

WE HAVE TO REASON, ANYHOW

PERIODICALLY, men discover, or rediscover, as though it were some new "truth," what should have been realized all along—and will be, in a mature civilization: that Reason is no path to certainty except in matters that do not matter. The discovery usually leads to a somewhat voluptuous and largely irresponsible exercise of unregulated *feeling*, by means of which the champions of the new truth inaugurate their new dispensation. Contempt for reason is the common accompaniment of this change, which may spread over many areas. It affects religion, for example, through the rather sudden popularity of something like Zen; it makes rational form seem practically unnecessary in literature; and it lends to the casual impulse a deceptive validity in human relations. Feeling has no time-sense and a life thoroughly given over to feeling, therefore, is lacking in historical perspective and makes no response to the lessons of experience. It has all the strength and all the weaknesses of immediacy.

You might argue that the life of feeling, like the doctrine of anarchism, has fifty-one per cent of the truth on its side. The other forty-nine has to do with what is worth feeling and how a man ought to regulate his freedom. To know anything at all, you have to feel. Knowing, we suspect, *is* feeling, even though it may be necessary to say a lot more than this about knowing.

What can be said in behalf of the life of feeling? The authentic man of feeling is never doctrinaire. He is never the captive of either tradition or ideology. The things he is unable to feel have no reality for him. He lives, perhaps, on a short tether, but his thought and his experiences are *real*. His spirit has true independence. It is no accident that the poet is seldom taken in or limited by weighty theories of knowledge. Wordsworth had no commerce with the earnest atheists of the nineteenth century, and Blake recognized hardly at

all the intellectual "trends" of the eighteenth. There are of course modes and fashions in feeling, too, which no one can entirely escape, but imitations and borrowings in feeling are far more transparently unoriginal than the echoed thought. Feeling has by definition a private intensity; it is an impact more than it is a form.

Taking another view, we might say that feeling is the vocabulary of identities, whereas reason is concerned with differences. Differences can be, must be, defined by the use of reason, while identities are not subject to definition—they can only be declared. Feeling, then, reveals fusion, while reason describes degrees of separation. The anatomist is dry and cold, he tells about the form of things; he gives you weights and measures; but the naturalist—the lover, that is, of the natural world—performs a more profound service: he shows you his sense of unity with the living forms of nature.

Compared with reason and its doubts, its tentative judgments, its speculative forays toward the possible and the probable, feeling is imperial, indivisible. A man divided in feelings is a sick man, a man with a schism in his psyche. The man of health in mind, however, is a man capable of living with uncertainties. To think is to deal with disunities; to feel is to combine disunities in some common identity.

But apart from the sterility which overtakes a man who thinks, but does not feel, there is the disillusionment which awaits at the end of even the most careful thinking processes, considered independently of feeling. Rational analysis is always *relative* and can lead but to relative conclusions. Reason deals with parts, never with wholes, which are undistributed and therefore opaque to analysis. For example, a man may gather a few facts about a problem and from

reflecting on these facts form an opinion. He may write an article or otherwise express his opinion. Then, a few weeks later, he comes upon other facts which oblige him to change his opinion. This can go on indefinitely, until the fundamental security of his opinions is threatened. Of course, the field in which the fact-finding is pursued is important, here. If the conclusions sought are matters of fairly objective fact, the man who properly researches his subject will finally become an expert. This kind of fact-finding is like simple counting. Eventually you determine how many there are of this and that and can write a reliable report. But if you are trying to decide on a question of justice, or right and wrong, the more facts you get the more confused the problem may appear. There is always another way of looking at it. There are as many views of a game as there are spectators, and whatever happens in life has as many values as there are people whom the happening affects. How, then, can you do justice to the "meaning" of the event?

We speak of a "train" of thought—an apt metaphor. Every argument is a train of reasoning which moves toward some desired end, and we have only to think of the end to cause at least a few of the intermediate stages to come into view. The activities of debating societies, in which the taking of a "side" is of small importance compared to the skill exhibited in defending whatever position is taken, the practice of lawyers, and the disquisitions of special pleaders of every sort—these illustrations of the relativity of reasoned argument lead, eventually, to discouragement with reason.

It is possible to say, of course, that the trouble with such reasoning is that it proceeds without attention to *all* the facts. This is no doubt true; but who, after all, is in possession of *all* the facts? This question leads us directly into the hands of the practitioners of scientific method. Science, we shall be told, is the means by which we assure ourselves that as many as possible of the pertinent facts are included in our calculations.

Experiment is the means by which we test our understanding of the relationships of the facts. And so on.

The idea of science is plainly a great idea. It is the rule of reason. But in order to feel secure in the practice of the scientific method, it is necessary to have considerable confidence in the capacity of science—which means, the capacity of scientists—to select the facts which are pertinent to any given inquiry. Now the judgments of scientists are bound rather rigidly by certain presuppositions concerning what is "real," concerning what, therefore, may be legitimately spoken of as "facts." The "facts" of science are facts which are susceptible of scientific investigation. What cannot be scientifically examined can hardly qualify as a "scientific fact." There is a natural indisposition on the part of scientists to acknowledge the existence of facts which lie outside of contemporary scientific conceptions of reality.

Suppose the problem is the good of man. An early step in the reasoning process will be to set some limiting definitions concerning what is good for man. Someone will probably say, "Well, whatever you do, it must be done justly." And it is not far from the idea of justice to the rule of the utilitarian philosophers, "The greatest good of the greatest number." If you are building a railroad, for example, the route should be arranged so as to give maximum service to as many as possible of the people living in the area crossed by the road. The good, in this case, is a matter of practical calculation.

A psychotherapist, however, may have other concerns. He might be working in a region where there are so many railroads that their din—like the New York subways—is a source of psychic exhaustion to the population. He might say that the most important good for human beings is a coherent idea of the self. Such a man could easily regard all the major projects of the utilitarians as irrelevant to the mental and emotional health of human beings.

This is a way of pointing out that the facts found to be relevant to the good of man in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may be very different from the facts found to be relevant in the twentieth century. And so on, we might argue, in the twenty-first century, the twenty-second, etc. As the sense of human need changes its expression, the pertinent facts also change, and scores of other factors, affecting our judgment of what is good for man and how to go about getting it, will exercise their influence.

What, in the last analysis, are all these arguments directed toward? They have as their end the creation of a feeling: *This is what must be done*. They have as their end the instigation of an act.

But in the experience of the individual, or in the experience of history, the feelings adopted through the persuasions of reason often lead to disaster. When the reasoning leads away from the intimate realities of daily life, to some far-reaching program which has only logical structure as its support, terrible crimes may result. Inquisitions, concentration camps, saturation bombings, and atomic war are all justified and tolerated through reason, however much they violate the immediate feelings of human beings. Seeing this, the man of feeling cries, "Away with all these plausible betrayals! We want no interpreters who delight in making insanity seem 'reasonable'! Discharge the stern surgeons whose business is not healing but mutilation! Let us abandon a 'reason' that conducts us all to destruction. Have these men no hearts?"

The artist has his "argument," too. It is from "reason," he will point out, that all these people are wasting their lives. They take their premises, not from science, but from convention. The unities they practice are all at secondhand. Their feelings are not natural, but titivated appetites. Their responses are schooled by irritants. They have no life of their own, no private opinions. Their rules of morality are obtained from convention and tradition, likewise their ideals and

objectives. They have no stature in either good or evil. If there are such things as lost souls, they are the ones who are lost—at least, for the present.

And yet, after all these arguments are in, we have to reason anyhow. We have to reason because only from reasoning can we acquire even an imaginary portrait of the whole toward which our feelings strain. We do not reach "the truth" from reason, but a just mind continuously engaged somehow generates feelings which suit the intellectual hunger for impartiality. The mind is always tinkering with the future, remembering the past, bringing perspective to the feelings. Yet we get into trouble when we deceive ourselves into supposing that thought about life is life itself—life, full-bodied, pulsating, feeling and visioning. Thought is not life; it is only the dance of life, an art-form of the imagination. The man who would make thought into life must learn to fuse thought with feeling so effectually that they become inseparably one, so that to think, for him, is to *be*.

When a Buddha or a Christ talks of loving all men, this is no sentiment, however splendid, but an act of being. He *is* all men. So long as he loves in this way, Christ cannot enter heaven, nor Buddha Nirvana. It would tear them in two.

Yet still we have to think, to use our reason. Even though thought remains separate from the act of being which is feeling, although it is but two-dimensional action which reaches out beyond the man, like abstract antennae, to make "moving pictures" of the possible structure and nature of things, we cannot do without thinking. For if we did not think, we should have no hope of ever feeling anything more than what reaches into our small and private circumference and demands attention. By thinking, we extend the theoretical radius of our being, until some day, our hearts may catch up with our thoughts, and then we shall think and feel and know, all in the same instantaneous act. And then, to borrow a term from antique theology, we shall be gods.

Letter from **INDIA**

MADRAS—The hostile reception given to Mr. Nehru by a section of the people and the stormy scenes in Madras during his recent visit to this city have disconcerted friends and well-wishers of India's Prime Minister. Earlier, Mr. Nehru provoked a highly sensitive political party in Madras State by certain angry utterances, but those who know the Prime Minister well would hardly rebuke him. Nevertheless, Mr. Nehru and the Government of India now need all their sagacity to meet successfully the challenge issued by two militant political parties in Madras State—the D.K. (the Dravida Kazhagam or the Dravidian Party) and the D.M.K. (the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or the Dravidian Progressive Party).

Few people in Madras would have anticipated that, within ten years after independence, the Dravida Kazhagam would emerge as a political and social factor to reckon with. And yet, in retrospect, it is clear that this development was inevitable. The Dravida Kazhagam had—and still has—an effective political lever, the issue of *caste*, which easily serves politicians intent on inflaming the public. The Congress Party absorbed people's attention and won their allegiance in Madras as elsewhere in India during British rule, which it opposed. In those days, the people had no time for the D.K.'s clamouring about the less exigent evil of caste. But British withdrawal threw the Congress into power and therefore on the defensive against the D.K.

Originally there was only the D.K. (Dravida Kazhagam). Differences between the leader of the D.K. and his followers led to the creation of the new D.M.K. (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam), which is now the more important party, led by younger, more brilliant and energetic men. The latter group has concentrated on the caste evil and has built up a philosophy of rationalism, the controversial aspects of which may be ignored here for reasons of space. Its campaign against

the caste evil menaces the small and unhappy Brahmin community in South India. Brahmins are at the topmost rung of the caste ladder and they are the traditional representatives of the priesthood. In the past, the lower castes were persecuted by Brahmins who abused their privileges and with whom Nemesis has now caught up. Their privileges have disappeared and the Government ruled the practice of caste in any form a punishable offence in June 1955. The Government of Madras also imposed disabilities on the brahmins.

This anti-caste policy of the Congress Party has not, however, mollified the wrath of the D.K. and the D.M.K. in the Madras State, which have practically identified casteism with brahminism, despite the fact that casteism is also practiced by many non-brahmin communities. It is not difficult to explain the great hostility against the brahmins in South India. They are a very small minority comprising just three per cent of the entire population of India, yet have attained a social importance out of all proportion to their number. In Madras State in particular, the prosperity they seem to enjoy in all walks of life, thanks to their active utilisation of educational and other opportunities, provokes the vast majority of poor non-brahmins into believing that the brahmins are parasites.

The D.M.K. has repeatedly stressed that *brahminism*, and *not* brahmins, is its enemy. Brahmins would indeed be very much comforted if these protestations were not belied by acts. The D.M.K. is building up a mass movement and it cannot avoid propagandist tactics and manoeuvres. Thus the helpless Brahmin community in Madras State has in recent months suffered insults and outrages from the simple and emotionally excited non-brahmin masses, inflamed by the writings and speeches of D.K. and D.M.K. leaders.

Those who lead the D.M.K. are believed to be men of integrity who may be relied upon not to perpetrate excesses. But the D.K. is headed by a

cantankerous octogenarian who is frustrated at the eclipse of his party by the vigorous D.M.K., the leaders of which were originally his followers. Not long ago, the D.K. leader also proclaimed that his enemy was brahminism and not brahmins. But he has now totally abandoned these pretensions and has made extraordinary speeches urging his audiences to loot, burn and kill brahmins, leaving his countrymen to wonder whether he is a lunatic who should be ignored or a dangerous criminal who should not be at large. During his recent visit to Madras, Mr. Nehru was provoked beyond measure by these utterances and he condemned the D.K. leader in very strong terms. Unfortunately, he made certain indefensible statements that angered the leaders of the D.M.K. as well, who thereupon decided to hold a black flag demonstration against Mr. Nehru when he returned to Madras a little later. The Madras Government imposed a prohibitory order against the demonstration, which the D.M.K. defied with very unpleasant consequences. The D.M.K. leaders were arrested and the police took violent measures against the D.M.K. followers, who ran amuck and disturbed the peace of Madras as never before since independence.

Nearly all agree that Mr. Nehru was right in condemning the D.K. leader's incitement to bloodshed and murder and few could take exception to what he said. But he involved himself in some angry sentimentalisation which enlightened men found passing strange. The frustrated D.K. leader was organizing a campaign for mass burning of India's national flag and copies of the Constitution of India, since in his view these had brought no blessings to the people of Madras. Mr. Nehru declared that such men had no place in India and should "pack up and go."

Mr. Nehru has been always unsparing in his ridicule and repudiation of medieval habits of mind. But Homer nods and so did Nehru. Patriotism, nationalism, flag—how "modern" are these concepts inherited from medieval Europe? As Prime Minister of India, Mr. Nehru cannot

perhaps be expected to adopt an attitude of indifference to the Constitution of India and the Indian tricolour, but he could have been more vigilant in restraining the medievalism which made him think they are inviolably sacred. He unhappily forgot that the Government can make no demands on any citizen beyond requiring him to keep the peace and refrain from being a menace to other citizens. The Government has certainly no jurisdiction over his thinking. He has every right to be derisive about the flag and the Constitution. While the Government might intrude upon a leader who makes a nuisance of himself with his campaigns, it certainly has no right to demand a citizen to "pack up and go" because he lacks respect for the national flag.

Mr. Nehru made his remarks in the course of an emotional speech which it is not worth-while to criticise too much. He is prone to emotional outbursts for which he gracefully apologises afterwards. In this case, matters were not helped by the Madras Government, which intervened with its prohibitory order when the D.M.K. decided to demonstrate against Nehru. How can such a demonstration be contested in a democracy? But the Madras Government did not even bother to give reasons for the prohibitory order. Nor was it a service to Mr. Nehru to try to stifle an opposition which it was his right to know of and benefit from as a democratic prime minister. This high-handed action against the D.M.K. leaders plunged the city of Madras into a civil commotion.

The D.M.K. is something more than a party pledged for the abolition of caste. It agitates for an independent Tamilnad (the area comprising the present Madras State), since it feels that the region suffers from North Indian domination and exploitation and has been unfairly treated in the Five Year Plans. This is a grievance which almost all South Indians share with the D.M.K. and the Government of India has not successfully met charges of step-motherly treatment towards the South. Further, the Government policy with

regard to the official language of India has been vehemently opposed in South India, particularly in Madras State.

Mr. Nehru and his Government need to employ all their persuasiveness towards the South. Irritation and shouting will only drive the South into greater and unco-operative truculence. The members of the D.M.K., despite their uncompromising opposition to Mr. Nehru, do believe in his fairness and sense of justice. It remains to be seen whether Mr. Nehru can make headway among these people, with whom anger and unimaginative behavior may well slice off a second Pakistan.

C.V.G.

Madras, India

REVIEW

"THE WEB OF LIFE"

JOHN H. STORER'S "first book of ecology," published under the above title, causes one to wonder why American high schools do not spend more time with such illuminating studies of man's relation to natural resources. Almost any book on ecology is a good one, for ecology is the study of the interdependence prevailing throughout the natural world, an elaboration of what Storer calls "the universal truth" that "the environment that supports life extends far beyond the vision or experience of the things that live there." "Its most important feature," he continues, "may lie in the distant mountain ranges, perhaps a thousand miles away. And events like forest fires, which affect the ability of the mountains to store and control their supply of water, may decide the issue of life or death for the creatures in the lowlands." The facts of the use and misuse of forest land and water are not subject to political argument. They exist as reminders that what the Buddhists would call Karma is not so much a theory as a description of the One Law of Life.

There is poetry and beauty in such descriptions as the following:

We see the river and the lands of its watershed as a great living organism, with its heart in the mountains that supply its life blood. This blood flows out through the streams that form the arteries above ground and below, coming down from a hundred thousand hidden sources—the mountain springs and meadows, the patches of moist woodland with the porous soil beneath them, the shaded snow banks and the afternoon thunderstorms, the flow of every raindrop held back by the delaying stems of grass and flowers, absorbed by bits of rotting wood, filtering into the soil through a million root tunnels and worm holes, delayed, but slowly moving down the hillside through the soil, to bring a steady, even flow of life to the great functioning body of civilization in the valley.

Every action that affects the lands of the watershed has its direct influence on the functioning of the whole organism. The growing leaf that shades the snow to delay its melting is doing its microscopic

share to give an even flow of water through the summer. Combining its influence with a hundred billion other leaves, it may determine the success or failure of the harvest in the valley.

Here is understanding of the world of nature, with fascination in every association which the human mind makes with the descriptive words used. Turning to spoliation of nature—in this case by man's criminal pollution of water resources—one sees the same "law of interdependence" in operation, but toward neither a beautiful nor harmonious end:

As the early cities grew along the river courses, pollution was not a serious problem, for the wastes from each city were diluted by the flowing water, oxidized by the bacteria, used as fertilizer by the water plants, and filtered through the river sands and gravel, so as to reach the next user in fairly clean condition. But with the multiplication of cities and their discharges, the water became filled with an unsupportable load of poisons from the factories, offal from the slaughterhouses, raw sewage from the homes. These killed the cleansing plants, used up the purifying oxygen in the water, and clogged the filtering gravels with filth.

And so, today, the water supply for many of our cities enters the city water system as a dark chocolate-colored fluid, straight out of the sewers and factories of its neighbors upstream. In one midwestern city some tests of the water showed that, during the period of low water in the winter, it was one half straight sewage. Later in the season, when the river filled with run-off from the spring rains, it was a thin, liquid mud, made from good topsoil washed off the improperly cultivated farm lands above.

By thorough and expensive treatments, the mud and the visible sewage can be removed from the water and its remaining load of bacteria killed by disinfectants before it is distributed to citizens for drinking, washing, and cooking. But then it is discharged back into the river, boiling out from the city sewer as foul and offensive as when it entered. The sewers of the city have become an integral part of the watershed that supplies the cities downstream.

This pollution of the rivers is as truly a destruction of a basic natural resource as is the overcutting of a forest or the wrong management of good land.

If, in other words, you become so preoccupied with the life of man in society that you fail to sense the life of man in nature, an inevitable and offensive corruption occurs. You rob yourself of a source of beauty and inspiration which you did not really know you possessed, but obliviousness, in this case, does not mean that nothing of value has been lost. The ruined rivers, the trees and plants dying or ailing under an encrustation of smog deposits, reduce our own capacity to be alive. We may not need to eat the spoiled vegetables, but it is likely that, somewhere within the psyche, there is a debilitating reaction to their very existence. If we had learned how to find true beauty and proportion in society, and in the majority of interpersonal relationships, we would also see the crying need for restoration of "the harmony that inspires"—but we have not. Nature lovers and ecologists alike therefore confer a boon. The search for and appreciation of beauty is a vital part of the *human* ecology, for the man who sees magic and beauty in any area of life will tend to sense either its presence or absence elsewhere. His capacity for tolerance and for justice, moreover, is increased by every acquired degree of this sensitivity.

All this may seem simple and obvious. But, is it not a fact that most writing done on "nature" subjects reaches man's finer sensibilities? We have been hoping for some time to find an appropriate place for a quotation from Henry Beston's *Herbs and the Earth*. Beston is one who feels compelled to attempt to relate human meanings with the meanings of the land and of the seasons. His words are as rich in imagery as any natural scene:

For beside the path of awareness lie the seasons and the ritual of the year, the vast adventures and journeyings of the sun, the towering of a wave to its breaking, the faithful wheeling of the moon, the sound of rain when there are no more leaves, and the furrow lengthening under the tug of hooves on a morning in spring. Sustained and moulded of its immeasurable forces, it is by this mystery we exist, and by its poetic power in our lives that we attain the stature of human beings, having the sun to our right hand and the earth and the seas beneath us; without it

becoming like the ghosts in Homer, houseless, and thin and dead, and crowding and whispering angrily for blood.

The quiet of winter is wearing through upon the land. Human voices which seemed lost in the vast of snow have again the open earth beneath them, and over the unfrozen soil, across field and pasture and darker wood comes the bold and distant cry of chanticleer. What a fine sound it is, that triple and unearthly cry, heard here in the garden through the pale quiet of the northern spring. All the animal defiance of circumstance and fate, all the acceptance and challenge of the animal blood come with it into our human world seeking an echo there, before melting away into the light. Pressing on with the sun the furrow shall follow north the sun retreating, and the earth shall be sown again and shall part, giving life to the seed and to the herbs of man's remembrance, the ancient leaves dear at once to ploughman and woman of the distaff, to priest and golden-circleted king.

Fairfield Osborn writes the introduction to *The Web of Life*, which is published by Devin-Adair at \$3.00. Osborn's comment on the work is pertinent:

Although the balance of nature is a complex business, the story told here is in simple language and presented with clarity. While this book is not written primarily for specialists, it is valuable for all students of agriculture, and even for students who are interested in the social sciences. One of our great ecologists, the late Aldo Leopold, became eminent in his field not only because he was an accomplished scientist but because he was a philosopher as well. He used to say that unless one approached conservation with an ethical as well as an economic perspective, the problem had not even been adequately defined.

The youngster, captive on the sidewalks of our big cities, the farmer struggling in a dust bowl, the sullen river that once ran silver, the desolate tangle of second growth, even the last condor on a California mountaintop—all have a tenuous relationship to life on this earth as a whole. Man does not stand alone.

COMMENTARY

PROJECT FOR OUR TIME

THE insistence on "meaning" so often found in these pages will sometimes raise more questions than it settles.

There is for example the problem of the "mass" society. MANAS readers no doubt share with MANAS writers the sense of being hemmed in by the inflexible ways and resistless pressures of the mass society. By comparison, a small community is susceptible to rational appeal. If you live in a small community, you can talk things over with people, maybe get things done.

But how can you talk things over with three or four, six or seven, million people? To reach them, you have to go on the air or own a newspaper. You can spend your whole life building up such projects, and become so involved that you may forget what it was you wanted to say.

Even if you learn how to reach a "mass" audience, you are restricted by what a mass audience will listen to. Try holding a conversation with a sea of faces, or half a million television screens! Audiences like that are conditioned to expect omniscience or, at any rate, some kind of certainty. And if the things you want to talk about don't involve any certainties, but only questions and problems that need to be discussed, how will you hold their attention? The people "out there" aren't used to being talked to that way. The system is against it—and against them, and against you.

So, if you are concerned with "meaning," what can a situation of this sort possibly signify? Is there any "larger" meaning to be learned from such huge and unwieldy aggregations of human beings?

There is not much prospect of relief. The birthrate in most countries is so high that the population experts and other scientists are filled with anxiety. They are worried about simple

living room and enough food for all. And others are worried about the loss of solitude and the crowding of human beings on the earth like ants in an anthill.

But these are only technical problems, by no means as serious as the captivity of men who are held immobile in the grip of the mechanics of their lives in the mass.

It is a problem, perhaps, of learning all over again the meaning and importance of individuality, and of defining in more intimate terms the rights of individuals, and then slowly reconstructing the patterns of economic and social relationships to provide for those rights. It will not be easy, and it will take a long time, but a minimum achievement of this undertaking might turn out to be a world at peace.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

DISCUSSION OF A GENERATION: I

PARENTS and community stalwarts have always been prone to agonize over the off-beat attitudes and behavior of adolescents. And small wonder, for it takes no great percipience to realize that the young, even without trying, will always challenge the standards of the family and society to which they are born. Whether consciously realized or no, any form of "outlandish" behavior on the part of youth is bound to constitute a commentary on the goings-on of the adult generation, which is what makes it outlandish.

The attitudes of youth often draw painful caricatures of the behavior currently accepted as "normal" for society, and, as is the case with so many caricatures, they are painful precisely because more "true" than serious accounts.

One segment of today's youth carries the conformity depicted in David Riesman's *Lonely Crowd* to absurd proportions. The conformity of adults to standardized attitudes and behavior is usually accompanied by a certain pretense of individuality. Lip service is at least occasionally given to the principles underlying the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, even though quiet submission to "loyalty" investigations belies any real devotion to such a faith. But the youths who seek refuge in group standards rather than in principles don't bother to pretend. It is precisely the subservience of individuality which seems to them a valid principle, so far as we can see.

What is weird about the present generation—although "generation" is hardly the right word, since no clear-cut age-group gives this impression—is what is weird about adult society, both in terms of the presence of certain psychic factors and in terms of the absence of others. The weirdness is blown up, even exaggerated, but youth didn't manufacture all the ingredients. They

have put something where they found nothing, or embellished what they found, and in so doing moved either towards the extreme of social conservatism or an extreme of social nihilism. They are "weird" because of these extremes, we say, but what is *really* weird is that we have difficulty in perceiving that the world we accept—a world of half-values, both politically and interpersonally—actually demands either a deliberate submergence in the status quo, or withdrawal from its center of unsatisfactory compromise. The "rebel without a cause" may not have a cause, but there are reasons for his state of mind. If there is nothing "there" at the socio-religious center of things, for instance, youth flies out toward the periphery, because there is nowhere else to fly, and you gotta go, man, you gotta go.

And where is "out"? The point, apparently, is that this "out" is not a destination such as, say, the moon may be for the practical scientists of the space-age, but simply a theory of propulsion. The word "frantic" speaks of a desire to know frenzy, but not any particular kind of frenzy. The "hipster" (someone who is "hep," "hip," or, in a special sense, "in the know") doesn't pretend to know in advance what *is*, but only what isn't. Rather than being a counterpart of Riesman's "inside dopester"—a very old type, especially in American culture—the hipster is the inside-dopester's opposite. The inside dopester likes to pretend that he knows what's really what, and since he is himself aware that he doesn't really know what, he places his faith in revelation by rumor, from those he fondly hopes are *actually* in "the know." The hipster does away with all this nonsense, at least. He is existentialist to the degree that he feels he has inside dope only about his own feelings and reactions. Nor does he have a formula for frenzy, a planned program for its attainment. He drifts until the moment when the opportunity for being "frantic" arrives, and all he knows is that he wants to be "there," uncluttered with theories or disciplines. He desires to be detached from life most of the time in order to

catch the full "beat" of an experience when it comes his way.

The whole of the present generation of youth is not in flux, though it seems a common mistake to assume that they are. Many of them are indistinguishable from their predecessors. But those presently in flux are the ones who compel us to think about the shape of things to come. The most interesting representatives of transition are the violent and "wild" ones, but first let us consider the extent to which the disease of status-quoism has spread among more orthodox youth. For the hipster attitude and the accept-any-standards-given attitude have one thing in common: in neither is there a desire to be different from others in the peer group, let alone a desire to be heroic in any classical sense. For the classical hero was a man of stringent discipline and certain purpose. Whatever this generation has, it is not discipline, either social or self-imposed. They don't want it, not so much because their elders made stabs in the direction of "responsible" living which were unproductive—no rebellion here—as because they feel unrelated to the concept of striving.

We should say that it is precisely the acceptance of this situation—whether simply by way of feeling of the psyche or by articulation—which constitutes the characteristics of the "generation" everyone is discussing. But here we run into a multitude of complications. There are a few vigorous writers who choose to interpret the disturbing characteristics of "the new juvenile" as some sort of clearing of the desks for a later affirmation. Others see nothing in the apparently nihilistic attitudes or behavior except nihilism. The big question, we should say, is whether or not the majority of youths are taking any steps on the natural Odyssey of the young—toward the acquirement of individuality.

According to conventionally hopeful sociologists, defiance of parental authority and of contemporary standards is usually a prerequisite for youth's definition of his own personality. The

spokesman of a parent's guidance center in New York summed up this doctrine in the following words:

When an adolescent begins to defy parental authority and becomes highly critical of adults in general, he is actually beginning to define his own personality.

Testing just about everything and everyone, taking very little for granted, the adolescent is in fact beginning to find "something of his own," to believe in and cling to.

This sounds fine, so far as general theory goes, but the theory just doesn't fit the twin pictures of super-conformity and its strangely unrebelling opposite. Neither the superconformist nor the "way-out-there-somewhere" hipster, is trying to define himself as an individual. Just what may be the significance of what these types are attempting to gain *without* trying is an absorbing subject, and before we allow ourselves the pomposity of any sort of conclusion, we should sample a few statistics and more than a few diverging opinions (to be examined next week).

FRONTIERS Quest for "Commitment"

EVERY four years the Methodist Church holds a conference for Methodist youth, the most recent of which ended Jan. 1 in Lawrence, Kansas. The get-together lasted six days and was attended by 3,200 students and 200 adult leaders.

Normally, we should pass an event of this sort by without comment, but the critical murmurings of the Methodist student body in response to charges of "passivity" and lack of "commitment" from the elders of the Church are possibly typical of the feelings of other young people. When Harold A. Bosley, a Methodist minister of Evanston, Ill., declared, "If you are the uncommitted generation, you are the irrelevant generation," the students retorted:

We admit the truth of the designation, but protest the implication that we are uncommitted either through choice or indifference. . . . Most of us are concerned over our lack of commitment and many of us are actually searching for that cause to which we can offer unreserved allegiance.

Statements of this sort by the students were compiled into a summarizing report by Dr. Robert Hamill, Wesley Foundation Director at the University of Wisconsin. The Church itself, some students felt, is itself "a major stumbling block toward commitment." Another comment was: "We may be silent and withdrawn, but we are not easily misled."

This last observation recalls the explanation of youthful "apathy" given by Roy Finch, professor of philosophy at Sarah Lawrence College, in *Liberation* for May of last year:

. . . those who accuse the young of apathy forget how often they have been committed to enthusiasms that have created havoc or have gotten nowhere. If the choice is between enthusiasms, "apathy" may be the more decent alternative. Similarly, when the young are urged to "speak up" by those whose speech has become empty rhetoric on the one hand or sectarian jargon on the other, perhaps it is small wonder that they prefer to keep silent.

According to one observer who attended the Conference, some tensions developed around the

issue between the neo-orthodox and the "liberal" approach to religion. In his address, Dr. Bosley said:

The "new movements" in Christian theology (whether neo-orthodox or any one of a half a dozen different biblical theologies) have betrayed every significant position won by the social gospel movement over 50 years. They have provided the verbal, intellectual and ethical framework which enables reluctant spirits to ignore, postpone, modify or repudiate every single position on race, war, social or economic justice that we once were committed to serve with all our personal and combined energies."

There were some interesting contrasts in the Conference. The neo-orthodox influence, it is reported, was strongly evident in the forms of guided "worship" provided for the students, while other currents manifested in a ballet performed by a New York dancer before a packed auditorium—"a fitting symbol," the *Christian Century* reporter remarked, "of Puritanism's lost sway over Methodist thought and life." And one student described the Conference as "bang-up, spectacular, an extravaganza, a three-ring circus in the name of Jesus."

The major impact of the Conference on the students, however, came with the address of Norman Cousins, editor of the *Saturday Review*, who laid aside a Jeremiad concerned with atomic Armageddon to renew the theme of Albert Schweitzer's recent "Declaration of Conscience" (an appeal for which Cousins had been primarily responsible, in the sense that he went to Africa to prevail upon Dr. Schweitzer to speak to the world in this way). As the editor of a national magazine who has probably done more than any publicist to try to bring an end to nuclear testing, Mr. Cousins told the students that nuclear violence is unthinkable. It cannot, he said, give security or freedom. According to the *Christian Century* report:

Cousins asked students to free themselves from trivia, to respect the rights of the next generation, to recognize that "sacred man is in jeopardy," and to insist that "we would rather die than drop these bombs." Repudiation of nuclear tests by America would place the psychological initiative once again in our hands and force the Soviet Union to abandon them also, Cousins said. "We must produce not bigger *sputniks* but bigger ideas. The greatest adventure of man on earth is now beginning, the

venture into outer space. We must become citizens of the earth before we can become citizens of the cosmos."

It is easy to see how the challenge presented by Norman Cousins captured the imagination of the young Methodists and sent them home wondering what *they* could do to stop nuclear weapons testing. Here is an issue with both drama and simplicity.

Yet the problem of a religious institution like the Methodist Church in relation to its youth is a basic one in our society. There is more to it than the typical schism between the older and younger generations. If the students lack "orientation" and commitment, are their elders any better off? Can any religious institution of our time hope to establish balance among the wracking questions which have left all but partisans and zealots uncertain?

What, exactly, is the object of Christian endeavor? The appropriate generalization would say that it is to bring the saving power of the example and inspiration of Jesus into human life. But what does this mean for a heavily armed, technological society which can see no alternative to its corporate policies save the defenseless anarchy which effective disarmament would seem to promise? And which is the prior goal—private redemption or social transformation? How does the power for good—which Christians believe comes from God—enter upon the human scene? Is it a historical phenomenon or are the divine ends indifferent to the fortunes of nations, as such? For Christians, the role of man—his duty, that is, and the ends he should seek above all—depends entirely for its definition upon how the role of God is conceived. And who is so rash as to define the role of God?

The oscillations of the Christian community between what is now called "neo-orthodoxy" on the one hand, and "social gospel" religion on the other, are obviously the result of honest searchings and deeply felt responses to inward monitions. From a philosophic point of view, these two extremes might be compared to the Stoic and the Platonic moralities of antiquity. The Stoics worked out a scheme of private integrity which a man could practice no matter how bad the world became. The Platonists,

on the other hand, were social moralists as well, and if the *Republic* can be regarded as embodying a "social gospel," they believed in working toward the establishment of the ideal community.

Did the Platonists find a resolution of the Niebuhrian dilemma—the dilemma of the man who finds himself an unwilling servant of "political necessity"? How would they have dealt with the evils of a complexly institutionalized culture which Niebuhr aptly identified in his title, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*.; The only clue we find to a solution is the passage, recently quoted in MANAS, from the close of Book IX of the *Republic*, where Socrates admits that, so far as he can see, the pattern of the ideal community exists only as "laid up in heaven." Socrates adds:

But whether such an one exists, or ever will exist in fact is no matter; for he will live after the manner of that city, having nothing to do with any other.

This, it must be confessed, is very much of an "otherworldly" solution. To live in this world according to the ideals of an imaginary "good society"—or a "heavenly city"—may be a program for individuals, but it is certainly not a program for an organized church which has intimate and practical relations with the existing society. An organization or institution which sought to assist toward the Platonic solution would have no "program" of its own, but would rather lend support to each man who is trying to find his own way of living "after the manner of" the ideal community. Some kind of "consensus" concerning ideal behavior might develop in time, but it would be the consensus of the unharnessed thinking and acting of free men, rather than a planned or predetermined conclusion.

The implications of these reflections, so far as the Methodists are concerned, raise the question of whether the Methodist students really ought to reproach their church and their elders for failing to offer them clear avenues to "commitment." The heart of true religion—and true philosophy—it seems likely, is finding one's own avenues of commitment. The man or youth who expects direction in such matters may be only repeating the errors of his forefathers.