

MORAL MAN
AND
IMMORAL SOCIETY

A Study in Ethics and Politics

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INTRODUCTION

THE thesis to be elaborated in these pages is that a sharp distinction must be drawn between the moral and social behavior of individuals and of social groups, national, racial, and economic; and that this distinction justifies and necessitates political policies which a purely individualistic ethic must always find embarrassing. The title "Moral Man and Immoral Society" suggests the intended distinction too unqualifiedly, but it is nevertheless a fair indication of the argument to which the following pages are devoted. Individual men may be moral in the sense that they are able to consider interests other than their own in determining problems of conduct, and are capable, on occasion, of preferring the advantages of others to their own. They are endowed by nature with a measure of sympathy and consideration for their kind, the breadth of which may be extended by an astute social pedagogy. Their rational faculty prompts them to a sense of justice which educational discipline may refine and purge of egoistic elements until they are able to view a social situation, in which their own interests are involved, with a fair measure of objectivity. But all these achievements are more difficult, if not impossible, for human societies and social groups. In every human group there is less reason to guide and to check impulse, less capacity for self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the needs of others and therefore more unrestrained egoism

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than the individuals, who compose the group, reveal in their personal relationships.

The inferiority of the morality of groups to that of individuals is due in part to the difficulty of establishing a rational social force which is powerful enough to cope with the natural impulses by which society achieves its cohesion; but in part it is merely the revelation of a collective egoism, compounded of the egoistic impulses of individuals, which achieve a more vivid expression and a more cumulative effect when they are united in a common impulse than when they express themselves separately and discreetly.

Inasfar as this treatise has a polemic interest it is directed against the moralists, both religious and secular, who imagine that the egoism of individuals is being progressively checked by the development of rationality or the growth of a religiously inspired goodwill and that nothing but the continuance of this process is necessary to establish social harmony between all the human societies and collectives. Social analyses and prophecies made by moralists, sociologists and educators upon the basis of these assumptions lead to a very considerable moral and political confusion in our day. They completely disregard the political necessities in the struggle for justice in human society by failing to recognise those elements in man's collective behavior which belong to the order of nature and can never be brought completely under the dominion of reason or conscience. They do not recognise that when collective power, whether in the form of imperialism or class domination, exploits weakness, it can never be dislodged unless power is raised against it.

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If conscience and reason can be insinuated into the resulting struggle they can only qualify but not abolish it.

The most persistent error of modern educators and moralists is the assumption that our social difficulties are due to the failure of the social sciences to keep pace with the physical sciences which have created our technological civilisation. The invariable implication of this assumption is that, with a little more time, a little more adequate moral and social pedagogy and a generally higher development of human intelligence, our social problems will approach solution. "It is," declares Professor John Dewey, "our human intelligence and our human courage which is on trial; it is incredible that men who have brought the technique of physical discovery, invention and use to such a pitch of perfection will abdicate in the face of the infinitely more important human problem. What stands in the way (of a planned economy) is a lot of outworn traditions, moth-eaten slogans and catchwords that do substitute duty for thought, as well as our entrenched predatory self-interest. We shall only make a real beginning in intelligent thought when we cease mouthing platitudes. . . . Just as soon as we begin to use the knowledge and skills we have, to control social consequences in the interest of a shared, abundant and secured life, we shall cease to complain of the backwardness of our social knowledge. . . . We shall then take the road which leads to the assured building up of social science just as men built up physical science when they actively used techniques and tools and numbers in physical experimentation."¹ In spite of Professor Dewey's great interest in

¹ John Dewey, *Philosophy and Civilization* (New York: Minton, Balch), p. 329.

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and understanding of the modern social problem there is very little clarity in this statement. The real cause of social inertia, "our predatory self-interest," is mentioned only in passing without influencing his reasoning, and with no indication that he understands how much social conservatism is due to the economic interests of the owning classes. On the whole, social conservatism is ascribed to ignorance, a viewpoint which states only part of the truth and reveals the natural bias of the educator. The suggestion that we will only make a beginning in intelligent thought when we "cease mouthing platitudes," is itself so platitudinous that it rather betrays the confusion of an analyst who has no clear counsels about the way to overcome social inertia. The idea that we cannot be socially intelligent until we begin experimentation in social problems in the way that the physical scientists experimented fails to take account of an important difference between the physical and the social sciences. The physical sciences gained their freedom when they overcame the traditionalism based on ignorance, but the traditionalism which the social sciences face is based upon the economic interest of the dominant social classes who are trying to maintain their special privileges in society. Nor can the difference between the very character of social and physical sciences be overlooked. Complete rational objectivity in a social situation is impossible. The very social scientists who are so anxious to offer our generation counsels of salvation and are disappointed that an ignorant and slothful people are so slow to accept their wisdom, betray middle-class prejudices in almost everything they write. Since reason is always, to some de-

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gree, the servant of interest in a social situation, social justice cannot be resolved by moral and rational suasion alone, as the educator and social scientist usually believes. Conflict is inevitable, and in this conflict power must be challenged by power. That fact is not recognized by most of the educators, and only very grudgingly admitted by most of the social scientists.

If social conflict be a part of the process of gaining social justice, the idea of most of Professor Dewey's disciples that our salvation depends upon the development of "experimental procedures"² in social life, commensurate with the experimentalism of the physical sciences, does not have quite the plausibility which they attribute to it. Contending factions in a social struggle require moralé; and moralé is created by the right dogmas, symbols and emotionally potent oversimplifications. These are at least as necessary as the scientific spirit of tentativity. No class of industrial workers will ever win freedom from the dominant classes if they give themselves completely to the "experimental techniques" of the modern educators. They will have to believe rather more firmly in the justice and in the probable triumph of their cause, than any impartial science would give them the right to believe, if they are to have enough energy to contest the power of the strong. They may be very scientific in projecting their social goal and in choosing the most effective instruments for its attainment, but a motive force will be required to nerve them for their task which is not easily derived from the cool objectivity of science. Modern educators

² Cf. *inter alia*, John Childs, *Education and the Philosophy of Experimentalism*, p. 37.

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are, like rationalists of all the ages, too enamored of the function of reason in life. The world of history, particularly in man's collective behavior, will never be conquered by reason, unless reason uses tools, and is itself driven by forces which are not rational.

The sociologists, as a class, understand the modern social problem even less than the educators. They usually interpret social conflict as the result of a clash between different kinds of "behavior patterns," which can be eliminated if the contending parties will only allow the social scientist to furnish them with a new and more perfect pattern which will do justice to the needs of both parties. With the educators they regard ignorance rather than self-interest as the cause of conflict. "Apparently," declares Kimball Young, "the only way in which collective conflicts, as well as individual conflicts, can be successfully and hygienically solved is by securing a redirection of behavior toward a more feasible environmental objective. This can be accomplished most successfully by the rational reconditioning of attitudes on a higher neuro-psychic or intellectual symbolic plane to the facts of science, preferably through a free discussion with a minimum of propaganda. This is not an easy road to mental and social sanity but it appears to be the only one which arrives at the goal."³ Here a technique which works very well in individual relations, and in certain types of social conflict due to differences in culture, is made a general panacea. How is it to solve the problem between England and India? Through the Round-Table Conference? But how much would England have

³ Kimball Young, *Social Attitudes*, p. 72.

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granted India at the conference if a non-co-operation campaign, a type of conflict, had not forced the issue?

A favorite counsel of the social scientists is that of accommodation. If two parties are in a conflict, let them, by conferring together, moderate their demands and arrive at a *modus vivendi*. This is, among others, the advice of Professor Hornell Hart.⁴ Undoubtedly there are innumerable conflicts which must be resolved in this fashion. But will a disinherited group, such as the Negroes for instance, ever win full justice in society in this fashion? Will not even its most minimum demands seem exorbitant to the dominant whites, among whom only a very small minority will regard the inter-racial problem from the perspective of objective justice? Or how are the industrial workers to follow Professor Hart's advice in dealing with industrial owners, when the owners possess so much power that they can win the debate with the workers, no matter how unconvincing their arguments? Only a very few sociologists seem to have learned that an adjustment of a social conflict, caused by the disproportion of power in society, will hardly result in justice as long as the disproportion of power remains. Sometimes the sociologists are so completely oblivious to the real facts of an industrial civilisation that, as Floyd Allport for instance, they can suggest that the unrest of industrial workers is due not to economic injustice but to a sense of inferiority which will be overcome just as soon as benevolent social psychologists are able to teach the workers that "no one is charging them with inferiority except themselves."⁵ These omniscient social scientists will

⁴ Hornell Hart, *The Science of Social Relations*.

⁵ Floyd Allport, *Social Psychology*, pp. 14-27.

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also teach the owners that "interests and profits must be tempered by regard for the worker." Thus "the socialisation of individual control" in industry will obviate the necessity of "socialistic control." Most of the social scientists are such unqualified rationalists that they seem to imagine that men of power will immediately check their exactions and pretensions in society, as soon as they have been apprised by the social scientists that their actions and attitudes are anti-social. Professor Clarence Marsh Case, in an excellent analysis of the social problem, places his confidence in a "reorganisation of values" in which, among other things, industrial leaders must be made to see "that despotically controlled industry in a society that professes democracy as an article of faith is an anachronism that cannot endure."⁶ It may be that despotism cannot endure but it will not abdicate merely because the despots have discovered it to be anachronistic. Sir Arthur Salter, to name a brilliant economist among the social scientists, finishes his penetrating analysis of the distempers of our civilisation by expressing the usual hope that a higher intelligence or a sincerer morality will prevent the governments of the future from perpetrating the mistakes of the past. His own analysis proves conclusively that the failure of governments is due to the pressure of economic interest upon them rather than to the "limited capacities of human wisdom." In his own words "government is failing above all because it has become enmeshed in the task of giving discretionary, particularly preferential, privileges to competitive industry."⁷ In spite

⁶ Clarence Marsh Case, *Social Process and Human Progress*, p. 233.
⁷ Sir Arthur Salter, *Recovery*, p. 341.

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of this analysis Sir Arthur expects the governments to redeem our civilisation by becoming more socially minded and he thinks that one method which will help them to do so is to "draw into the service of the public the great private institutions which represent the organised activities of the country, chambers of commerce, banking institutions, industrial and labor organisations." His entire hope for recovery rests upon the possibility of developing a degree of economic disinterestedness among men of power which the entire history of mankind proves them incapable of acquiring. It is rather discouraging to find such naïve confidence in the moral capacities of collective man, among men who make it their business to study collective human behavior. Even when, as Professor Howard Odum, they are prepared to admit that "conflict will be necessary" as long as "unfairness in the distribution of the rewards of labor exists," they put their hope in the future. They regard social conflict as only an expedient of the moment "until broader principles of education and cooperation can be established." Anarchism, with an uncoerced and voluntary justice, seems to be either an explicit or implicit social goal of every second social scientist.

Modern religious idealists usually follow in the wake of social scientists in advocating compromise and accommodation as the way to social justice. Many leaders of the church like to insist that it is not their business to champion the cause of either labor or capital, but only to admonish both sides to a spirit of fairness and accommodation. "Between the far-visioned capitalism of Owen

⁸ Howard W. Odum, *Man's Quest for Social Guidance*, p. 477.

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Young and the hard-headed socialism of Ramsay MacDonald," declares Doctor Justin Wroe Nixon, "there is probably no impassable gulf. The progress of mankind . . . depends upon following the MacDonalds and Youngs into those areas."⁹ Unfortunately, since those lines were written the socialism of MacDonald has been revealed as not particularly hard-headed, and the depression has shown how little difference there really is between Mr. Young's "new capitalism" and the older and less suave types of capitalism.

What is lacking among all these moralists, whether religious or rational, is an understanding of the brutal character of the behavior of all human collectives, and the power of self-interest and collective egoism in all intergroup relations. Failure to recognise the stubborn resistance of group egoism to all moral and inclusive social objectives inevitably involves them in unrealistic and confused political thought. They regard social conflict either as an impossible method of achieving morally approved ends or as a momentary expedient which a more perfect education or a purer religion will make unnecessary. They do not see that the limitations of the human imagination, the easy subservience of reason to prejudice and passion, and the consequent persistence of irrational egoism, particularly in group behavior, make social conflict an inevitability in human history, probably to its very end.

The romantic overestimate of human virtue and moral capacity, current in our modern middle-class culture, does not always result in an unrealistic appraisal of present so-

⁹ Justin Wroe Nixon, *An Emerging Christian Faith*, p. 294.

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cial facts. Contemporary social situations are frequently appraised quite realistically, but the hope is expressed that a new pedagogy or a revival of religion will make conflict unnecessary in the future. Nevertheless a considerable portion of middle-class culture remains quite unrealistic in its analysis of the contemporary situation. It assumes that evidences of a growing brotherliness between classes and nations are apparent in the present movement. It gives such arrangements as the League of Nations, such ventures as the Kellogg Pact and such schemes as company industrial unions, a connotation of moral and social achievement which the total facts completely belie. "There must," declares Professor George Stratton, a social psychologist, "always be a continuing and widening progress. But our present time seems to promise distinctly the close of an old epoch in world relations and the opening of a new. . . . Under the solemn teaching of the War, most of the nations have made political commitments which are of signal promise for international discipline and for still further and more effective governmental acts."¹⁰ This glorification of the League of Nations as a symbol of a new epoch in international relations has been very general, and frequently very unqualified, in the Christian churches, where liberal Christianity has given itself to the illusion that all social relations are being brought progressively under "the law of Christ." William Adams Brown speaks for the whole liberal Christian viewpoint when he declares: "From many different centres and in many different forms the crusade for a

¹⁰ George M. Stratton, *Social Psychology and International Conduct*, pp. 355-361.

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unified and brotherly society is being carried on. The ideal of the League of Nations in which all civilised people shall be represented and in which they shall cooperate with one another in fighting common enemies like war and disease is winning recognition in circles which have hitherto been little suspected of idealism. . . . In relations between races, in strife between capital and labor, in our attitudes toward the weaker and more dependent members of society we are developing a social conscience, and situations which would have been accepted a generation ago as a matter of course are felt as an intolerable scandal.¹¹ Another theologian and pastor, Justin Wroe Nixon, thinks that "another reason for believing in the growth of social statesmanship on the part of business leaders is based upon their experience as trustees in various philanthropic and educational enterprises."¹² This judgment reveals the moral confusion of liberal Christianity with perfect clarity. Teachers of morals who do not see the difference between the problem of charity within the limits of an accepted social system and the problem of justice between economic groups, holding uneven power within modern industrial society, have simply not faced the most obvious differences between the morals of groups and those of individuals. The suggestion that the fight against disease is in the same category with the fight against war reveals the same confusion. Our contemporary culture fails to realise the power, extent and persistence of group egoism in human relations. It may be possible, though it is never easy, to

¹¹ William Adams Brown, *Pathways to Certainty*, p. 246.

¹² Justin Wroe Nixon, *An Emerging Christian Faith*, p. 291.

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establish just relations between individuals within a group purely by moral and rational suasion and accommodation. In inter-group relations this is practically an impossibility. The relations between groups must therefore always be predominantly political rather than ethical, that is, they will be determined by the proportion of power which each group possesses at least as much as by any rational and moral appraisal of the comparative needs and claims of each group. The coercive factors, in distinction to the more purely moral and rational factors, in political relations can never be sharply differentiated and defined. It is not possible to estimate exactly how much a party to a social conflict is influenced by a rational argument or by the threat of force. It is impossible, for instance, to know what proportion of a privileged class accepts higher inheritance taxes because it believes that such taxes are good social policy and what proportion submits merely because the power of the state supports the taxation policy. Since political conflict, at least in times when controversies have not reached the point of crisis, is carried on by the threat, rather than the actual use, of force, it is always easy for the casual or superficial observer to overestimate the moral and rational factors, and to remain oblivious to the covert types of coercion and force which are used in the conflict.

Whatever increase in social intelligence and moral goodwill may be achieved in human history, may serve to mitigate the brutalities of social conflict, but they cannot abolish the conflict itself. That could be accomplished only if human groups, whether racial, national or economic, could achieve a degree of reason and sympathy

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which would permit them to see and to understand the interests of others as vividly as they understand their own, and a moral goodwill which would prompt them to affirm the rights of others as vigorously as they affirm their own. Given the inevitable limitations of human nature and the limits of the human imagination and intelligence, this is an ideal which individuals may approximate but which is beyond the capacities of human societies. Educators who emphasise the pliability of human nature, social and psychological scientists who dream of "socialising" man and religious idealists who strive to increase the sense of moral responsibility, can serve a very useful function in society in humanising individuals within an established social system and in purging the relations of individuals of as much egoism as possible. In dealing with the problems and necessities of radical social change they are almost invariably confusing in their counsels because they are not conscious of the limitations in human nature which finally frustrate their efforts.

The following pages are devoted to the task of analysing the moral resources and limitations of human nature, of tracing their consequences and cumulative effect in the life of human groups and of weighing political strategies in the light of the ascertained facts. The ultimate purpose of this task is to find political methods which will offer the most promise of achieving an ethical social goal for society. Such methods must always be judged by two criteria: 1. Do they do justice to the moral resources and possibilities in human nature and provide for the exploitation of every latent moral capacity in man? 2. Do they take account of the limitations of human nature,

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particularly those which manifest themselves in man's collective behavior? So persistent are the moralistic illusions about politics in the middle-class world, that any emphasis upon the second question will probably impress the average reader as unduly cynical. Social viewpoints and analyses are relative to the temper of the age which gives them birth. In America our contemporary culture is still pretty firmly enmeshed in the illusions and sentimentalities of the Age of Reason. A social analysis which is written, at least partially, from the perspective of a disillusioned generation will seem to be almost pure cynicism from the perspective of those who will stand in the credo of the nineteenth century.

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Since the pure force of reason is never powerful enough to achieve a critical detachment from nationalism, if actual experience does not detach the individual from the nation, only the obviously disinherited worker will achieve it completely. But it may not be too much to hope that increasing intelligence will at least extend slightly beyond personal experience, so that a labor movement which is not completely disinherited will have the intelligence to offer more stubborn resistance to the will of the nation and to the all-pervasive sentiment of nationality. Here, as in other instances, the future of society is served best if we accept the limitations of the human imagination, recognise that it cannot be extended too far beyond the actual experiences of an individual or a class; but bend every effort to increase its penetration so that the obvious may be recognised before its bitter consequences lead to a recognition of the truth after it is too late to profit by it.

The contrasting virtues and vices of revolutionary and evolutionary socialism are such that no purely rational moral choice is possible between them. Whatever judgments are made depend partly upon personal inclination; whether one prefers the partial preservation of traditional injustices or the risk of creating new iniquities by the attempt to abolish old ones completely. They depend partly upon the extent to which one suffers from traditional social abuses; and they are partly determined by the degree of crisis in which a society finds itself.

CHAPTER NINE

THE PRESERVATION OF MORAL VALUES IN POLITICS

ANY political philosophy which assumes that natural impulses, that is, greed, the will-to-power and other forms of self-assertion, can never be completely controlled or sublimated by reason, is under the necessity of countenancing political policies which attempt the control of nature in human history by setting the forces of nature against the impulses of nature. If coercion, self-assertion and conflict are regarded as permissible and necessary instruments of social redemption, how are perpetual conflict and perennial tyranny to be avoided? What is to prevent the instruments of today's redemption from becoming the chain of tomorrow's enslavement? A too consistent political realism would seem to consign society to perpetual warfare. If social cohesion is impossible without coercion, and coercion is impossible without the creation of social injustice, and the destruction of injustice is impossible without the use of further coercion, are we not in an endless cycle of social conflict? If self-interest cannot be checked without the assertion of conflicting self-interests how are the counter-claims to be prevented from becoming inordinate? And if power is needed to destroy power, how is this new power to be made ethical? If the mistrust of political realism in the potency of rational and moral fac-

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tors in society is carried far enough, an uneasy balance of power would seem to become the highest goal to which society could aspire. If such an uneasy equilibrium of conflicting social forces should result in a tentative social peace or armistice it would be fairly certain that some fortuitous dislocation of the proportions of power would ultimately destroy it. Even if such dislocations should not take place, it would probably be destroyed in the long run by the social animosities which a balance of power creates and accentuates.

The last three decades of world history would seem to be a perfect and tragic symbol of the consequences of this kind of realism, with its abortive efforts to resolve conflict by conflict. The peace before the War was an armistice maintained by the balance of power. It was destroyed by the spontaneous combustion of the mutual fears and animosities which it created. The new peace is no less a coerced peace; only the equilibrium of social and political forces is less balanced than it was before the War. The nations which pretended to fight against the principle of militarism have increased their military power, and the momentary peace which their power maintains is certain to be destroyed by the resentments which their power creates.

This unhappy consequence of a too consistent political realism would seem to justify the interposition of the counsels of the moralist. He seeks peace by the extension of reason and conscience. He affirms that the only lasting peace is one which proceeds from a rational and voluntary adjustment of interest to interest and right to right. He believes that such an adjustment is possible

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only through a rational check upon self-interest and a rational comprehension of the interests of others. He points to the fact that conflict generates animosities which prevent the mutual adjustment of interests, and that coercion can be used as easily to perpetuate injustice as to eliminate it. He believes, therefore, that nothing but an extension of social intelligence and an increase in moral goodwill can offer society a permanent solution for its social problems. Yet the moralist may be as dangerous a guide as the political realist. He usually fails to recognise the elements of injustice and coercion which are present in any contemporary social peace. The coercive elements are covert, because dominant groups are able to avail themselves of the use of economic power, propaganda, the traditional processes of government, and other types of non-violent power. By failing to recognise the real character of these forms of coercion, the moralist places an unjustified moral onus upon advancing groups which use violent methods to disturb a peace maintained by subtler types of coercion. Nor is he likely to understand the desire to break the peace, because he does not fully recognise the injustices which it hides. They are not easily recognised, because they consist in inequalities, which history sanctifies and tradition justifies. Even the most rational moralist underestimates them, if he does not actually suffer from them. A too uncritical glorification of co-operation and mutuality therefore results in the acceptance of traditional injustices and the preference of the subtler types of coercion to the more overt types.

An adequate political morality must do justice to the insights of both moralists and political realists. It will

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recognise that human society will probably never escape social conflict, even though it extends the areas of social co-operation. It will try to save society from being involved in endless cycles of futile conflict, not by an effort to abolish coercion in the life of collective man, but by reducing it to a minimum, by counselling the use of such types of coercion as are most compatible with the moral and rational factors in human society and by discriminating between the purposes and ends for which coercion is used.

A rational society will probably place a greater emphasis upon the ends and purposes for which coercion is used than upon the elimination of coercion and conflict. It will justify coercion if it is obviously in the service of a rationally acceptable social end, and condemn its use when it is in the service of momentary passions. The conclusion which has been forced upon us again and again in these pages is that equality, or to be a little more qualified, that equal justice is the most rational ultimate objective for society. If this conclusion is correct, a social conflict which aims at greater equality has a moral justification which must be denied to efforts which aim at the perpetuation of privilege. A war for the emancipation of a nation, a race or a class is thus placed in a different moral category from the use of power for the perpetuation of imperial rule or class dominance. The oppressed, whether they be the Indians in the British Empire, or the Negroes in our own country or the industrial workers in every nation, have a higher moral right to challenge their oppressors than these have to maintain their rule by force. Violent conflict may not be the best means to at-

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tain freedom or equality, but that is a question which must be deferred for a moment. It is important to insist, first of all, that equality is a higher social goal than peace. It may never be completely attainable, but it is the symbol for the ideal of a just peace, from the perspective of which every contemporary peace means only an armistice within the existing disproportions of power. It stands for the elimination of the inequalities of power and privilege which are frozen into every contemporary peaceful situation. If social conflict in the past has been futile that has not been due altogether to the methods of violence which were used in it. Violence may tend to perpetuate injustice, even when its aim is justice; but it is important to note that the violence of international wars has usually not aimed at the elimination of an unjust economic system. It has dealt with the real or fancied grievances of nations which were uniformly involved in social injustice. A social conflict which aims at the elimination of these injustices is in a different category from one which is carried on without reference to the problem of justice. In this respect Marxian philosophy is more true than pacifism. If it may seem to pacifists that the proletarian is perverse in condemning international conflict and asserting the class struggle, the latter has good reason to insist that the elimination of coercion is a futile ideal but that the rational use of coercion is a possible achievement which may save society. It is of course dangerous to accept the principle, that the end justifies the means which are used in its attainment. The danger arises from the ease with which any social group, engaged in social conflict, may justify itself by professing to be fighting for

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freedom and equality. Society has no absolutely impartial tribunal which could judge such claims. Nevertheless it is the business of reason, though always involved in prejudice and subject to partial perspectives, to aspire to the impartiality by which such claims and pretensions could be analysed and assessed. Though it will fail in instances where disputes are involved and complex, it is not impossible to discover at least the most obvious cases of social disinheritance. Wherever a social group is obviously defrauded of its rights, it is natural to give the assertion of its rights a special measure of moral approbation. Indeed this is what is invariably and instinctively done by any portion of the human community which has achieved a degree of impartiality. Oppressed nationalities, Armenians fighting against Turkey, Indians against England, Filipinos against America, Cubans against Spain, and Koreans against Japan have always elicited a special measure of sympathy and moral approbation from the neutral communities. Unfortunately the working classes in every nation are denied the same measure of sympathy, because there is no neutral community which is as impartial with reference to their claims as with reference to the claims of oppressed nationalities. In the case of the latter there is always some group in nations, not immediately involved in the struggle, which can achieve and afford the luxury of impartiality. Thus Europeans express their sympathy for our disinherited Negroes and Americans have a special degree of interest in the struggle for the emancipation of India.

In spite of the partiality and prejudice which beclouds practically every social issue, it is probably true that there

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is a general tendency of increasing social intelligence to withdraw its support from the claims of social privilege and to give it to the disinherited. In this sense reason itself tends to establish a more even balance of power. All social power is partially derived from the actual possession of physical instruments of coercion, economic or martial. But it also depends to a large degree upon its ability to secure unreasoned and unreasonable obedience, respect and reverence. Insofar as reason tends to destroy this source of its power, it makes for the diminution of the strength of the strong and adds to the power of the weak. The expropriators are expropriated in another sense beside the one which Marx analysed. Reason divests them of some of their moral conceit, as well as of some measure of the social and moral approbation of their fellows. They are not so certain of the approval of either their own conscience or that of the impartial community. Divested of either or both, they are like Samson with his locks shorn. A considerable degree of power has gone from them. The forces of reason in society are not strong enough to guarantee that this development will ever result in a complete equality of power; but it works to that end. The very fact that rational men are inclined increasingly to condemn the futility of international wars and yet to justify the struggles of oppressed nationalities and classes, proves how inevitably reason must make a distinction between the ultimate ends of social policies and how it must regard the end of equal social justice as the most rational one.

We have previously insisted that if the purpose of a social policy is morally and rationally approved, the choice

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of means in fulfilling the purpose raises pragmatic issues which are more political than they are ethical. This does not mean that the issues lack moral significance or that moral reason must not guard against the abuse of dangerous political instruments, even when they are used for morally approved ends. Conflict and coercion are manifestly such dangerous instruments. They are so fruitful of the very evils from which society must be saved that an intelligent society will not countenance their indiscriminate use. If reason is to make coercion a tool of the moral ideal it must not only enlist it in the service of the highest causes but it must choose those types of coercion which are most compatible with, and least dangerous to, the rational and moral forces of society. Moral reason must learn how to make coercion its ally without running the risk of a Pyrrhic victory in which the ally exploits and negates the triumph.

The most obvious rational check which can be placed upon the use of coercion is to submit it to the control of an impartial tribunal which will not be tempted to use it for selfish ends. Thus society claims the right to use coercion but denies the same right to individuals. The police power of nations is a universally approved function of government. The supposition is that the government is impartial with reference to any disputes arising between citizens, and will therefore be able to use its power for moral ends. When it uses the same power against other nations in international disputes, it lacks the impartial perspective to guarantee its moral use. The same power of coercion may therefore represent the impartiality of society, when used in intra-national disputes, and a threat

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against the interests of the larger community of mankind when used in international disputes. Thus the effort is made to organise a society of nations with sufficient power to bring the power of individual nations under international control. This distinction between the impartial and the partial use of social and political coercion is a legitimate one, but it has definite limits. The limits are given by the impossibility of achieving the kind of impartiality which the theory assumes. Government is never completely under the control of a total community. There is always some class, whether economic overlords or political bureaucrats, who may use the organs of government for their special advantages. This is true of both nations and the community of nations. Powerful classes dominate the administration of justice in the one, and powerful nations in the other. Even if this were not the case there is in every community as such, an instinctive avoidance of social conflict and such a superficiality in dealing with the roots of social disaffection, that there is always the possibility of the unjust use of the police power of the state against individuals and groups who break its peace, no matter how justified their grievance. A community may be impartial in using coercion against two disputants, whose dispute offers no peril to the life and prestige of the community. But wherever such a dispute affects the order or the prestige of the community, its impartiality evaporates. The prejudice and passion with which a staid, genteel and highly cultured New England community conducted itself in the Sacco-Vanzetti case is a vivid example. For these reasons it is impossible to draw too sharp a moral distinction between the use of

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force and coercion under the control of impartial tribunals and its use by individuals and groups who make it a frank instrument of their own interests.

The chief distinction in the problem of coercion, usually made by moralists, is that between violent and non-violent coercion. The impossibility of making this distinction absolute has been previously considered. It is nevertheless important to make a more careful analysis of the issues involved in the choice of methods of coercion in the social process. The distinguishing marks of violent coercion and conflict are usually held to be its intent to destroy either life or property. This distinction is correct if consequences are not confused with intent. Non-violent conflict and coercion may also result in the destruction of life or property and they usually do. The difference is that destruction is not the intended but the inevitable consequence of non-violent coercion. The chief difference between violence and non-violence is not in the degree of destruction which they cause, though the difference is usually considerable, but in the aggressive character of the one and the negative character of the other. Non-violence is essentially non-co-operation. It expresses itself in the refusal to participate in the ordinary processes of society. It may mean the refusal to pay taxes to the government (civil disobedience), or to trade with the social group which is to be coerced (boycott) or to render customary services (strike). While it represents a passive and negative form of resistance, its consequences may be very positive. It certainly places restraints upon the freedom of the objects of its discipline and prevents them from doing what they desire to do. Furthermore it de-

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stroys property values, and it may destroy life; though it is not generally as destructive of life as violence. Yet a boycott may rob a whole community of its livelihood and, if maintained long enough, it will certainly destroy life. A strike may destroy the property values inherent in the industrial process which it brings to a halt, and it may imperil the life of a whole community which depends upon some vital service with which the strike interferes. Nor can it be maintained that it isolates the guilty from the innocent more successfully than violent coercion. The innocent are involved with the guilty in conflicts between groups, not because of any particular type of coercion used in the conflict but by the very group character of the conflict. No community can be disciplined without affecting all its members who are dependent upon, even though they are not responsible for, its policies. The cotton spinners of Lancashire are impoverished by Gandhi's boycott of English cotton, though they can hardly be regarded as the authors of British imperialism. If the League of Nations should use economic sanctions against Japan, or any other nation, workmen who have the least to do with Japanese imperialism would be bound to suffer most from such a discipline.

Non-co-operation, in other words, results in social consequences not totally dissimilar from those of violence. The differences are very important; but before considering them it is necessary to emphasise the similarities and to insist that non-violence does coerce and destroy. The more intricate and interdependent a social process in which non-co-operation is used, the more certainly is this the case. This insistence is important because non-re-

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sistance is so frequently confused with non-violent resistance. Mr. Gandhi, the greatest modern exponent of non-violence, has himself contributed to that confusion. He frequently speaks of his method as the use of "soul-force" or "truth-force." He regards it as spiritual in distinction to the physical character of violence. Very early in his development of the technique of non-violence in South Africa he declared: "Passive resistance is a misnomer. . . . The idea is more completely expressed by the term 'soul-force.' Active resistance is better expressed by the term 'body-force.'"¹ A negative form of resistance does not achieve spirituality simply because it is negative. As long as it enters the field of social and physical relations and places physical restraints upon the desires and activities of others, it is a form of physical coercion. The confusion in Mr. Gandhi's mind is interesting, because it seems to arise from his unwillingness, or perhaps his inability, to recognise the qualifying influences of his political responsibilities upon the purity of his original ethical and religious ideals of non-resistance. Beginning with the idea that social injustice could be resisted by purely ethical, rational and emotional forces (truth-force and soul-force in the narrower sense of the term), he came finally to realise the necessity of some type of physical coercion upon the foes of his people's freedom, as every political leader must. "In my humble opinion," he declared, "the ordinary methods of agitation by way of petitions, deputations, and the like is no longer a remedy for moving to repentance a government so hopelessly indifferent

¹ *Speeches and Writings of M. K. Gandhi* (Mardas Edition, 1919), p. 132.

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to the welfare of its charge as the Government of India has proved to be,"² an indictment and an observation which could probably be made with equal validity against and about any imperial government of history. In spite of his use of various forms of negative physical resistance, civil-disobedience, boycotts and strikes, he seems to persist in giving them a connotation which really belongs to pure non-resistance. "Jesus Christ, Daniel and Socrates represent the purest form of passive resistance or soul-force," he declares in a passage in which he explains the meaning of what is most undeniably non-violent resistance rather than non-resistance. All this is a pardonable confusion in the soul of a man who is trying to harmonise the insights of a saint with the necessities of statecraft, a very difficult achievement. But it is nevertheless a confusion.

In justice to Mr. Gandhi it must be said that while he confuses the moral connotations of non-resistance and non-violent resistance, he never commits himself to pure non-resistance. He is politically too realistic to believe in its efficacy. He justified his support of the British Government during the War: "So long as I live," he said, "under a system of government based upon force and voluntarily partook of the many facilities and privileges it created for me, I was bound to help that government to the extent of my ability when it was engaged in war. . . . My position regarding that government is totally different today and hence I should not voluntarily participate in its wars."³ Here the important point is that the violent character of government is recognised and the

² C. F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, p. 238.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

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change of policy is explained in terms of a change in national allegiance and not in terms of pacifist principles. His controversy with his friend C. F. Andrews over his policy of permitting the burning of foreign cloth and his debate with the poet Rabindranath Tagore about the moral implication of the first non-violent resistance campaign in 1919-21, prove that in him political realism qualified religious idealism, in a way which naturally bewildered his friends who carried less or no political responsibility.⁴ The first non-co-operation campaign was called off by him because it issued in violence. The second campaign also resulted in inevitable by-products of violence, but it was not called off for that reason. Gandhi is not less sincere or morally less admirable because considerations of political efficacy partly determine his policies and qualify the purity of the doctrine of "ahimsa" to which he is committed. The responsible leader of a political community is forced to use coercion to gain his ends. He may, as Mr. Gandhi, make every effort to keep his instrument under the dominion of his spiritual ideal; but he must use it, and it may be necessary at times to sacrifice a degree of moral purity for political effectiveness.

The use of truth-force or soul-force, in the purer and more exact meaning of those words, means an appeal to the reason and goodwill of an opponent in a social struggle. This may be regarded as a type of resistance, but it is not physical coercion. It belongs in the realm of education. It places no external restraints upon the object of its discipline. It may avail itself of a very vivid and dra-

⁴ *Ibid.*, Chap. 15.

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matic method of education. It may dramatise the suffering of the oppressed, as for instance Mr. Gandhi's encouragement to his followers to endure the penalties of their civil disobedience "long enough to appeal to the sympathetic chord in the governors and the lawmakers." But it is still education and not coercion.

It must be recognised, of course, that education may contain coercive elements. It may degenerate into propaganda. Nor can it be denied that there is an element of propaganda in all education. Even the most honest educator tries consciously or unconsciously to impress a particular viewpoint upon his disciples. Whenever the educational process is accompanied by a dishonest suppression of facts and truths, relevant to the point at issue, it becomes pure propaganda. But even without such dishonest intentions there is, in all exchange of ideas, a certain degree of unconscious suppression of facts or inability to see all the facts. That is the very reason the educational process alone cannot be trusted to resolve a social controversy. Since reason is never pure, education is a tool of controversy as well as a method of transcending it. The coercive elements in education do not become moral merely because they operate in the realm of mind and emotion, and apply no physical restraints. They also must be judged in terms of the purposes which they serve. A distinction must be made, and is naturally made, between the propaganda which a privileged group uses to maintain its privileges and the agitation for freedom and equality carried on by a disinherited group. It may be true that there is a difference in degree of coercive power between psychological and physical types of coercion, as there is between

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violent and non-violent types. But such differences would establish intrinsic moral distinctions, only if it could be assumed that the least coercive type of influence is naturally the best. This would be true only if freedom could be regarded as an absolute value. This is generally believed by modern educators but it betrays the influence of certain social and economic circumstances to a larger measure than they would be willing to admit. Freedom is a high value, because reason cannot function truly if it is under any restraints, physical or psychic. But absolute intellectual freedom is achieved by only a few minds. The average mind, which is molded by a so-called free educational process, merely accepts contemporary assumptions and viewpoints rather than the viewpoints which might be inculcated by an older or a newer political or religious idealism. The very education of the "democratic" educators is filled with assumptions and rationally unverifiable prejudices, taken from a rapidly disintegrating nineteenth-century liberalism. Psychic coercion is dangerous, as all coercion is. Its ultimate value depends upon the social purpose for which it is enlisted.

Mr. Gandhi's designation of non-violence and non-coercion as "soul-force" is less confusing and more justified when this emphasis upon non-violence of spirit is considered. Non-violence, for him, has really become a term by which he expresses the ideal of love, the spirit of moral goodwill. This involves for him freedom from personal resentments and a moral purpose, free of selfish ambition. It is the temper and spirit in which a political policy is conducted, which he is really designating, rather than a particular political technique. Thus, while justi-

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fying his support of England during the War, he declared: "Non-violence works in a most mysterious manner. Often a man's actions defy analysis in terms of non-violence; equally often his actions may bear the appearance of violence when he is absolutely non-violent in the highest sense of the term, and is subsequently found to be so. All I can claim for my conduct is that I was, in that instance cited, actuated in the interest of non-violence. There was no thought of sordid national or other interests."⁵ What Mr. Gandhi is really saying in these words is that even violence is justified if it proceeds from perfect moral goodwill. But he is equally insistent that non-violence is usually the better method of expressing goodwill. He is probably right on both counts. The advantage of non-violence as a method of expressing moral goodwill lies in the fact, that it protects the agent against the resentments which violent conflict always creates in both parties to a conflict, and that it proves this freedom of resentment and ill-will to the contending party in the dispute by enduring more suffering than it causes. If non-violent resistance causes pain and suffering to the opposition, it mitigates the resentment, which such suffering usually creates, by enduring more pain than it inflicts. Speaking of the non-violent resistance which Gandhi organized in South Africa he declared: "Their resistance consisted of disobedience to the orders of government, even to the extent of suffering death at their hands. Ahimsa requires deliberate self-suffering, not a deliberate injuring of the supposed wrong-doer. In its positive form, Ahimsa means the largest love, the greatest char-

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

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ity."⁶ Speaking before the judge who was to sentence him to prison during his first civil disobedience campaign in India he said: "Non-violence requires voluntary submission to the penalty for non-co-operation with evil. I am therefore to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty which can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime."⁷ The social and moral effects of these very vivid proofs of moral goodwill are tremendous. In every social conflict each party is so obsessed with the wrongs which the other party commits against it, that it is unable to see its own wrongdoing. A non-violent temper reduces these animosities to a minimum and therefore preserves a certain objectivity in analysing the issues of the dispute. The kindly spirit with which Mr. Gandhi was received during the course of the second Round-table Conference by the cotton spinners of Lancashire, whom his boycott had impoverished, is proof of the social and moral efficacy of this spiritual non-violence. It was one of the great triumphs of his method.

One of the most important results of a spiritual discipline against resentment in a social dispute is that it leads to an effort to discriminate between the evils of a social system and situation and the individuals who are involved in it. Individuals are never as immoral as the social situations in which they are involved and which they symbolise. If opposition to a system leads to personal insults of its representatives, it is always felt as an unjust accusation. William Lloyd Garrison solidified the south in support of slavery by the vehemence of his attacks against

⁶ Quoted by Clarence M. Cass, *Non-Violent Coercion*, p. 364.
⁷ Quoted by Andrews, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

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slave-owners. Many of them were, within the terms of their inherited prejudices and traditions, good men; and the violence of Mr. Garrison's attack upon them was felt by many to be an evidence of moral perversity in him. Mr. Gandhi never tires of making a distinction between individual Englishmen and the system of imperialism which they maintain. "An Englishman in office," he declares, "is different from an Englishman outside. Similarly an Englishman in India is different from an Englishman in England. Here in India you belong to a system that is vile beyond description. It is possible, therefore, for me to condemn the system in the strongest terms, without considering you to be bad and without imputing bad motives to every Englishman."⁸ It is impossible completely to disassociate an evil social system from the personal moral responsibilities of the individuals who maintain it. An impartial teacher of morals would be compelled to insist on the principle of personal responsibility for social guilt. But it is morally and politically wise for an opponent not to do so. Any benefit of the doubt which he is able to give his opponent is certain to reduce animosities and preserve rational objectivity in assessing the issues under dispute.

The value of reducing resentments to a minimum in social disputes does not mean that resentment is valueless and wholly evil. Resentment is, as Professor Ross observed, merely the egoistic side of the sense of injustice.⁹ Its complete absence simply means lack of social intelligence or moral vigor. A Negro who resents the injustice done his race makes a larger contribution to its ultimate

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁹ E. A. Ross, *Social Control*, p. 37.

emancipation than one who suffers injustice without any emotional reactions. But the more the egoistic element can be purged from resentment, the purer a vehicle of justice it becomes. The egoistic element in it may be objectively justified, but, from the perspective of an opponent in a social dispute, it never seems justified and merely arouses his own egotism.

Both the temper and the method of non-violence yield another very important advantage in social conflict. They rob the opponent of the moral conceit by which he identifies his interests with the peace and order of society. This is the most important of all the imponderables in a social struggle. It is the one which gives an entrenched and dominant group the clearest and the least justified advantage over those who are attacking the *status quo*. The latter are placed in the category of enemies of public order, of criminals and inciters to violence and the neutral community is invariably arrayed against them. The temper and the method of non-violence destroys the plausibility of this moral conceit of the entrenched interests. If the non-violent campaign actually threatens and imperils existing arrangements the charge of treason and violence will be made against it none-the-less. But it will not confuse the neutral elements in a community so easily. While there is a great deal of resentment in Britain against the Indian challenge of its imperial domination, and the usual insistence upon "law and order" and the danger of rebellion by British imperialists, it does not have quite the plausible moral unction which such pretensions usually achieve.

Non-violent coercion and resistance, in short, is a type

of coercion which offers the largest opportunities for a harmonious relationship with the moral and rational factors in social life. It does not destroy the process of a moral and rational adjustment of interest to interest completely during the course of resistance. Resistance to self-assertion easily makes self-assertion more stubborn, and conflict arouses dormant passions which completely obscure the real issues of a conflict. Non-violence reduces these dangers to a minimum. It preserves moral, rational and co-operative attitudes within an area of conflict and thus augments the moral forces without destroying them. The conference and final agreement between Mr. Gandhi and the Viceroy Lord Irwin, after the first Round-table Conference, was a perfect example of the moral possibilities of a non-violent social dispute. The moral resources and spiritual calibre of the two men contributed to its success. But it would have been unthinkable in a dispute of similar dimensions carried on in terms of violence. It was a telling example of the possibility of preserving co-operative and mutual attitudes within an area of conflict, when the conflict is conducted with a minimum of violence in method and spirit.

The differences between violent and non-violent methods of coercion and resistance are not so absolute that it would be possible to regard violence as a morally impossible instrument of social change. It may on occasion, as Mr. Gandhi suggests, be the servant of moral goodwill. And non-violent methods are not perfect proofs of a loving temper. During the War one sect of the pacifist Doukhobors petitioned the Canadian Government to withdraw the privileges of conscientious objectors from

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another sect which had disassociated themselves from it, "for no reason other than to satisfy the feeling of ill-will towards their brothers."¹⁰ The advantages of non-violent methods are very great but they must be pragmatically considered in the light of circumstances. Even Mr. Gandhi introduces the note of expediency again and again, and suggests that they are peculiarly adapted to the needs and limitations of a group which has more power arrayed against it than it is able to command. The implication is that violence could be used as the instrument of moral goodwill, if there was any possibility of a triumph quick enough to obviate the dangers of incessant wars. This means that non-violence is a particularly strategic instrument for an oppressed group which is hopelessly in the minority and has no possibility of developing sufficient power to set against its oppressors.

The emancipation of the Negro race in America probably waits upon the adequate development of this kind of social and political strategy. It is hopeless for the Negro to expect complete emancipation from the menial social and economic position into which the white man has forced him, merely by trusting in the moral sense of the white race. It is equally hopeless to attempt emancipation through violent rebellion.

There are moral and rational forces at work for the improvement of relations between whites and Negroes. The educational advantages which have endowed Negro leaders to conduct the battle for the freedom of their race have come largely from schools established by philanthropic white people. The various inter-race commissions

¹⁰ See Case, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

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have performed a commendable service in eliminating misunderstandings between the races and in interpreting the one to the other. But these educational and conciliatory enterprises have the limitations which all such purely rational and moral efforts reveal. They operate within a given system of injustice. The Negro schools, conducted under the auspices of white philanthropy, encourage individual Negroes to higher forms of self-realisation; but they do not make a frontal attack upon the social injustices from which the Negro suffers. The race commissions try to win greater social and political rights for the Negro without arousing the antagonisms of the whites. They try to enlarge, but they operate nevertheless within the limits of, the "zones of agreement." This means that they secure minimum rights for the Negro such as better sanitation, police protection and more adequate schools. But they do not touch his political disfranchisement or his economic disinheritance. They hope to do so in the long run, because they have the usual faith in the power of education and moral suasion to soften the heart of the white man. This faith is filled with as many illusions as such expectations always are. However large the number of individual white men who do and who will identify themselves completely with the Negro cause, the white race in America will not admit the Negro to equal rights if it is not forced to do so. Upon that point one may speak with a dogmatism which all history justifies.

On the other hand, any effort at violent revolution on the part of the Negro will accentuate the animosities and prejudices of his oppressors. Since they outnumber him hopelessly, any appeal to arms must inevitably result in a

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terrible social catastrophe. Social ignorance and economic interest are arrayed against him. If the social ignorance is challenged by ordinary coercive weapons it will bring forth the most violent passions of which ignorant men are capable. Even if there were more social intelligence, economic interest would offer stubborn resistance to his claims.

The technique of non-violence will not eliminate all these perils. But it will reduce them. It will, if persisted in with the same patience and discipline attained by Mr. Gandhi and his followers, achieve a degree of justice which neither pure moral suasion nor violence could gain. Boycotts against banks which discriminate against Negroes in granting credit, against stores which refuse to employ Negroes while serving Negro trade, and against public service corporations which practice racial discrimination, would undoubtedly be crowned with some measure of success. Non-payment of taxes against states which spend on the education of Negro children only a fraction of the amount spent on white children, might be an equally efficacious weapon. One waits for such a campaign with all the more reason and hope because the peculiar spiritual gifts of the Negro endow him with the capacity to conduct it successfully. He would need only to fuse the aggressiveness of the new and young Negro with the patience and forbearance of the old Negro, to rob the former of its vindictiveness and the latter of its lethargy.

There is no problem of political life to which religious imagination can make a larger contribution than this problem of developing non-violent resistance. The discov-

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ery of elements of common human frailty in the foe and, concomitantly, the appreciation of all human life as possessing transcendent worth, creates attitudes which transcend social conflict and thus mitigate its cruelties. It binds human beings together by reminding them of the common roots and similar character of both their vices and their virtues. These attitudes of repentance which recognise that the evil in the foe is also in the self, and these impulses of love which claim kinship with all men in spite of social conflict, are the peculiar gifts of religion to the human spirit. Secular imagination is not capable of producing them; for they require a sublime madness which disregards immediate appearances and emphasises profound and ultimate unities. It is no accident of history that the spirit of non-violence has been introduced into contemporary politics by a religious leader of the orient. The occident may be incapable of this kind of non-violent social conflict, because the white man is a fiercer beast of prey than the oriental. What is even more tragic, his religious inheritance has been dissipated by the mechanical character of his civilisation. The insights of the Christian religion have become the almost exclusive possession of the more comfortable and privileged classes. These have sentimentalised them to such a degree, that the disinherited, who ought to avail themselves of their resources, have become so conscious of the moral confusions which are associated with them, that the insights are not immediately available for the social struggle in the Western world. If they are not made available, Western civilisation, whether it drifts toward catastrophe or gradually brings its economic life under social control, will

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suffer from cruelties and be harassed by animosities which destroy the beauty of human life. Even if justice should be achieved by social conflicts which lack the spiritual elements of non-violence, something will be lacking in the character of the society so constructed. There are both spiritual and brutal elements in human life. The perennial tragedy of human history is that those who cultivate the spiritual elements usually do so by divorcing themselves from or misunderstanding the problems of collective man, where the brutal elements are most obvious. These problems therefore remain unsolved, and force clashes with force, with nothing to mitigate the brutalities or eliminate the futilities of the social struggle. The history of human life will always be the projection of the world of nature. To the end of history the peace of the world, as Augustine observed, must be gained by strife. It will therefore not be a perfect peace. But it can be more perfect than it is. If the mind and the spirit of man does not attempt the impossible, if it does not seek to conquer or to eliminate nature but tries only to make the forces of nature the servants of the human spirit and the instruments of the moral ideal, a progressively higher justice and more stable peace can be achieved.

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CHAPTER TEN

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL MORALITY

A REALISTIC analysis of the problems of human society reveals a constant and seemingly irreconcilable conflict between the needs of society and the imperatives of a sensitive conscience. This conflict, which could be most briefly defined as the conflict between ethics and politics, is made inevitable by the double focus of the moral life. One focus is in the inner life of the individual, and the other in the necessities of man's social life. From the perspective of society the highest moral ideal is justice. From the perspective of the individual the highest ideal is unselfishness. Society must strive for justice even if it is forced to use means, such as self-assertion, resistance, coercion and perhaps resentment, which cannot gain the moral sanction of the most sensitive moral spirit. The individual must strive to realise his life by losing and finding himself in something greater than himself.

These two moral perspectives are not mutually exclusive and the contradiction between them is not absolute. But neither are they easily harmonised. Efforts to harmonise them were analysed in the previous chapter. It was revealed that the highest moral insights and achievements of the individual conscience are both relevant and necessary to the life of society. The most perfect justice cannot be established if the moral imagination of the in-

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