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A QUESTION OF PERMISSION

THERE is a minor sense in which we always need help from our times—a kind of "permission" concerning what we may or ought to think; but there is a major sense in which we need neither help nor permission. This sort of paradox haunts all human activity. We adjust to it without difficulty in practical matters, such as building a house or planning a menu. Only in regard to ultimate questions do we allow it to bring confusion.

This is nowhere more evident than in the question of human nature—or, more precisely, the nature of man. We start, as everyone knows, with vague and wondering intuitions about ourselves. Where an individual would go with those intuitions, if left to himself, no one knows. Or rather, we should say that the question is an artificial one, since the human being is hardly human when left entirely to himself. His natural habitat or environment is with other human beings, so that to leave an individual to himself creates an inhuman situation. What we do know is that, very early in the life of the child, or in the life of most children, a course of indoctrination sets in. This influence will of course vary with the parents and the community. Some few parents start in early to convince the child that he is born a sinner in dire need of heavenly grace. Other parents, not religiously involved, will leave the child's idea of his own identity more or less to chance, doing only what seems appropriate to control or direct his behavior. In the present epoch, there is probably more diversity among the various influences to which children are exposed than there has been during any period in the past. We have little cultural homogeneity, although common attitudes probably settle down to a "dead level" of acceptable assumption or belief, by the time the child emerges from adolescence.

Intuitions of identity range all the way from the high declarations of the mystic to the intimations of poets, as found, for example, in Blake and Whitman, and in the strange, imaginative flights of Edgar Allan Poe. In the range of philosophic thinking, the classic expression is that of Pico della Mirandola, who spoke of man as the being who has the capacity to create his own destiny—to raise himself above the angels, or reduce himself to a state below the animals. A clear distinction should be made, however, between the primary sense of being felt by such men—felt in some measure, perhaps, by all—and more superficial longings, the wanting to be, or "be like," someone or other. William James characterized the latter accurately in his *Principles of Psychology:*

> Not that I would not, if I could, be both handsome and fat and well dressed, and a great athlete, and make a million a year, be a wit, a *bon vivant*, and a lady-killer, as well as a philosopher, a philanthropist, statesman, warrior, and African explorer, as well as a "tone poet" and a saint. The thing is simply impossible. The millionaire's work would run counter to the saint's; the *bon vivant* and the philanthropist would trip each other up; the philosopher and the lady-killer could not keep house in the same tenement of clay.

The play of this sort of identification occupies much of the foreground of our mental life. Actually, the work men have to do simply to keep alive is probably a blessing in respect to such day-dreaming, since it compels engagement with external realities.

But what we are interested in, here, is the question of internal realities. There are cases in which men have been filled with overwhelming conviction concerning their own nature and the nature of the world around them. An impressive instance of this is found in the report by Admiral Richard Byrd of an experience which came to him

while left alone at an isolated outpost on Little America. Byrd was sick, almost asphyxiated by the carbon monoxide gas that leaked from his stove, yet unable to live without the stove because of the bitter cold. In the extremity of this situation, he left his tiny refuge for a few minutes, going out to look at the stars. All at once there came upon him a sense of the profound unity of the whole of life, flowing through and around him. Later, he wrote:

> The universe is not dead. Therefore, there is an Intelligence there, and it is all-pervading. At least one purpose, possibly the major purpose, of that Intelligence is the achievement of universal harmony. . . .
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> It was enough to catch that rhythm, momentarily to be myself a part of it. In that instant I could feel no doubt of man's oneness with the universe. The conviction came that that rhythm was too orderly, too harmonious, too perfect to be a product of blind chance—that, therefore, there must be purpose in the whole and that man was a part of that whole and not an accidental offshoot. It was a feeling that transcended reason; that went to the heart of man's despair and found it groundless. The universe was a cosmos, not a chaos; man was as rightly a part of that cosmos as were the day and the night. . . .
>
> The human race, my intuition tells me, is not outside the cosmic process, and is not an accident. It is as much a part of the universe as the trees, the mountains, the aurora, and the stars. . . .

If we made a project out of collecting such quotations, we could probably assemble quite a lot of them. The point is that such realizations are a fairly common experience, although not everyone feels able or wants to write them down. Another point to be considered is whether such experiences should be classed as a kind of metaphysical hallucination. No doubt such hallucinations take place. No doubt the mental hospitals have plenty of candidates for recognition as being spiritually illuminated. What we are arguing for is the folly of any sort of blanket judgment. The *content* of the experience should determine judgments of it, not the miraculous or extraordinary manner of its coming.

At issue, here, also, is the distinction made by Wordsworth and Coleridge between fancy and the imagination. Fancy is an irresponsible wanderer, the creature of "free association," whereas the imagination works at a deeper level of being. A high rapture is more than a flight of fancy, although we may sometimes need to question which is going on.

While this discussion is obviously intended to be—in part, at least—a protest against the habitual tendency to regard such wonderings as "unreal," and to set off against them the matter-of-fact recitations of the scientific account of the nature of things, we do not propose to be sidetracked into a diatribe against "science" or "scientism." There is no essential contradiction between science and primary psychological experience of the sort we are concerned with. The trouble lies not with science but with the assumption that science somehow contradicts the play of the intuitive imagination. No doubt science does contradict doctrinal theologies which contain elaborate judgments about both God and man, and the role and nature of both; but these latter are of no interest here, except possibly as corruptions of ancient intuitions of identity and reality.

What remains a fact, whatever the discoveries or "rulings" of science, is that the essential stuff of human life is made of intuitions of our being. Our *human* existence is as dependent upon these inner perceptions as our bodily existence is dependent upon breathing air. That we keep secret our wonderings, lest they be laughed at, or constrain them into conventional forms, allowing ourselves only a watered-down egoity, a kind of tame, timid and wholly docile being that is easily warped in predictable channels of behavior—that men so hide their inward dreams, their feelings of Promethean purpose, is rather a symptom of far-reaching psychic ill than evidence that they have no dreams, no independent source of stature and dignity.

There is much talk, these days, of "respect for personality," but this seldom means an anticipation of the heroic in human beings. Education, like other human affairs, is too much haunted by statistics, dominated by the norms of what is, instead of inspired by hopes of what might be. Lately, however, a new breath has been felt in education. Some eight years ago, Carl Rogers, now professor of psychology at the University of Chicago, prepared some notes on teaching which seem to recognize something of what we are feeling for. Following are some of the things he said in a conference on "classroom approaches":

> . . . My experience has been that I cannot teach another person how to teach. To attempt it is for me, in the long run, futile.
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> It seems to me that anything that can be taught to another is relatively inconsequential, and has little or no significance in behavior. . . . I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning. Such self-discovered learning, truth that has been personally appropriated and assimilated in experience, cannot be directly communicated to another.
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> . . . As a consequence of the above, I realize that I have 1ost interest in being a teacher.
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> When I try to teach, as I do sometimes, I am appalled by the results, which seem a little more than inconsequential, because sometimes the teaching seems to succeed. When this happens I find that the results are damaging. It seems to cause the individual to distrust his own experience, and to stifle significant learning.

This, for education and for private philosophy, is the restoration of mystery—something of great importance to modern man. Mystery may not be precious for its own sake, but it is certainly valuable in heuristic terms, and it is also infinitely superior to a plebian sort of certainty. What Dr. Rogers is saying unequivocally is that there is a range of learning which each individual must pursue for himself. If this is the case, then the first obligation of the teacher is to make the fact plain. The teacher's business is to wean the student of authority, in this range—obviously a process which ought to begin fairly early in the life of the child. What is wanted, of course, is not a pretentious bustle about what is knowledge and what is not, but an honest wonder on the part of parents and teachers.

It is almost impossible to write effectively on this subject, since, as children of our time, we have the habit of thinking that when we "know" something, it can be boxed, catalogued, inventoried, and shipped anywhere in the world. But when what we know, or are trying to know, is a matter of subtlety in human relations, and a matter of honoring the element of mystery in every human being, how can this view be labeled?

Dr. Rogers began the notes quoted above by saying that he couldn't teach another person to teach. Paradoxically, this may be the most fundamentally educational utterance of his whole career. His obscurity may have the same functional role as the obscurity of the oracle at Delphi.

The danger in discussions of this sort lies in the tendency to sentimentalize about our precious "egos," which are now seen in the light of something sacred—primary, original intelligence. Hard work is doubtless the best way to avoid such debilitating nonsense. If we are going to assign potential greatness to human beings, we shall have to expect great things of them. To sentimentalize over children and older students would be the quickest way in the world to direct their inward perceptions into trivial forms of expression, and from this it is only a short step to self-disgust and feelings of personal inadequacy. The difficult task of the teacher is to distinguish between friendly stimulation and a policy which means the break-down of discipline—not so much "classroom discipline" as the self-imposed discipline without which growth is impossible.

We don't mean to gloss over the enormous practical problems of the overcrowded public school system, nor to pretend that reforms of this sort are not already under way in the work of percipient teachers. Here, we are trying only to

make issues a little more explicit, in what may be called philosophical terms.

Actually, America's famous "prosperity" is probably our worst enemy in respect to the project of self-discovery. Children who grow up in families where there is a continuous struggle to maintain an adequate diet and other necessities learn by natural means lessons which with more "fortunate" children must be improvised. It is for this reason, if for no other, that the best "educated" children of coming generations may quite possibly come from families in which the parents have nonconforming or even alienated patterns in their lives. Such children will at least experience at first hand the atmosphere of struggle—an educational experience of immeasurable value so long as the parents avoid humorless self-righteousness and anger towards others.

The problem is essentially one of integrity. Parents who take themselves too seriously because they are "doing good" may do their own children more harm than an honest hedonist would do. The entire idea of "doing good" has been so identified with self-righteousness and ostentatious piety that even people with some emotional balance are found admiring the hero of Ayn Rand's *Fountainhead* and sharing the author's contempt for the professional altruists lampooned in this volume, as though no other sort of altruism could exist.

Of recent books devoted to the region of inquiry we are trying to explore, Carlo Levi's wartime volume, *Of Fear and Freedom*, is one of the best. Levi wrote this book while interned by Mussolini, so that he was compelled to use a kind of "cipher" to express his convictions. The meaning nevertheless becomes plain. Briefly, Levi proposes that human beings originate in the primeval stuff of undifferentiated *chaos*—the cosmic womb of nature. Life is the struggle toward individuality. But the finding of a stance that is wholly one's own—this is agonizingly difficult. So, while we retain the longing for individuality, we try to make it easy for ourselves. We try to frame the ordeal with familiar comforts and aids. These latter are the institutions which are supposed to be concerned with the revelation of truth and meaning.

Institutions of another sort develop around practical needs, called, in general, economic institutions. Then there is a third type of institution which usually combines both practical and what are termed "spiritual" needs—the political institution.

There are various ways of defining the totalitarian society, but a simple way is to say that such a society merges into one the concept and function of all three of these institutions. This merger accomplishes a final discount of individuality.

Western democracy is not yet a totalitarian form of society, but it moves in this direction every time it allows the "theory" part of its economic institution to be grandly associated with what is named "spiritual truth," and every time it exercises the coercive aspect of the political institution in the name of religion.

Why don't people rise up and reject these corruptions of their inward longings? Why do they permit institutions to give them codified "answers," instead of insisting that no true answer can come from an institution?

They don't rise up and reject for two reasons: first, courage is needed to rebel—courage and a somewhat rare sort of certainty; second, they are bewildered by the merit badges given out by the religious and political institutions. Rites of various sorts are practiced in religion, intended to convey the feeling that one's true being has been *confirmed.* This is a fake kind of individuality. Its worst effect is that it stops people from looking for themselves, so that they sink back into the warm, inviting "chaos" of the institution. All this is implicit in Levi's book.

The difficulty, here, is quite plain: Many people need help; they are not ready to stand

alone; they want a sense of "belonging," of sharing a security already obtained by others.

The question, then, is whether or not a community supplying avenues of *search* can answer to the needs of men for fellowship. Perhaps whatever bodies do service as religious and political institutions ought to be plainly marked as containers of *temporary* truth, of *instrumental* truth, avoiding all claim to any kind of "final truth" as though that claim were the greatest heresy of all.

Actually, the indecisiveness of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States concerning what *is* the good life—what *is* life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—may be the really profound element in the American theory of government.

Yet no man should be barred from saying in whatever way he can what he thinks he has found of the truth. What must be prohibited is organizing it, packaging it, codifying it, tabulating it, like a lot of "data" concerned with the description of the physical universe.

What is needed is more and more full-throated, independent utterance of the sort of expression which many men now suppose they must ask their culture for permission to make. The twin myths of the past—that we *don't* know, and that we *do* know—that we *don't* know as individuals, but that we *do* know through our institutions—must be taken apart, examined, and put back together again with a new meaning: That we can and do know as individuals things that we can never learn from institutions!

Who can really say with finality what men know, or don't know, about themselves? We need rather to hear without prejudice, and to speak without prejudice, without asking permission. How shall we ever learn to exercise a private sort of responsibility so long as we believe that original thinking must have some sort of license from the powers that be?

REVIEW

NATIONALIST "EMOTIONAL ILLNESS"

EVERY SO often, in the welter of review material which frequently hides our desk-top, some pamphlet or booklet appears, with no word of who sent it. A beneficent instance of this phenomenon is the appearance of a reprint of an *Atlantic* (1958) article, "The Great Antagonism," by Jerome D. Frank. Dr. Frank is associate professor of psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins Medical School, and this paper is a psychiatric diagnosis "of what happens to Americans when they think of Soviet Russia and of what happens to the Russians when they think of the United States."

Among the paragraphs to which we should like to call attention are the following:

> More alarming than the tendency to deny the dangers of the nuclear arms race is the fact that attempts to find solutions lead only to intensification of a course of action which enhances the danger. Why can we not change behavior which we know is only making matters worse? One reason may be that we are frightened, and anxiety if too strong tends to make rigid both perception and behavior.
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> Patients with emotional illness often show remarkable rigidity of behavior, which Freud labeled the repetition compulsion. They keep repeating the very acts which cause trouble for them. This seems to be partly a result of their chronic anxiety. The patient clings to a faulty solution to a problem because he is afraid to give it up. The more anxious a person is, the more rigid his behavior tends to become. Similarly, the more menacing the arms race becomes, the more frantically we build more weapons and the less we seem able to seek more sensible alternatives. Anxiety also tends to freeze one's perceptions of the world. There is nothing harder to stand than ambiguity, so when faced with a dangerous situation one tends to oversimplify it. Everything becomes black and white. To use a technical term, thinking tends to become stereotyped.
>
> This is seen clearly in the stereotype of "the enemy." No matter who the enemy is or who we are, the enemy tends to be perceived as intellectually inferior but possessed of an animal cunning which enables him easily to outwit us. The enemy is seen as cruel, treacherous, and bent on aggression. Our side is seen as intellectually superior but guileless and therefore easily victimized, peace-loving, honorable, and fighting only in self defense. . . .
>
> The fact that the enemy—whoever he may be—is viewed as completely untrustworthy is a major source of tensions leading to war.
>
> The terrible thing about the mutual distrust of enemies is that it is justified. Some enemies are untrustworthy to begin with, but all become so eventually. Enemies cannot trust each other because each is forced to act in such a way as to justify the other's misgivings. This is an example of what the sociologist Robert K. Merton has termed the "self-fulfilling prophecy."

As Dr. Frank shows, an inevitable psychological law insures that "all social behavior tends to elicit corresponding behavior from the person toward whom it is directed. Friendliness begets a friendly response, hostility a hostile one."

Dr. Frank continues:

> This can be seen most clearly in psychiatric patients, because of the rigidity of their behavior. A good example is the paranoid patient who expects everyone to be his enemy. You may be disposed to be friendly when you first meet him. Since he is sure you hate him, however, he persistently rebuffs your advances and maintains a surly, suspicious manner. In the face of this you are very apt to come to dislike him. Thus he succeeds in confirming his prophecy that everyone is against him, and will be even more suspicious of the next person he meets.

We need not look far for evidence of paranoid reactions in society and nations.

Once again, we are prompted to quote Dr. Pearl Cleveland Wilson concerning the ancient Athenians. Dr. Wilson shows that the Athenians, when confronted by an enemy, real or potential, showed reactions exactly the opposite of those described by Dr. Frank.

Dr. Wilson puts it this way: "Recognition of admirable qualities in foe as well as friend appears among the Greeks from the earliest times."

Dr. Wilson's paper, "The Greek Way," examines the cause of Athenian decline, by way of discussion of Sophocles' *Œdipus Rex:*

> The play of Sophocles shows the fall of a man of heroic capacities from the highest position in the land. He had unhesitatingly accepted the responsibilities of leadership without first applying the ancient Greek maxim: "Know thyself." . . .
>
> This powerful drama was written when Athens, still assured and unafraid, looked down upon the world from a height no other state had reached, failing to see the precipice at her own feet. Some persons realized that she had been approaching it, and the most important of them was Socrates. Before the Peloponnesian War he had begun the effort to which half of the seventy years of his life were devoted. This was an effort to make Athenians aware of the danger into which they were blindly hastening—the danger of seeking by superficial cleverness to make an impression, or to get their own way instead of continuing their earlier search for knowledge, their endeavor to come nearer to Absolute Truth.

The philosophic Greeks, of course, didn't need the word "neurotic," for they held that each man was responsible for continuing devotion to reason. Any departure from reason was regarded as regressive or infantile, nor was this condition thought to come about because of adverse "conditioning."

There is an obvious value, we think, in maintaining that we are responsible for our failures to reason justly about both personal and world affairs. So long as we excuse our departures from reasonableness on the ground that the international situation requires indoctrination, it is hard to imagine any means by which Dr. Frank's "vicious circle" may be broken.

Every historian records with sadness the Athenian's final lapse from reason, for this meant the end of Greek civilization. Our own culture is yet to be built, since, save for the earliest days of the Republic, our diplomacy has reflected more of the destructive "cleverness" which sank Athens, than a passion for impartial truth.

COMMENTARY
SOME CLARIFICATION

WE ought to honestly close the books on a controversy somewhat carelessly begun in Frontiers for Oct. 7, last year. In that article the writer said something which, if taken literally, was sheer nonsense. Obviously, he did not expect to be taken literally. What he said was rhetorical exaggeration—to the effect that "food faddists," despite their excessive enthusiasms, "have done more for the nation than the doctors, who usually wait until you get sick."

This wild proposal came after a description of a Food and Drug Administration attack on the food faddists. It is pretty easy to get disgusted with the Food and Drug Administration, and, therefore, with its diatribes; hence, perhaps, the exaggeration.

The article shouldn't have said "food faddists," but have referred to serious students of nutrition who are sometimes called "food faddists" by people who mock at any pursuit which promises restraint and intelligence in an area of popular self-indulgence. And it shouldn't have taken a gratuitous swipe at the medical profession, even if it should happen to be true that neglect of nutrition has been for many years characteristic of far too many doctors.

It is just as foolish to indict a profession as it is to indict a nation. Objecting to things said in the second installment of this controversy (Frontiers, MANAS, Dec. 2, 1959), a physician writes: "Good nutritionists today are eager to learn and I am afraid that you are confusing the orthodoxy of science with the orthodoxy of organized medicine with respect to public relations and organized professional policies that have no claim to science." We may have given this impression. However, the "crusading" tone of doctors intensely interested in nutrition—whom we quoted in the Dec. 2 article—indicates that they encounter considerable indifference among their colleagues when it comes to spreading knowledge about nutrition. These doctors, incidentally, were quoted, not as "food faddists," but to document our complaint that medical schools slight the subject of nutrition—as admitted, also, in an A.M.A. *Journal* some years ago.

We present the comment of an informed correspondent:

> Nutrition is a complex subject. Scientific medicine is aware of its ignorance of the finer details, but the food faddists are sure they know what they are talking about. They are called faddists because they base their dogmas on case histories of their own selection without regard to the criteria demanded by science. Many physicians have their preference for certain diets, but the scientifically minded ones do not claim universal validity for their preference without proof of that validity. All that orthodox science asks is that no claim of universal validity be made without evidence of universal proof. In other words, the claim must be backed by controlled studies or by conformity with known physiologic and chemical laws. And science is always prepared today to revise its "known laws" on the basis of new evidence. That is orthodox scientific medicine. This orthodoxy is not rigid. It only asks to be shown, and you might be surprised at the eagerness of numerous nutritionists to experiment with all sorts of hunches in their effort to learn and to discover valid evidence.
>
> The actual practice of medicine is not entirely scientific and it cannot be because of our ignorance. Orthodox medicine knows this, but it continues to seek objective knowledge backed by scientific evidence. It seems to me that you leave your readers in the dark as to what you really mean by food faddists and what you have in mind by medical orthodoxy. There are scores of diverse and even contradictory food fads in the literature. What ones do you favor? When it comes to science, generalizations such as you make benefit no one. Specific criticisms are valuable as are specific suggestions. Science might work on such suggestions and test their possible validity. As it is, I suggest that you are actually favoring the dogmas of food faddists and rejecting the necessary skepticism of science where specific evidence is lacking. I might continue by giving many details about the experience of doctors and patients with folk medicine. Some would favor such medicine and some would not. The point is that individuals apparently differ in their dietary needs. Scientific medicine would like to know why

> this seems to be true. Faddists by definition cannot tell us. Personally I have no objection to fads, if they help those who have faith in them, but I object to making dogmas that claim universal validity without scientific evidence.

We have three things to say about this letter. First, it shows the importance of clear definitions. Second, it shows that we should never have permitted a loose remark to have been made the basis of serious discussion. Third, our correspondent has provided a statement of the ideal of the practice of scientific medicine. At this level, we cannot quarrel with what he says, although we might suggest that heterodox movements outside the pale of established medicine are at least in part brought into being by the failure of medical men to live up to that ideal.

Finally, we have three books to recommend—books covering questions within the general area of this discussion; in our judgment books which are worth reading, yet which have been almost totally neglected by medical or scientific orthodoxy. The first is *Béchamp or Pasteur?,* by Douglas Hume (London: Daniel, 1932); the second, *Scientists Are Human,* by David Lindsay Watson (London: Watts, 1938); the third, *Diet Prevents Polio,* by Dr. Benjamin P. Sandler (Los Angeles: Lee Foundation for Nutritional Research, 1951). These books may not "settle" anything for the reader, but they do show, we think, that earnest men who work outside the boundaries of medical and scientific orthodoxy are capable of scientific discipline and devotion, even if their findings are unable to win "scientific" recognition.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

OLD FOLKS NOT AT HOME

> Editors, MANAS: Why don't you write about such a simple but constantly looming problem (because parents—along with "people," are getting older) as the relationship of children to parents, especially *old* children to *old* parents? (As long as you can put little children to bed at night, it's a cinch.)
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> We hear so much about the young, in fact a whole ministry has evolved, not on Christianity, or even religion, but on "What can we do for the Young?" It has made a whole generation of ministers jump through hoops.
>
> Several of my friends are not "great with child," but great with parents, and we travail. We agree that we all suffer from a terrible sense of guilt. . . . When and why did this relationship become so clinging?

OUR correspondent feels that some of her own elderly relatives, and those of her friends, are so dependent on inherited notions of human relationships that they seem to learn "nothing from a long life of vast opportunities." Well . . . yes . . . but it is not only charitable, but also philosophical, to cut back to the thought that people *may* have learned a good deal, even if *we* didn't recognize the fact.

There are many ways in which our culture has made things difficult for the old folks. For one thing, there is the almost incredible emphasis in America on the "cult of youth." And if one tends to accept new cults as gospel, he may be strongly influenced to believe that anything done, seen, felt, heard and thought past the age of thirty is not worth much. Then, too, America offers little nourishment for the virtues which are natural to later life. Buddha's *Dhammapada* compares in consecutive verses the "fruitless old" and true "elder":

> A man is not an elder simply because his hair is gray. His age is ripe but he is to be known as "Old-in-vain."
>
> He is called an elder in whom dwell truth, virtue, nonviolence, restraint, and control, and who is free from impurity and is wise.

The wealthier the culture, the easier it is to nudge elderly people into a drone-like existence. When the elderly feel they are needed because they actually *are*, they may respond with interest and activity. The ancient Chinese grandmother was valued very highly because she was needed to help raise the children and to direct other activities. She was appreciated—and she doubtless became wiser with each passing year. But the need has to be genuine; few elderly grandparents of today would be more than incidentally helped by a contrived program of baby-sitting designed by young parents who would prefer a home by themselves.

So perhaps we should approach this matter from the other direction, recalling something said by Lynn White in *Educating Our Daughters.* It is Mr. White's argument that we do irreparable harm to women when they are young by conditioning them to believe that they should either have a "career" or be parents. The fashionable thing for intelligent young women is to teach for a year or two when they are young, or do some similar work for which a college degree has fitted them—and then "lapse" into marriage. Mr. White thinks that, from the very beginning of a young woman's curriculum-planning, she should look forward to a performance of creative, useful work during two phases of her life—first, before she marries; second, after she has brought her children far enough along to permit a fair amount of free time. It is White's contention that the mother who looks forward to the resumption of an individual activity after her children are grown is more apt to keep her mind alive to the work for which she is fitted during the child-bearing years.

The problem usually comes into focus for women who find themselves drifting rather aimlessly in middle age. Dr. White writes concerning "The Dowager's Dilemma":

> Nothing would do more for the morale of women, and particularly of middle-aged married women, than the development of as many part-time jobs as possible. It is strange that our powerful women's organizations have not given more study to the question, and particularly to the system which one hears was operated with great success in Great Britain during the recent war in an effort to get married women into the labor market. Since commercial employment agencies make a smaller commission on placing a part-time than a full-time worker they are indifferent to the problem. In every largish city a special agency to discover and fill such jobs might be set up cooperatively by the local women's clubs, and a campaign launched through radio and the newspapers to make the community conscious of the possibility and importance of such jobs. If in the classified ads section of the papers the part-time openings were listed separately from the rest, employers might find that the eagerness of able women for such jobs, and the resulting opportunity to fill them with a high type of person, would justify splitting existing full-time positions. Such a service might also investigate existing brush-up courses for women whose skills are rusty, and encourage or sponsor others which seem to be needed in terms of the local demand for workers. This task is concrete and tangible. It should be item number one on the agenda of those who wish to help women towards confidence in themselves.

The last sentence is the crucial one, for confidence in one's ability to be useful and creative during middle age may create in turn an old age that is fruitful. Some confidence comes to every mother if, during her child's early years, she is able to minister successfully to her child's physical and psychic needs. This is constructive "role-playing." But in our fragmented culture, "role-playing" easily becomes artificial—the cause, for example, of Philip Wylie's monumental indignation in his *Generation of Vipers.* "Mom" is a viper because she exploits a dramatic interpretation of her value without really knowing how to measure authentic value; her neurotic behavior probably arises because her soul is sick with frustration.

In our time, human relations cannot be summed up with slogans, because the needs human beings have for one another—including parents and children of any age—are increasingly psychological, decreasingly physical or "functional." Not every child has the same "need" for close relation with a mother or father, not every parent needs to identify himself closely with the successes or failures of the children. Our correspondent speaks of feeling guilt for what at present seems to be a barren relationship with an aged parent. Perhaps she has left important things undone, perhaps both have failed in various ways from time to time—but it is also possible that, as she suspects, spontaneous inclination on both sides has run its course. This is not necessarily a tragedy, but the culture which outlives functional interdependence in families is the one most in need of replacing organic functions with others—the self-dependent functions of genuine maturity.

FRONTIERS

The Vanishing America

HAVING returned a few days ago from a brief visit to Death Valley, and finding ourselves somewhat less refreshed and restored in spirit than we had anticipated, we again began to wonder what is happening to the great American legacy of wilderness. Only one hundred and ten years have passed since Death Valley was first crossed by the white man. Today, all parts of the Valley are accessible by roadways, most of them negotiable by all but the lowest-slung Detroit monsters. The main, paved roads will even take these. The fact is, at certain junctions, and in certain of the more famous sight-seeing points (such as Bad Water, or Zabriski Point), you might get into a traffic jam. There were an awful lot of people in Death Valley, it seemed.

This accounts for one of our frustrations. Solitude, the private, intimate renewal of acquaintance with primeval sources, the joyful sense of belonging to the great surge and flow of the vital forces of the natural world: these are no longer easily discovered among the hordes of people rushing about the Valley in the hysterical pursuit of Kodachrome slides, souvenirs, and scenic "wonders."

Nevertheless, if you got up early in the morning you could manage to find yourself alone briefly at a place like Ubehebe Crater. This splendid example of recent volcanic activity has created an eerie landscape of black cinders, thinly coated over hills of grey ash, from which grow ghostly white shrubs of desert holly. We tried to record some of the strangeness of this little world on film, only to discover that there was no camera view which would not include the ugly defacements of the scene caused by footprints, automobile tire tracks, or initials scraped through the thin and fragile crust. The park service is certainly aware of the delicacy of the landscape here, and has lots of signs posted to tell people to stay off of the formation, but this apparently hasn't been effective. You walk across this cinder field and your footprints will last a hundred years. Many have been thus immortalized!

Going down the footpath into the crater itself should be an experience well calculated to stir awe and mystery, but here, too, the crass evidences of human indifference to the natural world keep confronting you. Beer cans were widely scattered along the trail, and huge initials have been dug into the soft mud at the bottom.

Speaking of beer cans reminds us that at the historic Harmony Borax Works—a site now enclosed by an eight-foot high chain link fence to prevent tourists from razing the place for souvenirs—we were again distressed to find that some person had exerted himself to throw over the fence at least a dozen beer cans, which landed directly in front of the colorful old boiler. Close by, outside the fence, there was a conveniently placed trash barrel where the cans could have been put with much less effort.

In Titus Canyon, where the road is pretty rough, and where the scene is therefore less desecrated, we discovered prehistoric Indian picture-writing on some rocks. But humans of a more recent period, much as a dog raises his leg at the lamppost, have added some symbols of the Twentieth Century: dollar signs *(sic)*, initials, and pornography.

While these small acts may seem trivial beside the massive destruction of natural scenery, such as the recent "improvements" in the Tioga Road alongside Lake Tenaya, they are expressions of *hubris*, the great sickness of Western peoples, the sickness from which they may yet die. And if we can't even control so small a symptom as a wantonly tossed beer can, no wonder the larger problems of wilderness conservation seem almost insoluble.

For the past several years, the Sierra Club, probably the most dedicated and active wilderness conservation group in the West, has organized several do-it-yourself, clean-up expeditions into

the High Sierras. Far from roadsides and places of habitation, the Club members spend days picking up litter, cans and bottles, and carrying the collected refuse out on their backs in huge quantities. An odd way to spend a vacation, but one that has become, alas, necessary for those who find something sacred in the wilderness—where rubbish of our cities is an offense against the holy.

In keeping with its vigorous concern for the preservation of some of the last remaining wilderness on earth, the Sierra Club has just published an extraordinary volume of photographs and text on the subject, titled *This Is the American Earth*, by Ansel Adams and Nancy Newhall (available at $15 directly from the Sierra Club, Mills Tower, San Francisco, or through bookstores). Adams has long been known by art lovers, photographers, and wilderness enthusiasts for the great sensitivity he brings to his photographs, and for the skill with which he has caught the spirit of the wilds. Connoisseurs of fine photography will welcome the superb reproductions of many of the best Adams photographs (as well as top-notch work of others). We can't "quote" from these pictures, but we can reproduce some lines from the moving, passionate text by Nancy Newhall.

In a kind of preamble, we read:

> Now, in an age whose hopes are darkened by huge fears—
> —an age frantic with speed, noise, complexity
> —an age constricted, of crowds, collisions, of cities choked by smog and traffic,
> —an age of greed, power, terror
> —an age when the closed mind, the starved eye, the empty heart, the brutal fist, threaten all life upon this planet—
> What is the price of exaltation?
> What is the value of solitude?
> —of peace, of light, of silence?
> What is the cost of freedom?

That the words *peace* and *freedom* should appear in the context of a book on wilderness conservation may come somewhat as a surprise to those who associate conservation either with the practical business of managing forests, mineral resources, and watersheds, or with the kind of sentimentalizing in which the ladies from the Audubon Society indulge. But let these words mark the depth that Mrs. Newhall penetrates. Her poetic text deals with essentials, and is directed at the core of human life. Learning to live on this planet, lightly and with reverence, is the theme.

The history of civilized man has been one of pillage and destruction of the natural landscape, and when finally ruin sets in, he has moved on, seeking new frontiers he can exploit. Mrs. Newhall recounts this dreadful history, the driving human quest, that in strange, misguided turnings has brought us to the present, as we invade the last remaining wilderness on our planet—the American West:

> Now, by machines, we are torn loose from earth—too soon, too suddenly surrendered, the arts, skills, strengths that were our pride as Man.
> Confined by our own artifice, borne up on vast abundance and colossal waste,
> Restless, disconsolate, passing in higher, faster flight
> over old arduous obstacles,
> above old bitter boundaries,
> we course across this dwindling globe that once seemed infinite,
> hoping to find some shell of civilization harboring still the echoes of old faiths, passions, and delights;
> we descend into the seas, scale the last dread peaks, cross ice caps, dare outer space,
> seeking somewhere, in some last far place, our birthright: the wild majesty, beauty, freedom through which for a million years Man grew,
> —too few of us aware that to any beauty we must come as lovers, not destroyers,
> come humbly, softly, to look, listen, learn, to cherish and to shield.

But over the years our learning has been meager:

> Today, in the 20th Century, more frightful visions rise—
> to scientists tracing from present fact the cold trajectories of the future,
> and to common men and women everywhere,
> not merely by night, alone, in fear or fever,
> but by lucid day, sitting together to consider the

mathematics of survival.

We learn to live with horrors—evils as old as man,
suddenly expanded into new until they hang world-wide, sky-high, above our lives.
Death no longer rides on a pale horse; Death rides a ray, an atom.
War, winged, rises on strange fires to leap oceans and continents, assail the moon, the sun, the stars.
We have seen massacre swollen to genocide, tortures learned from healing.
And, far beyond mace, thunderbolt, volcano, terrible as the sun, destruction, flashing immense into the columned cloud whose crown is Death.
More dreadful than the ancient fearful riders, Famine and Pestilence, its rays, lingering in rock, in lethal life, its dust drifting in the winds around the world, dooming—perhaps already—how many forms of life to cancerous corruptions and to monstrous births?

Hell we are building here on earth.

Headlong, heedless, we rush
—to pour into air and water poisons and pollutions until dense choking palls of smog lie over cities and rivers run black and foul
—to blast down the hills, bulldoze the trees, scrape bare the fields
to build predestined slums; until city encroaches upon suburb, suburb on country, industry on all, and city joins city, jamming the shores, filling the valleys, stretching across the plains. . . .

One is tempted to go on quoting from such a book, but we shall observe our limitations and urge, as we don't often do in MANAS, that, somehow or other, this book be acquired, if only from the library. It speaks so completely to our situation, ending on a note of praise for the human spirit and the noble sanctuary where it belongs—venerable wisdom, endlessly proven, but perilously close to vanishing from the councils of our time:

You shall know the night—its space, its light, its music.
You shall see earth sink in darkness and the universe appear.
No roof shall shut you from the presence of the moon.
You shall see mountains rise in the transparent shadow before dawn.
You shall see—and feel!—first light, and hear a ripple in the stillness
You shall enter the living shelter of the forest.
You shall walk where only the wind walked before.
You shall know immensity, and see continuing the primeval forces of the world.
You shall know not one small segment but the whole of life, strange, miraculous, living, dying, changing.
You shall face immortal challenges; you shall dare, delighting,
to pit your skill, courage, and wisdom against colossal facts.
You shall live lifted up in light; you shall move among clouds.
You shall see storms arise, and, drenched and deafened, shall exult them.
You shall top a rise and behold creation.
And you shall need the tongues of angels to tell what you have seen.
Were all learning lost, all music stilled,
Man, if these resources still remained to him,
could again hear singing in himself
and rebuild anew the habitations of his thought.

Tenderly now let all men turn to the earth.