

For Mankind He Measured Truth

"Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography,"

by **B. R. Nanda** (Beacon. 542 pp. \$6.50), and **"Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict,"** by **Jean V. Bondurant** (Princeton University Press. 269 pp. \$5), between them shed more light on the Mahatma, whose ideologies and philosophies were in such contrast to others of his time. Our critic, Louis Fischer, is the author of *"The Life of Mahatma Gandhi"* and other books.

By Louis Fischer

MAHATMA GANDHI, dead since 1948, is very much alive. Books about him continue to appear. In addition to the two under review, there is one called "Non-Violence in Politics: A Study in Gandhian Techniques and Thinking," by Professor V. V. Ramana Murthi, of Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, published in India, and two volumes, the first 704 pages long, the second 810 pages, entitled "Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase," by Pyarelal, Gandhi's political secretary, also published in India. Gandhi's personality and philosophy preoccupy India, the other new states of Asia and Africa, and the West. For this century has two gods—Success and Violence—yet in it Gandhi achieved success through nonviolence and greatness beyond that of any advocate or practitioner of violence.

At the All-African People's Conference, which assembled in Accra, Ghana, in December, the provisional agenda contained a commitment to nonviolence which the Egyptian delegation found distasteful. At the October conference convened on the island of Rhodes by the Congress for Cultural Freedom to discuss the problems of representative government and public liberties in the new Afro-Asian states, Gandhi's economic program was constantly in the background and often the subject of debate among Afro-Asians, Europeans, and Americans.

Gandhi was anything but dogmatic, but, writes Miss Bondurant, "If there is dogma in the Gandhian philosophy, it centers here: that the only test of truth is action based on the refusal to do harm." This meant not only bodily



Gandhi: "Turn the searchlight inward."

harm but heartache. Miss Bondurant presents a detailed analysis of every one of Gandhi's civil disobedience movements in South Africa and India, and then she dissects most other ideologies and philosophies of modern time to contrast them with those of the Mahatma. She likewise treats the question of "the operation of Satyagraha [active nonviolent resistance] against a totalitarian regime," and does not rule it out.

I hold that in writing "Doctor Zhivago" and in his behavior since writing it, Boris Pasternak has done something far more significant than producing paper pellets for the Cold War; in an age in which civil courage is a rare commodity (remember our own McCarthy period), Pasternak has said, in effect, "Here I stand and proclaim my truth and am ready to pay for it—the awesome might of the Kremlin notwithstanding." It is this quiet heroism which will someday move Russia, one hopes, as it has moved the rest of the world. A man has showed in action that he is a man, not a mouse.

Pasternak's position is the essence of Gandhism and the secret of Gandhi's victories. "If I had to choose between cowardice and violence," said Gandhi, the apostle of nonviolence, "I would choose violence." For cowardice diminishes the stature of man and thereby invites political pygmies to become bullies. In all the history of the Soviet Union, no one, not even Trotsky, has displayed a tiny fraction of Pasternak's civil bravery. That explains totalitarianism's strength.

But who knows? "Freedom," Mr. Nanda quotes Gandhi as saying, "is like a birth. Till we are fully free we are slave. All birth takes place in a moment." On the other hand, it may also be true that until we are fully slave we are free and that freedom too dies in an instant. As Gandhi, cited by Nanda, wrote, "For the starving men and women, liberty and God are merely letters put together without the slightest meaning; the deliverer of these unfortunate people would be one who brought them a crust of bread." And that from a most religious liberty-loving person. This intimate relationship between liberty and rice is being demonstrated every day in Afro-Asia. When any country's democracy is diminished so too is our own.

Mr. Nanda has done a great deal of research and turns up new material, especially on Indo-British relations. He wields a smooth pen. But for some opaque reason he avoids the drama of Gandhi's life and death. Perhaps he was afraid of overstatements. In the case of Gandhi, dramatic telling would be true to reality. Gandhi made peaceful, nonviolent civil disobedience thrilling, more exciting than Napoleon's battles and Hitler's blitz. He demonstrated that wrestling with one's conscience and efforts to lift man above the beast level are more important than international conferences or the class struggle. To Gandhi, wrote his deceased secretary Mahadev Desai, "the struggle with the opponent within is keener than with the opponent without." Indeed, the way to peaceful victory over another is by conquest of self. "Turn the searchlight inward," Gandhi taught. This is the most difficult aspect of the Gandhian ethic. We find it much more satisfying to condemn the adversary. By thus neglecting to see our own faults we lose the capacity to win without bombs.

THE reviewer could not read two such meaningful books at one sitting. He must take time to eat meals, read the newspapers, even to turn the radio and TV knobs on and off. The meals are a delight, but, of necessity, the press and the other communications media, because they reflect the spirit and deeds of our time, are full of killing, murder, hate, tension, and vexation. It is a pleasure, then, to return to the atmosphere created by Mr. Nanda and Miss Bondurant, or rather by Gandhi, the atmosphere of peace, love, and happiness—but not of mushy namby-pambyism. Gandhi was a fighter always. He resisted evil with firmness and kindness and with a view not to destruction but to self-conversion. We might still try it.

The Character of Creative Genius

"The Philosophy of Art History," by Arnold Hauser (Knopf. 410 pp. \$7.50), examines its topic from five standpoints: "The Sociological Approach," "The Psychological Approach," "The Philosophical Implications of Art History," "Educational Strata in the History of Art," and "Conflicting Forces in the History of Art." Michael Lenson is art critic for the Newark Sunday News.

By Michael Lenson

ALL cultural phenomena and artistic excellence do not spring from cultural causation. Professor Hauser makes this admonition explicit in the first section of "The Philosophy of Art History." He offers at the beginning a sociological approach to the understanding of art history along with the careful scholar's warning that his thinking is merely contemporary and not eternal.

Since sublime as well as worthless art can be produced out of the same social condition, neither the good nor the bad can be attributed to the material or intellectual climate of the times. Hauser supports this view by coupling and contrasting such diverse Second Empire artists as Feuillet and Flaubert, Delacroix and Bouguereau, and both of these pairs against Courbet. Hauser goes further and points out that the Greek and the Renaissance achievements were totally divorced from the pressures, freedoms, and restraints of the societies out of which they emerged. The point is that creative genius is an unpredictable phenomenon. The norms of beauty are never final. They are still determined by the eye of the beholder, be he Socialist, bourgeois, monarchist, plebeian, or the adventurous man-in-the-street who simply knows what he likes.

While the individual creator may be socially and politically uncommitted, his art work is put to use. It may serve as a magic amulet for hunters. It may fortify some animistic role in primitive religion. It may impartially provide for the magnification of kings, deities, and saints. It may serve the propaganda arm of some social or political class. But here again Hauser warns the reader against

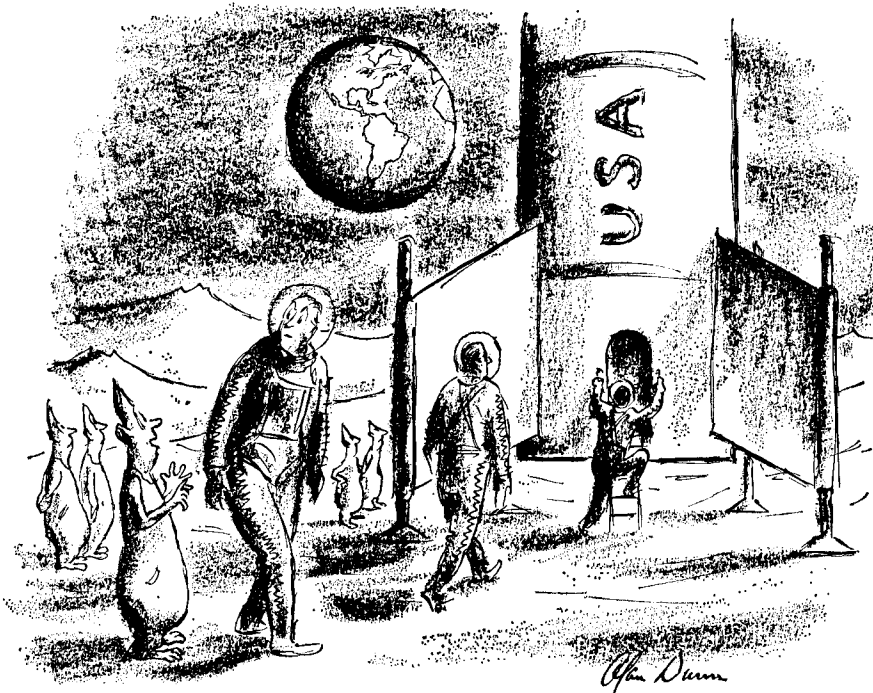
glib sociological conclusions. There is, he reminds us, a richer esthetic and spiritual harvest to be found in Michelangelo, Rembrandt, and Beethoven than in all the folk art of the world.

In this deeply engrossing volume, filled with political, historical, and psychological considerations (such as Freud's view of the artist as an introvert who seeks the "power of sublimation"), Hauser offers no premise as an absolute. Yet on the polar terms of "quality" and "popularity" he firmly bars Rousseau's natural man (as well as Tolstoy's peasant) or the "uneducated, urbanized, or industrialized" average man from making any critical judgment of the arts. Such people, he says, "... are ready to accept what is artistically worthy, provided it supplies vital value for them by portraying their wishes, their fantasies, day dreams, provided that it calms their anxieties and increases their sense of security." It is hard to see in what respect Professor Hauser's suggestion here differs from the requirements of the cultivated, elite mind. After all, popular acclaim was not the kiss-of-death for Giotto, the High Renaissance, or the three masters of the recent Mexican renaissance.

Art history can work independently of the artist and his art, obliterating names and achievements in a sea of doctrine. The author is aware of this when he allows that "a sense of perfection is not a necessary ingredient of esthetic experience." Yet Hauser swiftly counters this nod to the popular by saying that he is "disinclined to name in the same breath the 'Merry Widow' and Mozart's 'Figaro,' or Böcklin's 'Isle of the Dead' and El Greco's 'Burial of the Count of Orgaz.'" In fact, he closes this argument with the statement that "anyone who has known the shattering experience of being involved with a real work of art becomes intolerant of all exploitation of cheap effects and is very ready to maintain that there is one art, indivisible and incapable of being diluted, and beside which all else is devoid of significance and value."

The serious finality of this dictum is mellowed when the author accepts the innocent, fanciful, and childlike in folk and fine art that influence Klee, Picasso, and Matisse. This is the kind of experience which is reflected in the work of Dürer and Breughel. But, Hauser notes caustically, today in the commercial practices of the entertainment industries—with their frantic currying for public favor, resulting in the maudlin romantic attitude—is one of the most ominous aspects of our cultural crisis. The modern artist cannot escape this trap even by sheer revulsion. He is forced into involvement and fettered by

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"And then, in addition, we have a moon-wide income tax, a green-cheese tax, and a sales tax . . . where are you going?"