

# WAS JESUS MAD?

by Leonard Roy Frank

The logic of 1984 is upon us. The slogans of Orwell's futuristic classic - FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, WAR IS PEACE, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH - have their counterparts in Institutional Psychiatry, among whose devotees CONFORMITY IS SANITY, MYSTICISM IS MADNESS, and TORTURE IS THERAPY.

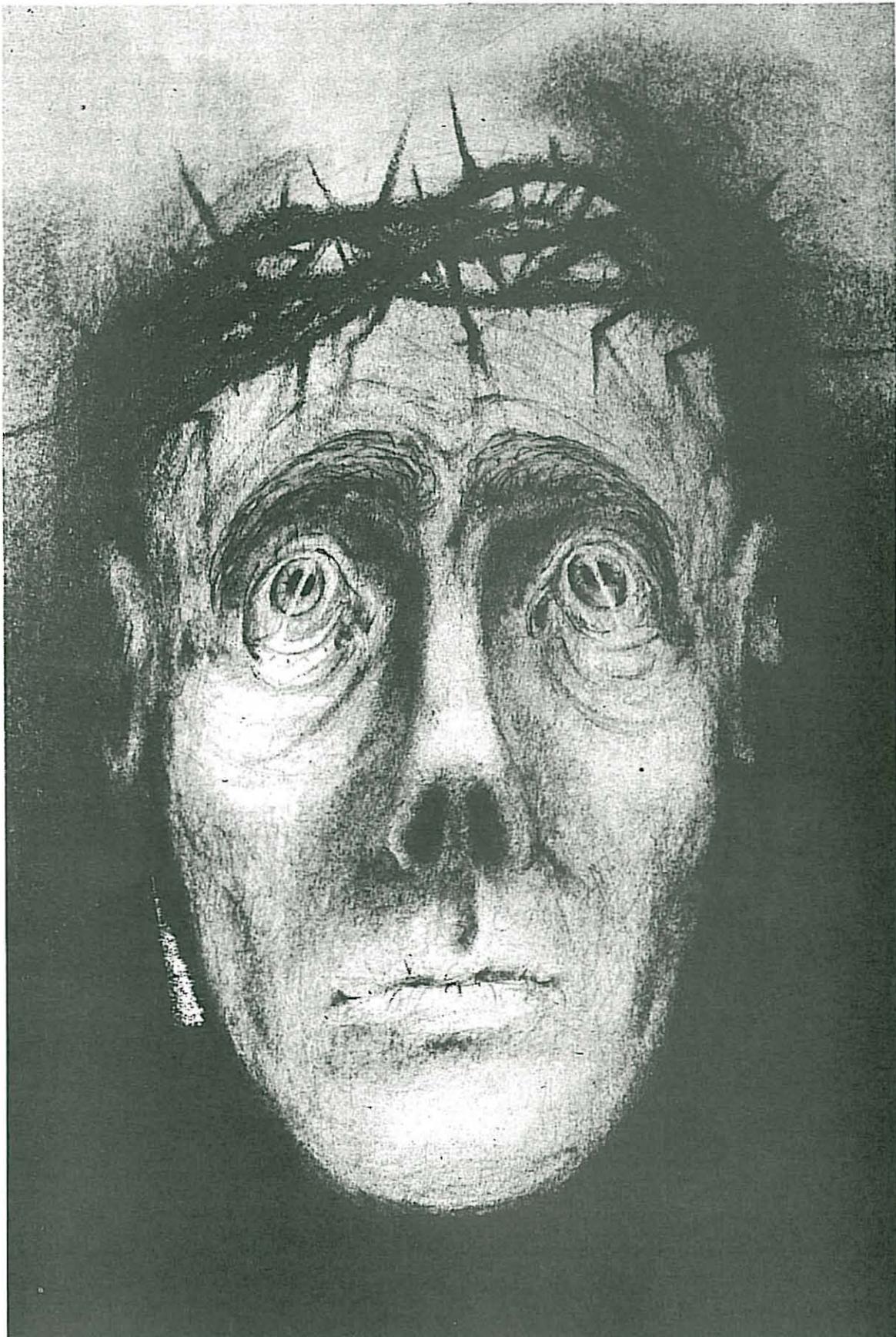
The key to Institutional Psychiatry's power in our society lies in involuntary commitment, the legal method its practitioners use to hospitalize and forcibly treat persons alleged to be "mentally ill," who either do not acknowledge their illness or, if they acknowledge it, will not voluntarily undergo treatment.

Dr. Thomas S. Szasz, author of *The Manufacture of Madness*, has charged that involuntary mental hospitalization is "a crime against humanity" and that mental illness is "a myth" by means of which certain persons or groups justify their efforts to control individuals who have not violated any laws but whose unconventional ideas and behavior disturb or otherwise inconvenience the community.

Although the typical practice of Institutional Psychiatry should be challenged on humane, social, and legal grounds I have decided to focus in this article on the question of religious liberty and what I regard as its frequent and gross violation by institutional psychiatrists.

Any thought or deed may be religiously founded. Although freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Constitution, it is often denied in psychiatric courts and mental institutions, where certain unconventional thoughts and acts, which may be religiously motivated, are interpreted as symptoms of mental illness. Contrary to Dr. Szasz's view almost all institutional psychiatrists accept mental illness as a fact, although there is considerable disagreement among them as to what constitutes mental illness, and who is and who is not mentally ill.

Such judgements will vary greatly, depending on the personality and belief-system of the diagnosing psychiatrist. For example, "non-religious" psychiatrists (such as Freud, who dismissed religion as "a universal obsessional neurosis") might easily read "symptom" into almost anything a religiously-oriented person said or did - especially if the individual did not belong to a well-established religious group or, if be-



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longing to one, veered from the accepted beliefs and practices of that group.

Jesus of Nazareth would certainly fall into the latter category. To indicate the questionable worth of current mental illness theory, consider how an institutional psychiatrist might evaluate this Jesus, who many people regard as the finest example of humankind ever to have lived, if his psychiatric history were based on the Gospel account of his life!

Here are eight verses from the books of Matthew and John, followed in parenthesis by the symptoms of mental illness they might evidence to an institutional psychiatrist:

"And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying 'This is my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'."

Matthew 3:16, 17 (Hallucination)

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted for forty days and forty nights."

Matthew 4:1, 2 (Withdrawal)

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in."

Matthew 23:13 (Hostility)

"You see all these (buildings of the temple), do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."

Matthew 24:2 (Nihilistic Delusions)

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body'."

Matthew 26:26 (Out-of-touch with Reality)

"The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he'."

John 4:25, 26 (Messianic Complex)

"(Jesus asked,) 'Why do you seek to kill me?' The people answered, 'You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?'"

John 7:19, 20 (Persecutory Ideas)

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me."

John 14:6 (Delusions of Grandeur)

I make no judgment as to whether Jesus was right or wrong in his beliefs, but I maintain that he had the right to them and, furthermore, the right to try to convince others of their validity. In his time, Jesus obviously did not have these rights for he was condemned as a heretic and-or revolutionary and crucified. In our

time, he in all likelihood would be condemned, not as he was then, but as a paranoid schizophrenic and committed to a psychiatric institution, where he could be subjected to the progressive violence of "intensive therapy," including forced medication, electric shock treatment, and psychosurgery.

If you think this is far-fetched, consider what the psychiatrist William Hirsch concluded about the mental condition of Jesus: "Everything that we know about him conforms so perfectly to the clinical picture of paranoia that it is hardly conceivable that people can even question the accuracy of the diagnosis." (1)

The following three selections concerning the afore-mentioned therapies, when taken together, represent a viewpoint which almost all institutional psychiatrists would find unacceptable, if not downright reprehensible:

**DRUG TREATMENT** - "Though the claim is made that the drugs are for the 'patient's' benefit in treating his 'illness,' none of the patients interviewed during the study said they felt any better because of the drugs and all reported feeling worse. As one doctor put it, 'What we offer the patient is control and the drugs are just another form of control - a chemical strait jacket.' The most common reason given by patients for taking the drugs was to keep the doctor happy. The fact is that each 'patient' is made quickly to understand that if he does not take the drugs, he is subject to forced injections. These drugs have devastating side effects and patients reported being extremely uncomfortable." (2)

**SHOCK THERAPY** - "What counts alone with most shock therapists is the 'adjustment' their fearful apparatus and its brain-searing explosion produces. In effect, there is little difference between the white-coated shock specialist and his primitive forebear, the mud-daubed witch doctor, who also treated diseases of the mind by scaring out, shaking out, routing out, and exorcising by dire agony and inhuman ordeal the demons or devils - today disguised by scientific sounding names, which they believed caused patients to behave in such deplorable, tactless, or irritating ways. In the name of this adjustment, and in order to bring about the desired quiet and submissiveness, the patient is put through a crucifixion of such torment as one would wish to spare the lowliest animal." (3)

**PSYCHOSURGERY** - ". . . a Salvation Army worker, a very high-ranking officer. . . married a clergyman. For years she lay in a hospital, constantly complaining that she had committed sins against the Holy Ghost. She complained of it for weeks and months, and her poor husband did his best to distract her, but without success. Then we decided to operate upon her (lobotomy). . . After the dressing had been taken off, I

asked her, 'How are you now? What about the Holy Ghost?' Smiling, she answered, 'Oh, the Holy Ghost; there is no Holy Ghost.'" (4, 5)

Most institutional psychiatrists use or recommend these treatments, or at least sanction them through their silence. A few psychiatrists and other doctors have strongly criticized their use, some calling them "tortures." I believe that this charge and that of involuntary mental hospitalization as a "crime against humanity" and often a denial of religious freedom are well founded and warrant a full scale high level governmental investigation.

Hundreds of thousands of human beings are now in psychiatric institutions against their will. Restricted as they are, they cannot properly defend themselves and so must look to the outside for assistance.

I urge every reader of this article to alert his elected representatives at the local, state, and national levels to this monstrous situation and in any other way within the law to privately and publicly demonstrate his concern and compassion for Institutional Psychiatry's victims, America's most brutalized and silenced minority. (6)

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#### FOOTNOTES:

(1) "I avoid using words like schizophrenia just as I avoid using words like 'wop' and 'nigger'." Karl A. Menninger, "Saturday Evening Post," April 25, 1964, p. 12ff.

(2) James S. Turner and Robert Carr. "Toward an Enlightened Commitment Law." Constitutional Rights of the Mentally Ill. Hearings before the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970, p. 425.

(3) Robert Lindner. The Revolutionist's Handbook. New York: Grove Press, 1971, p. 52.

(4) G. Rylander. Quoted by Wm. Sargant in Battle for the Mind. New York: Perennial Library, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971, pp. 139, 140.

(5) "Doctors in all ages have made fortunes by killing their patients by means of their cures. The difference in psychiatry is that it is the death of the soul." R.D. Laing. "The Obvious." The Dialectics of Liberation. Edited by David Cooper. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968, p. 18.

(6) "Mental patients in the United States suffer widespread and grievous violation of their constitutional rights. I believe that today these people, more than members of particular racial or religious groups, are the principal scapegoats of our society." Thomas S. Szasz. Law, Liberty and Psychiatry. New York: Collier Books, p. 190.

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