

THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS

IT is hardly a coincidence that in the same month MANAS should receive for review two important works, one a pamphlet, the other a weighty volume, both having to do with the withdrawal of human confidence or faith in the prevailing institutional authorities of the age. Usually histories of ideas or chronicles of cultural change describe the passage of mental and emotional allegiance from one system of finding "truth" to another. What we are confronted with, today, is a growing current of questioning of *all* systems. The issue of this broad trend can only be to press human beings toward a region of established and admitted uncertainty—a psychological "place" from which, in the past, we have as a culture and as individuals taken flight.

Of course, the withdrawal from familiar approaches to certainty is itself a part of the quest for truth. It is a way of saying that those approaches are misleading; that they do not lead us where we want to go. Take the field of theology. In his recent Pendle Hill pamphlet, *The Eclipse of the Historical Jesus*, Henry J. Cadbury (emeritus professor of divinity at Harvard University, where he taught for twenty-seven years) notes the comparative unimportance of the historicity of Jesus to present-day theologians. After reviewing the gradual liberation of Christian theology from dependence upon "the historical Jesus," he writes:

. . . the theologians . . . regard history as useless. They quite correctly gauge the difficulty of recovering Jesus. They quite correctly say that history is always mixed with interpretation, is never pure and objective. They quite correctly perceive that the historical approach is often neglectful of the problems of epistemology, that is, of method and knowledge in general. No wonder they get more satisfaction in the unhampered constructions of theology. They can claim that the Jesus of history has never been central in Christianity.

Dr. Cadbury examines the implications of this position:

Biblical theology itself admits that without interpretation it is unsuited to present needs. At least it requires selection and interpretation. Otherwise it would lack the relevance of what they call "existential." For Karl Barth the crucial matter for modern man is right decision. Therefore the element of decision demanded by Jesus in the light of the future coming of the Kingdom of God, or by Paul in the light of both the future and what had happened in Jesus Christ is selected as significant to modern man. It may be called "crisis theology." For Tillich the keyword is being. For Bultmann it is self-understanding. The answers to man's predicament so defined are, they believe, to be found by selection and interpretation within the classical scheme of salvation. But why if we understand what are our problems today, should we bother to connect them even remotely with so arbitrary and fanciful a structure as traditional theology? Why not, as indeed many do, find our description of the typical human predicament in avowed fiction, like Dostoevski, Kafka, and the great modern imaginative novelists and poets of many nationalities? Why not use psychology? I am not suggesting that psychology or even fiction is a better medium of analysis and presentation. I am suggesting that theology, even biblical theology, if it has to be so translated, transposed and adapted, is not really more instructive. Why, just because it is loosely connected with the Bible and still more loosely connected with the Jesus of history, has it any special authority? One suspects here a carry-over from typical Protestant emphasis on the authority of the Bible and even from the dogmatic formulation of the creeds. Decoded Christian theology looks as though it were using borrowed credentials.

When you get this far in the impartial analysis of a system of belief or religious faith, it becomes impossible to turn back. The internal logic of this sort of questioning eventually places the individual entirely on his own in the quest for religious truth. Not that he will easily or willingly accept this logic; the force and development of such a view is usually felt only after the passage of time, when its persuasion has become a cultural consensus rather than the mandate of naked reason. After all, the

responsibilities of self-reliance in religion are a somewhat novel burden for Western believers. Men long for companions in this as in other daring undertakings. The point, here, is that pioneers are already moving in this direction. There are additional sources to illustrate this trend in religious thinking, but first let us look at the other work we have for review.

The Broken Image, by Floyd Matson (George Braziller, \$6.95), is a critical study of science as a systematic means of determining the truth about man. There have been scores of books with this general purpose; Mr. Matson's volume has the virtue of drawing together the various themes of this criticism and making a clear reading of what is rapidly becoming another cultural consensus. Again, there is an obvious breakaway from established and time-honored means to certainty. To what, or whom, now, is "reality" assigned? To man himself—man as *subject*. About half this book is devoted to the causes which are now leading to the reorientation of the social and psychological sciences. The section titled "Humanization" starts with the impact of the new physics, the influence of which Mr. Matson calls an "uncertain trumpet." The passing of the world-machine and the substitution of mathematical formulas for the mechanistic account of "reality," did not, after all, restore the dignity of man, but it did liberate philosophizing physicists from mechanistic assumptions. As Whitehead asked in 1925: "What is the sense of talking about a mechanical explanation when you do not know what you mean by mechanics?" Next comes the evidence from biology. Mr. Matson summarizes the entire cycle of the argument between the Mechanists and the Vitalists, showing how research kept reducing the usefulness of the machine analogy. Actually, mechanism was pushed from the biological scene in much the same inch-by-inch fashion that God was eliminated from the cosmic scene by the earlier Natural Philosophers. Mr. Matson also gives a full report on the ninth wave of common sense which made the psychologists—the new ones, that is—recognize that if you want to know about subjects, you have to consult subjects, and by using the means with which subjects communicate, namely, ideas. As Gordon W.

Allport has put it: "the best way to discover what a person is trying to do is to *ask* him." The book reviews the slow emergence and rehabilitation of the subject in the practice of psychoanalysis, from Jung's revisions of Freud to the conceptions of the neo-Freudians—which he characterizes as "psychosynthesis," to set them off from psychoanalysis. Mr. Matson concludes a later chapter:

Man's freedom of choice—the basis of his existential indeterminacy and personal responsibility—is seen to be confirmed by the several convergent traditions in postmodern psychology which the present chapter has surveyed. The cumulative evidence from psycho-biology, perception, psychoanalysis, psychotherapy and existential psychology therefore gives us the groundwork for a new and reconstructive science of human behavior—an alternative to "behavioral science." The main outlines of that science are now identifiable.

It will be a science whose guiding purpose is not the measurement of organic mechanisms or the manipulation of conditioned responses but the understanding of personal experience in its complementary wholeness: a science which, in Riezler's words, begins with "respect for the subject-matter"—and ends in vindication of that respect.

It will be a science activated, not by a rage for order, but by a passion from freedom.

It will be a science which regards men as actors as well as spectators, and accordingly perceives its own task as one primarily of participation (intersubjectivity) and only secondarily of observation (objectivity). In short, it will recognize with Tillich that "detachment is only one element within the embracing act of cognitive participation." It will be a science which, in seeking to comprehend human nature and conduct, takes men's reasons and reasoning into account as seriously as it does nature's causes. . . . The constructive science of behavior will dare to look upon all men as moral agents, and upon their behavior as the expression of a choice—in agreement with Sartre that "this decision is human and I shall carry the entire responsibility for it."

Mr. Matson's book draws an extraordinarily complete picture of the great change in thinking about the meaning and use of science in relation to man; he gives essential quotations from the figures in science and psychology who have taken decisive

steps in this transition, and his own independent intelligence provides ample substance and structure to the over-all view. *The Broken Image* is a milestone marking human progress in self-understanding.

Another aspect of this book deserves attention. The early chapters present the origin, the rise, and the triumphant high noon of the mechanistic philosophy, and while this has been done by various writers, Mr. Matson's account has the effect of making it clear that the early materialists were campaigners in a holy war. Never was there more confident self-righteousness, more zealous determination masquerading as scientific certainty, than in these men who believed that at last the guess-work had been removed from the study of human beings. From La Mettrie to Skinner, from Comte to Marx, the defenders of the Mechanist dogma have been animated by a passion for salvation from the unpredictable and the incalculable. In the eighteenth century, there was some excuse for this ardor. One has only to read La Mettrie, or his even more aggressively materialistic contemporary, Baron d'Holbach, to recognize that these men believed that they had found a way to free mankind from the evils of irrational religion. God can neither save nor punish a mechanically determined man, nor make his heart heavy with charges of "sin." The founders of modern materialism were hot-gospellers with a great cause to further and a whole army of ignorant Goliaths to overcome. They hardly anticipated that in a scant two hundred years, the tables would be turned and that freedom would again be lost, this time to mundane manipulators who claimed their authority from Science instead of God.

It is Mr. Matson's contention that the modern world is now recovering from the scientific dogma that there is a settled system of reaching objective certainty about the behavior of human beings and the meaning of human life. The rejection of Mechanism might be summed up in the remark of a perceptive patient in psychotherapy who had tired of being treated as an object. "Doctor," he said, "I have the impression that you are not listening to me, that you are trying *to figure me out.*"

We began this discussion with notice of the decreasing interest in the historical aspect of Western religion, and of the growing emphasis on the existential element in the idea of religious experience. A book by Wilfrid Cantwell Smith, professor of comparative religion at McGill University, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Macmillan, 1963), is devoted to justification of this trend.

Dr. Smith's purpose early becomes apparent. It is to distinguish between the reality of "the religious" in human life, and the body of attitudes, doctrines, practices, and organization commonly called "a religion." He writes:

This much at least is clear and crucial: that men throughout history and throughout the world have been able to be religious without the assistance of a special term, without the intellectual analysis that the term implies. In fact, I have come to feel that, in some ways, it is probably easier to be religious without the concept; that the notion of religion can become an enemy to piety. One might almost say that the concern of the religious man is with God; the concern of the observer is with religion. This is too quippish; yet it is not absurd. For the religious man in less sophisticated societies or of less mature piety one would have to substitute less absolute references than "God" in this aphorism. Such a man is concerned with the divine as mediated—through the fetish the ritual, the doctrines, or whatever. Again, in some traditions a less personal reference for the Absolute than "God" would be required. In any case, it is not entirely foolish to suggest that the rise of the concept "religion" is in some ways correlated with a decline in the practice of religion itself.

Dr. Smith finds that there are four general uses of the term "religion." The first use commonly is adjectival; it refers to the quality in a man's life. We say he is "deeply religious," not meaning his system of beliefs, but his spirit and temper. The second use refers to "an overt system, whether of beliefs, practices, values, or whatever." Here, however, there is an "inside" and an "outside" view of the system, which makes the third use of the term. "Normally," Mr. Smith observes, "persons talk about other people's religions as they are and about their own as it ought to be." The fourth use suggests "religion in general," as a total phenomenon. The author's thesis

is that the word "religion," and the concepts with which it is associated, should be dropped, "at least in all but the first, personalist sense." The early part of his book is devoted to showing that, with only one or two exceptions, the great religious teachers of the past had no intention of "founding" religions in the modern sense of the term. They wanted to stir men to seek an inward encounter, not to create recognizable "religious" forms. Dr. Smith gives extended attention to the long historical process through which the inward meaning of religion was exchanged for a description of the outward patterns of behavior. As he puts it, in summary:

The concept "religion," then, in the West has evolved. Its evolution has included a long-range development that we may term a process of reification: mentally making religion into a thing, gradually coming to conceive it as an objective, systematic entity. In this development one factor has been the rise into Western consciousness in relatively recent times of several so conceived entities, constituting a series: the religions of the world.

Dr. Smith states his basic position—

that a religious understanding of the world does not necessarily imply that there is a generic religious truth or a religious system that can be formulated and externalized into an observable pattern theoretically abstractible from the persons who live it. This is to look for essences; to Platonize one's own faith and to Aristotelianize other peoples'.

His conclusion, leaves no doubt as to his purpose:

Perceptive readers will have noticed that in the course of this present inquiry the adjective "religious" has been retained in use even while the noun is rejected. This has to do with a contention that living religiously is an attribute of persons. The attribute arises not because these persons participate in some entity called *religion*, but because they participate in what I have called transcendence. . . .

All man's history is becoming self-conscious; including his religious history. It is also becoming more unified, for good or ill. How man will work out the unification on the religious plane is as yet far from clear. What is clear already is that the responsibility for this too is becoming his. Men of different religious communities are going to have to collaborate to construct conjointly and deliberately the

kind of world of which men of different religious communities can jointly approve, as well as one in which they can jointly participate. . . .

Written from within mankind, [this book] is offered to fellow human beings throughout the world, including those whose faith is derived from other traditions and also those whose faith is not religious, in the hopes that it might contribute to the intellectual aspect of our new task of together constructing a brotherhood on earth deserving the loyalty of all our groups.

Such aspirations would seem fantastical and pretentious, were it not that today no man's faith is finally legitimate unless it can so aspire.

We have titled this discussion "The Edge of the Abyss." It might also have been called "At the Foot of the Mountain," for the tasks it contemplates, through Floyd Matson's proposal of "a new and reconstructive science of human behavior," and Wilfrid Smith's advocacy of religion by "participation in transcendence," represent the challenge of a great, new ascent for human intelligence. Both proposals have arisen within the existing matrix, and are, not arguments for a new conceptual system of authority to replace one that has proved misleading and ineffectual, but demands for the abandonment of any conceptual system of authority. It is a call, in both science and religion, for reliance on *individual* discovery, *individual* insight, and *individual* demonstrations of verity. Conceptual or intellectual approaches are not discarded entirely, but allowed only a relative validity. They are seen as tools of self-discovery, not avenues to final certainty. The science of the future, as Matson says, will be "a science activated not by a rage for order, but a passion for freedom." And religion, according to Smith, will not result from adherence to some denominational group, but from inward communion.

If we mistake not, this sort of movement for regeneration from within the structure of society is something new in Western history. It marks the end of the collectivist theory of progress in both science and religion. It rejects the authority of the experts in any determination of ultimate value. It affirms the responsibility as well as the freedom of individual man.

What must now be recognized is the far-reaching change this view of man requires of individuals. It will be urged that people do not have the habit of self-reliance; that they have not been expected, and do not themselves expect, to make important decisions concerning their lives, their essential philosophy, and the selection of worthwhile ends. Indeed, their habits are quite the reverse, and Western civilization has become in many ways a cultural conspiracy to confirm this lack of independence. How can a few "leaders" in science and religion change such a situation?

We might argue, however, that the pessimism embodied in this question is itself a product of collectivist thinking. It ignores the fact that, within certain limits, there is a broad band of variability in human behavior which depends upon what individuals feel is expected or required of them. Educators soon learn that children respond inventively when thrown on their own resources. It is not easy to "teach" self-reliance, but, on the other hand, it is not difficult to encourage it and to refuse to make decisions for others. As a matter of fact, the literature of psychotherapy is today filled with reports of the astonishing things which happen when people are led to frontiers of self-decision and left alone on the edge of the abyss. You could say that the main contribution of the "leaders" in this movement toward an existential position—in both psychology and religion—is their discovery of the real individuality in all human beings, and not some conceptual construction that must now be "taught" to everyone. You could say that this new consciousness of identity in human beings—this self-searching, this hunger to find the roots of reality and meaning within, instead of in some authoritative external system of belief or knowledge—is a natural phenomenon of the age, a part, it may be, of the course of "emergent evolution." In any event, there is also a plainly evident exhaustion of the utility of outside authority. One of the lessons of the present juncture of history—in international affairs, in domestic problems, in matters of psycho-social health and well-being—is that people can no longer be "manipulated" for their own good.

The deep sense of dilemma, of seeing no openings into the future, felt by so many, these days, may be simply the reverse side of their reluctance to admit that there is now nothing left to do but to seek understanding and responsibility in individual behavior. This is a way of saying that the pursuit of progress through the sagacious use of collectivist techniques in the "management" of people has reached a point of diminishing returns.

But why speak of an "abyss" which lies ahead? Because the abyss is real. Because, for a great many people, the idea of having to live without authority must seem a threat of being cast adrift, thrust into the outer darkness of independent decision. The problem, you might say, is to give the idea of the individual being or self sufficient substance in realizable reality or strength to support a life of awakening individuality, and to do this without falling back into some kind of "authoritarian" claim concerning the nature and potentiality of human beings. It would be a way of speaking of the self which would help each one to accumulate personal resources in his attempt to grow into greater responsibility—a way of thinking about the human essence which is consistent with the vision of greatness that has moved men to high striving throughout history and, on rare occasions, brought fulfillments which remain undying wonders in the memory of man.

REVIEW

A PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLORATION

THE source of the most recent flare-up of publicity about smoking tobacco is *Smoking and Health*, the report of the Public Health Advisory Committee to the Surgeon General (available from the U.S. Government Printing Office for \$1.25; a \$3.95 hardbound edition is published by Van Nostrand). This study is complete and the most thoroughly documented of all the reports. While couched in the Committee's jargon, it does pose some questions not raised (except parenthetically) elsewhere; the last three chapters of this 387-page report deal directly with the social and psychological relationship between the smoker and his inability to stop smoking.

Having established that smoking is unhealthy—even deadly—it would seem logical to proceed to how to help people stop smoking. But not much is being done in this area and not much is known about why people smoke. Ruth and Edward Brecher in "How to Give Up Smoking—Maybe" (*New York Times Magazine*, Jan. 26, 1964), after surveying the methods and research being conducted to help people break the habit—from groups like AA who use a "buddy system," to individual psychoanalysis—conclude: "Surprisingly little study has been devoted to this subject. On the basis of what evidence is available, the guess might be hazarded that a goodly number of smokers—perhaps a third or even a half of the total (there are 70 million smokers in the United States)—can stop if they really want to, if they have an overwhelming reason, such as a heart attack, or if they have the help of a clinic. The other half or two-thirds are really hooked." Apparently, we live in a country with over 35 million incurable tobacco "addicts"!

This reviewer is neither medically nor psychologically trained in the formal sense, but as a student of biochemistry and psychology—and as a former smoker and recent dieter—I would like

to explore briefly some aspects of stopping, or starting, within a largely unknown continuum.

What sort of events interrupt the dream-like state most of us live in most of the time; and, when interruptions come, what are the consequences? Assuming that stopping smoking is less a physiological problem than a psychological one, why is it so difficult? Is it possible that even in this mundane business of smoking—admittedly not "mundane" to cancer victims, nor to the tobacco companies—human beings are involved in dilemmas which can only be described as existential: directly participating in the fact that to be aware of existence, of being, points (as Sartre and others have said) to non-being, to death, and to the overwhelming realization of the importance of being and having responsibility for that being? Who gazes calmly at this responsibility which can never be earned nor abdicated, but only ignored by a self-limitation which may become, finally, self-destruction?

To stop smoking (or drinking, or using drugs, or overeating), one must interrupt and suspend the momenta and security of the dream-like state most of us live in most of the time. In this dream that is neither insensibility nor awareness, we passively interact with the world (or ourselves as another part of that world), living only on the periphery of our consciousness where pleasure and pain are either available, avoided, or repressed. Satisfaction is guaranteed by the small whimper of needs and by the firm voice of repression: less and less is required and demanded, while the negative forces of repression hollow out further the empty men. We repress too well and the world has no need of our deeper selves: we sleep, we do not know the place of our inner, active selves, we live so meagerly as to barely notice death when it comes. Perhaps death shocks only as it points back to life missed. Blinded by the responsibility of potentiality, we live peeking between fingers covering our faces.

If one's dream-like state is smooth-running and efficient, then one might continue indefinitely

with only minimal reminders—if any at all—that one is in fact alive, existing. But when it becomes impossible to confirm a part of the sub-structure of the dream-like state, the whole is open to question and the sleeper is threatened with waking. Smoking is now becoming for many people a part of their dreamlike state which cannot be confirmed. The mass media have not only made it difficult to ignore that smoking is dangerous, but have made contradictory, and therefore questionable, the "word from the world" about smoking: it has become a status symbol to stop smoking; the ads indicate one thing about smoking, but the news programs they sponsor say something else again. In addition, smoking does have long-term psychological vectors which make it more significant than, for example, eating, or not eating, tuna; it is significantly different—because of these basic, inner coordinates—from the fashions that wax and wane without interrupting the dream, which in fact give a kind of movement and illusion of change to the dream. In smoking a host of personal and fundamental psychological factors are operating: a sense of security from sucking, social approval and poise (derived in part from advertising and from a willingness to accept advertising), the symbol of masculinity feared lost by men. All these forces conspire, when the dream-like state is interrupted, to focus attention on inner processes and deprivations. The "site" of interruption is not outside (war, plague, the furies of nature), but within; rationalization in the service of repression fails under the harangue of facts and contradictions; the sleeper wakes to the unknown and empty place that is himself. It is not surprising that he is afraid and that he keeps smoking in order to reassure himself that he is still asleep.

Assuming that he stays awake and persists in his effort to stop smoking, he is catapulted into a key existential dilemma: what is the place in himself where he decides to do or not do something? He is in a foreign land, his awareness riddled with anxiety, and he cannot go home

again: he is home, he is responsible, he is alive. His search for the place of decision may not be attempted, or if attempted a shunt of deflected searching usually prolongs and confuses it. Most of us look outside ourselves for some kind of command to follow or some kind of "benevolent dictator" to support us, but if fully awakened, we discover a frightening inner void of consciousness, and that the place of decision is a lonely place. To confront this fact is the source of more anxiety; one is drawn into the realization that he is ultimately alone, autonomous. This can be a time of intense anxiety, and who in our culture and time is in any way prepared by education or revelation to sustain anxiety for any reason? There is neither language, nor hope for such an effort; and our reasons for risking it—love, joy, discovery of the real—are the voice of the turtle.

The next step is long and dangerous; the stranger to this self he is must explore and chart his unknowns and unknowables; he must gather into himself and fuse the possible and the potential, and find somewhere between the place of choice. He may reach this place only to discover that it has been weakened by disuse and misuse, that the voice of decision is without action—disembodied and only a ghost for hope. Or he may find that the decision—for death—has been made before he began to explore, that his life is an investment in death and that his dream-like state was in reality a nightmare. But the place of choice can be strengthened and the choice made for death can be changed; efforts to do these things cost anxiety and pain, but one finally comes to develop a taste for the real—even here.

Finally, the "addict" arrives at his place of choice, and let us assume that it functions and is aligned with life and viable growth. The explorer is exhausted from his journey; he has sustained a variety of phases and rhythms of anxiety, sustained and mastered them. He is running tired, supported by a curious—even to himself—interest in what is real, having gone through so much he—with nothing to lose, the only free man—finds

courage in this freedom to feed a determination to find what is real, if it is findable. This new discovery elicits more anxiety: in choosing he takes responsibility for himself, he takes on all the prerogatives and limitations of being and forsakes the magic and painlessness of the dream. He acknowledges all that he might have been, but will not, and all that he might have done, but cannot. He begins with the reality of his status quo, wherever it may be, coming face to face with his own inexorable slot of time in history, with his own death. He lives consciously for the first time where he has always lived and will always have to live: a vital twilight which is intensely real between what he was, what he is, what he might become, and bounded only by the denouement of his own death.

He chooses to stop smoking—this choice but one of many made, a choice only incidental to choices more profound—and he finds a growing satisfaction in coming to know what is real, what is really happening to himself (he discovers the emotional dimension of being alive), and what are the beginnings of a love for what is real, a love strong enough to question all the roads and bridges to it. He loves that which he never really knows, becoming able to redefine and reshape his beloved again and again, as both he and reality change: he comes to dance with change. He learns to accept anxiety (his perception is imperfect) and death (his imagination grows to predict accurately) because of his growing and sustaining love for what is actual and real. The mystery becomes beloved; and death and anxiety, while real and painful, are less significant than this love, less compelling than the vital present.

This prolonged metaphor is open to question in many aspects; for one thing, it is an oversimplified sketch of a complex process. My point has been to try to suggest that the most mundane aspects of human life may not be at all mundane, and that whenever and for whatever reasons we interrupt and discard the dream-like state of living, the peripheral existence, we

embark on a dangerous but potentially saving exploration. In point of fact, there may be nothing human that is mundane. The drama suggested here may be more relevant than one might think at first glance; a variety of forces are emerging in current history which make it increasingly difficult to remain in the dreamstate, forces as apparently disparate as governmental concern over cigarette smoking, the funeral "industry," and—not parenthetically—popular incredulity about exposés of preparing for nuclear war as a means of gaining peace and security: the contradictions and absurdities are too obvious, knowledge of them is too widespread, and small but clear voices in favor of being awake exist for those who will listen.

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COMMENTARY

PSYCHO-SOCIAL SYNTHESIS

THERE is an impressive conjunction of ideas in this week's issue—between, for example, the suggestion in the lead article of the need for radical self-reliance, and Dr. Glasser's observations as quoted in "Children . . . and Ourselves:" A paragraph from Dr. Glasser was crowded out of the "Children" article, but it fits well here. Speaking about the young law-breaker to a group of youth counselors, he said:

We never ask him why he did it because there is no excuse. We only point out what he did and how this has caused him to suffer. Since we'll accept no excuses we never need to ask why. If we act this way, he will understand that we expect responsibility, not excuses. We care about him far more than anyone who will excuse him for what he did wrong, because in the end he is harmed if excuses are accepted.

Too much listening to problems is one of the best ways of not getting really involved because the young person knows that you can't do one solitary thing about his troubles. Listen briefly, enough to be human, then move on. This tells him that you accept him at your level, not at his.

This sounds like "good advice" in any human relationship. There is implicit respect for the individual, for his capacity to start solving his own problems, along with implicit communication of the fact that no one can remove another's troubles or substitute his own good will for the commitment that must come from within the individual who seeks or needs help.

It is also good advice for those concerned with social relationships—and this brings into our comparison the ideas of Erich Fromm and Jayaprakash Narayan, cited in *Frontiers*. No doubt the reader will have noted, as we did, the absence of denunciation of "the capitalists." These men are students of the human situation, not partisans of any class. Their ideas for the future do not rest upon revenge for an evil past; they seek no angry revolutionary passion, but intelligent understanding of common human need. There is full recognition, here, that a political

revolution can neither "make people happy" nor create a heaven on earth. Politics can establish the conditions of justice but it cannot make men responsible and just.

These several quotations, it seems to us, constitute some profoundly basic realizations in modern thought.

CHILDREN

... and Ourselves

MISERY AND RESPONSIBILITY

THOSE who are familiar with Erich Fromm's discussion of the "Limitations of Psychoanalysis" will find particular value in a paper on "Reality Therapy" by Dr. William Glasser, consulting psychiatrist at the Ventura School for Girls, Camarillo, Calif. Dr. Glasser believes that to explain away deviant behavior by background, parentage, or environment avoids the central question of individual responsibility. Only when the offender becomes willing to assume responsibility for his own condition can actual therapy begin. Following is a paragraph by Dr. Glasser with a decidedly sympathetic human touch:

When we find the mountains of misery that these children carry on their shoulders our first human reaction is to do something to make them happy. So we try to change their environment, find a good foster home, feed, clothe and provide them with recreation and wonder why they are not happier because we have done so much. Why do they return after our good treatment to their old habits? We are puzzled because we haven't been taught that we can't make people happy and that unhappiness is the result, not the cause, of irresponsibility. Therefore, in Reality Therapy, we, as much as possible, ignore the unhappy past, we help them always to help themselves and we provide an opportunity for them to benefit themselves in a responsible way. When a girl comes to me and says she is unhappy, I won't sympathize. Mostly I'll just listen or in some cases I'll suggest that she, herself, could do something about her problems. I'm a compassionate human being, not a crying towel. I don't promise to produce happiness or alleviate misery. This is not my job as a psychiatrist, this is up to her. In the same vein, I'll never do anything to impair her taking responsibility, no matter how initially upsetting this may be. I'll never change the rules no matter how much she begs, nor will I give her tranquilizers which promise to her happiness without responsibility. I'll help her toward responsibility, happiness after that, is up to her. But at least when she becomes more responsible she is in a position to find some lasting happiness, not the

brief kicks she searched for so vainly in her irresponsible delinquent condition.

Dr. Glasser says that he wastes no time on verbal expression of sympathy for the background causes of deviant or criminal behavior. In many cases the offender has already been giving herself large quantities of sympathy, which usually takes the form of excuses. Dr. Glasser continues:

If we want to face the reality, we must accept that we can never re-write a person's history. No matter how much we can understand about the cruel and unusual circumstances which led to his behavior, his mental illness, his neurosis, his ulcer, his depression or his drug addiction, there is not one solitary thing that this information can do for us or him except to reinforce the concept that indeed he has a reason to break the law or to be sick. The only possible good that this information could serve would be if through magic we could get him reborn and re-direct his life with a new 20-20 hindsight. *We may learn a great deal about how he should have been raised, but we can't re-write his history for him,* therefore we emphasize what traditional therapy tries to ignore, that no matter what happened to him, he still has the responsibility for what he does. *The crux of our theory is personal responsibility which we equate with mental health—the more responsible the person, the healthier he is—the less responsible, the less healthy.* This is why in many cases it is easier to rehabilitate murderers than any other criminal. Except for one grossly irresponsible act, many murderers are fairly responsible individuals. From a treatment standpoint it matters little exactly what a person did. What matters is in how many areas of his present life is he responsible? The more that we find, the easier he is to treat and the better his prognosis.

We do not conclude from the above that Dr. Glasser feels prolonged psychoanalysis in individual cases is useless, but rather that until the issue of responsibility is squarely faced, analysis is palliative instead of therapeutic. Even with the numerous juvenile offenders for whom individual psychoanalysis is unlikely, the decision to assume responsibility for oneself may come anywhere along the line:

I believe that regardless of what the young offender has done, how he feels, where he comes from, his size, shape, mental ability, physical condition or heredity, he suffers from a universal

malady; he is unwilling to take responsibility for his behavior to himself and to his community. I further believe that correctional problems are only a dramatic expression of this difficulty, it is in essence the basic problem of all psychiatry. In corrections the children and adults we deal with express this irresponsibility directly by the act of breaking the law. Patients in the local mental hospital express their inability to take responsibility by withdrawing partly or completely into a world of their own creation. The depressed patient is unable responsibly to express the intense anger he feels so he turns it inward and becomes depressed. The obsessive-compulsive neurotic tries desperately to compensate for his lack of responsibility by becoming super-responsible, so much so that he can accomplish little because of his compulsive symptoms. Thus all people who function badly in our society suffer from this difficulty but none of them express it as clearly and as directly as the law-breaker.

All the effort in the world aimed at discovering why a child is irresponsible and breaks the law won't change the fact that he is. Nor will all the treatment we can muster help unless this treatment is from the start always concerned with guiding the patient toward becoming a more responsible person right now. This is why we can claim that diagnosis based on detailed studies is meaningless; because no matter what superficial or deep explanation is arrived at, the ultimate fact remains that the person involved is not acting or thinking in a responsible manner.

A paragraph from Herbert Fingarette's *The Self in Transformation* seems pertinent here:

If we are to discover the moral viewpoint consistent with psychoanalysis, we must give up the postulate which conflicts with what we know to be psychoanalytic practice. Apparently the patient *must* accept responsibility for traits and actions of his which are the inevitable results of events over which he had no control and of actions which he did not consciously will.

It holds that paradoxical as it may at first *seem*, this is precisely the case. The real issue as revealed by our present perspective is that: What is the (moral-therapeutic) *solution* to the present human predicament, granted that what happens now is a consequence of what happened when we could not control what happened?

The solution is, as I have already indicated, that moral man must *accept* responsibility for what he is at some point in his life and go on from there.

A practical therapeutic discovery at Synanon is that men often make great progress when they are encouraged to behave *as if* they were mature and responsible people. The "as if" is a projection of one's potentialities into the future, but it "builds track," so to speak, for actual achievement.

FRONTIERS

Contemporary Socialist Directions

IT has often been said in these pages that the fears and partisan polemics of the cold war have made serious political thinking practically impossible. This, however, ceases to be true when the idea of socio-political progress is linked with the renunciation of war. Some of the contemporary advocates of socialism who have joined with the radical pacifists show an insight into the nature of social problems which is seldom found among critics of socialism. The latter devote their attention mainly to nineteenth-century socialist theory, or to the twentieth-century practice of communist powers, without giving attention to contemporary radical literature. They fail, therefore, to recognize the pioneering character of the ideas of some of those who call themselves "socialist" today. Take for example the recent observations of Jayaprakash Narayan, Indian Sarvodaya leader who some ten years ago ended his association with one of India's socialist parties to join the Bhoodan and Gramdan movement of Vinoba Bhave. In an article in *Bhoodan* for Nov. 9, 1963, Mr. Narayan wrote:

Only a limited socialism can be established through the agency of Government, and not the values of socialist living. Its outer frame, economic or social, does of course take shape, but the "socialist culture" does not emerge.

The students of social science have made comparative study of the power of the people and the power of the Government. How can the power of the people be generated? It is apparent that it cannot be done by Government officials. In democracy, cooperation and direct participation by the people are considered essential ingredients for its success, but the Government and the Law cannot make use of them when these forces emerge. Here arises the need for voluntary organizations. How to get the state's cooperation when the power of the people is released is another serious problem. It is these questions to which the Sarvodaya movement mainly applies. Education in our schools and colleges should relate itself to the life of the people, for otherwise the knowledge gained will be unreal, chimerical.

That freedom from exploitation and state control can be possible only through economic as well as governmental decentralization has been the core of Sarvodaya thought. The more centralized the economic order, the greater the exploitation. Nationalization slams the door against capitalism, but the state too is a problem. The bureaucracy has its supremacy here. Power also has to be decentralized. The basic thing in democracy is who makes decisions—a few at the top or the many at the base: Even those who had the reins of government have come to believe that the Panchayati Raj [village self-government by councils of elders] cannot succeed without economic decentralization. And it is because the Sarvodaya movement holds such a view that it emphasizes Khadi and village industries.

It is interesting to compare with the foregoing some of the ideas in a recent pamphlet by Erich Fromm, titled *Let Man Prevail*, issued by the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation as a "Socialist Manifesto and Program." Here, again, the emphasis is on decentralization, autonomy, and voluntary action. Discussing the intermediate goals of what he calls "Humanist Socialism," Dr. Fromm says:

The transition from the present centralized state to a completely decentralized form of society cannot be made without a transition period in which a certain amount of state planning and state intervention will be indispensable. But in order to avoid the dangers that central planning and state intervention may lead to, such as increased bureaucratization and weakening of individual integrity and initiative, it is necessary: (a) that the state is brought under the efficient control of its citizens; (b) that the social and political power of the big corporations is broken; (c) that from the very beginning all forms of decentralized, voluntary associations in production, trade, and local social and cultural activities are promoted.

Elsewhere he writes:

The aim of humanist socialism can be attained only by the introduction of a maximum of decentralization compatible with a minimum of centralization necessary for the coordinated functioning of an industrial society. The functions of a centralized state must be reduced to a minimum, while the voluntary activity of freely cooperating citizens constitutes the central mechanism of social life.

The first part of *Let Man Prevail* is concerned with the moral decay of Western industrial society:

The political ideas of democracy, as the founding fathers of the United States conceived them, were not purely political ideas. They were rooted in the spiritual tradition which came to us from prophetic Messianism, the gospels, humanism, and from the Enlightenment philosophers of the eighteenth century. All these ideas and movements were centered around one hope: that man, in the course of his history, can liberate himself from poverty, ignorance, and injustice, and that he can build a society of harmony, peace, of union between man and man, and between man and nature. The idea that history has a goal, and the faith in man's perfectibility within the historical process has been the most specific element of Occidental thought. It is the soil in which the American tradition is rooted, and from which it draws its strength and vitality. What has happened to the ideas of the perfectibility of man and of society? They have deteriorated into a flat concept of "progress," into a vision of the production of more and better *things*, rather than standing for the birth of the fully alive and productive *man*. Our political concepts have today lost their spiritual roots.

Of the socialism of the past, Dr. Fromm has this to say:

Socialism hoped for the eventual abolition of the state, so that only things, and not people, would be administered. It aimed at a classless society in which freedom and initiative would be restored to the individual. Socialism, in the nineteenth century, and until the beginning of the First World War, was the most significant humanistic and spiritual movement in Europe and America.

What happened to socialism?

It succumbed to the spirit of capitalism which it had wanted to replace. Instead of understanding it as a movement for the liberation of man, many of its adherents and its enemies alike understood it as being exclusively a movement for the *economic* improvement of the working class. The humanistic aims of socialism were forgotten, or only paid lip service to, while, as in capitalism, all the emphasis was laid on the aims of economic gain. Just as the ideals of democracy lost their spiritual roots, the idea of socialism lost its deepest root—the prophetic-

messianic faith in peace, justice and the brotherhood of man.

Thus socialism became the vehicle for the workers to gain their place *within* the capitalistic structure rather than transcending it; instead of changing capitalism socialism was absorbed by its spirit. The failure of the socialist movement became complete when in 1914 its leaders renounced international solidarity and chose the economic and military interests of their respective countries as against the ideas of internationalism and peace which had been their program. . . . Capitalism and a vulgarized, distorted socialism have brought man to the point where he is in danger of becoming a dehumanized automaton; he is losing his sanity and stands at the point of total self-destruction. Only full awareness of his situation and its dangers, and a new vision of a life which can realize the aims of human freedom, dignity, creativity, reason, justice and solidarity can save us from almost certain decay, loss of freedom, or destruction.

MANAS is not a journal of political commentary and criticism, but it seems important to call attention to the fact that original thinking is going on among the democratic or humanist socialists, and that it is difficult to find such thinking in any other quarter. The socialists are having their say, but to a very small audience, politically speaking, and there is no dialogue. What other socio-political thinkers are addressing themselves realistically to these questions?