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TRUE SENSE OF THE WORLD

THE best books are nearly always treatises on human nature. They may seem to be about other matters, and therefore to deal with human beings only indirectly, but their enduring value is in what they say about man. This view seems inescapable after some reading in a new book about Rachel Carson, *Since Silent Spring* (Houghton Mifflin, 1970), by Frank Graham, Jr., written in vindication and extension of Miss Carson's immense labors.

How was Miss Carson's book concerned with "human nature"? Besides its measured accuracy, its scientific background, and its avoidance of even a faint suggestion of the sentimentalism so disliked by readers whom she especially hoped to influence, *Silent Spring* was a declaration of man's kinship with the rest of life on the planet. Mr. Graham says this in effect when he points out that until *Silent Spring* nearly everything that had been written about pesticides had been phrased in *"economic* terms," while Miss Carson wrote "an *ecological* book." In an address after it was published she said:

> In each of my books I have tried to say that all the life of the planet is inter-related, that each species has its own ties to others, and that all are related to the earth. This is the theme of *The Sea Around Us* and the other sea books, and it is also the message of *Silent Spring*. . . .
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> We have already gone very far in our abuse of this planet. Some awareness of this problem has been in the air but the ideas had to be crystallized, the facts had to be brought together in *one place.* If I had not written the book, I am sure the ideas would have found another outlet. But knowing the facts as I did, I could not rest until I had brought them to public attention.

It is difficult to put into words what really lies behind the excellence of *Silent Spring.* Perhaps Henry Beston said it best in his review:

> Some spiritual instinct has shaken itself free and has refused to take the scientific vision of nature as complete. . . . It is Miss Carson's particular gift to be able to blend scientific knowledge with the spirit of poetic awareness, thus restoring to us a true sense of the world.

As for science, the book has fifty-five pages of notes on its source-materials. To show how well prepared Miss Carson was to write this volume, Mr. Graham tells of the years she spent as a writer and editor, and finally editor-in-chief for the publications of the Fish and Wildlife Service. She was trained as a biologist and studied genetics under H. S. Jennings and Raymond Pearl, later working at the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. She was a stickler for accuracy in writing, but the "poetry" in her work came naturally. It was simply there in the world disclosed to her during the practice of scientific observation. Perhaps because of this rare combination, *The Sea Around Us* remained on the best-seller lists for eighty-six weeks.

The story of how *Silent Spring* was written, and under what persuasions and pressures, is told in detail by Mr. Graham. In this way emerges his portrait of a sensitive and determined human being—yet not a "crusader" type at all. Retiring by nature, disliking public attention, Rachel Carson did what she saw had to be done, while knowing the arena of controversy she was entering. Mr. Graham relates:

> Early in 1959 she expressed some of her concern to Cottam [Clarence Cottam, once her superior in the Fish and Wildlife Service and a powerful supporter and friend]. "As you know, the whole thing is so explosive, and the pressures on the other side so powerful and enormous, that I feel it far wiser to keep my own counsel insofar as I can until I am ready to launch my attack as a whole."
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> She knew that, by taking up her pen to write honestly about this problem, she had plunged into a sort of war. Friends already had warned her that she could expect no quarter from the chemical industry, and she expected none. But even she, a former government worker and an experienced scientist, was amazed at the attitudes she encountered among government agencies and even among official medical organizations.

> In chemical pesticides, USDA had found a fascinating new toy, which it was arrogantly flaunting at every opportunity. (If the opportunity did not exist, USDA manufactured one, as it had for its discredited Fire Ant Program.) USDA pesticide "eradication" programs have been aptly compared by Roland C. Clement of the National Audubon Society to the overkill policies manifested in the stockpiling of nuclear weapons by the military. "When combined with the chemical industry's productive overcapacity, and the hustling salesmanship of a free enterprise system, this commitment threatens to poison the landscape and to make the farmer increasingly dependent and the consumer well nigh helpless," Clement has said.

Long before *Silent Spring* appeared, the forces of "hustling salesmanship" and its advocates and allies began planning their attacks against the book. Public relations campaigns disputing and minimizing its thesis were mounted on every level. But Miss Carson had strong support from distinguished scientists who knew her work and abilities, and she went ahead. The story of the publication of *Silent Spring* and its reception is told in detail by Mr. Graham. The fact is that the book was simply too good, too accurate in its contentions and too persuasive in its arguments to be ignored. Even magazines which in 1962 printed reviews deploring the volume have since become champions of what it maintained.

Well, how is Mr. Graham's book concerned with "human nature"? It shows, first of all, that even for "experts" the facts involved in this controversy were second in importance to basic attitudes toward nature and life. Miss Carson's opponents chose their facts according to the position they had assumed long before. One distinguished consultant to the oil industry and a professor of industrial medicine replied to Clarence Cottam's defense of Miss Carson's views:

> "We alter nature daily. Would you have us believe that you or I or anyone else really knows what is nature's way? We are natural creatures, and who is to judge whether or not our destructiveness, however we may deplore it, is not an ordained path in nature's road of terrestrial development?"

Only mounting mortality rates convince such "experts," and their agreement is then likely to be obtained inch by inch. Often there are lethal jokers in reassuring statistics. The Mississippi fish kill of 1963 is an example. Donald Mount, who tracked the cause to endrin (a pesticide fifteen times as poisonous as DDT to mammals, and thirty times as poisonous to fish) found that a chemical plant at Memphis was discharging endrin as a waste in ways that reached the big river. His discovery at first seemed "unbelievable":

> Perhaps at the heart of the dispute lay the inability of many pesticide-oriented businessmen and officials to believe that comparatively tiny quantities of any poison in a great river could bring about a major disaster. Donald Mount has spoken of those "who, seeking the truth, fail to comprehend the magnitude of endrin toxicity to fish and other aquatic animals. Perhaps it is difficult to understand that any substance in water in such minute concentrations as .01 parts per billion could be acutely toxic to fish. However, one must consider that in just two hours, the blood of a catfish can attain an endrin concentration of 1,000 or more times greater than that of the water in which the fish swims; understanding then comes more readily.
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> "In one of our studies we discovered that fathead minnows exposed to .015 parts per billion, had total body concentrations 10,000 times greater than that of the water. Because of such concentrating ability, it is obvious that accurate toxicity data cannot be obtained when one or more pounds of bullheads are placed in a five- or ten-gallon aquarium in which the test water is *not* renewed continuously . . . one can readily realize the need to measure concentrations of endrin in the parts per billion range."

Here Mr. Graham recalls that in *Silent Spring* Rachel Carson had noted "the persistent tendency of pesticides to 'disappear' from a lake's water, but to reappear later in 'the fabric of the life the lake supports'." This sort of thing, perhaps, led some of her technical critics to speak of *Silent Spring* as "science fiction," while others simply would not reverse their often announced opinion that chemical pesticides were the breakthrough of the century for the advance of agriculture. This was especially the view of specialists working in the Department of Agriculture's Insect Control Division. Rachel Carson spoke of another factor in the lack of support she experienced in the early days of her work She referred to it in connection with her effort to find

"biological" controls that could be put in the place of chemical pesticides:

> "I'm convinced there is a psychological angle in all this," she wrote to a friend, "that people, especially professional men, are uncomfortable about coming out against something, especially if they haven't absolute proof the 'something' is wrong, but only a good suspicion. So they will go along with a program about which they privately have acute misgivings. So I think it is most important to build up the positive alternatives."

For full recognition of the point we are endeavoring to make here, it is necessary to read Mr. Graham's book. This point is that the argument about chemical pesticides really turns on basic philosophical questions concerning the relationship of man and nature. Miss Carson understood this quite well, we think, while carefully guarding against the charge—which was widely made, anyhow—that her position was founded on "mystical" feeling. However her "feeling" is described, and she surely had it, she was also a meticulous compiler of evidence, which had the effect of turning this complaint against her critics. Graham shows that the charge of "emotionalism" really applies to them, since they often ignored key statements and qualifications in her book while broadly attacking it.

It is probably not possible to separate entirely the evidence for a contention from the feeling that leads a man to collect the evidence in the first place. The *relevance* of the evidence often depends upon this feeling, and there is nothing wrong or unscientific in presenting evidence in the light of a basic philosophic intention. There really aren't any "neutral" facts. Even the most "objective" of facts have been selected for display or inspection by reason of their presumed connection with some scheme of meaning. There are only idea-facts, and the idea-part of a fact is theory arising from initial assumption. Those who deny that they have a position, or any assumption about the nature of things, are much more likely to become "emotional" in defense of a position concealed even from ourselves when they sense that it is threatened. (E. A. Burtt's *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science is* an important study for understanding this reality in human thought.)

What further can we say about "human nature" in relation to Miss Carson's and Mr. Graham's books?

There is this: That it seems wholly unreasonable to expect employees of the government to put an end to abuses which flow out of the righteous and profitable activities of a numerous, powerful, and successful segment of the population. A change in attitude toward life is what is called for, and no regulatory agency can cope with this problem, especially when it is not even understood. The change required in the idea of man's relation to nature is so far-reaching as to be practically "revolutionary." This is Lynn White, Jr.'s opinion, expressed in *Machina Ex Deo,* where he declares that man's attack on his environment grows out of defective religious attitudes and can have no enduring correction save through a regeneration of religion in the West. As for the capacity of government to effect the change, Vinoba Bhave has put the matter briefly:

> The spreading of revolutionary ideas is no part of the government's duty. In fact, revolutions cannot be organized and brought about by the established institutions of politics. The government can only act on an idea when it has been generally accepted, and then it is compelled to act on it.

It may turn out that the demonstration of this psycho-social reality will be the principal long-range gain from the arduous labors of men like Ralph Nader and his youthful cohorts. MANAS has several times mentioned lately three books made possible by Ralph Nader Study Groups—all devastatingly critical of government commissions and bureaus. But these books—*The Chemical Feast,* on the Food and Drug Administration; *Vanishing Air,* on air pollution control; and *The Interstate Commerce Commission,* concerned mainly with the trucking business—should lead to much more than an exposé of the "guilty parties." The next step is to point out that the real trouble lies in assigning to government responsibilities which it cannot fulfill. Preparation for seeing this clearly is the best possible reason for reading these books. At the end of *The Chemical Feast,* in the closing

chapter, called "Lessons from a Summer Study," the writer, James S. Turner, says:

> The first specific study the group completed concerned the Coca-Cola-Dr. Pepper fight to obtain a regulation that allowed the addition of caffeine to cola drinks and the Dr. Pepper drink without announcing the addition on the label. Agency documents showed that the overwhelming sentiment of the FDA officials involved in the decision was to require labeling. The record also showed strong reasons for following such a policy. But the first act of Commissioner James Goddard, taken four days after assuming office, was to sign a regulation that allowed the addition of caffeine without requiring that it be listed on the label. After spending ten days going over all the agency documents concerned with the decision, the student investigator involved spent the next days conducting interviews with all the responsible individuals, after which he said, "I will never be able to trust another government official again. Every one of these men lied about their involvement in the decision to one degree or another. If I hadn't had the records, I would never have known there had been any disagreement with the final regulation." The experience of many other students was similar if less dramatic.

There are, of course, shining exceptions. Admirable men can be found in government, but the percentages are against them. And when they get something good done, it is often too little and too late. Directly applicable is what James J. Gallagher said upon leaving HEW: "We in government are actors in a badly written or badly produced play. . . . Good actors can disguise the flaws in a play for a time, while bad actors make them immediately apparent, but the flaws remain and merely changing the cast of characters doesn't help that much." This same criticism was made more directly in 1969 by Simon Lazarus, executive director of New York City's Department of Consumer Affairs:

> The problem is not simply with the present incumbents of the F.T.C., of the F.C.C., the C.A.B. and others. The problem is not merely that incumbent officials will not or cannot carry out the grand design of Progressives and New Dealers. In large measure, the problem is with the grand design itself. Something is fundamentally askew about the whole regulatory system which the nation adopted to control corporate power in the public interest. Many of the regulatory agencies were doomed to fail from the start.

This might be taken as merely an argument for conservative politics, but few if any conservatives will press it the whole way—to a refusal to rely on the *military* arm of government, despite the fact that, if Seymour Melman's analysis is correct, the military is the worst offender of all in the misuse of power and in economic waste. The problem is not really "political," but moral and educational. Yet in order for this to be understood, it will doubtless be necessary to expand the meaning of "ecology" to include the intelligent management of *ideas*—not other people's ideas, which would be thought-control, but our own.

What set up the barriers against which Rachel Carson had to contend? Ideas made those barriers—erroneous ideas about interest, value, and human good. One might say that the poison in the Mississippi and every other stream—and in the air, in the soil—has its genesis in a much more dangerous source of trouble: human ignorance and twisted motivation. The poisons and pollutions begin there and work their way down. But who is ready to consider this diagnosis? Not very many people, as yet. Only men humbled by pain and failure are willing to look for faults in themselves.

Meanwhile, and in any event, we need the Nader books, and the revelations of others among the new generation of muckrakers, if only as stopgaps and provocatives, and as means of showing that there is something radically wrong with the grand design. Best of all, however, for stirring such realizations is the work of persons like Rachel Carson, for they, even while they detail the mistakes men are making, embody in their lives an example of a strongly affirmative philosophy and serene way of life.

REVIEW
"A COMPLETE REVERSAL"

IN an editorial in the first issue of the *Journal of Parapsychology* (March, 1937), William McDougall, who was instrumental in launching the program of psychic research at Duke University, asked some basic questions:

> What are the relations of mind and matter? Are mental processes always and everywhere intimately and utterly dependent upon material or physical organization? Do the volitions, the strivings, the desires, the joys and sorrows, the judgments and beliefs of men make any difference to the historical course of the events of our world, as the mass of men at all times have believed? Or does the truth lie with those few philosophers and scientists who, with or without some more or less plausible theory in support of their view, confidently reject well-nigh universal beliefs, telling us that the physical is coextensive with the mental and that the powers and potentialities of mind may be defined by the laws of the physical sciences?

In *Mind Over Matter* (Macmillan, 1970, $7.95), Dr. Louisa E. Rhine tells the story of research into Psychokinesis (PK) at the Duke Parapsychological Laboratory, headed by her husband, J. B. Rhine. Psychokinesis means the tangible influence of human will on material objects without physical instruments or intermediaries. In the thirty-six years during which studies of PK have been carried on at Duke and elsewhere, sufficient evidence in behalf of this power has been accumulated to convince the investigators of its reality. At the conclusion of her book, Dr. Louisa Rhine quotes from her husband's recent summary of the importance of this research, and what he says in one place makes a rather precise answer to the questions raised by Dr. McDougall in 1937. J. B. Rhine says:

> The evidence of PK along with that of ESP establishes the case for the reality of mind, based upon more than mere clinical observation as is much of the present field of psychology. The reality of psi is an oft-repeated demonstrated experimental fact.
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> These consequences of the findings of parapsychology however are not limited just to these pure sciences of physics, biology, and psychology. Other immediate effects also follow. Now for the first time mind is what the man-in-the-street thought it was all along—something of a force in itself; something that gave him some kind of special volitional freedom. He could not have been very certain of it, but after all he was intuitively right in following the heritage of the common sense of the race, that the mind was real in spite of the fact that a couple of generations of psychologists had been trying to discourage the idea and supplant it with a model of mechanistic behaviorism.

There seems no question but that, beneath the masks of familiar physical events there is a factor affecting the behavior of things which fits the meaning of "mind over matter." In the circumstances of laboratory and experimental research, the presence of this factor is seldom "dramatic," or will not seem so to most people, yet the factor is there, and has been revealed by the various ingenious means, statistical and otherwise, which this book describes. The truly dramatic instances of what may indeed be psychokinesis occur in settings of everyday life, becoming unforgettable happenings for those who experience them. Louisa Rhine has described a number of these events in a later chapter of her book.

Yet this power—if it can be called a "power" in its present undeveloped state—is very unpredictable. Many of the experiments conducted by the Rhines and others were in order to discover the circumstances under which it operates, or operates best. Interest and enthusiasm play a part, but the possibility of *developing* this capacity of human beings got very little attention. How, one wonders, would this subject be approached among a people wholeheartedly convinced of the reality of the power of mind over matter? The whole program of investigation seems profoundly conditioned by the fact that few if any men of learning believe in the independent reality of *mind*, to say nothing of mental powers. This attitude has an inevitably reductive effect on psychic research. Of necessity,

therefore, the primary contention of the Rhines has been elementary: *Mind,* they say, is *real.*

Throughout the period of the ascendancy of physical science Western thought has been essentially hostile to this conception, an attitude explained by C. J. Ducasse as the result of "a certain metaphysical bias." Unbelievers in mind as an independent agency have this metaphysical bias as the starting-point of all their thinking. It lies, Ducasse says, in "a particular initial assumption they tacitly make, namely, that *to be real is to be material;* and to be material, . . . is to be some process or part of the perceptually public world." The experiments in ESP and PK are attempts to wear away at this assumption.

How did research in psychokinesis get started? One day in 1934 a student from another college perched himself on the corner of Dr. Rhine's desk and said, "Hey doc, I've got something to tell you I think you ought to know." The youth explained that in non-student life he was a professional gambler and had found that he could control the fall of the dice "by *will power."* This was the beginning of the scientific crap game which still goes on. The object of the game is to find the extent to which the laws of chance can be suspended or displaced by acts of the will. One interesting experiment was a competition between a group of gamblers and a cadre of divinity students: the gamblers used their own private incantations while the divinity students used prayer. The best men of each team got good scores, but a gambler had the edge!

In general, however, "gambling" has little role in this book, except for a note relating that one volume on how to win in gaming seems to have borrowed extensively from reports of experiments at Duke!

In her last chapter, Dr. Rhine gives attention to models of man for which such faculties as ESP and PK would be quite natural. Robert H. Thouless, for example, has suggested that these now supernormal faculties were once the prevailing mode of perception and action, and that the development of an insulating organism led to their inhibition except under special circumstances. There is the possibility that this limitation of such original natural powers had a practical purpose in that it focused attention on the immediacies of physical life. (Something like this was also proposed by H. H. Price, years ago, in the British journal, *Philosophy,* for October, 1940.) Dr. Rhine summarizes:

> When the idea of PK was added to that of ESP, Thouless supposed that in the primitive organism the PK ability also may have been unrestricted and potentially able to affect external matter. But as evolution occurred, here too more specific or more restricted application of the ability was needed, and nature responded with the development of the sensory-motor nervous system. With that, the free range of the PK effect became limited *within* the confines of the organism. This, of course, would be the ordinary PK by which supposedly the mind controls the body, as had been proposed too by JBR who also had thought of psi as being more primitive than the sensory-motor system.

This kind of thinking about human origins becomes inevitable and necessary, since the facts of psychic research will not fit into the mechanistic models of human nature, and parapsychologists would rather consider new models than to ignore facts. This is the importance of Dr. Rhine's book, as she shows in the closing pages. The first task, she says, was to gather evidence for PK, without much attention to the implications of this hypothesis for human thought in general. However—

> Now that the evidence is in, it is clear that first of all the integration of the fact of psi into the conceptual picture of the personality means a complete reversal in the current theory of the mind-body relation. The implications resulting from a reversal from a brain-dominated (cerebrocentric) concept to a mind-dominated (psychocentric) one each person can envisage for himself.

COMMENTARY
IN PRAISE OF WOLVES

THE disposition of "official" watchdogs of the public good to go after comparative innocents instead of real offenders seems to be a rule of government policy rather than the exception. In *Since Silent Spring* Frank Graham begins a chapter concerned with government programs of predator-control with a note on Farley Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf*, which much impressed Rachel Carson. First published (by Little, Brown) in 1963, this book has been through nine paperback printings by Dell. It is a completely delighting study of the arctic wolf and a brilliant defense of its right to survival. In a letter to a Canadian conservationist Miss Carson called it "a shocking revelation of the archaic philosophies that direct the handling of this matter by the Canadian Wildlife Service," adding that the "so-called predator control activities of our own Fish and Wildlife Service are no better."

This chapter of Mr. Graham's book is a story of ruthless destruction of species which often does not stop with the "target" predator but attacks other wildlife. When mass techniques of poisoning are used, there can be little control over the consumption of bait. "Poisoned grain," Graham relates, "carelessly distributed during a campaign against meadow mice, killed thousands of geese in the Tule Lake area of Oregon and California in the late 1950's." And the carcasses of poisoned animals may become "reservoirs of death" to other species.

The best arguments against all such programs come from writers like Farley Mowat who have firsthand knowledge of the habits of the creatures victimized by extermination campaigns. Employed as a biologist by the Canadian Wildlife Service, Mowat was sent to investigate the claim that the Canadian deer population was being seriously reduced by wolves. He practically "lived" with a family of wolves for the best part of a year, learning many important things, one being the fact that the wolves really performed services for the deer by pruning the herds of their weaker members. The wolves wouldn't bother to chase a healthy deer; they could never catch one, and they knew it. Even very young caribou run faster than wolves. Further, the wolves seemed to have their own scheme of population regulation, which worked very well. They never multiplied beyond a number that could live on the amount of food available. Finally, Mowat found that humans, not wolves, were killing off the caribou.

At the end of this book, he tells of the total unwillingness of the people in that part of Canada to listen to his explanations. They said that only ten years before they could kill 50,000 caribou a year, but now bagged only a couple of thousand. *Wolves* were to blame. When Mowat pointed out that the wolves had been preying on the caribou for tens of thousands of years without decimating the herds, before the advent of white men, they raged at him. One day an excited trader claimed he had final evidence that wolves killed deer from sheer "blood lust." Mowat went to look at twenty-three caribou carcasses, but found that they had been *shot*.

There were bullet wounds in the animals, with plain tracks all around of the skis and tail-skid of a plane. The heads of two bucks and the hindquarters of a pregnant doe had been removed, but the other bodies were untouched.

Mowat discloses that the Provincial Government had two years earlier organized "safaris," sometimes in Government-owned planes, "to lure rich trophy hunters up from the United States." The pilot located the herd, then landed and taxied around until the hunters, firing from open doors and windows, killed enough caribou from which to make a selection of the "best" trophies.

These were some of the "wolves" which caused such deep concern among civic-minded people who feared that soon there would be no deer left. Mr. Mowat ends his chapter on this "field trip":

> The Cree who accompanied me had observed this sequence of events for himself the previous winter while acting as a guide. He did not like it; but he knew enough of the status of the Indian in the white man's world to realize he might just as well keep his indignation to himself.
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> I was more naive. The next day I radioed a full report of the incident to the proper authorities. I received no reply—unless the fact that the Provincial Government raised the bounty on wolves to twenty dollars some weeks afterwards could be considered a reply.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
A STORE OF COMMON SENSE

Now a woman with four children, Margot Hentoff feels that she is a lot wiser than she was at twenty, even though, as she explains in the *Saturday Review* for Sept. 19, she then counted herself "an educational philosopher—a Summerhillian beyond argument." She had never been to a good school and was totally convinced that children, if left to themselves, would choose to learn what they needed to know. That is what *she* had done. Since she was an omniverous reader, the fact that schooling left her untouched did not interfere with her self-education. She tells her story:

> Myself a product of so many and such inferior schools in which I had idled at my desk during math, science, geography, and languages that, by the end of high school, I knew no French or Latin, although I had been taught them for years; no algebra nor where Ohio was; nothing, in fact, but what I had read in books I found in bookstores and on the family library's shelves. . . .
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> *My* grades in school were dreadful, and I got into college only because I had landed in an entirely corrupt, small New York private school where the headmistress kited my transcript grades to a minimally acceptable average. At college, the same perverse business went on. . . . I suppose the reason I could manage to be both totally turned off by school and still not be turned off intellectually was because my parents made no fuss whatever about academic achievement or grades as long as I appeared to be intelligent and stayed in school and off the streets.

If we had the space, we would reprint here long sections from the first chapter of Ortega's *Some Lessons in Metaphysics* (published last January by Norton), which amounts to an independent and searching essay on education. Ortega explores the common failure of teachers to distinguish between the rare student who feels a genuine *hunger to know*, and the typical ones who endure schooling as some sort of moral "ought," but lack spontaneous interest in what they learn. Ortega's point is that the really *questioning* student in no way illustrates what educators mean when they speak of the "learning process," yet this student is the only one who really learns, who makes discoveries for himself. One of the values of reading this essay is the help it gives to people like Mrs. Hentoff, who learn in spite of bad schools or poor teaching. They must not make the mistake of assuming that other people are like themselves.

This, apparently, is what Mrs. Hentoff did, at first. For her two girls she chose a school "that gave no tests or grades, and that allowed free movement and conversation and a wide choice of activity." Dedicated teachers developed their own teaching materials and "intellectual achievement was not valued above other kinds of achievement." This program produced certain results:

> By the time they were nine, my children wrote delightful and original poems and essays, misspelled and unpunctuated, handed in to appreciative teachers on scraps of crumpled paper. The trouble was that at thirteen they were still doing the same thing and, by this time, kids from other schools who had mastered some technique and who had some fundamental background knowledge were beginning to write better poems and essays than my children. Also, it turned out, my children were not readers. Not that they couldn't read—they didn't read. Since the school was rooted in the group-as-an-experience-in-community theory in which each child was supposed to excel at something in which he was naturally best, my daughters discovered they were best at being popular, forming cliques, gossiping and running races in the yard. One of them was also good at making copies of ancient Greek pots. Somehow, they never connected with any real intellectual interest. I might have thought they were just an odd pair of kids if I had not seen the same syndrome in many of their classmates. Further, when my elder son began to behave in the same way in the same school it occurred to me that perhaps the school was not so much helping the child to find out who he was as it was assisting him to discover that he was inadequate.

So now the Hentoffs are looking for another kind of school for their boys. The new, "free" schools seem to Mrs. Hentoff "uncomfortably like the old permissive schools with a few technical innovations tacked on." Moreover, she says,

"There are many teachers with whom I do not *want* my children to have an intimate relation: those teachers who imagine themselves therapists; those who, having entered the teaching profession as social crusaders, politically indoctrinate children in the manner of the old church schools; and those who do not understand that in order for healthy growth to take place there *must* be a distinction between adult and child, something real for kids to test themselves against rather than the confectionery mist surrounding those who are always 'on the side of the child'." There were other reasons for the search for another school:

> I no longer wholly subscribed to what has been called the romantic theory of education. For some children, it seemed to me, the traditional quiet classrooms with a great deal of structured activity might be exactly the atmosphere that would allow them to concentrate on the work at hand for a sustained period of time. In the third grade, at his old school, one son, whose teacher had told me he got math to do whenever he wanted it, seemed to have wanted it about five times during the entire year. He thought his handwriting looked terrible; so he didn't write. And it was true: his handwriting looked terrible because no one ever insisted that he practice it. No one insisted, because it was felt he didn't write well. The whole school began to strike me as Red Queen territory: *"Here,* you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place."

What sort of school are the Hentoffs looking for? Well, it's easier to say what you don't want than what you do. However:

> What I do want is an experimental school that is willing to try anything promising without succumbing to the current anti-intellectual mode; one that sets intellectual standards. My husband complains of his term of servitude at stuffy Boston Latin School, but I have noted over the years that he has the kind of puritan self-discipline that keeps him working whether or not he is having a particularly rich experience with the job at hand. Also he has a nice grasp of basic areas of knowledge and does not have to ask me questions about Roman history.
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> I have discovered it is not enough to act on the premise that if you merely expose a child to enough of those areas that make up our culture, he will make good use of the exposure. There is such a strong drift away from the passing-on of the traditional culture that it is quite easy for a child to avoid absorbing even the best of it, and I find it patronizing for an educator to assume that children should be "reached" largely through material relevant to the present, and through the kid culture of rock music and slogan politics.

We haven't encountered so much common sense about education, all in one piece, in a long, long time.

Either Schopenhauer or Nietzsche—one of the two—said, "Every vice is a virtue carried to an unlawful extreme." The definition has application here, since all the things Mrs. Hentoff objects to were once thought of as splendid liberations from the prison house of conventional pedagogy. The basic consideration, then, is not the form, or the reform, but balance in its use.

One thinks of this principle, also, in reading a new collection of pro and con arguments about "local control" in education. The book is *Education and Social Policy: Local Control of Education* (Random House paperback), edited by C. A. Bowers, Ian Housego, and Doris Dyke. The contributors are distinguished, including, for example, Seymour Martin Lipset, James S. Coleman, Jules Henry, and Edgar Z. Friedenberg, four among thirteen, in addition to the editors. This is the sort of debate which shows that, the more you learn about the issues, the less inclined you are to take a position except in relation to a particular situation where you know the facts. There is right and shrewd intelligence on all sides of this question. In a utopian situation, you might opt for local control, but when you find how destructive it can be in some regions, the principle must give way to concrete welfare considerations. The embodiment of right principles in inverted situations becomes very difficult, since it calls for intimate firsthand knowledge and much practical invention, sometimes involving extensive compromises in the service of the beaten down and weak.

FRONTIERS

Comment on the "Watchdog Theory,'

FROM 1883 to 1912, Dr. Harvey W. Wiley, a medical doctor with a Ph.D. in chemistry, headed the Bureau of Chemistry of the United States Department of Agriculture. Throughout this period Dr. Wiley led the fight to protect the interests and health of the people of the United States through the influence he was able to exert on legislative control of food and drug manufacturers. He became known as the father of the Food and Drug Act of 1906, basing his contentions in behalf of legislative control on experiments with a group of twelve employees of the Department of Agriculture who ate only what he asked them to eat. "His conclusion after five months of controlled feeding," James Turner relates in *The Chemical Feast,* "was that many items in the food supply were in fact dangerous." The balance of this chapter by Mr. Turner, titled "History That Repeats Itself," is devoted to showing how Wiley's protective legislation was emasculated in behalf of the food manufacturing interests. It is the story of the defeat of Dr. Wiley, despite his heroic efforts. He finally resigned in 1912, "in bitter protest against the Department of Agriculture's failure to enforce the Pure Food and Drug Law. . . ."

Skipping to a more recent period, we turn to an article by David Cort in the *Nation* for April 12, 1958, in which he said:

> . . . the 1951-52 Congressional investigation fully brought out that the current infatuation with chemicals often approaches homicidal insanity. Apart from pesticides, a very few examples, out of many, would include: That the flour industry for thirty years used nitrogen trichloride, called Agene, which causes hysteria in dogs. That the Food and Drug administration managed to seize and destroy frozen peaches sprayed with thiourea, very poisonous. That the poison, paraphenetyl, was used for fifty years as a sweetening agent. That lithium chloride killed some people before it was removed from the market. That mineral oil in food prevented human absorption of important vitamins. That monochoracetic acid, used commonly as a food preservative, was as poisonous as strychnine or carbolic acid (some manufacturers, mostly in the South, ignored this information for some time). That cheese wrappers made with dehydroacetic acid were equally poisonous. That "emulsifiers" are commonly used to offset lowered egg and fat content in breads, cakes and mixes. That women were permanently blinded by an eyelash preparation using pyrogallic acid. And so on. And on.

No doubt these "abuses" have since been controlled, but it is equally or even more certain that others have taken their place. That, you could say, is the point of Mr. Turner's book; and the point, also, of Robert Sherrill's angry *Nation* (Sept. 14) article on pollution quoted here two weeks ago. Sherrill is convinced that there is no hope of reforming the manufacturers except by prosecution and watchful supervision by government authority. However, without supermen in the regulatory agency, this seems quite impossible. The record is statistically against any such expectation, as a critical history of the Food and Drug Administration would easily show. And even a bureau headed and staffed by men like Harvey Wiley and Ralph Nader would have a pitched battle the whole way, judging by past experience.

A riotous exploitation of both private and public health and wealth, according to Mr. Sherrill, is the "American Way," and the time has come, he thinks, to punish severely public officials who fail to exert the necessary controls. What else, he implies, is there left to do?

Well, it is one thing to work for legislative controls and effective policing of irresponsible industry, because that is all we can think of to do, but a very different thing to pretend that this is going to *work,* because it isn't. Not well enough, at any rate. So, while indignant men pursue the conventional means of controlling these self-destructive tendencies in our society, a more constructive, long-term approach is called for.

What are the "conventional means"? At root they are specific and moralistic. That is, we wait for an evil to appear, then for it to become

unmistakable. Finally, after it begins to kill people, we attempt to prohibit it. And when government employees charged with the responsibility of controlling these evil tendencies fail in their duties, we fire them—or try to—and hire other public servants. There is also the "watchdog theory" which forms an important part of the conventional means. The press is supposed to tell us about bad practices which need to be corrected. Reformers depend upon the press to publicize their campaigns. And since the general public responds more surely to attacks on evil and evil men, the energy of reform seems most effectively generated by passionate condemnation and the use of the spur of fear of what will happen if "something is not done."

But the press is often selective in its choice of targets. Like all commercial enterprises, the press has its own "interests" to protect. And the charge of selectivity in respect to law enforcement can also be directed against government bureaus. In *The Chemical Feast* James Turner notes the preoccupation of the Food and Drug Administration with relatively "minor hazards" while neglecting massive offenses on the part of large food processers. The FDA, he says, has conducted two great anti-"quack" campaigns against what it holds to be fraudulent cancer cures and fraudulent vitamin sales. The latter effort became an attack on the health food stores. Turner comments:

> The crusades were misconceived because the Food and Drug Law was not designed to deal with the problems raised by sharp and strongly held differences of opinion about how to live and what to eat. It was designed to send to jail that group of human misfits who callously and crudely mislead unsuspecting consumers into reliance on their products in spite of adulteration or lack of value, by cleverly organized and massively circulated sales campaigns. Rather than plan big campaigns against major firms that routinely break the law, the FDA pursues small violators. . . .
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> The vitamin and health food business, which may not be a fraud at all, was called the "most widespread and expensive type of quackery in the United States" by former FDA Commissioner George Larrick at the 1961 conference on medical quackery. But this "fraud" is minor compared to the routine practices of other segments of the food industry.

Mr. Turner has a number of recommendations for more effective enforcement of the Pure Food and Drug Law. In one place he agrees strongly with Mr. Sherrill that there is no hope of "voluntary" compliance. Elsewhere, however, he suggests that a rather close relationship exists between FDA employees and the industries under regulation. He quotes Dr. Louis Lasagna of Johns Hopkins University as observing in 1962 (in *The Doctors' Dilemma*):

> [The] subtle and potentially most dangerous aspect of the FDA setup [is] the well traveled, two-way street between industry and Washington. Men from the drug industry have gone on to FDA jobs and—more important—FDA specialists have gone on to lucrative jobs in industry. . . . It does not seem desirable to have in decision-making positions, scientists who are consciously or unconsciously always contemplating the possibility that their futures may be determined by their rapport with industry.

We have one more item produced by the watchdog approach—a short article by John Lear in the *Saturday Review* for Oct. 3. The *SR* science editor bases this account of the deficiencies of white bread on a report by Dr. Henry Schroeder, director of the Trace Elements Laboratory at Dartmouth Medical School. Using facts taken from the *Mill Feeds Manual*, a handbook published by the Millers National Federation through the Wheat Flour Institute, and other sources, Dr. Schroeder found that pigs which are fed the residues milled out of white flour for human consumption get far more of the vital nutrients in whole wheat than is left in the flour for people. Mr. Lear's article is full of figures. He tells what such elements as chromium, manganese, selenium, zinc, iron, cobalt, calcium, potassium do for the organism, then tells how much of these materials is milled out of white flour. He also lists how much folic acid, Vitamin A, B1, B2, B3, B6, D and E, and pantothenic acid is removed. The percentages lost are usually

large. Yet advertising claims remain narrowly true, and nobody is called a "liar." Mr. Lear explains:

> Dr. Schroeder sums up the facts on white bread by saying that it may contain an adequate number of calories for a healthy diet and still lack the chemicals that would put those calories to work properly in the body.

Lear also quotes from *The Chemical Feast*, and, on the claim that white bread is "enriched" by the bakers, he says:

> Dr. Schroeder confirms, that of the approximately two dozen nutrients removed from wheat in the processing of white flour, only four are later restored. These are vitamins B1, B2, B3 and iron. The iron is questionable because it is in ferric form, which the body does not absorb well, it is ferrous iron that readily fits the chemistry of the human animal.

The *Saturday Review* notes that the FDA, spurred by recent criticism, has asked the Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences to make a "two-year study" of foods widely consumed by Americans and to recommend "fortification" procedures. *Bread*, however, was not specifically mentioned as needing attention!

One reason why health food stores are persecuted and food faddists ridiculed is the basic ignorance in this country concerning nutrition. In 1947 the *Journal* of the AMA ran a series of editorials (April 26-May 17) concerned with even physicians' neglect of nutrition, pointing out that this subject was not then taught as a separate subject in medical schools. It is ignorance, for the most part, and the resulting apathy, which drives earnest reformers into what we sometimes call the "lunatic fringe." If the preservation of health is allowed to become a matter of "expertise" and political controls, we shall *never* solve these problems. How many Harvey Wileys and Ralph Naders must we wear out before this becomes plain?