

June 18 1967

Dear Ted:

Thanks for your very interesting letter. I'm replying while I can, because my ability to get letters out is pretty much hit and miss these days-- so feel free to write any time and don't think that if I don't reply to each one, something has gone wrong. I will if and when I can.

The point you raise about cowardice is a good one, and of course very deep indeed. I am perhaps going to do some joint work on the subject with an analyst friend of mine who has dealt with war criminals and juvenile delinquents etc and is very good on the whole ambivalent business of cowardice, violence, suppressed violence, and all that. I am afraid that a lot of the pacifism around is utterly worthless, as you suggest. It is only the obverse of the murderousness that is structured into our society. That is to say that the supposedly non-violent believer may well just be secretly pursuing his own compulsive hate in a way he thinks legitimate and sanctimonious: in other words, he wants everything to be destroyed, and he wants to egg the violent villains into doing it by goading them through self-righteous demonstrations and all. He wants the human race to go ahead and get it all over with, meanwhile pretending to love life when he fears it. And of course he is full not of love but of hate, but he has everything invested in the false belief that he really loves, while in fact his love is the mask of weakness, incapacity to love, hate.

My only possible contribution to this immense problem -- the great problem of our time is this violence against which we are all more or less helpless-- is that we have to cultivate a clear realization of the nature and extent of the problem. Symbolic and magic reactions, whether nasty (warlike) or nice (loving, artistic, hippie) are just useless. I admit that the loving ones are nicer and perhaps more helpful. But in the end what we need is a fuller and more creative breakthrough of our human intelligence along with a growth of a really revolutionary humility-- the capacity to accept the fact of massive contamination, and to try to deal with it.

I won't go into the celibacy issue: it is both too symbolic and too complex. And too fraught with ambiguities right now.

You are right, it seems to me, in your intuition that creative and fleeting acts are the places where we see the real forces of preservation breaking through. Meanwhile I would suggest that you be more aware of the things in the society around you which arouse in you unrealistic expectations of fulfillment, love, creativity, perfection, finding out the answers and all that. Continual frustration by this kind of conflict and the attempt to protect yourself from being overwhelmed by impossible expectations, builds up a lot of useless tension which you probably handle with great difficulty. Then comes the danger of a fraudulent solution of some sort, or a short circuit, or an explosion, or despair, God knows what. You don't have to go through whatever the syndrome is. But you have to perhaps be more aware of where it starts. Since I don't know you, this may be framed in terms that are useless: but I think they have some general validity. All my best, and all blessings. in Christ

Could I have a few copies of Current?