

Editorial

Violence and armed force seem to have been increasing as instruments of power or control in the body politic. Throughout this century, Americans have been horrified when they have seen manifestations of this blight, such as nazism and similar political movements in other parts of the world that have sought political rule by force and violence instead of by the free consent of the governed rationally achieved. But now it would seem that even the American public is losing its capacity to find consensus by reason and is too often using force and violence to win control—in the outside world and even within its own body politic. W. E. Hocking noted in his study of the impotence of the state, published in his *The Coming World Civilization*, that the “police state is a sick state, on its way to death.” What is this disease that is now afflicting America as well as much of the rest of the world? Can anything be done to cure it?

Hocking noted that “the state’s incapacity arises from a *failure of motivation it has hitherto been able to assume in its public*. And since political society is essentially an organization of human wills, *motivation is of its essence*. This bare proposal is all but axiomatic; but the nature of this motivation and the sources of its health are not to be read from the surface of things.”

If it be true, as some of the human and behavioral scientists have been pointing out, that the bulk of the motivations or goals, and hence behavior patterns, in human populations derive largely from genetic and cultural forms transmitted from generation to generation and person to person, then it is reasonable to suppose that any change or increase in the use of armed force and violence must arise from some change in the effective transmission and operation of those forms or patterns of values. Since the genetic change is known to be insignificant during a small number of generations, the failure must lie in a breakdown of elements of the culturally patterned values.

In such a picture of group or public behavior derived from the behavioral sciences, it seems clear that police and armed force or violence play only marginal roles in keeping public order. A number of studies have shown that, even in societies that seem to us to be ruled by dictators, a closer look shows that the “dictator” in reality “rules” because

he is generally recognized by those whom he "rules" as close to the best agent for securing what they want. The problem of armed force and violence arises only at the boundaries of the "like-minded" group possessing common values. Disorderly or destructive violence has been shown to be a mechanism of last resort for integrated individuals or societies and is called into play only when the established and orderly response patterns have failed to satisfy basic needs.

To understand what is happening in America and in the world to produce so much disruptive violence in the twentieth century is to understand the failure of those social institutions that provide the individuals in a population with a suitable set of basic values which they hold in common. Many psychosocial scientists, some of whom have been published in *Zygon*, have been pointing to religion as the core institution of a culture and the heart of each society's value orientations. Clyde Kluckhohn expressed it well in the paper published in the September, 1966, issue of *Zygon*, where he sought to account for the contemporary "personal and social disorganization, individual unhappiness and human misery on a vast scale, irrational political movements which both manifest and add to these disasters."

Basic to these conditions is uncertainty about and conflict over values. Both aesthetic and moral values are universal in all cultures. Religions have been the traditional repositories of moral values. . . . It is an induction from the evidence at the disposal of the anthropologist that religion in the broad sense is essential to the health and survival of any society. That is, there must be codes which unite individuals in adherence to shared goals that transcend immediate and egocentric interest. There must be intellectually and emotionally acceptable orientations to some of the deeper inevitables such as death. There must be communicable symbolisms that appeal to the eye and the ear and the viscera. There must be expression in personal and group ceremonial. On all these points there is now little unity in the West. Belief in God as revealer, judge, and punisher has greatly weakened and with this a whole set of sanctions for adherence to established values.

It should be noted that behavioral and historical scholars in this century have come to include under the term "religion" not only the traditional, parochial forms recognized within a particular culture but, more broadly, they include the religions of the infidels and the "secular faiths," such as fascism, communism, and other national or "man-worshipping" religions, which Arnold Toynbee has called "the idolization of parochial communities." All of these institutions or systems for propagating community-wide basic values in a society perform the function of a religion.

The social and historical scholars today seem to be clearer than the

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theologians that there are good and bad religions, and why. Historian Toynbee in his *An Historian's Approach to Religion* joins philosopher Hocking and a number of anthropological and social scientists in pointing out the superior qualities of a religion that grounds its value system in a reality or nature that transcends man, over a religion that is only an idolization of the existing values in a parochial community.

The worship of Nature tends to unite the members of different communities because it is not self-centred; it is the worship of a power in whose presence all human beings have the identical experience of being made aware of their own human weakness. On the other hand the worship of parochial communities tends to set their respective members at variance because this religion is an expression of self-centredness; because self-centredness is the source of all strife; and because the collective ego is a more dangerous object of worship than the individual ego is.

Anthropologist A. F. C. Wallace pointed to the same danger in his paper published in the first issue of *Zygon* (see especially page 77).

To understand the remarkable experience of the United States in providing a free society where political and social consensus has been achieved by rational, democratic methods with a minimum of constraint by police and armed force, we can look at sociologist Robert Bellah's leading article in the *Daedalus* issue on *Religion in America* (Winter, 1967), where he described "Civil Religion in America" as distinct from the church religions:

Although matters of personal religious belief, worship, and association are considered strictly private affairs, there are, at the same time, certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share. These have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere. This public religious dimension is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that I am calling the American civil religion.

Bellah pointed out that "the civil religion was able to build up . . . powerful symbols of national solidarity and to mobilize deep levels of personal motivation for the attainment of national goals." He cites the famous French analyst of America, de Tocqueville, as saying:

The greatest part of British America was peopled by men who, after having shaken off the authority of the Pope, acknowledged no other religious supremacy; they brought with them into the New World a form of Christianity which I cannot better describe than by styling it a democratic and republican religion.

De Tocqueville also spoke of American church religion as “a political institution which powerfully contributes to the maintenance of a democratic republic among the Americans” by supplying a strong moral consensus amid continuous political change.

However, Bellah, also, notes the danger that the disappearance of the God concept (or the objective, man-transcending ground of values) from American religion, church or civil, might imply the end of our capacity to arrive at common goals or consensus by freely felt conviction or reason. The question before America and the world is: Is there any way to provide a credible faith in and commitment to some objective standard that transcends existing individual or community values?

The Jesuit priest-scientist, Teilhard de Chardin, became aware early in this century that Christian faith had lost its power. He was convinced that the scientific “myths” of creation found in the evolutionary story were today the credible picture of the reality of the human phenomenon, but he felt the Christian religion could be reformulated and shown to be in accord with the evolutionary picture. Will his suggestions for finding God in nature fare better than those of the Deists of the eighteenth-century enlightenment underlying American civil religion? Is it a better picture and more serviceable for the world population today than the nineteenth-century Marxist faith in the transcendent power of an historical, economic, natural process underlying Communist civil religion? (We should recognize that the Communist foreign missionary movement of the twentieth century has been even more successful in its conquest of human minds in Asia and Africa as the way of salvation than was the Christian foreign mission that preceded it.)

This issue of *Zygon* presents the first two of several papers we expect to present evaluating Teilhard’s attempt to tie religion to the sciences. At the same time, it presents three papers that examine some of the limitations as well as strengths of the sciences for dealing with problems of human values. It will appear that *Zygon*’s task of relating religion and science is not a simple or easy one. But perhaps these papers will do as much for showing us some of the real potentialities as for guarding us against the errors of naïveté. And perhaps, through the sciences, we can establish objective criteria by which men can persuade each other of common values instead of bludgeoning or killing the dissenters.

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