisms of Jayaprakash Narayan, in the East, to realize how maddeningly unclear is any possible mandate of a new politics of vision for the modern world.

What else can we say of the present? Well, we can certainly say that this is a time when a new conception of the human individual is trying to get born. All the talk of problems of "identity," the longing for "commitment," and the need for "responsibility" says one thing very clearly: the idea of the human self is in flux. It follows that the idea of human good must also be in flux.

No politics worth striving for can be erected on a foundation of flux. Nor is the vacuum in political philosophy itself an adequate reason for seeking a new philosophy of self. Any such expedient quest would only produce theories warped by or subservient to preconceived political objectives.

We need to know about ourselves because we need to know about ourselves. Man is an end in himself, not a resource for some passionately-longed-for Utopia. The means must not be

permitted to define the ends. The ends must define the means, and if the ends are not yet evident, an impatient moral passion to define the means anyhow will only add angry self-righteousness to the confusion.

No doubt a viable conception of the human individual will be born on the various physical and metaphysical battlefields of the twentieth century. All genuine births are marked by travail. All true visions come to man in some kind of extremity. And great declarations of principle become commanding because they make useless preoccupations and irrelevances drop away. It is of some importance to recognize these various necessities.

# CHILDREN

## . . . and Ourselves

### FRIENDS WORLD COLLEGE— PERSPECTIVES

THE Quakers have always been persistent and it is not surprising to find that their "World College," the plans for which have been previously reported here, is coming into being. A new brochure issued by the Friends World Institute stresses the pressing need for reforms which will remove provincialism from education. Leading educators are quoted on typical feelings in their own profession:

Testimony to the illness at the heart of our educational system may be found in a Special Supplement on colleges published in *Harper's* a few years ago. A distinguished sociologist charged that "we are not doing much to make a college education more than a huge boondoggle—which is what most of it is today"—and concluded from his survey that, "if the function of a college is to help its pupils formulate the problems they face . . . then most American undergraduates are, at most, half-educated.

Not surprising, a Harvard professor discovers "many of our most sensitive youngsters simply throw up their hands. They turn their backs on the whole process. . . . increasingly, the able students are among those who leave before graduation."

Out of their deep sense of human community, the Friends continue to accept ever-increasing political, social, and educational responsibility. Any former tendency toward isolationism has been replaced by a sense of obligation to global commitment and involvement. The campus revolts, perhaps at one time seen as out of keeping with the Quaker "gentle spirit," are now recognized to have direct correlation with wholly necessary changes in attitude if war is to be supplanted. The World Institute bulletin continues:

The current revolt on the campus is but a symptom of the growing discontent and disenchantment with the whole system of higher education in America. It is a rebellion against the bureaucracy, regimentation, mechanization,

dehumanization, and at times the intellectual dishonesty and political maneuvering that are apparent in college and university life. Informed and concerned critics have long been crying in the academic wilderness. Now the undergraduates are taking up the cry.

"The new undergraduate learns quickly that of all the functions of the Great University his own education is perhaps the least important," wrote one of the graduate students at Berkeley. "He has almost no contact with the famous professors he had heard about . . . his success at school depends on his ability to master a four-year system of lectures, reading lists and examinations that have little to do with genuine learning."

Morris Mitchell, Director of World Institute, outlines the various divisions of the program now under way. There is to be a center for Resident Study in the United States, with a four-year program leading to a B.A. degree, and study centers abroad in seven "strategically selected" locations where students will gain knowledge of the world through living, traveling, studying and working for six months in each region. During two of these periods, each student will be "on his own." This program, also, will lead to a Bachelor of Arts degree.

A Center for Peace Studies and Research will be maintained in the United States, helping those who seek Master of Arts degrees to become "experts in conflict resolution." For such graduate students, the facilities of the Broadman Library on War and Peace will be available—a collection of contemporary documents covering international affairs since 1914. Also accessible will be the Thomas Alexander data on postwar educational programs of denazification in Germany. The Institute will give a summer study-travel program, offering a series of trips abroad for students in the division of resident study, including students from other colleges and universities, and, in addition, students not yet enrolled in college who wish to obtain first-hand knowledge of foreign countries.

A bulletin prepared for circulation among students adds to the over-all picture of the Institute's plans:

The faculty and student body will be drawn, as far as it is possible, from all regions of the world, and the institution itself will reach throughout the world by establishing centers for study in widely scattered parts of the globe. It will thus have a strongly cross-cultural outlook, in which students and faculty will seek involvement in, and appreciation for, the many different designs for living that groups throughout the world have developed as ways of giving order and meaning to life. It will endeavor to prepare young people of all races, faiths, and nationalities for participation in the shaping of a merging world culture which must reconcile the diversities of local cultures with the realities of the modern world.

Further information on the "World Institute" plans may be obtained from the Committee on a Friends World College, Harrow Hill, East Norwich, N.Y. 11732.

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Aims allied to those of the "World College" plan are suggested in a paper submitted by Brian Carpendale to a Provincial Committee on Education in Ontario, Canada. Prof. Carpendale shows that teachers who reject the insularity of their profession are, more and more, speaking a common language:

Some identifiable abilities which would be potentially valuable in a changing world (for some of which "teaching methods" have already been developed).

(a) ability to perceive the "invisible structure," or the "rules behind the rules," which bind us so effectively because we are not aware they are there.

(b) ability in "original learning"; turning the stress of uncertainty into useful experimentation.

(c) ability to distinguish between "observation" and "inference," carried over into the ability to detect one's own prejudices; objectivity.

(d) ability to learn in such a way that one can also reexamine, unlearn and relearn; when this is possible not only in technical material, but also in attitudes, beliefs, and habits, it forms the basis of psychological health; humor, flexibility and determination.

(e) ability to generate trust and to resolve conflicts constructively (*i.e.* so that everyone is better off, instead of suppressing or avoiding conflict like

parents or children, or fighting it out like adolescents, or bargaining like merchants); psycho-social maturity. . . .

Most of the "abilities" mentioned cannot be "taught" in the sense that we are accustomed to think about teaching. Consequently, in our present system, we either ignore them, or merely "give knowledge about" them. However, methods of creating a situation in which members of a group may begin to develop these qualities for themselves (to the extent that they are latent) have been and are being devised. Some of them are already suitable for use within the framework of a modern educational institution (provided teachers with suitable personalities and training are available); others would need further experimental development.

## *FRONTIERS* "Seeds of Liberation"

THE selections published under this title (Braziller, 1964) are representative articles which have appeared in the magazine *Liberation* since its inception in 1956. The book would ordinarily be classified as an "anthology," but the readers of this volume will soon recognize that it has been edited with the primary intention of assembling the "seed" ideas which project new concepts of social and political transformation. It is, therefore, considerably more than an anthology of well-written contributions.

In his editor's preface, Paul Goodman indicates how this always-in-the-red publication should be distinguished from media devoted to after-the-event reporting and discussion:

Reviewing *Liberation* as it turns into its tenth year, we see that this has not been its pattern. The topics it has treated are still with us and indeed are more in the "news" than when the articles were written and published. Let me give some examples. It did not generally seem in 1956, when the magazine started, that the para-political and sometimes para-legal demonstrations of small groups could be of any historical importance. Especially nonviolence—sitting in front of trucks and filling jails—was strictly for the Hindoos. By 1956 there was a conspicuous rise of delinquency and anomie, but it was not yet fashionable to point out that the economy had a built-in structural defect; few noticed the hard-core poverty. And in the galloping growth of the Gross National Product and the drive to an affluent standard of living, it was simply "utopian" to raise questions about the moral and psychological worth of jobs and middleclass schooling, or about the human use of technology. It was not "realistic" to oppose bomb-testing and fall-out shelters, nor to be alarmed that other powers beside NATO and the USSR would soon brandish atomic weapons. The news of the day did not yet take seriously the fact that the social revolution in the technologically underdeveloped regions of Latin America, Africa, and Asia would not so easily be contained in the policies of either the West or the USSR, but must become a new factor in the world. Finally, in 1956 we were at the beginning of the flood-tide of brilliant "social criticism" that has challenged every part of the American mores, from

the I.Q.'s and the advertising to the urbanism and the pesticides; yet for years almost all the criticism was negative; the few critics who doggedly proposed alternatives tended sooner or later to write for *Liberation*.. Thus, one could say that the "news" has been catching up to *Liberation*.

Why not? Perhaps, for all the toughness of many of the *Liberation* writers, something of a mystical element enters here. Paul Tillich spoke of "ultimate concern," and we imagine that the clarity of vision which ultimate concern would provide is focussed—sharply if intermittently—in various stages of the commitment represented by *Liberation*. Dave Dellinger, one of the editors, has been a challenging man, and not only on paper. And the "commitments" that count and have always counted are those which most people would characterize as "self-sacrificial." Nonviolent direct action *now*, whether in respect to inviting arrest for protesting the development of nuclear missiles, or in fighting the psycho-social confinements imposed upon Negro Americans, means, in Dellinger's words, "refusal to run away, or to conform, concrete resistance in the communities in which we live to all the ways in which human beings are regimented and corrupted, dehumanized and deprived of their freedom." Dellinger and his co-editors, however should not be regarded as the sort of rebels who only act or react emotionally. Commenting on the educational value of the "Triple Revolution" manifesto, Mr. Dellinger subjects habitual attitudes towards a future "guaranteed income" for all to philosophical and psychological scrutiny:

The conventional response to the idea that people should be able to spend their lives doing what they want to do and receive the material decencies of life without charge is that it wouldn't work. People just wouldn't want to do the right things. They have to be coerced, if not by the old-fashioned alternatives of a future hell or heaven, then at least by a system of more immediate material rewards and punishments. Of course, this is the kind of incentive system which people have been conditioned to live by, and if it were suddenly discarded there would undoubtedly be a certain amount of "goofing off." But we predict that it wouldn't take very long for most people to settle

down and discover, in many cases for the first time, that the satisfactions of useful or challenging work are more fulfilling than those supposedly derived from either nonproductive idleness or alienated work and the putative rewards of status or luxury that, in theory at least, fall to the hard-working and conscientious.

The statement issued by Bertrand Russell after he courted arrest for protesting nuclear armament properly belongs in this volume. Russell remarked that he found it unpleasant, yet entirely necessary, to force the London police to take him into custody—necessary, because a man of Russell's eminence, knighted for his deeds in mathematics and philosophy, is never the sort of person whom Authority likes to identify in the ranks of its opposition. After a brief sojourn in Brixton Prison, Russell declared:

Nonviolent civil disobedience was forced upon us by the fact that it was more fully reported than other methods of making the facts known, and that caused people to ask what had induced us to adopt such a course of action. We who are here accused are prepared to suffer imprisonment because we believe that this is the most effective way of working for the salvation of our country and the world. If you condemn us you will be helping our cause, and therefore humanity.

At any moment of any day the slightest miscalculation can bring nuclear war. Rockets are poised at a few minutes' notice. H-bombers are continually in the air, radar is totally unreliable. Radioactivity kills and maims our children. War is always imminent.

To use the vast scheme of mass murder, which is being prepared, nominally for our protection, but in fact for universal extermination, is a horror and an abomination. We call upon people everywhere to rise against this monstrous tyranny.

We call upon scientists to refuse work on nuclear weapons. We call upon workers to "black" [boycott] all work connected with them and to use their industrial strength in the struggle for life. We will not tolerate the incineration of human beings because governments are occupied with idiotic matters of prestige.

*Seeds of Liberation* (necessarily priced at \$7.50 to pay for its 551 pages) will hardly receive

the wide attention it deserves; but meanwhile, the magazine goes on. Despite the limitations imposed by a small staff and an unending deficit, it represents, as Goodman points out, the sturdy vigor of continuing radicalism in the United States. The American public in general has yet to recognize that the essential principles undergirding Tom Paine's dream of "a new order of ages" in the United States *are* radical in nature. The roots of the kind of democracy to which we often pay only lip-service lie in the conviction that man, individual man, is capable of self-discipline and self-government. But he is hampered in reaching his full human potentialities by all efforts which seek to coerce or cajole him into meaningless political stances.