

## CRISIS AND RESPONSE

MOST people find it exceedingly difficult to keep their heads in the midst of a crisis. Well-learned lessons are often forgotten under pressure and guiding principles may be ignored. It is generally agreed, however, that excitement and desperation never help a man to ride out a crisis. Decisive action may be needed, but only a calm head can choose what to do; only the judgment which sees all (or most) of the alternatives and can assess their probable consequences is able to turn crisis away from disaster.

When it comes to a time of crisis for large groups—for nations or the entire world—the application of mature intelligence seems almost impossible. Now it is not simply a matter of maintaining individual "control," but of managing the desperation of masses of people, with the added complication, in a "free" society, of dealing with the emotional explosives set off by demagogues. Problems of this order seem beyond us, outside our experience. In such circumstances, one can well understand the temptation of leaders to try to hide the nature or full extent of the crisis; or, on the other hand, the eagerness on the part of others to have it publicly faced. Some people insist that we must bargain for time, while others declare that the methods adopted to gain time become the means of concealing the fact that *time is running out*.

A letter from a reader deals with a characteristic phase of this issue:

This is a brief dissent from the thought expressed in the concluding paragraph of the article, "The Principle of Human Survival," in the May 8 issue. The paragraph reads:

"Meanwhile, there is a pleasant irony in the fact that all the means we have established, which have been absorbing our lives, do not suddenly collapse because we are no longer sure what to use them for. They remain in fairly good order, spinning their

wheels, waiting for the driver to make up his mind. We can keep them going while we learn how to think. In fact, the activity of tending the machines may save us from the madness which comes from loss of direction. The machines have given us many things, and now they may give us a little time.

I would say that it is precisely *time* that we do not now have. We cannot afford to "keep [the wheels] going while we learn how to think." We do not have the time to think; the machines are too dangerous.

I have in mind primarily our nuclear war machinery, which is bringing us closer and closer to Armageddon. This machinery is so lethal that we continue spinning its wheels only at our own peril. This machinery needs to be scrapped, promptly, or *we* will soon all end up on the scrap heap.

The counsel, "the activity of the machines may save us from the madness which comes from loss of direction," is the rule of thumb by which so many people today have buried themselves in the System, and given up consideration of the consequences to which it is leading. The busywork of small, day-to-day routines tends to conceal the larger, long-range consequences to which these routines are leading us. "Tending the machines" is, under such conditions, a narcotic which dulls the pain. It is no cure but rather a false pain-reliever.

Our madness, which is real, stems not from a loss of direction, but from devoting our energies to activity in a human direction, a direction which blithely thinks in terms of tens of millions of dead as "acceptable losses," and that has no goal in the meantime but a higher material standard of living, with all the moral dislocations attendant upon the raising of that standard, at any cost.

No, we do not have the luxury of sitting back and thinking, while we continue to tend the machines. If survival is our goal, we have to junk the machines, and all that goes with them—and do so soon, before it is too late. The time is later than we realize.

We should first get straight the meaning of the paragraph quoted from the May 8 MANAS. The "machines" there referred to are the general

production equipment of the entire technological society, not simply those devoted to military purposes. Our correspondent has addressed himself to a special ill of the technological society—the military-industrial establishment—and makes his point. He declares what he believes must be done "if survival is our goal."

In these terms, there is not one problem, but two. The first problem concerns deciding what "we" must do, and the second involves getting people to do it. This is a complicated case of the old question of ends and means. So long as they are presented with sufficient generality, there is little argument about ends. The real differences all turn on the means. Everybody wants a "peaceful world." Everybody wants to "survive." But as you sharpen the focus on these ends, the obstacles begin to be defined. Then you set your analysis wherever you think you have to begin in order to overcome the obstacles. The MANAS article in question looked at the basic, pre-political attitudes of human beings. This was done on the theory that these attitudes control responses in crisis as well as in daily life. It was an attempt to go behind symptoms and to get at the non-political causes of a situation that tends to be obsessively defined in political terms.

There is considerable evidence that this kind of searching for causes is more important than cries of desperation which are not heard.

It is necessary, for example, for people to recognize that the extensive preparations for nuclear war which characterize the American scene represent a kind of insanity. And it should be clear that an objective so formulated will require an enormous amount of re-education. The controlling elite (consisting of people from the best educated and most powerful classes of society) think otherwise. The foreign policy of the United States, which is not only closely related to, but dependent upon, the nation's military strategy, is designed by men of this sort. And on the whole, the people assent. They don't like it, but they assent.

The problem is to create an awareness of values which point to entirely different forms of behavior. The need for this kind of regeneration, or innovation, is plain enough even at the level of political analysis. A recent "Occasional Paper" published by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, *The Elite and the Electorate*, attempts to answer the question: "Is government by the people possible?" Senator Fulbright (Arkansas) opens the discussion with a statement of the difficulties now being experienced by the Western democracies:

The descent from democratic optimism in Western political thought has been more than borne out by events. As a result of the great conflicts of the twentieth century the worldwide dominance of the Western democracies has been lost. These conflicts and upheavals have thrown the democracies on the defensive and generated powerful restraints within the free Western societies themselves. There has developed, writes Walter Lippmann, "a functional derangement of the relationship between the mass of the people and the government." "The people," he writes, "have acquired power which they are incapable of exercising, and the governments they elect have lost powers which they must recover if they are to govern."

The impact of mass opinion on vital issues of war and peace in Lippmann's analysis, is to impose a "massive negative" at critical junctures when new courses of policy are needed. Lagging disastrously behind the movement of events, Lippmann contends, public opinion forced a vindictive peace in 1919, then refused to act against a resurgent Germany in the inter-war years, and finally was aroused to paroxysms of hatred and unattainable hopes in a Second World War that never need have occurred. The impact of public opinion, says Lippmann, has been nothing less than a "compulsion to make mistakes."

Implicit in these observations by Mr. Lippmann and Sen. Fulbright is the assumption that modern democratic governments, including that of the United States, would have been able to pursue wise policies and decisions if they had not been harassed by the emotional demands of "public opinion." Which is to say that they might have been more successful if they had not been democratic. Possibly these two observers are in a

better position than most of us to comment on the private opinions of men in government, and have reason to be certain that these governments would have done better if they had not been obliged to be responsive to popular opinion. The Occasional Paper, however, is not specific on this point. Nor is there any impressive evidence of the secret peace-making proclivities of the present administration. Yet there is bound to be *some* truth in Sen. Fulbright's argument. And there is certainly a great deal of sense in a quotation he makes from de Tocqueville:

Foreign politics demand scarcely any of those qualities which a democracy possesses; and they require, on the contrary, the perfect use of almost all those faculties in which it is deficient . . . a democracy is unable to regulate the details of an important undertaking, to persevere in a design, and to work out its execution in the presence of serious obstacles. It cannot combine its measures with secrecy, and it will not await their consequences with patience. These are qualities which more especially belong to an individual, or to an aristocracy.

Sen. Fulbright's remedy for these deficiencies of democracy is to give more power to the executive branch of the government. Another view would be that there should be strong attempts to change the "requirements" of foreign politics. But let us hear Sen. Fulbright out:

For a politician who serves at the pleasure of his constituency, the course of prudence is to adhere to prevailing views. To be prematurely right is to court what, to the politician at least, is a premature retirement. We come at last to the ironic inversion of the classical democratic faith in the will of the people: not only does public opinion fail to hold the politician to the course of wisdom and responsibility but, on the contrary, to take the right course requires a singular act of courage on the part of the politician.

What then is to be done? Politically, the answer is simple. Either you silence the electorate, and jettison democracy, or you improve its intelligence in the hope of changing the "prevailing views." As one who believes in "the moral sanctity of the free mind and the free individual," Sen. Fulbright chooses to improve the intelligence of the electorate:

If men are often irrational in their political behavior, it does not follow that they are *always* irrational and, what is more important, it does not follow that they are *incapable* of reason. Whether in fact a people's capacity for self-government can be realized depends upon the character and quality of education.

The case for government by elites is irrefutable insofar as it rests on the need for expert and specialized knowledge. The average citizen is no more qualified for the detailed administration of government than the average politician is qualified to practice medicine or to split an atom. But in the choice of basic goals, the fundamental moral judgments that shape the life of a society, the judgment of trained elites is no more valid than the judgment of an educated people. . . . The demonstrated superiority of democracy over dictatorship derives precisely from its refusal to let ruling elites make the basic moral decisions and value judgments of society. The core of classical democratic thought is the concept of free individuality as the ultimate moral value of human society. Stripped of its excessive optimism about human nature, the core of classical liberalism remains valid and intact. The value and strength of this concept are its promise of fulfillment for man's basic aspirations. The philosopher and the psychoanalyst agree that, whether it issues from reason or instinct, man's basic aspiration is to be a free individual.

A reconstructed philosophy of self-government, accepting the weaknesses as well as the strengths of human nature, must place heavy emphasis on the development of the human *capacity* for rational moral choice. The challenge to public education is nothing less than to prepare the individual for self-government, to cultivate his capacity for free inquiry and his more humane instincts, to teach him *how* rather than *what* to think, in short, to sustain democracy by what Ralph Barton Perry called "an express insistence upon quality and distinction."

A reconstructed philosophy of self-government must replace an ingenuous faith in human *nature* with a realistic faith in human *capacity*, recognizing that self-government, though the best form of political organization that men have devised, is also the most difficult. Democracy, in short, must come to terms with man's weaknesses and irrationalities while reaching for the best that is in him.

This is about as far as political thought is able to go, but we must go farther. Sen. Fulbright can

deliver his challenge to public education, but when he invites education to cultivate the capacity for free inquiry, he turns his problem over to non-political teachers, who need to be in a position to set their own conditions.

The educator who accepts this charge will naturally look about to see what stands in the way of "heavy emphasis on the development of the human capacity for rational moral choice," and he soon finds himself objecting to major features of our advanced industrial society. He will be horrified, for example, by the casting of all the citizens of this republic as impersonal consumer-type adjuncts to the production-consumption process. He will note that the organs of public communication are almost without exception aimed at stultifying the human capacity for rational moral choice. The advertising and promotional techniques of economic distribution consistently exploit the irrational side of human nature, endlessly provoking it to impulsive decision in the purchase of goods and services. Even the editorial or non-advertising content of magazines and newspapers has been slowly converted into a blandly friendly matrix for the Message that Sells. The survival of all the mass media depends upon their remaining such vehicles for the movement of goods.

This jungle of motivations alien to education's high purposes confronts the teacher who is ready to go to work to increase the human capacity for rational moral choice. Already, if he is serious, he finds himself becoming as much of a revolutionist as the pacifist youth who "trespasses" on a nuclear installation in the Middle West or bruises his toes on the cold hull of a Polaris submarine—and with prospects of being about as effective (nobody knows how effective that is). Nor is this particular slice of the tissue of our cultural life the only one which gives a report adverse to any real educational undertaking. Among dozens of definitive studies of the anti-educational and even anti-human qualities of modern acquisitive society, the works of three

contemporary writers will supply a fairly complete diagnosis—*The Tower and the Abyss* by Erich Kahler, *Growing Up Absurd* by Paul Goodman, and *In the Name of Sanity* by Lewis Mumford.

Sen. Fulbright referred his version of the problem to the public schools, but it seems plain that hope for the education we need lies elsewhere—at least, initially—in the hands of another kind of "elite": the intellectuals, artists, writers, psychotherapists, and amateur moralists who are non-org and free enough and daring enough to speak their minds. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* is a good example of the kind of critical and affirmative intelligence that should gain enormously diverse expression, to the point of arousing parents to personal attention to the education of their children. The Women's Strike for Peace is another. What is wanted is a vast ferment of independent thinking followed by some appropriate kind of action. We may, before we are done, have to endure the pain of some serious mistakes. We may need to experience more directly the symptoms of advanced malnutrition in our lives as moral agents and individual decision-makers. One thing is sure: there are all sorts of transfers of interest, once an individual starts deviating from accepted beliefs and opinions, and determines, as Sen. Fulbright would have it, to think for himself. In the last analysis, it is the symmetry of purposeful moral intelligence which comes with persistence in impartial reflection that is the sole salvation of both individuals and societies. But individuals must produce it in their own lives before a free society can profit by its wider applications.

And now we make a small defense of our (earlier quoted) paragraph on "tending the machines." Nathaniel Hawthorne was one of those who, a century or so ago, cared about the values which are under discussion here. Naturally enough, he was drawn to investigate the famous Transcendentalist experiment in plain living and high thinking at Brook Farm. Coming away from his visit, he wrote: "I was beginning to lose the

sense of what kind of a world it was, among innumerable schemes of what it might be, or ought to be." Later, he added:

No sagacious man will long retain his sagacity if he lives exclusively among reformers and progressive people without periodically returning into the settled system of things to correct himself by a new observation from that old standpoint.

In its widest sense, "tending the machines" may serve some such stabilizing purpose. We have to keep them going (not the military ones), even though we don't like them, or the purposes to which they have been put. But it will take time to convert them to better purposes. One of the nice things about a machine is that you can think while it runs.

It is well known that the mundane necessity of working at something in order to get the food and shelter required to stay alive is sometimes the best possible therapy for a distraught individual. He works, he adapts himself to the physical environment, and often he gets some calm. With calm comes perspective, and with perspective, on occasion, come the ideas he needs to make himself well.

## *REVIEW*

### "ENCOUNTERS WITH ART"

THOSE who enjoyed our extracts from Robert Henri's *The Art Spirit* are also likely to appreciate a new Pendle Hill pamphlet (No. 128) of the above title, by Dorothea Blom. There is a freshness and challenge in Mrs. Blom's expression and even, we suspect, a handy guide to some of the trends in modern art. In answer to the question, How do we communicate with art?—Mrs. Blom replies:

Communicative seeing has to do with the whole matter of relating and relationship. MacLeish tells us: "The end aim of any true work of art is precisely the achievement of the relationship we have lost—the relationship between man and world—between man and man's experience of the world."

We must stress beyond all question that *both* these endowments of sight are important. "There is no illusory world," writes Martin Buber in *I and Thou*, "there is only world—which appears to us as twofold in accordance with our twofold attitude."

We can learn to allow room for and trust our endowment for communicative seeing. We can reclaim it. The great artist confronts us with fruits of communicative vision. And yet it is possible to spend much time in museums for years and never give up the utilitarian vision. And never know what one has missed. When you sit in a museum awhile, you can see many people doing this.

As for the challenge, a provocative theme in this essay is the following:

Now the Western community has exhausted its unearned spiritual income from the past. It finds itself catapulted into a new era as different from the Post-Renaissance world as that was from the Byzantine. It discovers itself, with unbelief, in the most dangerous opportunity of history. It lives in a world of dematerialized physics, yet still *sees* the world in terms of mechanically oriented science and dynastic technologies. The leadership and most of its people act and react in terms of what they see.

Out of sheer desperation, the sensitive and reflective person of the Twentieth Century must dare to ask for a new way of seeing. Not only for himself, but for the sake of his world, he must recover and liberate the language of spirit. The image arts always

have been and always will be the non-verbal language of spirit, the silent educator of soul;

More often than not, the art specialist cannot help us. As a Bible scholar may be tempted to interpret the Bible endlessly without making room for transforming encounter with any part of it, so too with the specialist in art. Nor can those who deify art help us. Art is no more and no less than a language of spirit.

Here, a passage from Henry Miller's *To Paint is to Love Again* seems to fit:

Here I must confess that the water colors I like best are those which fly in the face of the medium. They are at opposite poles to those you will find in books devoted to the subject. More like poems or musical compositions, freighted with sonority, luminosity, fantasy and precision, they would never be exhibited as demonstrations of the charming possibilities latent in the water color medium. In these the painter made use of the medium only as a man makes use of a raincoat in wet weather or kid gloves and spats when taking a stroll along the *grands boulevards de Paris*. (A 19th century promenade.) Undoubtedly the painters I have in mind knew all about this business of technique, but they drowned their knowledge in some happy emulsion of purposeless purpose. You won't find in their paintings those saturated skies dripping with moisture, . . . those purple splashes of shadow, that explosive springtime foliage associated with the White Mountains or the Green Mountains, or those delicate, subtle nuances which are dwelt on so reverently by the maestros who write books on the subject. In the works I speak of only the essence is given—the skyness of a sky, the freeness of a tree, the housiness of a house. It serves. It does more . . . it evokes, elicits, excites. Because of all that has been so artfully omitted, drowned or forgotten one is left free to roam, free to invent, free to imagine.

As to art as a language of the human spirit (more from Miller):

To paint is to love again. It's only when we look with eyes of love that we see as the painter sees. His is a love, moreover, which is free of possessiveness. What the painter sees he is duty bound to share. Usually he makes us see and feel what ordinarily we ignore or are immune to. His manner of approaching the world tells us, in effect, that nothing is vile or hideous, nothing is stale, flat and unpalatable unless

it be our own power of vision. To see is not merely to look. One must look-see. See into and around.

Another perspective on the difficult matter of evaluating art in the twentieth century is provided by an article, "Artists without Art," by Malcolm Bradbury and Bryan Wilson in the *Texas Quarterly* (Winter, 1962). These writers suggest that art can easily become too "private," too unrelated to the society to which the artist belongs. Bradbury and Wilson write:

In the nineteenth century art elevated man, softened his sorrows, aided conduct, testified to his humanity and his greatness. Though its writers were often "alienated" men, men loosely attached to the society, they had much in common with their bourgeois readership; what in particular both of them seem to have shared was a common faith and interest in the individuality of man, an interest now dissipated by our rather more sociological vision of man's state.

But the dispersal of the old reading public and the coherent center of values which it afforded the artist is clearly a matter of importance. The fact that the arts grow more marginal and the audience for them more dispersed and more specialized means that there is a parallel dispersion and marginality in the mind and the work of the artist. There seems a good deal of evidence that freedom and liberalism are conditions most favorable to an expansive, varied, and original art, but these conditions contain their own risks. And these the artist is now facing. The problem we are posing here is that there is a further edge to alienation, a further edge of disinterest, beyond which art cannot go without destroying its roots in society.

Certain aspects of this progressive alienation are clear and evident; there is the gradual disappearance of a sense of moral commitment in art, a growing heterogeneousness of styles, a growing experimentalism, a growing aestheticism denying the relation of art to society, and a growing sense that art is a fantasy of human disorder. And these tendencies are destructive of the notion that the primary purpose of art is to communicate. We have today artists who accept their alienation as a badge of their seriousness.

This brief array of quotations is your reviewer's form of escape from any attempt to comment on "contemporary trends" in art. We turn to Mr. Miller for a questioning conclusion:

To paint is to love again, and to love is to live to the fullest. But what kind of love, what sort of life can one hope to find in a vacuum cluttered with every conceivable gadget, every conceivable money maker, every last comfort, every useless luxury? To live and love, and to give expression to it in paint, one must also be a true believer. There must be something to worship. Where in this broad land is the Holy of Holies hidden?

## COMMENTARY TOWARD BALANCED ENDS

IN discussing Sartre's "present paradox of ethics," our *Frontiers* writer left out a situation which might well have been examined—the business enterprise. In an ideal society, the practical activities of supplying bodily needs could quite conceivably serve as the vehicle of educational purposes. Nor is it necessary, as Gandhi showed, to wait until some utopian millennium to make this use of economic functions. Spinning and weaving Gandhi saw primarily as a means of regenerating the moral life of the Indian villagers. This kind of hand production could not possibly "compete" with the output of textile mills, yet it could do for the hungry and idle Indian farmers what power-operated looms could never do.

The implication, here, is that properly scaled economic activities would consistently present situations in which both social and individual ends are mutually and simultaneously served. Such a society could no doubt be called "organic," but it is difficult to imagine how it will come about. The Westerner who dreams of this ideal is likely to envy Gandhi the simplicity of Indian agrarian life, where there were no vast technology-involved institutions which had been developed on the theory that it is some kind of law of nature for some men—the labor force—to be the means to the ends of other men—the owners. But it is not only the tradition of capital-labor opposition which stands in the way of organic relationships in industry in the West; there is also the fiercely demanding need to "compete." The machines of our society have not ended the struggle to make a living, but only changed its level. Breadwinners may no longer be physically exhausted at the end of the working day, but many of them are psychologically worn out by the scheming they have to do to hold their markets and avert the disaster of unforeseen competition. The trend to monopoly in the commercial world is inevitable so long as business remains a kind of "hot" war

among men who eventually tire—as indeed they ought to—of the competitive struggle.

The sheer stupidity of the way men waste their lives and dissipate their creative ability in economic activities whose importance has been enormously exaggerated must sooner or later awaken intelligent people to the need for finding another "way of life." This is not a political or an ideological issue; but a simple human necessity. It is a matter of psychological health. A realization of this sort was behind the inspiration which in 1945 moved a French watchcase manufacturer—a successful one—to take the imaginative steps which led in time to the Communities of Work. (See Claire Hutchet Bishop's *All Things Common*.) But there is no one pattern for the restoration of the organic relationships that men long for in their hearts. Ingenious and determined individuals find ways of living their own lives even in the difficult surroundings of an acquisitive society.

What is wanted, however, is not the success of the few—although this must come first—but the development of an *esprit de corps* in relation to the balance of social and individual ends. It is this intangible element in any group or collective undertaking which frees the association of rigidities and opens up the *room* for individuality and personal growth. This is the quality which cannot be written into any social contract, but which, at the same time, makes the alliance defined by the contract worth preserving.

# CHILDREN

## . . . and Ourselves

### CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

[The following article was prepared for MANAS by Adah Mauer from a paper presented by her to the 1963 Convention of California Psychologists.]

THE farther back in time we go, the more common and cruel were the attempts of men to control their subordinates by physical force. Once all institutions: nunneries, monasteries, armies, navies, merchant ships, plantations, factories, construction projects, prisons, orphan and insane asylums, as well as schools enforced obedience quite routinely with the whip and the rod. One by one, the religious institutions leading the way in the eleventh century, they began to replace the lash with the carrot.

Americans by this time-clock of torture are the most civilized people on earth. We have forbidden many forms of cruelty even to our animals. Only one large group remain whom the law does not shelter from physical abuse, who are still subject to archaic laws and customs which a just regard for our future bids us abolish. They are our children.

Although corporal punishment is forbidden by the California Criminal Code in juvenile detention institutions which house children who have stolen cars, destroyed property or even killed, yet the California School Code condones it for our non-criminal boys and girls including babies of five.

Many people who hear this fact cannot believe that it happens. They seem to trust naïvely that child-beating went out with wife-beating a dozen decades ago.

Those who defend the practice have two arguments: (1) They deserve it. (2) They won't learn any other way. This was once expressed to me as: "When you have a bad dog you have to beat him into submission before you can train him."

The uncommitted who would never strike a defenseless child themselves are silenced by the despair of harassed principals who are overwhelmed by the problem of "antisocial" boys. They seriously want to know: "What are we going to do with some of these kids?"

The California Teachers Association has taken a firm stand in favor of more punishment. Their State Advisory Council on Educational Research concluded its report on The Legal Aspects of Corporal Punishment thus:

The rise in juvenile delinquency is bringing the subject of corporal punishment before the public and is putting more stress on the schools to get "tough" with troublemakers. . . . While legislation and board rules cannot remove the liability involved, such laws and rules can serve to strengthen the teacher's authority to spank unruly pupils.

Who are these unruly?

One hundred and twenty-five years ago Horace Mann, in urging moderation against the unanimous opposition of the school masters of 1836, said:

In one of the schools to whom I ascribe the motto: Fear, Force, Pain,—consisting of about two hundred and fifty scholars—there were 328 separate floggings in one week of five days. In another, eighteen boys were flogged in two hours in the presence of a stranger. In another, twelve or fifteen in one hour.

For most children the dark ages have passed, but not for all. I have seen a mongoloid child in kindergarten threatened with a stick. "He doesn't understand anything else," his teacher explained. I watched a second-grade child, a member of a family of eleven retarded children, as he shivered with apprehension in the principal's office while he was shown the "board of education" and reminded that he would taste of it the next time he came late. An older member of the same family had been truant for two years because he refused to take any more beatings. I know of a severely disturbed child whose teacher told me: "I hardly ever paddle him any more except if he crawls under the piano." Slaps across the face for

"talking back" were the regular fare of a boy whose tested intelligence is considerably higher than that of the average teacher. He is accused of "non-conformity"—a trait that is valued in other places, to be cultivated into creativity.

"When I went to school," one mother remarked in community discussion, "it was always the same ones who were paddled. They were spanked in the first grade and again in the second. Each year it was the same few who incurred the teacher's wrath. In Junior High it was less conspicuous, but we all knew what went on in the Assistant Principal's office. Not until they broke the law and landed in Juvenile Hall did they find someone who would listen to them and show them the first kindness they had known."

The unruly, in my experience, those who are subjected to corporal punishment in the schools, are chiefly the mentally retarded, the slow learners, the emotionally disturbed and the creative misfits, the very ones who for one reason or another are most in need of protection. "Unruly" also includes some normal boys whose normal behavior is unruly only by special definition of the term. Let us take a typical example:

John and his good friend Tim are scuffling in the third grade dressing room. Tim pushes John out of his way and John hits back. Tim goes to the teacher and says, "John hit me." The teacher, with a fair semblance of a trial asks, "John, did you hit him?"

"Yes," says honest John.

In this school the child is allowed a choice. The teacher says, "Then you'll have to be punished. Do you choose detention or to go to the principal?"

Tim is grinning in the background. John looks at the teacher, then at Tim.

"I choose whacks," he answers bravely.

So John goes to the principal who gives him three sharp smacks with a ruler and sends him back to his class. Justice has been done.

Now school is for the purpose of educating John and we must assume that this was an educational experience. What has John learned?

Not to hit back? I hope not. This would be to rob him of his ability to safeguard his life and his reputation by defending himself under attack. But advisable or not, did it teach him not to hit? No, again. Children cannot be taught by the hair of the dog. By this I mean a child cannot learn not to hit by being hit. If he could, it would logically follow that he could be taught not to swear by swearing at him, not to steal by stealing from him and not to kiss the girls by kissing him.

What then has he learned?

In this particular case, nothing very fatal. He has learned to lie a little. Next time he will answer, "Tim hit me first." He has defined principal as hitter instead of helper. He has acquired a little of the quality that defined Lawrence of Arabia: to take pride in the ability to withstand pain and perhaps even to enjoy it a bit for its prestige value.

Punishment teaches four things: trickery to outwit adults, hatred perhaps of all authority, fear that spreads to all phases of life and cruelty as he imitates his tormentors. Research indicates that where corporal punishment is used regularly it is accepted as a natural hazard like storms or rattlesnakes, to be avoided if possible but without personal meaning.

Where it is a daily occurrence, students may feel left out if they are not sometimes whipped. A parent told me of her boy who feared he was a sissy because all his friends had been paddled except himself. To correct the omission, he dashed one day into the girls' dressing room with his mother's squirt bottle of hand lotion, and shot all the girls. He came home happily boasting, "I got initiated!"

"Yes, I know," said a perplexed principal, "it's useless. But what are we to do when parents insist that we spank them?"

Brutal parents beget beggarly children, and the alert psychologist has no difficulty diagnosing the pain anxiety. Such children use words like *kill, hurt, blood, cried*, much more frequently than do normal children. They fail to understand ordinary sequences of human activities. In the stories they tell, scoldings as often as not occur before the misdeed. Like the Red Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, they speak of tears before the trouble. They seem obsessed by a need to get even and seldom can they suggest sensible ways of solving disputes. Their fears distort the facts. Strange terror creeps between the printed page and the pencil in their hand, thus often making them appear retarded even when they may have normal or better ability.

Research psychologists have paid far too little attention to the problem of punishment and its effects. Dr. Jay Boyd Best reported in the *Scientific American* of February, 1963, in an article called "Protopsychoy" that punishment has strange and unexpected results among animals also.

Fresh water planarians are very simple worms with a rudimentary nervous system and a distinct head end which grows complete animals out of pieces when it is cut up. He found that this lowly animal can be conditioned and what is more amazing is capable of learning to make choices to get a reward. It is placed in a "Y" shaped maze and may choose a lightened or darkened path. The correct choice is rewarded by flooding the maze with water without which the planarian cannot live very long. If the tests are continued after they have learned, they begin to choose incorrectly and eventually refuse to play the game at all.

Planarians and people have this in common: both are alive and both are provided with mechanisms to help them remain so as long and as fruitfully as possible. The proto-stubbornness of

planarians, the anti-experiment attitude of over-punished dogs, cats and monkeys and the wilful behavior of rebellious boys may thus be considered as extreme responses to overwhelming threat to their existence and integrity.

The school, since there is no other agency, must demonstrate to less well educated parents that the methods of treating children with respect, keeping them busy, understanding the principles of their growth, overlooking minor mistakes and noticing and praising their good deeds are effective, while the ready rod is not. The school, since it knows the most about children, must move parental thinking from "Whodunit" to "Whydunit."

A preliminary survey of the corporal punishment practices in California schools indicates that about twenty per cent of the school districts have already grasped their full responsibility for leadership in this regard. The sixty per cent who still shamefacedly resort to medieval methods when they lose patience could easily be persuaded by an enlightened public opinion to abandon the anachronism.

ADAH MAURER

## *FRONTIERS*

### "The Present Paradox of Ethics"

WE owe to Existentialist thinkers the creation in modern times of a new classical literature—a literature, that is, concerned with the fundamental question of the nature of man. But why should such a literature be called "new"? It is new in the sense that it frames the problem with the relationships that have produced the agonizing dilemmas of the modern age. These relationships are rooted in the struggle toward ethical goals. The conflict is between social and individual objectives. Any attempt to settle the issue by choosing simply one or the other standard of the good (individual or social) is soon seen to be either ridiculous, brutish, or unreal, and the search for a compromise between the two is hardly more successful. The great contribution of the Existentialists is that they have dramatized this dilemma in book after book, obliging their readers to reflect upon the question of what a human being is, that he should be so frustrated and compromised by what seem the inevitable conditions of his life.

In *The Antioch Review* for the Spring of 1963, Thomas C. Greening, a Los Angeles psychotherapist, examines this theme in the writings of Sartre, Camus, Malraux, Koestler, and others. At the outset he puts the problem with the clarity that has become possible through Existentialist thought:

Each man as he exists today is both an end and a means. He has intrinsic value as a person and utilitarian value as an agent of action. As an actual living human being, his individual existence is an end in itself. In a chaotic world where many things are of no value, man needs to preserve and enhance his own existence as an intrinsic value. Each man, therefore, must be treated as an end in himself.

But a man not only has intrinsic value as an end; he also has crucial, responsible, extrinsic value as a means. He is an instrument capable of enriching the future value of the human race in general and of other men in particular. Indeed, he is a resource

which will be consumed in the process of such service, for all men die.

Thus the dilemma arises: How can man treat himself and other men as both ends and means? Sartre, in *What Is Literature?*, has called this problem "the present paradox of ethics." On the one hand we value "the intention of treating men, in every case, as an absolute end." On the other hand, Sartre maintains, "it is quite impossible to treat concrete men as ends in contemporary society."

This problem pervades all modern thought and action. No man can exist for a moment without willingly, consciously or unconsciously confronting this dilemma. Even if he attempts to escape from the dilemma by detaching himself from the rest of humanity and cultivating his own personal interests, he is actually choosing to side with those who treat their own individual existences as separate and final ends. We are all involved, all thrown together in the same world. An ethic which is capable only of dealing with individuals as single and final ends is not functional in the modern social world where all men's lives impinge on one another and on the future of mankind. Man must act to survive. He must act to make those who do survive more human. But when man does act he must deal with the risk of using himself and others as means toward an end. In even the most meaningful action, man risks an engagement that can alienate him for himself and others.

Illustrations involving institutions—which are the instruments of social ends—will probably be the most helpful in illuminating this problem. Take an army. The army is the most restrictive of institutions in relation to individual goals. The soldier is deprived of all aims and rights as an individual. His private goals have no standing, his personal problems and longings no meaning, save as they may relate to the development, efficiency, and morale of the army. The nature of the military enterprise requires this stripping of the individual down to a single, conforming unit. The social value of the political survival of his country is the justification. Ethically, the soldier is compensated for this extreme loss of individuality by the dignity of his sacrificial role. He gains heroic stature.

The logic, here, seems sound enough. In modern eyes, however, it breaks down on several

counts. For one thing, many wars are prosecuted for ignoble ends. This steals away the dignity of the soldier and makes a mockery of his sacrifice. Then, it may be argued that even wars undertaken with principled intent betray both their managers and the fighting men. Both are victims of human ignorance. The social goods the wars are fought to obtain do not materialize. Men are mutilated and killed, women are coarsened, children hunger, and the seeds of future wars, not peace, are planted by the conflict. And the heroes never were heroes, anyway. They did not offer sacrifice. They were drafted. The volunteer army does not exist in our age.

If you say that men may nonetheless serve a high social end in ignorance, and under compulsion, you only underline the dilemma, since this argument speaks from the dubious heights of political infallibility. It is not clear, or clear no longer, that a high social end is served by war. So to the betrayal of the soldier by a general ignorance is added his betrayal by the pretended certainty of his superiors. And when an entire society becomes an armed camp, not only the soldier, but all, may be so betrayed.

We have then, in the army, a (probably unsuccessful) resolution of the dilemma by going to one extreme—the complete disregard of the human, end-in-himself aspect of the soldier. The completely militarized or totalitarian state is the social expression of this extreme. The very being of the individual is lost in the larger "identity" of nation or race, or in the symbolic person of the Leader.

The contrary case or extreme would be the educational institution. Ideally and theoretically, the school exists solely for the child as an end in himself. Of course, insofar as the child is conceived as realizing his ends in social relationships, the school may properly introduce socializing influences, but if these be regarded as a "service to society," to which the child is merely a means, or an agent, then education has itself become perverted by the totalitarian tendency.

Obviously, there are practical questions to be argued here, and the general thrust of the educational enterprise has to be considered as more important than isolated aspects of its activities.

What is of particular interest, however, in the instance of the school is the frequent use this institution makes of activities which are not self-realizing in themselves, but which commonly become matrices of self-development. If, for example, the children are led to take part in a model of some adult activity—such as running a store, convening a congress, or exploring a region of the countryside—the *form* of the activity resembles the behavior of adults, but its purpose is quite different. By doing these things the children acquire skills and form character. The store does not really "make a profit." The decisions of the congress lead to no legislative or social effect, and the exploration does not add vital geographic information to the community's knowledge of its surroundings. These contributions, like the individuality restored to the soldier through the "larger meaning" of his role, are strictly symbolic.

What we are trying to suggest by these illustrations is the fact that there are multiple paradoxes in the varied fields of human experience which may in some sense "match" Sartre's paradox of ethics. Somehow or other, the individuals who are able to resolve the dilemma do so by finding in life those situations which bring an approximate balance to individual and social ends, such that both fulfillments enrich each other. The disappointing side of this solution is that we seem unable to turn it into "rules"—no rules, at least, which are definite enough to become the basis of a social contract that will *guarantee* the preservation of the balance. Either the formulation remains completely abstract, or you have to go to individual instances of resolution. The halfway house of political or legislative compromise only gets us into trouble—either anarchistic or totalitarian trouble. Which makes

us conclude that wisdom is indeed a private "institution."

This, at any rate, is the conclusion of Mr. Greening's thoughtful paper in the *Antioch Review*. It is the character, Rieux, in Camus' *The Plague*, who finds his way to sensitive balance between social and individual ends:

Rieux created new solutions. He made each choice on the basis of a personally experienced human situation, not an abstraction. Thus, the greatness of Camus' achievement is in presenting a man who fully risks an existential engagement.

We have paid little attention to Mr. Greening's paper, which deserves a careful reading by those who recognize in Sartre's paradox the most pressing ethical issue of the age. Instead of reviewing the paper, which calls for familiarity with the works of the writers it cites, we were led into another sort of examination by the fascinations of the problem. It seems likely, however, that Mr. Greening is right in turning to fiction for light on the subtleties of ethical decision, since it is in the novel that we find people choosing "on the basis of a personally experienced human situation, not an abstraction." Finally, two more books might be helpful in the study of this paradox: *Command Decision*, by William Wister Haines, which first appeared as an *Atlantic* serial, and *Portrait of an Officer*, by Pierre-Henri Simon (Seeker & Warburg, London, 1961). Both are war stories, presenting the painful contradictions of the paradox in strong relief.