VOLUME XVII, NO. 51
DECEMBER 16, 1964

THE SOURCES OF HUMAN FAILURE

IT seems quite obvious that there are two chief regions of breakdown and failure in human enterprises—the individual and the social. In the social area, the trouble comes from both the use and the misuse of political power. We find it almost impossible to imagine a society in which coercion would not be applied at all, yet at the same time we are horrified by the ruthlessness, the statistical cruelty, of the instruments of power in their practical effect on human lives. We have heard all the arguments which claim that power can be largely constructive so long as it is in the hands of the representatives of the correct social system, but force of these arguments tends to dissolve in the presence of the nuclear instruments of power which are now ready for immediate use by radically different social systems. The unmeasured evil implicit in these instruments overcomes the alleged righteousness of their use in either case.

In the field of internal affairs, the Western societies plead the necessity of economic power as a means of controlling the unruly tendencies of human nature. Without the spur of self-interest, the fear of want, the ideal of private independence, it is argued, men would not submit to the discipline they need in order to live fruitful, orderly lives. And it is logical, the argument continues, for those who have been able to rise to authority in a society based on these motives to make up the rules and administer the power. In time, however, we find that the mechanisms of power become inextricably linked with privilege; that power rewards the holders of power more than it serves the disciplined and the productive human beings. More and more, "success," in terms of the fulfillment of these motives, equates with the capacity for manipulation of other men and with habitual moral expediency. A kind of practical cynicism now seems to go with the quest for power, which is defended, not by any claim that in the long run the general good will be improved, but that there is absolutely no alternative. Under the influence of such arguments, moral indifference begins to pervade public life. The best men in the society cannot bring themselves to seek power. They withdraw in bewilderment and depression. A dark pessimism overtakes those who try to formulate public philosophies. Not unnaturally, the idea of Power takes on the aspect of Original Sin. Meanwhile, practical men administer the power of organized society—some of them conscientiously, as well as they can, and some of them in behalf of short-term self-interest. Such a society develops a lot of obvious flaws. While it seems to be a going concern, it has irrational leftovers—material and human waste which cannot be hidden.

Is there, then, any substitute for the rule of economic power? We recognize only political power as a possibility. Where political power rules, the threat is no longer that men will be *left out* of the operations of the going social concern, but that they will be *put out.* The argument is that, being unwilling to serve the general good in a manner approved by the political authority, they have no place in such a society. They are again the irrational left-overs. Instead of being condemned as "failures" in terms of the rules of economic survival in a "free" society, they are branded as outlaws in terms of the rules of a "just" society.

These are the extreme, the obvious difficulties in the use of power in all modern societies. Worse, perhaps—depending upon how you measure evil—are the conformity and compromise generated in people who fear what will happen to them if they challenge even in idea the authority which exercises the power. In time there develop dozens of petty theological or ideological

arguments to justify whatever role power happens to be playing at the time. Since for every theory of the correct use of power we require some kind of moral justification, endless stereotypes of "human nature" are produced by these secular theologies. And you get the sectarianisms which result from deliberate neglect of facts which contradict the stereotypes. Woven into the fabric of this kind of "thinking" are the threads of private self-interest and fear, which get knotted into the familiar compromises of traditional morality with the practical securities of the *status quo.*

What about thinking which tries to get outside of this confused arena of argument and look "objectively" at the social problem? Well, there are the anarchists, who are able to conceive of a social order which is ruled by no external power, and there are the communitarians, who share much the same values as the anarchists, who try to set up small, experimental societies that will have as few relations as possible with the power structures of the nation-states. And there are also various kinds of decentralists with similar ideals and programs. People of this general persuasion have the virtue of daring or trying to deal with the dilemma of power as it emerges in the behavior of single individuals, instead of waiting for its appearance in massive, unresolvable, institutional forms in the larger society. Their efforts, however, as seen by the great majority, have the fatal defect of offering only "token" solutions, even supposing these experiments should happen to work.

Now what, exactly, is the proposition of the anarchists and the communitarians? It is that no political rationalization of the moral life can be successfully enforced by coercive authority. And what is the question these people set out to answer? They are trying to formulate a tentative harmony of socio-political relationships which men may be expected to support and foster without the threat of power. What are the judgments involved in this attempt? One is that the coerced act is not a moral act, which is to say that to coerce and to submit to coercion are both dehumanizing acts. Another is that the coercing and coerced life is not worth living. A third is that men are capable of living uncoerced and uncoercing lives.

Well, how are these arguments opposed? The first thing to be noted is that they are not opposed in principle by anybody. Almost no one contends that the ideal life of the anarchist is not a desirable end for human beings. There is no moral argument against the anarchist. Neither is there any argument from educational psychology. The teacher knows that the anarchists describe the conditions necessary to any successful educational project. The "discipline" problems of the teacher are not the same as his educational problems. The two are related only occasionally and by accident.

The only argument against the anarchists is the practical argument from statistics. Anarchism won't work, we say. And we pile up all the evidence we can find to discourage people from listening to the anarchists. We prove how sagacious we are, how experienced in human affairs, by scornfully rejecting this dreamy idea about a better society for human beings. In short, we commit the offense which is at the root of all the failures of political rationalizations of morality: We ignore the fact that *whenever anything good happens in human life, it is a result of what the anarchists say is true about man.*

The basic defect of the political rationalization of morality is that it has an inherent tendency to solve all its built-in problems with *more* political rationalization. Political rationalizations have an inherent tendency to ignore their own limitations. Why not? What good is a rationalization which at the same time both affirms and denies its own worth? Pretty useless for men who have to get things done. There are of course societies which vaguely recognize the limits of political rationalization. Ours is one of them, and this recognition is recorded in the Bill of Rights. But it is no coincidence that the erosion of our common moral

life comes exactly here in political terms: The rights of the Ten Amendments need constant attention to keep them from disappearing.

The trouble with political rationalization, then, lies in its all-or-nothing tendency. When relied upon for uses beyond its capacity, political rationalization becomes the enemy of ideal human life and the enemy of education. Look at the crucial ills which flow from the unmanageable results of political excess: where are they? They are in the threat of war, in the constant ideological pressure of government propaganda, and in the both subtle and overt corruptions of education. How can these influences be removed? They can't, except by abandoning our present reliance on political rationalization and power.

The anarchists, of course, have an all-or-nothing problem, too. The anarchist's absolute stance is the only safe answer to the tendency of foci of political power to multiply and displace individual responsibility. Thus a good anarchist feels obliged to keep pure and spread the Word.

Well, what about a judicious compromise between political rationalization and anarchism? The joker in this idea is the word *judicious.* When a man says the best government is the least government, he is advocating "judicious" compromise. The minute you say "compromise," you have in mind one more carefully thought-out political rationalization to take the place of the ones that haven't worked very well:

A compromise is a compromise. It is judicious only when individuals make judicious use of it. There is no such thing as a "judicious" system, although there may be a system invented by extremely judicious men. Right here, we dare say, is the heart of the problem, which is to learn how to give our energy to the development of judicious men instead of vainly trying to devise judicious systems for men who lack even the similitude of the judicious spirit. This means facing a central reality of human life: No rationalization can be found for the process of developing judicious men. There can be no political guarantee of the quality of the fruits of education.

We may have to "compromise," all right, but we shall have to give up every bit of compromising at the wrong end of the scale. The Bill of Rights is a set of notes on the hopes of mankind, a memorial to some future Utopia. Instead of putting all our faith in some sagaciously designed political rationalization, and then "compromising" it with a bill of rights in the interest of the human qualities of human beings, we need to put our faith in the human qualities of human beings, and then compromise that faith as slightly as possible in consideration of the worst qualities of human beings. And we must then resolve to keep the operative aspects of the compromise to an absolute minimum, for there will be our greatest problem. We need, in short, some slightly impure anarchists, and the courage to believe in the potentialities for good of all mankind.

How might this be arranged? Only by means of the most extraordinary public relations program in behalf of the potentialities of man, and in behalf of the non-political good life. Who can be expected to support it, work for it, and keep it endlessly going until there are enough true believers to make such a society slowly come into being? We can look for help from teachers, humanistic psychologists, artists, writers, pacifists, disappointed liberals, disillusioned communists, tired socialists, businessmen bored by acquisition, and intelligent, idealistic people in all walks of life.

At the outset, we proposed that there are two regions of breakdown and failure in human life. One, which we have examined, becomes evident in the excess of reliance on political power. The other lies in the unrecognized limitations of intellectual analysis. There is obviously more than coincidence in the fact that we are learning to recognize these sources of confusion more or less concurrently. After all, the rationalizing faculty is involved in both political and intellectual transactions. It should be made clear, however,

that what is said here is not intended as an attack on rationality. There is no thought, no man, without rationality.

Where lies the defect in intellectual analysis and in elaborate projections of rational interpretations of meaning and reality? The familiar and obvious answers are two. First, the application of logic to any situation is at the mercy of its premises. You can't get out of the human computing machine what is not implicit in what you put into it. Logic elucidates the necessary consequences of the assumptions which are made at the beginning. The Hegelian philosophy, as someone has pointed out, bears little fruit for the individual because Hegel did not care very much about individuals. He was fascinated by the movement, the sweep, and the drama of history. He thought in terms of the dynamics of societies and he dealt with historical phenomena without concern for how these phenomena are derived from the complex causation of large numbers of individuals whose activities take on a homogeneous aspect from being pursued at the same time, in the same place, in intimate interrelation. You can talk about the World Spirit realizing Itself, which is an uplifting and inspiring idea, and you can talk about the resolution of the opposing forces of thesis and antithesis in a higher synthesis, which is a generalization about living (and social) processes which seems to apply to an endless series of relationships and progressions. You may become enormously impressed by the synthesizing value of this formula, yet neglect the bearing of its inspiration and its explanations on the precise point that needs attention above all—the human individual. So with all pluralistically defined branches of "knowledge"—they can be thoroughly tested and confirmed; they can have the exactitude, even the elegance, of demonstrated propositions; they can be the fruit of high objectivity and ardent devotion to fact—they can be all these things and still be irrelevant to the ultimate needs and hungers of the human spirit.

The second defect of intellectual analysis is that it is commonly pursued in divorce from feeling. It has, as we say, no "heart." This is of course a conventional criticism of the intellectual faculty, like the other one about the limitations of premises. The argument against intellectual analysis from its denial or neglect of feeling is, you could say, the spontaneous or intuitive version of the criticism that reasoning is no better than its premises.

Well, since we can't do without reason, the only remedy is an inspection of the premises. Where do we get them?

This is the question that people hate to try to answer, or have asked of them. It is the question which shakes faiths, inspires revolutions, destroys the temples of decaying religions, makes children shock their parents, and brings by reaction Holy Inquisitions, political Witch Hunts, Loyalty Oaths, Blue Laws, FBI investigations, Moscow Trials, lynch mobs, and all manner of angry or sternly righteous suppressions.

The true cultural hero of Western civilization is therefore Socrates—the man who made a profession of the inspection of premises, and paid for it with his life. It may be argued, of course, that Socrates did some role-playing. He wasn't really without assumptions of his own. He just pretended not to have any and his apparent pursuit of "objectivity" was a benign rhetoric, a way of helping his auditors to get to where he wanted them to get by developing their own strength to get there. Maybe so. It is at least possible that the imperfectly concealed premises of a man who knows that borrowed or merely "believed" assumptions have no value to human beings are premises of a special sort—a good and necessary sort. And it may be that when a man looks at such premises "from the outside"—without, that is, having made them his own—he thinks they are Just one more set of illusory persuasions.

Nonetheless, let us take Socrates at his word, and admit that his "ignorance" was an educational instrument for both himself and others. After all,

we need this kind of ignorance. It is the only possible starting-point for a man determined to get knowledge that is really his own.

Again, then, where do we get our premises?

We get them from our mothers and fathers. We get them from the accumulating experiences of life. We get them from people we trust. We get them from intuitions about the nature of life and being. We get them from institutional authorities of one sort or another. We get them from our longings and we qualify them with our fears.

We might generalize and say that we have our premises, first, in the form of unexamined affirmations, and we use these in our reasoning until we find that the reasoning leads us astray. Then, if we are ideal men, we check our premises and examine our reasoning. But we are not ideal men, mostly. Only if there is a seed of wisdom in us do we become potentially ideal men by admitting that we are not. This is the assumption of the Socratic position—the modification of the original intuitive feeling of having true premises, of being right, by the admission that we may be—or most probably are wrong.

Now comes the difficult task of distinguishing between what we know and what we don't know; between what we think and what we believe. Taking an inventory of this sort has certain curious results. You find, for example, that there are two kinds of certainties. There are the communicable certainties and the incommunicable certainties. The incommunicable certainties are important and the communicable ones are not. The incommunicable certainties represent what makes you go on, keep on trying as a human being, no matter what happens to you. Why should this be so obscure, so left to poetic apologies and mystical hints? It is a fact of the inner life of every human being. A man has these inner certainties, and they do carry him through, and he *can't* give them to anyone else, and they *are* the most important realities he knows. The fact that he can't really talk about them in "rational" terms doesn't take them out of the universe or drain them out of his life.

Education is the art of awakening a man's awareness of these certainties without *telling* him about them. It is also the act of encouraging him to increase them, and to rely upon them, since all good things in life are the fruit of this reliance.

The communicable certainties have to do with the external world and its measurements and predictable behavior.

We must now add the category of *probable* certainties—the probability resting upon the individual to whom they are to be communicated. Is the Socratic maxim, "The unexamined life is not worth living," a certainty, a probable certainty, or a plain uncertainty? Some men seem prepared to die before they will examine their lives with any impartiality. Others may decide that Socrates was right, and start to look at the way they live. This brings them pain. Is a painful life worth living? Well, according to report, living an examined life may also bring joy. If you taste the joy, along with the pain, what is happening to the probability that Socrates was right? Obviously, you will take no other man's decision on this point for your own. Or will you?

Let us suppose that the probable certainties available for consideration represent a curve in the inner life of each human being. Every man has his own curve. How could he have anyone else's? And he takes his decisive premises off that curve. An infinitude of points lie along the curve. The more important the proposition to be made, the more it will concern the matters which curl and twist along that curve. His logic can be magnificent, but what about the point on the curve where the premises originated?

Is the place on the curve where you happen to be living just now determined by "feeling"? This seems too simple, although feeling obviously plays a part. All that we can say, perhaps, is that a man's philosophy is where he stands—and if he knows, even approximately, where that is, he is a

man who can tell you what he really thinks and why.

For the most part, however, intellectual analysis proceeds without this desperately honest attention to its premises, and without the people who accept it wanting to know what they are. Why, then, should intellectual analysis work at all, or as well as it does?

Well, the curves may be private and personal, but everyone has them. And the points have their classical ratios, the curve its divine proportions. Some men have the capacity, through the use of reason, to set primeval echoes ringing. There are writers who seem to know how to extrapolate arguments which touch upon the secret hopes of every human being. Others learn by practice to strike familiar notes and compose engaging harmonies. The very nerves of human longing are strung along the curve and these give off vibrations and create fields of sympathy and attraction. And so, from the curve of our probable certainties, we are continually sending out expeditions of thought into the stolid world of facts. There is this never-ending hope that *there* we shall be able to convert our probabilities into certainties, for if we can find them demonstrated "out there," then we can put them on the blackboard in all the world's schools, write them in our constitutions, and produce at last the one true description of the meaning of life.

But alas, we make only a kind of poetry. Tomorrow we shall be somewhere else on the curve, and yesterday's science and religion will have become subjects for antiquarian research. Somehow, we can't see around curves, and we can't feel the hungers of ancient centuries any more than Alexander the Great could share the joys of Diogenes.

What of science? Science is only an institutional curve, a collectivist dream of Utopia. The premises still begin somewhere along the curve, at a place where learned men have voted that the probabilities of importance are clustered. Its chief virtue lies in its inductive influence upon the human heart. Science is socialized alchemy. When seriously practiced it produces certain qualities which sustain the dignity of man, such as reverence for truth, and impartiality in looking for it. The by-products of science, while enormously impressive in the form of material progress, are only the symbols of its excellence, like the alchemist's gold. You can do a lot of things with gold. You can even bury it in the ground and print up paper certificates which celebrate its scarcity and hard-to-get qualities, but it won't take the pain out of human ignorance nor the rancor out of human hostility, although with money you may be able to manipulate the ignorance and punish the people hostile to yourself.

A man who has found out the limits of science has a greater potentiality for good than any physical discovery, and the man who understands that an intellectual formulation is at best a dance form of the mind's activity—one way of mirroring a process which has an infinitude of aspects—is about the only man worthy to be entrusted with the writing of books.

This, we think, is what Socrates was trying to get at. He found the evils of his age in misplaced intellectual certainties and in the delusions of righteousness they produced. But having made this discovery, he went into his dance. The forms made by the movements of his mind (or Plato's) had their inductive effect, and out of them came those certainties for which he stood, and stands to this day. But these, the reader may exclaim, are intellectual formulations! Well, they are, and they are not. At any rate, you can't buy them and carry them home. Looking them up in the Syntopicon won't help you, either. To get those certainties you have to generate the full being of a Plato in your heart, which is only incidentally an intellectual process. The rational formulation is but one of the art forms necessary to the illumination of truth.

REVIEW
PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO ALIENATION

As introduction to a discussion of alienation in *Dissent* (Summer, 1964) by Raymond Williams, we note the opening passage of a contemporary novel by Sonya Arcone, *The Golden Hammer*. This first page of a sprawling 300-page book is typical in its compulsion to show the author's awareness of the "loneliness" of "man in the mass"—especially in a large city. "Alienation" has itself become a kind of negative ideology. The novelist who chooses an urban setting is tempted to play and replay the same theme—not that of displaced or misplaced persons, but of people who, having found a role and a place, discover that they are anonymous. Miss Arcone takes her opening fling at the mood of mechanistic determinism in human affairs:

> Protected by the warlike statue of Minerva, gray-eyed goddess of the city, isolated from the crowded streets by a small triangular island, the clock at Herald Square presides over the endless procession of men and women as they emerge from the network of subway exits marking the corners of Thirty-fourth Street, Thirty-fifth Street, Sixth Avenue and Broadway. No one who passes escapes the admonishing second hand as it stealthily pursues the hour mark, and the race to get behind a closed door before the chimes sound becomes a deadly game between the throngs of people and the white-faced keeper of time.
>
> Some hopeful eyes dart back and forth between the heralding clock and its multi-faced rival suspended over the Broadway entrance to Macy's department store. But the ringing of the chimes is the final judgment. . . .
>
> For Lisa Holloway, nothing seemed real, nothing had any substance. An hour could pass, or a day. With no face to time, it did not exist. Name it Day, name it Hour—without the continuing march of seconds, time meant nothing. It was like walking through a turnstile, looking in your hand for the coin and not remembering where it has gone. Time and memory became space and it didn't matter if you dropped the coin now or a hundred years ago. A face was a name. Put a name to something, it exists. Take away the name, it was never there—a passport without a photograph, an identification card without a signature.

Mr. Williams' "Prelude to Alienation" in *Dissent* intersperses his own analytical comments with passages from Blake and Wordsworth; these poets knew what was coming because they felt the inroads of urbanization penetrating the interstices of their own being. Take the following from Wordsworth's *Residence in London:*

> One thought
> Baffled my understanding, how men lived
> Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still
> Strangers, and knowing not each other's names.
>
> The broad high-way appearance, as it strikes
> On Strangers of all ages, the quick dance
> Of colours, lights and forms, the Babel din,
> The endless stream of men, and moving things,
> From hour to hour the illimitable walk
> Still among streets with clouds and sky above.
>
> The roar continues, till at length
> Escaped as from an enemy, we turn
> Abruptly into some sequester'd nook.

Mr. Williams comments:

> What the individual then sees, in the crowd of others, is not men but social types—images of men—and these are exactly characterized in the "advertisements of giant-size," the "allegoric shapes, female or male," which serve, in this crowded anonymity, to give back to men who have no direct knowledge of each other a generalized image. This is then the way of seeing embodied in a new kind of "Public Show," and the detached individual sees show and spectators—the "many-headed mass"—in comparable forms. Yet within this massing, there is a new kind of display of the self: no longer individuality, of a kind that is socially sustained, but singularity—the extravagance of display within the public emptiness. This is again hostile and competitive.
>
> The massing of other men in the street changes from a physical to a mental phenomenon: the crowd takes on a kind of absolute, single existence. This movement of mind, so fundamental to the modern imagination, produces a new kind of social relationship, which is more significant than mere anonymity. The conscious individual formulates his relationship with other men as with an

> undifferentiated mass, and feels at once threatened and hostile.

One great question remains—whether the mechanization or routinization of human affairs is inescapable, or whether, for the individual, the process is reversible. As Mortimer Chambers remarks in a review of Floyd Matson's *The Broken Image*, "the fixed mechanistic model of the universe is receding before current research both in physics and biology." Frederick Mayer's recent discussions of existentialism show the extent to which affirmative thought expresses individuality, refuses to capitulate to the classifying pressures of environment, and learns to value "loneliness" as quite possibly a "prelude to self-actualization."

In his *Dissent* article, Mr. Williams emphasizes what might be called William Blake's intuitive perception of an inevitable duality in alienation. The "spiritual" sense of disorientation was, for Blake, a condition of being human; the disparted self yearns to become whole. Blake held that the Protestant inheritance gave a symbolic representation of this fact—but also that human destiny required a pilgrimage through economic and political conditions which complicated the search for self-awareness.

Mr. Williams remarks: "What was offered was not an account of personal alienation in social terms, or of social alienation in personal terms, but a genuine connection of these processes, into a single process. This has radically affected all subsequent English thinking." We may see here an explanation of the extraordinary tolerance displayed in English thought for the "radical," whether anarchist or pacifist. The mood of such poets as Blake and Wordsworth was in part an expression of the English climate of opinion. Blake's Christianity is at once poetic, religious and psychological, as when he speaks of "my Spectre around me" as a jailer confining "my Emanation within." Blake's work, then, is concerned with gaining unity of the self through regeneration. Man's spiritual powers have to be redeemed and awakened, but this can occur only when he accepts the temporary nemesis of the conditions which alienate in his environment. For man himself is ultimately responsible for the fact that his creations have stolen his birthright of a natural life. He is Prometheus bound, but must break the bonds.

Yet this is extremely difficult. Williams quotes from Blake a poignant passage sorrowing over the psychological results of industrialism and urbanization:

> Where any view of Money exists, Art cannot be carried on, but War only.

COMMENTARY
1965 PEACE CALENDAR

THERE is still time to place orders for the 1965 WRL Peace Calendar and Appointment Book. Now in its eleventh year, the Peace Calendar is published by the War Resisters League, 5 Beekman Street, New York, N.Y. 10038. The price is $1.50 for single copies, $7.00 for five, postpaid within the U.S.A. The size is 5½" X 8½", and there are 128 pages, with a page for every week in the year. The theme of the calendar is set by descriptions and histories of organizations and movements devoted to peace and justice. Besides these histories, there is a directory of peace periodicals and organizations. The calendar is spiral-wire bound and opens flat. The 1965 edition has a foreword by Paul Goodman. An announcement of the 1965 Calendar reads:

> A bright thread of dedication to a just and peaceful world runs through American history. Many have contributed to this tradition—from the Southwest Hopi Indians, living the good life since before recorded history, to Operation Freedom which today is extending the opportunities and horizons for the most dispossessed of our neighbors, the Southern Negro sharecroppers. Sometimes visionary and other-worldly, other times practical and immediate, at times defensive and splintered, at others robust and well-organized—it is these expressions of one of the finest qualities in American culture which the current WRL Peace Calendar continues to explore.

It may be of interest to readers to know that there is nothing unimaginative or sectarian about the choice of groups given attention. Included, for example, are the Canadian Doukhobors, those uncompromising peace-devoted Russians who took refuge in Canada many years ago, and the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara. The Hopi Indians, who insist on their sovereign right to reject any part of war, are listed, along with the New School for Social Research. Black Mountain College has a page of description, likewise the Eva Le Gallienne Civic Repertory Theatre. In all, the history and contributions of some fifty-three groups have a place in the Calendar, and while the reader may know about a few or even many of the. organizations named, there are bound to be others of which he has not heard. The WRL performs a useful service in making all these groups better known.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
EDUCATION AND VIOLENCE

ANALYSES and debates concerning the effect of TV violence on the young are plentiful, and by this time most members of the reading and arguing public have been briefed on enough psychologists' "studies" and heard enough contrary opinions. At the same time, it is clear that, despite the single-minded crusade of psychiatrists like Dr. Frederic Wertham for "violence censorship," the adult population remains an eager market for the material we presumably don't want our children to see. Meanwhile, Senator Dodd of Connecticut is concerned with the lack of adult responsibility concerning the "coming of age" of TV. In one of his speeches, Dodd said:

> Glued to the TV set from the time they can walk, our children are getting an intensive training in all phases of crime from the ever-increasing array of Westerns and crime-detective programs available to them. The past decade has seen TV come of age. However, the same decade has witnessed the violence content in programs skyrocket and delinquency in real life grow almost two hundred per cent.

Programs specializing in crime and dramatic forms of dying were not so conspicuous when TV began; public demand from the buyers' market, however, has supplied the very ingredients we sometimes profess to deplore. An article by Eve Merriam in the *Ladies' Home Journal* (October, 1964), titled, "We're Teaching Our Children That Violence Is Fun," links the TV emphasis on violence with a booming business in mayhem toys:

> When something becomes part of everyday life, we no longer notice it. By now, make-believe weapons for children are part of the daily scene, ranging all the way from bomber models to gun-shaped teething rings. On Christmas and birthdays, doting grandparents give toddlers the latest mock-up missile. This year, toy grenades are popular.
>
> Also available in variety stores, dime stores and department stores are toy bazookas, rifles, machine guns and pistols. "Pull the trigger," say the ads, "loud bang is followed by whining noise of bullet. Wisp of smoke curls from the end of the barrel." Or, "Load it with caps! Single shot or rapid fire—real live action—loads, fires and ejects shells!" All part of the everyday scene. . . .

Analyzing one week's menu, Mrs. Merriam came up with the following count:

> In a five-day period, Monday through Friday, programs showed a stabbing in the back, four attempted suicides (three successful), four people falling or pushed over cliffs, two cars rolling over cliffs, two attempts to run cars over persons on the sidewalk, a raving psychotic loose in a flying airliner, two mob scenes (in one of which the mob hangs the wrong man), a horse grinding a man under its hooves, 12 murders, 16 major gunfights, 21 persons shot (apparently not fatally), 21 other violent incidents with guns (ranging from near-misses to shooting up a town), 37 hand-to-hand fights, an attempted murder with a pitchfork, two stranglings, a fight in the water, a woman being gagged and tied to a bed, and a great deal of miscellaneous violence, including a hired killer stalking his prey, two robberies, a pickpocket working, a woman killed by falling from a train, a tidal wave and a guillotining.

But viewing these trends with alarm does not, apparently, accomplish very much. We suspect that the only road to a life-giving instead of a death-dealing atmosphere for children's entertainment will come after a new sort of responsibility is assumed by educators, and comprehended by parents. We have been saving for appropriate use one of Hallock Hoffman's KPFK commentaries (August 30, 1964), and his searching questions respecting violence certainly fit in here. He looks at the links between the typical parental approach to "moral instruction" and the "natural" appeal of violence, asking, "Is violence characteristic of human beings, and ineradicable?" His broadcast continued:

> It takes a certain courage to answer that it is not. Men have been fighting with each other as long as they have been men; societies have been fighting societies; most men have regarded their group as "in" and other groups as "out"—and the outness of a group is the same as a license to do violence to its members. "The only good Indian is a dead Indian" fits almost every age and nation—merely change the name of the one made good by being dead. "They understand

only force" fits every age and people—just fill in the name of the people your people are afraid of.

It is not that we have to have violence. It is that we haven't learned to encourage the kind of behavior we like in others, instead of punishing what we don't like. We punish our children, and make them fearful, because we were punished and are afraid; they learn to frighten and to punish each other when they are frustrated; and they grow up and pass on the same tactics to their children.

This kind of behavior is natural, in the sense that it has been transmitted down through the generations and is built into the members of our culture, and most others, in child training.

We rest our attempts to make the world outside the United States safe and secure on our ability to frighten other peoples into doing what we wish. We rest our system of social order on fear and punishment within the United States. We even lean on punishment, which surely provokes fear and anxiety, as the principal ingredient in *all* our human relationships.

How many of your daily encounters with the members of your family and with your associates at work are marked by their encouraging you, by their recognition of your achievement? How many times during the day do you say to your children, "Good"; how many times do you say "No, bad"? How many times today did you look for something to praise in the person—whoever that person is—with whom you spent more hours than any other?

These questions embarrassed me. I found myself asking them of myself, as I wondered why there was so-much fear in our society. It seems that I, and everyone I know, depend more on punishment and negative responses to others than on positive reinforcements. And yet I know, and so do most of us, that the positive and encouraging and approving actions toward others are more likely to increase the behavior in those others that I prefer.

And why are "rewards and encouragements" unlikely to constitute what we usually consider "exciting" drama? Well, aside from the fact that familiar standards of success and failure are still extraordinarily childish, and forms of violence are natural to childhood until a sense of purpose has been established, we lack illustrations of that kind of "death-defying" bravery which cannot be represented in visual terms.

Liberation from the long dominion of violence will come, perhaps, only when a new psychology has been fully developed. Meanwhile a few TV dramas are groping in this direction and nothing, as Hallock Hoffman dares to hope, is impossible.

FRONTIERS

Not Enough With Us

"THE world," Wordsworth declared with his poet's wisdom, "is too much with us." But which world? Surely not Wordsworth's world, nor that great world of nature whose drafty spaces filled with the pageantry of life come sometimes to stretch our thoughts and compose our feelings with their timeless caress. This world, surely, is with us not enough.

We have been reading Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *Gift from the Sea* (published by Pantheon in the '50's) and trying to think long thoughts about the world which cannot, after all, be had as a gift save with the help of some poet's incantation. For Mrs. Lindbergh, the beach of a lonely island became for a time a clairvoyant's crystal. You look at those vacant, transparent spheres and see nothing in them. Yet let a sensitive human being gaze into depths of nothingness, and a whole panorama of trooping life appears. Is it, was it, really there? Have we any right to let such visions shred and shame our notions of "reality"? What order can a man expect from existence if he should take seriously Mrs. Lindbergh's reading of the shell of a channeled whelk?

It may be well, once in a while, to kick the cobblestone with Dr. Johnson and insist the earth is a solid place unlikely to dissolve in the mists of a poet's dreaming. But who is willing to lie down with cobblestones for all eternity? Cobblestones are also a stance for looking at the stars. Musing on her beach, Mrs. Lindbergh wrote:

> With a new awareness, both painful and humorous, I begin to understand why the saints were rarely married women. I am convinced it has nothing inherently to do, as I once supposed, with chastity or children. It has to do primarily with distractions. The bearing, rearing, feeding and educating of children; the running of a house with its thousand details, human relationships with their myriad pulls—woman's normal occupations in general run counter to creative life, or contemplative life, or saintly life. The problem is not merely one of *Woman and Career, Woman and the Home, Woman and Independence*. It is more basically: how to remain whole in the midst of the distractions of life; how to remain balanced no matter what centrifugal forces tend to pull one off center, how to remain strong, no matter what shocks come in at the periphery and tend to crack the hub of the wheel.
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> What is the answer? There is no easy answer, no complete answer. I have only clues, shells from the sea. The bare beauty of the channeled whelk tells me that one answer, and perhaps a first step, is in simplification of life, in cutting out some of the distractions. But how? Total retirement is not possible. I cannot shed my responsibilities. I cannot permanently inhabit a desert island. I cannot be a nun in the midst of family life. I would not want to be. The solution for me surely, is neither in total renunciation of the world, nor in total acceptance of it. I must find a balance somewhere, or an alternating rhythm between these two extremes; a swinging of the pendulum, between solitude and communication, between retreat and return. . . .

Women whose hopes were first stirred by the enthusiasm, and then dimmed by the polemics, of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* will find in this book some deeper counsels. But of course they are not "counsels," and save for her publisher's assurance on the jacket that here is "An answer to the conflicts in our lives," Mrs. Lindbergh hardly means them thus. *Gift from the Sea* is a shy exposure of the meditative thinking of a mature human being—someone who knows how slight an approach to wisdom comes with what we proudly call "maturity"—and while the writing is skillful, the perceptions delicate and luminously set down by a particular human being, the high merit of this book consists in its invitation to look at the world as it flows through the impersonal mirror of a mind.

Only superficially is this book written from a "woman's" point of view. The reflections on marriage, its riches and its meaning, might do more for men than for women, since men seldom think in this way about themselves. A passage on growing older—or "up"—is especially good:

> The primitive, physical, functional pattern of the morning of life, the active years before forty or fifty,

> is outlived. But there is still the afternoon opening up, which one can spend not in the feverish pace of the morning but in having time at last for those intellectual, cultural, and spiritual activities that were pushed aside in the heat of the race. We Americans, with our terrific emphasis on youth, action, and material success, certainly tend to belittle the afternoon of life and even pretend that it never comes. We push the clock back and try to prolong the morning, over-reaching and overstraining ourselves in the unnatural effort. We do not succeed, of course. We cannot compete with our sons and daughters. And what a struggle it is to race with these over-active and under-wise adults! In our breathless attempts we often miss the flowering that waits for the afternoon.
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> For is it not possible that middle age can be looked upon as a period of second flowering, second growth, even a kind of second adolescence? It is true that society in general does not help one accept this interpretation of the second half of life. And therefore this period of expanding is often tragically misunderstood. Many people never climb above the plateau of forty-to-fifty. The signs that presage growth, so similar, it seems to me, to those in early adolescence: discontent, restlessness, doubt, despair, longing, are interpreted falsely as signs of decay. In youth one does not as often misinterpret the signs; one accepts them, quite rightly, as growing pains. One takes them seriously, listens to them, follows where they lead. One is afraid. Naturally. Who is not afraid of pure space—that breath-taking empty space of an open door? But despite fear, one goes through to the room beyond.
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> But in middle age, because of the false assumption that it is a period of decline, one interprets these life-signs, paradoxically, as signs of approaching death. Instead of facing them, one runs away; one escapes—into depressions, nervous breakdowns, drink, love affairs, or frantic, thoughtless, fruitless overwork. Anything, rather than face them. Anything, rather than stand still and learn from them. One tries to cure the signs of growth, to exorcise them, as if they were devils, when really they might be angels of annunciation.

This is a book about gathering the threads of experience and thought of meaning and weaving them into a philosophy of life. It says little about the circumstances of life, except as they relate to the work that is in progress on the loom. There is not a breath of politics in the book, yet it is filled with implications for politics: the question, for example, of what would happen to political problems if everyone were to take up the weaving of a life as devotedly as Mrs. Lindbergh.

The point so well made in this book is that too large a number of women in America seem unaware of their unique opportunities. They do not use the freedom they have:

> For life today in America is based on the premise of ever-widening circles of contact and communication. It involves not only family demands, but community demands, national demands, international demands on the good citizen, through social and cultural pressures, through newspapers, magazines, radio programs, political drives, charitable appeals, and so on. My mind reels with it. . . .
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> This is not the life of simplicity but the life of multiplicity that the wise men warn us of. It leads not to unification but to fragmentation. It does not bring grace; it destroys the soul. And this is not only true of my life, I am forced to conclude; it is the life of millions of women in America. I stress America, because today, the American woman more than any other has the privilege of choosing such a life. Woman in large parts of the civilized world has been forced back by war, by poverty, by collapse, by the sheer struggle to survive, into a smaller circle of immediate time and space, immediate family life, immediate problems of existence. The American woman is still relatively free to choose the wider life. How long she will hold this enviable and precarious position no one knows. . . .

Well, our review now becomes a tract in behalf of the realities conjured up in *Gift from the Sea*, as distinguished from the preoccupations which fill the popular magazines, newspapers, and far too many "serious" books. It is the self-created reality of thinking human beings. Because, alas, it is not a reality that can be taken to market, promoted by developers, defended in wars or won by invasions, there is a conspiracy on the part of men of action to pretend that it does not really exist. Yet to ignore it turns human life into a furious ransacking of the external scene for what is not there at all.