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THE LONG WAIT

SIMPLY by looking up words like Chiliasm and Millennium and Eschatology, one can learn how extensively human hopes have been involved in finding out what is the governing force or principle in human life. Getting some answers along these lines is of obvious importance, since with the right information we can take steps to improve our condition.

Historically, there has usually been some division of labor in the enterprise of finding out. There are always some investigators or discoverers, some popularizers and organization men, and, finally, the believers and followers. It is one of the chief sources of pain and trouble in common experience that the ability to find things out is not evenly distributed among human beings. Frightening feelings of inadequacy and fear of personal risk are obviously behind the preference of a great many people to let others decide on the truth about final questions—an expert authority appeals to them as far more reliable than their own unpracticed and faltering judgment. Salvation on a do-it-yourself basis seems too improbable. This submissive attitude might be considered reasonable enough, save for the tendency of the chosen authorities to pretend to knowledge they don't possess, to hide their ignorance behind a bold front, and gradually to build up a tissue of accepted belief that confines and discourages all independent thinking. This is the other side of the lesson of common experience—that authority eventually misleads and fails as a substitute for personal search, and that when it begins to waver it resorts to desperate devices of lying and betrayal to maintain its position. It follows, then, that practically all the fundamental reforms in the way people think about meaning—about, that is, the ruling principle in what happens in the world—have come as changes or revolutions in the idea of authority.

If we can define religion as the communication of truth about meaning, it is evident that the question of authority is paramount. Statements about meaning which are meant to have a decisive effect on human decision naturally provoke the question: "How does he know?" or "How did they become sure of this?" Etc.

If you do look up words like Millennium and Eschatology, it will be clear that for long centuries of the past learned men searched old scriptures in order to establish firm authority for answers to ultimate questions. At stake was the salvation of Christian souls, the hope of eternal life. Probably all religions have texts which believers are supposed to search, although not all religions are the same in demanding "belief." *How* people decide what is true seems to have as much if not more importance than *what* they decide, and the entire moral strength of the agnostic position lies right here. Great religious reforms often begin by denying the importance of experts in religious truth and declaring the folly of relying on them. You must know for yourself, the reformers say. Yet it is difficult for even a denier of the authority of experts to avoid becoming some kind of expert himself. He is in danger of becoming an authority on why experts must be denied. People listen to him attentively, writing down what he says, and telling their friends about their discovery of *him.* Evidently, the formula, Don't listen to experts, is a piety which, when left as a simple admonition, may not ever get applied. The sense of personal insecurity returns and the longing for *help* is very strong. Iconoclasts don't fill this vacuum. Only extraordinary individuals, it seems, are able to give help which does not weaken or betray. This is a situation by no means limited to religious inquiry. All human relationships are affected; to consider the problem of authority seriously may have the effect of rubbing out the distinction between what men call the sacred and the secular. The Platonic claim that knowledge is virtue rests on recognition that there can be no determination of Truth which does not also resolve the problem of Authority.

Everything that men do along the fear/daring axis of their lives is modified by what they think about authority. If we knew more about why some people invariably become uncomfortable and rebellious simply from being *told* to do certain things, while other people become uncomfortable and petulant when there isn't anybody to tell them what to do, we might be well on the way to a partial solution of the problem. Yet reaching this solution is enormously complicated by the fact that someone who is carefully following another's instructions will often pretend to spirited independence of mind, since that is the kind of person he really admires. So there is daring and there are imitations of daring. Finally, there is the daring of the man who refuses to pretend to daring, yet goes on trying to be as daring as he can actually live out, himself, in his own life.

We are on the outskirts of a basic paradox. You start out, say, asking what is the real truth about meaning or the way the world is run; and then, in pursuit of an answer, you come across the importance of individual attitude toward the quest. There are certain attitudes we spontaneously admire; these are sometimes seen to be so important that religious reforms are based on them, it being declared that final truth is really unknowable and that the virtues are its only approximation on earth. But any such verbal solution soon grows stale. You still want or feel driven to *look* for the truth. And, men who were glorious examples of the virtues sometimes spoke of *approaches* to the Unknowable, with subtle doctrine as a result. We know that the psychological and ethical doctrines of the Buddha float in a majestic, mind-stretching, metaphysical sea.

Usually, in the high religions, there are doctrines for the strong and doctrines for the weak—authority for those who think they need it, and no-authority for those ready to free themselves of it. The Gnostics taught the necessity of this difference openly, but whether or not such adaptations to varying human needs are admitted or concealed, the accommodations always get made. They are the result of the way people perceive and when their reality is ignored or glossed over, they become sources of endless self-deception and corruption, since so many petty authority roles feed on the denial of the differences among men. The way to clean up the debris of false and pretentious authority is by honoring the right kind of authority. Denying the existence of authority is absurd.

The title of this discussion is "The Long Wait," which refers to the common tendency of people to wait for established authority to settle the question of what life really means and how the world runs. The idea of discussing it came from reading an article by Lord Ritchie-Calder, "Mortgaging the Old Homestead," in *Foreign Affairs* for January, 1970. Ritchie-Calder is an accomplished journalist with a flare for the dramatic and a good knowledge of the activities of science. He says on his first page:

> For the first time in history, Man has the power of veto over the evolution for his own species through a nuclear holocaust. The overkill is enough to wipe out every man, woman and child on earth, together with our fellow lodgers, the animals, the birds and the insects, and to reduce our planet to a radioactive wilderness. Or the Doomsday Machine could be replaced by the Doomsday Bug. By gene-manipulation and man-made mutations, it is possible to produce, or generate, a disease against which there would be no natural immunity; by "generate" is meant that even if the perpetrators inoculated themselves protectively, the disease in spreading around the world could assume a virulence of its own and involve them too. When a British bacteriologist died of the bug he had invented, a distinguished scientist said, "Thank God he didn't sneeze; he could have started a pandemic against which there would have been no immunity."

Wow, you say. Things are pretty bad. Then you think of your modest but pleasant home, the good roads, the wonder of the moon flight, the fact that the smart men who understand computers are really trying to ease traffic problems in the air, plan improvements for our cities, and do other good things, too; so you want to ask the good lord a few questions. Maybe he's painting things too black. But if you read his whole article, and turn to similar writing by other informed men; the questions may go in the other direction. Things *are* pretty bad.

No doubt there were well-dressed burghers who came up to Martin Luther after his Whore of

Babylon speech and said, "Are you trying to tell us there aren't any virtuous nuns? I know you're wrong! Why, back home . . ." And so on.

But the conditions in Rome and even out in the boon: docks were not really Luther's point. They were just "evidence." Luther was after a change in the prevailing theory of knowledge, a basic revision in the source of authority. *Think for yourself,* he said. Don't you see that you can't trust those people to think for you! Well, that's the kind of thing he said for a while. Ritchie-Calder is arguing something like that, too; although he isn't as impassioned, and he has no new concept of authority to offer. He is saying simply that the specialists we rely on to keep things going often don't know what they are doing:

> A classic example was the atomic bomb. It was the Physicists' Bomb. When the device exploded at Alamogordo on July 16, 1945, and made a notch-mark in history from which Man's future would be dated, the safe-breakers had cracked the lock of the nucleus before the locksmiths knew how it worked. (The evidence of this is the billions of dollars which have been spent since 1945 on gargantuan machines to study the fundamental particles, the components of the nucleus; and they still do not know how they interrelate.)
>
> Prime Minister Clement Attlee, who concurred with President Truman's decision to drop the bomb on Hiroshima, later said: "We knew nothing whatever at that time about the genetic effects of an atomic explosion. I knew nothing about fall-out and all the rest about what emerged after Hiroshima. As far as I know, President Truman and Winston Churchill knew nothing of those things either, nor did Sir John Anderson who coordinated the research on our side. Whether the scientists directly concerned knew or guessed, I do not know. But if they did, then so far as I am aware, they said nothing of it to those who had to make the decision."
>
> That sounds absurd, since as long before as 1927, H. J. Muller had been awarded the Nobel Prize for his evidence of the genetic effects of radiation. But it is true that in the whole documentation of the British effort, before it merged in the Manhattan Project, there is only one reference to genetic effects—a Medical Research Council minute which was not connected with the bomb they were intending to make; it concerned the possibility that the Germans might, short of the bomb, produce radioactive isotopes as a form of biological warfare. In the Franck Report, the most statesmanlike document ever produced by scientists, with its percipience of the military and political consequences of unilateral use of the bomb (presented to Secretary of State Stimson even before the test bomb exploded), no reference is made to biological effects, although one would have supposed that to have been a very powerful argument. The explanation, of course, was that it was the Physicists' Bomb and military security restricted information and discussion to the bomb-makers, which excluded the biologists.

Lord Ritchie-Calder has several more chilling accounts of unpredictable disaster brought on by loyal, brave, reverent, and true scientists working for the common (that is, the national) good, but he doesn't go as far as the Lutheran revolution because he doesn't have another theory of knowledge. He is himself a scientifically-minded man and offers no other access to meaning, in place of the one we've got. He just says at the end that the scientists have got to learn control—they must figure out the *right* thing to do, and then do it. He concludes:

> We don't have to plan for trends, if they are socially undesirable our duty is to plan away from them; to treat the symptoms before they become malignant.
>
> We have to do this on the local, the national and international and international scale, through intergovernmental action, because there are no frontiers in present-day pollution and destruction of the biosphere. Mankind shares a common habitat. We have mortgaged the old homestead and nature is liable to foreclose.

Actually, Lord Ritchie-Calder's prescription is nothing new. He wants a closer search of the texts in the Book of Nature by scientists, with common-sense management by government. We could probably get some additional research, but where is the government that could stay in office for longer than a week on a no-frontiers policy of cooperation with other powers, just to save the world?

Would it be inaccurate to say that governments are themselves symptoms which have already become "malignant," and that we ought to start planning away from them, right now, as decisively as we know how?

Why don't the people of today search scriptural texts to find out what runs the world and what to do to make things better? No doubt because they don't believe the information is there. While musing over sacred texts is very different from looking to religious authority, common ideas about authority usually ignore this distinction and the expectation that theologians have any really important answers has been dead for at least a hundred years. The modern world adopted the new way of getting answers made popular by the enthusiasts of science. In present-day jargon, this new way amounted to waiting until all the basic laws and facts of nature have been taped, after which everybody would know exactly what to do. The general disgust of intelligent men with codified and parroted religious answers gave eager invitation to a theory of knowledge that promised to be entirely free from the uncertainties and ambiguities of religion. You could say that scientific knowledge by definition includes all that can be said about the world without any ambiguity.

This kind of knowledge, once accumulated and properly structured, would get rid of the difficult issues of authority which beset human life at all levels and in all relationships. What a Millennium that would be! So people began saying, Don't think, find out. And the "real" world got defined as the world which is still there for inspection after all the ambiguous or questionable ways of looking at it have been eliminated. What is really *objective*—that's the world.

The protection it afforded against the impudence and pretensions of authority was the best thing about the scientific world-view, from a humanitarian and democratic point of view. It still is. A scientific fact is a fact that *anybody* can verify, if he'll take the trouble. This means that eventually we'll all *know*, that's all. And the differences among men will all be wiped out by establishing a proper environment with enough nourishment and equal education for everybody. What is a proper environment? Science will tell us that, too. Virtue—who needs it? Facts will be admitted because they can be *proved*.

Well, a few people are still making claims like this, just as some others are still looking up Biblical texts, but the positive energies of the epoch are groping for wider and firmer foundations.

Yet we are still in the second Long Wait. For the indisputable fact is that we need our scientific authorities in all sorts of important relationships, while, at the same time, as Paul Goodman points out, we need, even more, scientists and technologists who are determined to become moral philosophers and learn how to practice self-limitation. No one else can do this for them. The scholarly men who devote much time and attention to the impact of science and technology on society often point to the impossibility of ordinary people keeping up with real scientific thinkers. The people have to be instructed and briefed. This situation is of course different in important ways from the relationship in which the theologians and priests were the authorities, but there are some unpleasant parallels, just the same. What, for example, is the worst possible combination of factors in the social environment? The answer comes easily enough: Haughty, inaccessible, and unverifiable expert authority under contract to coercive and destructive political power.

So, in the great reform to come—which will seep into active being as the long wait on Scientific Authority comes to its troubled end—attention will again move away from worn-out certainties or assertions about the way things are, and come into focus on wide-open questions of how men behave, what they value, and whether or not they deserve and earn trust. For a brief and simple anticipation, then, of the next reform, we could say that it probably will obtain its shape and direction from the work and influence of intuitively self-reliant and non-violent men who reject coercion as a means to social order and human good.

What, finally, will put a practical end to the long wait for the scientists to deliver their finished map of the objective world, complete with instruction manuals for all important undertakings and full directions on natural energy control?

Two decisive influences are already working toward this denouement. One is evident in the inescapable conclusions of observers like Ritchie-Calder, who have spread out on a larger canvas what

many of us know personally from breathing smog every day in the week—that the scientifically managed environment is already a horrible and may soon turn into a lethal mess. Add the fact that the scientifically implemented war is a horror which even warlike people are beginning to despise.

The other influence, which has greater importance, actually, arises out of mature scientific philosophizing and amounts to rejection of the once unquestioned faith that "some day" the scientific picture of the objective universe will be *complete.* This rejection is a function of progress in both physics and psychology. Unavoidable reflection about what really is, or really is "there," has led the most intelligent among the scientists to see that the crucially important question, for both science and man, is *how* human beings come at last to decide on what is "there," and why they look "there" and not elsewhere. This is a form of the old problem of Authority, once again, and it throws the question of "objectivity" up for examination.

When it becomes evident that the places in which men look for evidences of the nature of "reality" are selected in very much the same way that the correct holy books were once chosen for study—by accidents of birth, by clues of feeling, by longings for fresh inspiration, by fatigue with failing doctrines or claims, and by various other leadings far from wholly understood—a certain dissolution in that old-time scientific certainty inevitably takes place. It isn't that the "facts" are no longer recognized as facts, but that their *role* is changed—reduced, you could say. The Newtonian universe didn't collapse with the coming of relativity theory, but it certainly lost its sanctity as final or total explanation.

When a dominant theory of explanation loses its holiness for common folk—which means that a philosophic revolution has filtered down to the popular level—then the long wait is really over and there is desperate looking around for a new way of thinking about and finding meaning. This brings both the agony of insecurity and vast birth pains. At present, two kinds of external authority have failed us—the sacred books and the scientific reading of the objective world. Yet we *know* that sacred books are far from worthless and that the objective universe is filled with rich analogues of truth. And we know that rare men of admitted virtue—men who would neither pretend to authority nor practice compulsion on their fellows—characteristically gave lifelong attention to both the records of transmitted human wisdom and immediate experience of the natural world.

The task, then, seems to be to learn from the example of such men but to *rely* upon ourselves—to try to find the authority which lay not in those men but in what they somehow came to know. This project of self-instruction, whenever men persist in it, seems always to result in transcendental philosophy of some sort—a synthesis which recognizes the communications of the wise as a species of instruction by Nature—Nature, one might suppose, expressing herself in a self-conscious mode.

REVIEW
ERIKSON ON GANDHI

REPORTING on the merits of Erik Erikson's *Gandhi's Truth* (Norton, 1969, $10.00) presents something of a problem. One could say, for example, that the book is an impressive report showing the increasing depth of psychoanalytical thinking, yet some restraint is indicated here, since Erikson is too individual a thinker, too exceptional in the quality of his reflections, to represent an entire profession. A little reading of him makes it plain that this man will not restrict psychological reality to areas already mapped by psychoanalytical conventions. There is in his work, also, that sense of confidence in high human potentiality common to those who combine awareness of the vast variety of human nature with natural, warm-hearted concern—the deep assurance of men who are under no temptation to pretend to certainties they lack and who are seldom, therefore, misled or fooled.

It was natural for Erikson to be drawn to the study of Gandhi. Men whose lives come into focus on the mystery of the mind, along with its ills and eccentricities, are not without regard for its peak achievements, and Gandhi was in more than one sense a Himalaya of a man. That he spoke clearly and forcefully to the most urgent needs of his time would naturally attract the interest of Erikson, who has devoted his life to the processes of human growth. (He is Professor of Human Development and Lecturer on Psychiatry at Harvard University.)

Why did Erikson write this book? One explanation is intimated in the next to the last chapter, where he draws an interesting parallel:

> Gandhi's and Freud's methods converge more clearly if I repeat: in both encounters only the militant probing of a vital issue by a nonviolent confrontation can bring to light what insight is ready on both sides. Such probing must be decided on only after careful study, but then the developing encounter must be permitted to show, step by step, what the power of truth may reveal and enact. At the end only a development which transforms both partners in such an encounter is truth in action; and such transformation is possible only where man learns to be nonviolent toward himself as well as toward others. Finally, the truth of Satyagraha and the "reality" of psychoanalysis come somewhat nearer to each other if it is assumed that man's "reality testing" included an attempt not only to think clearly but also to enter into an optimum of mutual activation with others. But this calls for a combination of clear insight into our central motivations and pervasive faith in the brotherhood of man.
>
> Seen from this vantage point, psychoanalysis offers a method of intervening nonviolently between our overbearing conscience and our raging affects, thus forcing our moral and our "animal" natures to enter into respectful reconciliation.
>
> When I began this book, I did not expect to rediscover psychoanalysis in terms of truth, self-suffering, and nonviolence. But now that I have done so, I see better . . . an affinity between Gandhi's truth and the insights of modern psychology.

It seems fair to say that modern psychology undergoes considerable stretching in the process. To Erikson's credit' no serious damage is done by the comparison to either party. Nor is it tiresomely pressed. The writer makes it clear that he will allow no methodological habit or tendency to explain anything of Gandhi away. As he says in one place:

> I consider any attempt to reduce a leader of Gandhi's stature to earlier as well as bigger and better childhood trauma both wrong in method and evil in influence—and this precisely because I can foresee a time when man will have to come to grips with his need to personify and surrender to "greatness."

The book falls naturally into two divisions. Gandhi, in Erikson's eyes, forged his final maturity at the age of forty-eight, when he led the strike of the Ahmedabad mill workers in 1918. All the basic ingredients of nonviolence came into view during this strike, which Erikson calls the Event. Description and discussion of the Event make one section of the book. The other is an account of the shaping influences, mostly found in South Africa, which prepared Gandhi for his life work.

One could say that the stature of Gandhi is a mystery at the beginning and remains so at the end. And that the stature of Erikson grows as he brings the skills of his musing, delicately tuned mind to bear on what seem to him the major facets of the mystery. He develops some views of Gandhi, but the portrait is inviting, not insistent. That would be one way to sum up the book. But there is also tangible accomplishment: By concentrating on certain themes and attitudes in Gandhi's life Erikson illuminates his meaning and intentions in a much-needed way. Over and over again, he reiterates Gandhi's point that nonviolence is for the strong, not for the weak. No reader of Erikson can continue in the belief that militant nonviolence is for passive, wishy-washy people. Nonviolence in the weak was for Gandhi a contradiction in terms. Hence the primary importance of the constructive program—the restoration of inner strength which would alone make nonviolence possible. As Gandhi put it in one place:

> What am I to advise a man to do who wants to kill but is unable owing to his being maimed? Before I can make him feel the virtue of not killing, I must restore to him the arm he has lost. . . . A nation that is unfit to fight cannot from experience prove the virtue of not fighting. I do not infer from this that India must fight. But I do say that India must know how to fight.

Erikson finds a curious application for this idea in recent events:

> In view of the values which the Jews of the diaspora have come to stand for, the belated proof that Jews *could* fight a national war, may impress many as an historical anachronism. And, indeed, the triumph of the Israeli soldiery is markedly subdued, balanced by a certain sadness over the necessity to re-enter historical actuality by way of military methods not invented by Jews, and yet superbly used by them. I would go further: is it not possible that such historical proof of a military potential will make peace-loving Jews everywhere better potential Satyagrahis? And is it not also obvious that the advocates of Black Power anywhere incorporate in its tenets, more or less fanatically, the assumption that only the . experience of disciplined rage provides the basis for true self-control?

Erikson sees psychological perception and basic honesty in Gandhi, rather than "contradiction," when he puzzles over the question of whether the Indian people can learn to be nonviolent without first passing through a phase of national identity based upon organized warfare. Gandhi wrote:

> Today I find that everybody is desirous of killing but most are afraid of doing so or powerless to do so. Whatever is to be the result I feel certain that the power must be restored to India. The result may be carnage. Then India must go through it. Today's condition is intolerable.

Gandhi was never confused by sentimental estimates of what he sought to overcome. Even in South Africa he recognized the deep-rooted character of the opposition. A kind of intuitive social Darwinism governed the policies of the South Africans. Gandhi made this analysis:

> . . . the very qualities of Indians count for defects in South Africa. The Indians are disliked in South Africa for their simplicity, patience, perseverance, frugality, and otherworldliness. Westerners are enterprising, impatient, engrossed in multiplying their material wants and in satisfying them, fond of good cheer, anxious to save physical labour and prodigal in habits. They are therefore afraid that if thousands of Orientals settled in South Africa, the Westerners must go to the wall. Westerners in South Africa are not prepared to commit suicide, and their leaders will not permit them to be reduced to such straits. . . . The problem is simply one of preserving one's own civilization, that is, of enjoying the supreme right of self-preservation and discharging the corresponding duty.

Certain aspects of the Event—the Ahmedabad mill strike—will present special difficulties to the understanding of most Western readers. There is the curious spectacle of the leader of the strike and the principal mill owner sitting down to have tea together as the conflict approached a climax. If the sufferings of the workers had not been so extreme, the proceedings would seem stylized and unreal. Yet the reader must penetrate to the encounter behind these appearances, and Erikson's reporting of the strike from day to day is sufficiently detailed for this.

The general background of labor conditions in India is briefly indicated:

> The totally unhygienic and immoral conditions of employment, even after the passage by the Delhi government of a universal Factory Act, were blatantly obvious. According to "enlightened" labor laws, no child was to work in a factory before the age of nine, and children between the ages of nine and twelve only half a day. . . . The adults (that is, all workers above the age of twelve) at that time worked a "humane" maximum of 12 hours a day, and some warpers were working 36 hours at a stretch with only a few short breaks.

The principal reformer in Ahmedabad until Gandhi came, oddly enough, was the older sister of the leader of the mill owners.

In the end, Gandhi began his first "fast to the death" to prevent the strikers from submitting to a compromise settlement. In consequence of this the strike was won, with beneficent consequences for labor all over India. Yet the principal thing to be learned from this account is Gandhi's unfailing emphasis on the inner integrity of those struggling to obtain justice, and his rejection of any "gains" which were not consistent with the principle that all must benefit from the solution.

This is not a book to hurry through. It is filled with musing, half-drawn conclusions, shrewd insights, and rare portraiture of high human qualities obtained with almost no use at all of the language of praise. Finally, like other distinguished psychologists, Erik Erikson exhibits a thorough grasp of the evil suffered by victims of prejudice and social injustice, yet pursues his quest for understanding with the dispassion necessary to members of the healing profession. *Gandhi's Truth* is likely to have enduring value for many Western readers, and perhaps for some Eastern readers, also.

COMMENTARY
GANDHI'S MAGIC

THERE is a practical support of Gandhi's method of seeking social change—based on the idea that for true progress there should be no losers—in the fact that, apart from the inertia of institutions, the coherence of a society must depend either on vision or on timidity and resistance to change. If revolutionary action tears down existing institutions before there is explicit vision of a new social order, the only remaining basis for maintaining coherent social function is *fear*.

A passionate rejection of existing evils does not in itself provide the capacity to envision adequate replacement of the corrupt processes. In fact, the history of revolutionary dictatorships is often an account of the inadequacy of mere power as a substitute for the natural infra-structure of social institutions.

Gandhi worked for gradual change in the polarity of basic motivation in human beings. He knew that even the most elaborate social plans and programs, however bravely launched, would eventually lapse to the level of the moral tone of the daily life of the people. So raising this level became his long-term objective.

Yet all his life it was his destiny to be confronted by extreme situations, involving intolerable suffering and injustice. The magic of his career lies in his synthesis of long-term objectives with emergency action. When the qualities which commonly crown long years of constructive, educational effort are required to meet an immediate crisis, to reach fulfillment in the brief space of a few days or weeks, the need is manifestly for a *heroic* act—an achievement ordinarily regarded as very rare in individual behavior and impossible for social groups.

That Gandhi developed the capacity to inspire this sort of intensification of resolve is one of the lessons of Erik Erikson's book about him. When Gandhi refused to hate or to condemn, he was in effect declaring that all men *can* learn better, but that for this they may need time. He saw that compelling men to do better is a contradiction in terms—a truly impossible thing.

A man held together by fear, by resistance to threat, will have to unlearn his fear before he can do better. So also with the man who expects good to result from making people fear. Laborious processes of unlearning are in store for both. Gandhi would not waste the time of the world and add to the sum of its pain by increasing these labors and delays.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
IT'S HARD TO BE A TEACHER

SOME books about the personal experience of teaching children contain much valuable material. The best ones, perhaps, tell about the mistakes beginning teachers are likely to make, and what can be done to avoid them. Following are some reflections by Joan Haggerty, a young American woman who was teaching dramatic play to some children in an East End public school in London:

> So I watched. I watched the longing and the restlessness and the energy. And then I realized what I hadn't been doing enough of up until then. Because I was inexperienced and over-anxious to impress, I had imposed too much on the children. I wanted the lessons to be imaginative and exciting so I could say to myself and to Miss Hall, "Look, it works!" instead of letting the main impetus and drive arise from them. In other words, I was guilty of the very fault which I wished to discourage in them and which had been the main thing wrong in Linda's concert—the element of performing to impress others. If I'd been sensitive to the needs of this backward class instead of rushing in with *my* story of Robin Hood because I thought it was imaginative and exciting, then I would have been more sensitive to the now obvious fact that it was far too difficult for them. This need to super-impose is a bad fault in most teachers. It is our own insecurity that prompts us to destroy spontaneity because a pre-planned lesson is safer.

There can hardly be good teaching unless an alert sixth sense in the teacher takes account of the capacities of the children. The value of Miss Haggerty's self-criticism increases as it grows specific:

> First of all it had been a mistake to cast parts right away. To have one or two characters who did all the talking and the rest quiet most of the time meant that the remainder of the class had to withhold too much of their energy. For example, in the Robin Hood scene, the group standing around the gallows didn't have the information or the ability to think up quiet background remarks. They only understood that if one or two people were the center of attention, then it was their prerogative to fill in time any way they liked. They were waiting for their turn for attention instead of using their inner concentration and resources to contribute to the overall *gestalt.* When they were more experienced, they would be able to find activities for lesser characters to engage in so as to add to the scene's authenticity by quiet support, but the concept of a great many small parts adding up to make a whole is a difficult one for self-centered children to grasp until they care enough that the scene should work well.

Of course, the informal, improvising method of this teacher's approach was particularly effective in disclosing these limitations. Miss Haggerty found out right away. Perhaps this is a peculiar advantage of the arts in child education. It doesn't take long to discover what sort of problems there are, and that something will have to be done to find initial balances between self-expression and responsibility. Teaching an art, you could say, soon results in "child-centered" teaching, yet it certainly isn't socializing, "life-adjustment" teaching, or need not be. It is teaching with close watch over the obscure and often random growth-processes in the learners, and it leads naturally to lots of little discoveries of how to meet their needs in a particular group of children, or a particular child.

One morning Miss Haggerty found a small Negro girl, Jeanette, crying desperately. She had a date with a teacher to get spanked:

> "Blub . . . Sir's going to give me the stick, Miss . . . Blub blub."
>
> "What for?" I asked, trying to wipe her eyes. . . .
>
> "Nothin, Miss, I didn't do nothin."
>
> "Nothing at all?"
>
> "I was only eating sweets, Miss."
>
> "And when was the last time you were caught eating sweets?"
>
> "Yesterday, Miss."
>
> "And the time before that?"
>
> "The . . . um . . . day before yesterday.
>
> "I see."

A little later Miss Haggerty set up a scene involving stolen sweets in a classroom and cast Jeanette to play "teacher." Given the plot, the children improvised the lines. Jeanette conducted a proper inquisition of each child in the playlet,

but before long the others began to offer accusations of one another, calling out the names of possible culprits. As Miss Haggerty relates:

> As in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, the children were giving vent to long-harbored grudges, but all under the safe auspices of child drama . . . thousands of effigies stuck with pins. Poor Teacher Jeanette tried hard to answer all the hands but became so harried that she restricted herself to the two original culprits . . . .
>
> JEANETTE: Now, Charlie, did you steal those sweets?
>
> CHARLIE: No, Miss.
>
> JEANETTE: Well then, Bob, did you?
>
> BOB: No, Miss.
>
> FIFTH PUPIL: Bob did, Bob did, I saw 'im.
>
> BOB: Those were me own rotten sweets.
>
> SIXTH PUPIL: Jimmy did it, Jimmy did it.
>
> JEANETTE: Oh, I give up. Everybody s yelling at me. You both stole 'em and so you'll both get the stick. Bend over. *Swat. Swat. Swat.*
>
> As Jeanette stood up after punishing the two boys with an imaginary cane, she looked at me very strangely, a light dawning in her eyes. She was an intelligent little girl.
>
> "Do you see how hard it is to be a teacher, Jeanette?" I asked.
>
> Jeanette nodded rapidly and seriously.
>
> "Did you know for sure that either of those two boys stole the sweets?"
>
> "Well, not really, Miss, but everybody was making so much noise and mucking about that I couldn't think."
>
> "Do you think your teacher ever feels like that, Jeanette?"
>
> Jeanette nodded rapidly and seriously.
>
> I never did find out whether or not Jeanette did get the stick. She never spoke of it again.

Miss Haggerty's playlets were often schoolroom scenes. Explaining how "psychodrama" works, she writes:

> Jeanette's wail that morning was expressed energetically in the following scene, but at the same time it was controlled and given a certain meaningful shape. It purged her in the same way that a little girl furiously spanking her doll is purging herself of the resentment she feels when she is being spanked. The little girl in such a situation changes from the receiver to the doer; she becomes the master, not the slave. Her confidence is restored. In the schoolroom scene, I purposely cast Jeanette as the teacher so that she would have a chance to rid herself of her humiliation. Also, I think she emerged from it realizing how difficult it must be to be a teacher faced with a thousand different things to deal with at once. Her pupils cooperated magnificently.

Miss Haggerty's book, *Please Can I Play God?* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), reads like an adventure story.

FRONTIERS

Legitimate Link with the Establishment

THERE is a curious if limited compatibility between certain counsels of Bruno Bettelheim to the young and the practical services of the *Whole Earth Catalog*—a hip if not hippie compilation, somewhat after Sears, Roebuck, of merchandise and other offerings to the liberated, back-to-nature generation. In a *New York Times Magazine* (Jan. 11) article, Bettelheim is quoted as saying: "One should go along with the Establishment if it is halfway reasonable; any Establishment is only halfway reasonable." The *Whole Earth Catalog,* subtitled "access to tools," provides 128 large pages (11" X 14½") 0f illustrated information about what the present Establishment affords in the way of manufactured articles that are likely to be useful or necessary to far-out ways of living.

There is a sense in which Dr. Bettelheim is saying, as a psychiatrist, what Karl Popper once declared as a political theorist: "it must be one of the first principles of rational politics that *we cannot make heaven on earth* . . . . Those who are inspired by this heavenly vision of an angelic society are bound to be disappointed, and when disappointed, they try to blame their failure on scapegoats, on human devils who maliciously prevent the coming of the millennium." Bettelheim insists that social health must be based upon psychological balance. The *Times Magazine* article quotes him:

> It is very easy to say, "I want a just society," but that is not idealism. Adolescents make tremendously high moral demands on others, but nowhere is it expected that they should live up to the demands. This is characteristic of the person who is not yet settled in life or society. . . . To scream that other people should do things—well, idealism is when you put your ideas into practice, at some expense and hardship to yourself.

The strange and wonderful trek back to the land pursued by many of the young has stirred both admiration and apprehension—admiration, because they seem determined to *try* to live the simple life they talk about; apprehension, because living on the land is very hard work and living off it is practically impossible. An obvious factor of "subsidy" in one form or another attends many of these projects. Well, there's nothing disgraceful about some subsidy. Several of the original colonies in North America would have died out in a few years without extended help from the mother country, and in time the people learned how to survive and then develop into "rugged pioneers." No doubt more of the spirit than the substance of pioneering is evident in the pages of the *Whole Earth Catalog*—which is really a wild composite of sophistication, conscious naïveté, and juvenile romanticism—but this is nothing against it. Underneath all the playfulness there is intensity of purpose and evidence of a fundamental break with the past. Perhaps this publication is a first attempt to assemble some of the components of the kind of personal, family, and social simplicity which might work for people habituated to technology, and variously dependent upon it. Out of the odd and probably misfitting parts of a very primitively developed utopian dream presented here, there might emerge something like "cottage industry" for the computer-minded, with the equivalent of spinning wheels for reformed American whiz kids. An undertaking like this obviously must get its start from existing resources in the present society.

The *Whole Earth Catalog* is published twice a year—spring and fall—by the Portola Institute, Inc. (a nonprofit corporation), at 1115 Merrill Street, Menlo Park, Calif. 94025. A single issue costs $4.00 and a year's subscription is $8.00 (for the two catalogs and four up-dating supplements). An interesting thing about the catalog is the way it avoids "commercialism." All the items described and pictured are selected by the editors and staff. Many of the descriptions give the name of the person who suggested the item, and also the name of the "reviewer" who writes an account of its merits and demerits. The reviewer reports his own experience in owning or using it, and receives

ten dollars for his testimony. Contributors are gaily independent; for example, this is the review of the weekly magazine, *Science:*

> This magazine of the American Association for the Advancement of Science is completely unlovable. It does have information you can't find anywhere else sometimes, but something is missing from the magazine and perhaps from the scientists, however liberal. It's like they hate to communicate.

Listed in the catalog are things as diverse as the thoughts of Buckminster Fuller and a low-cost edition of the *I Ching.* There are seven sections: (1) Understanding Whole Systems, (2) Shelter and Land Use, (3) Industry and Craft, (4) Communications, (5) Community, (6) Nomadics, and (7) Learning. The first section opens with the explanation that Fuller's ideas inspired the publishers to invent the catalog. A page is devoted to Fuller's works, including the six-volume set of "documents" on the World Resources Inventory. This section could be called General Orientation and includes books by Lewis Mumford, Hannah Arendt, and the *Tao Te Ching.* Also books by Jung and Loren Eiseley. Shelter and Land Use has material on how to build low-cost geodesic domes. A familiar name in this section is Ken Kern, who has been contributing for many years to School of Living publications on how to build your own home out of the simplest sort of materials. The reviewer calls Kern's book, *The Owner-Built Home,* about the most useful book on building available. Kern tells how to use rock and earth in building: "Inasmuch as there is nothing in bare earth to *sell*, no commercial group can be found to extoll its merits."

In short, the *Whole Earth Catalog* is a substantial publication which has eliminated the cash nexus as the measure of Significance in its pages. You rely on the integrity and intelligence of the editors, who use their best sense to pick out things to review. An announcement says that the items listed are thought to be (1) useful as a tool, (2) relevant to independent education, (3) high in quality or low in cost, and (4) easily available by mail. The following is the statement of Purpose of the catalog:

> We *are* as gods and might as well get good at it. So far, remotely done power and glory—as via government, big business, formal education, church—has succeeded to the point where gross defects obscure actual gains. In response to this dilemma and to these gains a realm of intimate personal power is developing power of the individual to conduct his own education, find his own inspiration, shape his own environment, and share his adventure with whoever is interested. Tools that aid this process are sought and promoted by the *Whole Earth Catalog.*

The Catalog does not refuse advertisements, but only the makers of items selected for review can buy space. (There are very few ads.) No payment for the reviews is requested or accepted from manufacturers. The purchaser buys direct. *Whole Earth Catalog* offers an interesting answer to people who wonder how the exploiting tendency in human nature can be overcome. One way would be to have relations with people who seem without it. This might help to put strength where it belongs.