

# Student Revolt with Special Reference to the New Left

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The subject which I propose to consider this morning is the student rebellion with special reference to what is called the New Left. The total development in the student world, which is apparently worldwide, cannot be categorized under any one heading. There are many elements in it having in common a general principle of revolt against what is, in restricted degree or in complete degree. There are elements in it that are highly noble, highly idealistic, and also other elements at the other extreme that are very definitely very dark indeed. To list some of the different elements in this movement, we have at the higher pole a feeling of disenchantment with the violence and irrational elements that are so characteristic of our world not only today but throughout all of its known history. There is the movement that would follow both the Christic and Buddhistic criteria of non-violence, non-killing. This part is noble, and I have the greatest sympathy for it myself, as I may be classed as, long ago, one who faced this same problem and took the same attitude. It would seem evident to one who has studied the problem that non-violence is the only possible implementation of the morality taught by Christ and by Buddha. But this is one part of the student revolt only. There are other elements that may be called a copping-out from our society. Some of these are persons that feel there is another way of life, and they go forth into wild places to form communes. Some of them seem to be oriented to something of a higher religiosity. The communes may be at, one end, based upon a due regard for constancy of relationship between man and woman, but, nonetheless, a communal life beyond that particular detail. Others, on the other hand, are oriented to what we might call a barnyard ideal or more strictly a chicken yard ideal of intersexual relationships throughout the whole commune, every man being the groom of every woman and every woman the bride of every man, and where constancy of relationship is discouraged.

Incidentally, this is not a new idea. I first heard of it from Har Dayal, a Sudra Hindu, in 1911 and 1912. The idea is not new at all, and would seem to be against nature. The barnyard standard here is not something beyond our present society. It is not even in accordance with nature. And nature shows her disapproval in certain definite ways. There are different relationships that have been historically valid in addition to that of monogamy, namely, polygamy and polyandry. These forms of social organization have historically been viable and do have codes. But indiscriminate free love sort of sexual relationships result in spread of disease, which tends to rot bodies, and that we may say is nature's condemnation.

But even this is relatively innocent as compared to certain other elements in the student revolt. I refer now to what is called the "New Left." The New Left is represented both in this country and in Europe, and in both cases it is known by the initials SDS, which in this country means Students for a Democratic Society. I do not know the designating words in the European sense. But there is a fundamental difference between the two. In Europe, the SDS is definitely oriented to the Marxist ideology, whereas, the

SDS here involves a repudiation of the whole conception of any kind of rational ideology. It rejects discipline. It rejects the notion of norm. It rejects reason. This means that it is not to be identified with Marxism. It is, in fact, more radical than Marxism. The Marxist development did not throw reason out the door. In its way it was supposed to be a rational, logical development. It was conceived as an historic process in which, by a dialectical movement, man moved from a society in its primitive form where man produced for himself individually, to a form where one produced for others, which is the capitalistic form, and then, ultimately, it was conceived that this would eventuate in a synthesis in which the collectivity produced for the collectivity. This was conceived of as a process in nature. And it was rather illogical, I would say, that they should feel that it was necessary to use violent means to enforce what was conceived of as a natural, logical process; but, so it was, so it was in the development of dialectic materialism. And, again, this dialectic materialism was based upon an analysis of purely economic factors. It was thought that man suffered because he did not have enough of the material goods, and that the problem of society would be resolved if we eliminated the supposed exploitation of the masses by the few, and then everyone would have their material needs satisfied, and that would solve the problems of society.

But the New Left, in contrast, has evolved from just precisely the people, the young people who have known affluence in their childhood, and do not view the problem as primarily an economic one. They seem to feel that economic satisfactions, or economic achievements, are insufficient, that affluence does not supply or satisfy the real needs of man. And with this, I must say I would agree. But, it makes it clear that here we have something developing that is not to be identified with Marxism, although the activity of this movement mainly serves the purposes of the Marxists by the disrupting the efforts of those who are striving to defend man from the harsh enslavement of what we see as Marxism in actual practice in the world. It may be used by the Marxists to aid them in their ends. But it is not a Marxist movement. It rejects the principle of discipline that is characteristic of the Marxist, and it rejects logic or reason. It is therefore, anti-mathematical, anti-scientific, and anti-philosophical.

There is an important respect in which the New Leftist movement differs from the radical movements of the past, and that is that in the past there was first a formulation in the form of written conceptions, such as those of Voltaire, of Rousseau, of the thinkers behind the American Revolution, and the systematic development of Karl Marx in *Das Kapital*. The ideation preceded; the movement followed. But in the case of the New Left, a sort of spontaneous revolt occurred among the young people, preeminently, which was spontaneous in the sense that there were no ideas leading it. Then later those who formulated conceptions in this direction did write books, namely, New Leftists who were of superior intellectual capacity. Among these are the names of Marcuse, Norman Brown, and Abbey Hoffman. From that which is written by these, we get the following impression:

Marcuse's radical indictment of present-day society is a kind of one-upmanship on Marx. Marx boasted of having discovered grounds for a critique of society far deeper and more basic than political oppression and social injustice. But Marcuse piles Freud on Marx and depicts alienation in psychic terms, thus discovering cause for profound discontent even in the

midst of affluence and security. He has no need of Marx' proletarian misery; in the heart of contentment, he finds slavery, oppression and indignity. Unlike Marx, Marcuse is not forced to play down any positive features of present-day society. They all serve to prove man's dehumanization.<sup>1</sup>

This is a quotation from an article by Gerhart Niemeyer, Professor of Government and International Relations at Notre Dame University, entitled "The Homesickness of the New Left" found in the *National Review* for July 28, 1970. I will quote further to present something of the picture.

Marcuse uses Marx minus his historical materialism; similarly, Norman Brown, having discovered Freud in the mid-Fifties, derives from him a message of emancipation that does away with Freud's own pessimistic analysis of civilization. To this end, Norman Brown adds to Freud the nineteenth-century visionary Blake, as well as Nietzsche. "Freud is the great emancipator from the reality principle." Norman Brown wants to join Freud, Marx and Pope John XXIII for the "unification of mankind"; unity is of bodies, thus social organization is ultimately sexual. "The endless task; to achieve the impossible, to find a male female (vaginal father) or a female male (phallic mother). It is to square the circle; the desire and pursuit of the whole in the form of dual unity or the combined object; the Satanic hermaphroditism of Antichrist." In these terms Norman Brown proclaims emancipation from "this world of generation and death," which we "must cast off" in its entirety. Again, such condemnation of present reality, far exceeds Marx' rather instrumentalist critique. All morality and religion, even being itself, is called before the bar and rejected out of hand. An emancipation is postulated that will liberate bodies and passions from frustration, separateness [from] and any sense of guilt or imperfection.

Here we have an essentially irrational movement since it rejects reason and the principle of any norm or discipline either in thought or action. I find this well-nigh impossible to understand in a rational sense, but it is possible to understand it in part in a psychological sense. It formulates a position which is almost the perfect, diametric opposite of the philosophic and religious position formulated by the Puritans, and which has dominated most of the history of the United States. As you will remember, the Puritan movement involved a rather rigorous austerity with respect to the aesthetic side of human nature, using the word 'aesthetic' in its root and most comprehensive sense. The repression of discipline fell heavily upon all of the sensuous impulses of man, including the love of beauty, so that from religious practices there was removed, definitely, all beautification, all music, and so forth. However, outlet for the psychic energy, or what Dr. Carl G. Jung calls the "libido," did exist in the form of thought and business activity, and the result was that there was a great development of thought culture in the very portion of the country in which the Puritan movement was most strongly centered,

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<sup>1</sup> Gerhart Niemeyer, "The Homesickness of the New Left," *National Review*, 28 July 1970, 779-783.

namely, New England. We have the emergence of lofty figures like that of Emerson, Hawthorne, Lowell, Longfellow, the elder Holmes, among others; and in a later day, the two leaders of the Pragmatic school of American philosophy that were dominant in the movement were William James and John Dewey, both New Englanders. And on the other hand, the great heroic period of industrial and trade activity in this country was led by figures in many cases definitely under the influence of the Puritan culture. I would mention as the outstanding figure here, the elder John D. Rockefeller.

Now, whenever any side of one is heavily repressed and another side given the full field of expression, there is a demand for compensation by the collective unconscious. In this sense, we can understand the present movement. It is the diametric opposite of the Puritan emphasis. The austere morality of the Puritan is rejected. The intellectuality, the rationality of the Puritan is rejected, and free rein is given to those very aspects of the total nature which were repressed by the Puritan. Psychologically, this is understandable. It is a clear case of massive enantiodromia. We discipline ourselves to reach a certain level of consciousness. To rise from the sensuous level, which is essentially animal or animal-human, to an intellectual level, there must be a more or less complete closing of the doors of expression through which psychic energy has flown in order that pressure may be built up so that new doors at a higher level are opened. In this way, we open the doors of intellectuality. And in ascending beyond intellectuality into the spiritual heights above, the same process must be applied again. In this case, not only the ascetic treatment of sensuality and all of the impulses that belong to cupiditas, but, as well, a subordination of intellectual criteria to something still higher. One climbs the heights by effort, by struggle, by forging that which is easy.

Now, what has happened in the present case is a reversal. One does not fall to spiritual heights. One climbs to spiritual heights. And if one has reached to the intellectual level, he must go by a path which is still more difficult and more austere. But when you deny intellectuality and let impulse take over, what happens is equivalent to letting go all holds and sliding down the hill. This is exhilarating, just as skiing is exhilarating, up to a point, and that point is where one begins to strike the field of rocks which lie below. It leads to descent, to decay; a thing that's easy to do, but which may be thrilling in the early stages of the process. It is man trying to become less than man, instead of man striving to become more than man; for man occupies a position between the animal and the god or the Buddha, and he can descend to the animal again or he can climb the steep heights which lead to identification with godhood or Buddhahood. What the New Left has achieved is a decent back into animality. The movement is doomed to decay, and we can see the reasons why. As pointed out by one former member of this movement, who turned it down and wrote a book, it'll decay because of loss of emotional drive. And beyond that, it can be easily seen that when you repudiate the discipline of the relationship between the sexes and permit a free love, as it is called, that you open the door to the spread of certain diseases which rot the bodies, and finally by the use of drugs, the mind is rotted, and the victim of all this will ultimately descend into the sewer of human failures unless they are redeemed before it is too late.

Now, this is a concern to all of us. The students are merely the first to feel a psychological tendency which runs through all of our society and even quite generally through the society of the world. We may, as older people and more disciplined people,

put up a certain resistance to this, which is lacking in the students; they're merely the first to feel it. It is, however, part of our sickness, a sickness of a one-sided society. Nature aims at wholeness. It is significant that the root for the word 'whole' and the root for the word 'holy' is one and the same—a Greek term. Nature aims at a holistic state—a completeness. Now, I'll note that in the process of development, one-sidedness has its place for bringing out one or another quality into manifestation, but in the end, there must be a balancing. Severe one-sidedness invokes revenge from nature in the form of the collective unconsciousness. It leads to an enantiodromia, so that the other side takes over with the same intensity as was applied in the first case; that we can see and understand as an interpretation of what is happening today. What is needed, of course, is a restraint in the intensity of the process, the guidance of it by a certain discipline. Rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's is part of the divine command; therefore, rendering unto sensuous man a due recognition of what is right and proper is required by nature. To that extent there is truth in this new movement, but the rejection of all discipline and going to the other side fully and extremely leads into even a deeper and darker error. We must accept, under due moderation, this other rejected side of ourselves, but having done that, it still remains necessary to climb to the austere heights of spirituality if man is to fulfill his destiny.

Now, how do you deal with a sickness like this, for that is what it is, a massive social illness which has affected the young people first, but is the sickness of all of us? Here we have what we might call a massive psycho-pathological problem and it calls for psychotherapy and more than that, for there is a spiritual element in it and it involves the service of the true redeemer, who is something more than a doctor in either the ordinary or the psychological sense. Since it cannot be dealt with on a rational basis, it must be dealt with by other psychological means, and what appears as evident is dealing with it by the principle of participation or accepted suffering. In this way, it becomes a contest between psychic energies, and he who has the greater, whichever side has the greater psychic energy will win. The redeemer striving to take over and redeem these that are falling into the depths of disintegration must prove to be psychically the stronger, and he acts through accepting the suffering and working upon it to transform it as though it were within himself. It is much simpler and much happier task to deal with a rational problem, but this is enough only with a *Brahman*. If you convince him who is on the level of the *Brahman* that the truth lies in such and such a direction, he is quite able to take care of himself and to be able to clean his own diapers; but with those others who are not so far evolved, the problem becomes messy indeed, and that is what is true of the present problem with this humanity as particularly manifested in the student revolt of the Left. They are not capable of cleaning their own diapers, for they are still not fully dry behind the ears, and the problem is admittedly a messy one. Nonetheless, if this humanity is to become healed, the problem must be faced.

The New Left rejects the whole of our culture. It pronounces it as evil. It does not attempt to prove this to be true; it regards it as an *a priori* truth, in other words, as something self-evident. Therefore, anything done in rejection of the society is therefore righteous. Now, what does the society of the so-called establishment consist? There is a complex here of elements that are obviously less than ideal with elements that are in fact quite lofty. There is in it institutions that are the expressions of human selfishness, to be sure; but, there is also the inheritance and the approval of, even though much less than

fully accepted in practice, nonetheless, the approval of the moral teachings of the Christ. That is part of the establishment. Generally we accord to these moral teachings a lofty place. Generally we regard them as right, even though we know that we fail in exemplification of them egregiously. These principles are as follows: first of all, the Golden Rule, to love thy neighbor as thyself, and to forgive the transgressor for his transgression—not only unto seven times, but unto seventy times seven. There must be something especially valid about the number 490—probably that's enough to build up a habit. We generally approve of this moral code, but from whence does it derive? Is there an innate morality in nature? Before Christ, there was in that milieu a code which said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Christ replaced this by his teachings. Why do we also go back to the Buddha to find the root source of the code formulated by him, which again involves the Golden Rule and a group of five moral principles as follows: non-killing, non-lying, non-stealing, non-concupiscence, and non-intoxication? These, too, we tend to view with approval and even admiration, and we strive, more or less, to exemplify them in our lives. But these are associated with the name of the Buddha, not with nature. What does nature herself contribute? It is simply, so far as I can see, the law of *karma*. Nature says, in effect, think what you will, do what you will, but you cannot escape the consequences of what you think and do. It is your privilege to choose wisely and loftily in what you think and do, and the *karma* will be according to that. That seems to be all that nature contributes to the moral law. Otherwise, morality appears to be founded by moral genius, and it is implanted by such in the collective human psyche. It thus appears quite possible that man can reject the lofty morality of the Christ and the Buddha, and it is so rejected when you reject the whole of the establishment, for in the establishment these codes are valued, however little they may be lived up to successfully. One then could eschew and prefer the negation of these codes, and thus establish what might be called an inverse morality, a sort of anti-Christ and anti-Buddha.

One of the surprising experiences one can have, and which I have had, is to find that those things which seem to me naturally to be preferred are not preferred by all men. There are those who prefer darkness to light, just as there are bugs that prefer life under a stone or in a dark cellar. There are those who prefer the manure pile to the rose garden, just as there are dung beetles as well as the creatures who love beauty. There are those who prefer the vital, with all of its shadowiness and darkness, as well as its finer elements, and who prefer it to the mental and the spiritual. I confess I've had trouble understanding how people can be this way, but I have found that it is true that there are those who have such preferences. It would seem, then, to be true, as Swedenborg said, that the dwellers in hell like it that way.

Well, then, if there is no rational criterion by which we can choose a higher morality, no proof as in the mathematical sense which when finished forces agreement by all who can understand, if there is nothing of that sort in the moral field, then it would seem that the establishment of a lofty morality is by the fiat of moral genius. And so, I would like to reaffirm today, the moral code left by the Buddha and the Christ, and add to it this, that it becomes the duty of him who would strive for a brighter and clearer day in the light, that he should carry through some of these additional principles which are essentially implied in the dicta of these great ones: that when he dwells in any society, that he dwells there as a guest since he belongs essentially to another higher and higher order of beings whose domain is not this plane, but another, a deeper, inner plane, and

that when dwelling here he is a guest; and that when he dwells in any society, he shall abide by the rules of that society except insofar as those rules violate higher law, then he must choose, and it would seem that he must choose the higher law; that he should keep to the best of his ability all the rules of life of that society of which he is a guest, that he not cheat, not even in respect to traffic laws; that his position is that of an exemplar, not that of an ordinary human being—he must set an example that will influence others; that he may not speed beyond what the law allows; that he may not in other ways violate it because there is no authority watching him, but to be a complete policeman for himself so that he obeys when all alone and when he could get by with a violation without trouble. This is a duty of the aspirant, of him who would be a leader, an exemplar for mankind. On the other hand, it is his right and his duty to protest that which is wrong in the law, to protest the irrationalities and contradictoriness in the law with forceful voice, but to obey it as much as he knows it, as much as he can know it; that is his duty.

There is also another example, remember that the Buddha's moral command included non-stealing. Often we are inclined to apply this only in part. We feel that we may steal with impunity and without moral condemnation from large entities, like large corporations or the government. This is wrong. This is definitely a violation of non-stealing. It isn't the individual that you steal from or the entity that you steal from that is primary in this matter. If you steal, you have done damage to the code of the Buddha and thereby done damage to yourself as well as to the entity from which you have stolen. He who takes from the government that which he can take because of cleverness, that which he does not need, but which he could provide for himself, is a thief. And remember, in this case, you're not stealing from an abstract entity called the government; you are stealing from the taxpayer, an individual that may be next to you. These are illustrations of carrying through the code of those who would strive for righteousness and to be honorable, responsible human beings, and ultimately Buddhas.