OBSCURE AND DIFFICULT ACCESS

THE insistent autonomy of the moral self-perception which characterizes the present generation of young seems to make it practically impossible to relate their surging longings to our externalizing, problem-solving culture. This sense of "no access" felt by the thinking youth of the country will in all likelihood shape the social transformations of the next twenty years.

Insight into transitions already going on is provided in a recent address by Dr. William F. Soskin, a research psychologist now lecturing at the University of California in Berkeley. Dr. Soskin's subject (as reported in the Los Angeles *Times* for Dec. 20, 1967) was the meaning behind the "Hippie" movement. Much of what he had to say contests the frothy, journalistic images which hide basic changes in human attitude. Far more than bizarre exhibitionism and nonconformity in dress and hair styles is involved:

> Spirituality and love are really the dominant forces of true hippiedom, which seeks to give acquisitive, rational Western man a new system of values, Dr. Soskin said.
>
> "In 1967, there are already many people living and formulating goals that will constitute a common value system by the year 2000," he added. "And they are living in a state of acute discomfort."

The psychologist gave attention to the vulgarizing effect of superficial description of these groping longings:

> Dr. Soskin repeatedly pointed to the difference between the old hippies and the new hippies. The early hippies didn't want to be called hippies and they still don't; the single, monolithic term was imposed on them, he said. He termed the new hippies imitators who don't understand what it is that they are imitating.
>
> "The whole axis has shifted; only the name remains the same. Outsiders are not aware of the monstrous change," said Dr. Soskin. . . .

> The early hippies still exist, but not on the streets of Haight-Ashbury. They have scattered into remote towns and into San Francisco communes; they "are married, have children, love their wives and use drugs very rarely." . . .
>
> "These kids seem to be saying that we have pushed that idea [faith in science, rationalism and materialism] too far," Dr. Soskin continued, adding that they have a real concern for the genuineness of man's encounter with man. . . .
>
> Although the old hippies occupy a position of alienation in contemporary culture, they are not merely rebels. To say that they are merely playing youth's traditional role of rebellion is an over-simplification, according to Dr. Soskin.
>
> "If we do, we fail to see what this whole enterprise is about," he said. "They are directly challenging us; they are saying the hell with it; they want a different society."

The hard common sense of Dr. Soskin's analysis becomes evident when we reflect that the charges here made against Western acquisitive society have been growing in both volume and detail ever since the 1920's, after World War I, and that the moral ardor of this criticism, which often reached revolutionary intensity in small groups, has for some forty years been siphoned into radical political fractions which looked to state power to bring about reforms. Today, when the anti-human activities of the state are the most conspicuous symptom of moral decay, power politics no longer seems a rational means to a humanized society. The crucial socio-psychological discovery of the present may lie in the irrepressible feeling that the only stepping-stones to high human ends are improvised, here-and-now applications of those ends themselves: that it is necessary to declare them and start living them, no matter how "impractical" they may appear, and regardless of opposing circumstances. This is essentially what Thoreau declared for, and did, and it is no wonder that Thoreau is now

increasingly identified as the most significant symbolic figure in American history.

The idealism of the young has for generations been distracted and consumed by the lucidity of critical abstractions. This sort of intellectual analysis serves to create obsession with what is plainly and unmistakably wrong with human society, but provides only emotional generality concerning what would be right. Skillful diagnosticians are commonly unable to give more than a negative account of health. Social critics seldom understand the processes of social synthesis. The revolutions and legislative reforms of the twentieth century are notable for their failure to develop essentially humanizing patterns of community life. So it is quite natural that this sense of "no access" is now applied to practically all the conventional acceptable forms of social action, and that the moral energies of the young are flowing into diverse protest movements which have a common denominator only in the "do-it-now, in-whatever-way-you-can," spirit.

It would be a great mistake to stop with particularizing the basic problems of our time in terms of "youth" and "race" and "war" and "justice." In these several divisions of our social experience, the common, underlying issue is the awakening of human beings to feelings of inward potentiality which are variously frustrated by the *status quo.* The confrontation may be partially defined in political language, with good reason for some of the differentiated groups involved, but behind the political formulations are human realities which represent much deeper transitions in attitude than any political conception can account for or illuminate. An article by James Farmer in the January *Progressive* makes it unmistakably clear that the "Negro Problem" is really a common human problem intensified by the isolating effect of skin-color and politicalized by economic deprivation. In a historical review of Negro experience in the United States, Mr. Farmer says:

What was the American Negro—or the Negro American? A black man who happened, through historical accident, to live in America, or an American who, by genetic accident, happened to be black? In 1903, W. W. B. Du Bois put the dilemma thus:

"One feels his two-ness—an American Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals, in one dark body.

"The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a truer and better self. . . . He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach the Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon. . . ."

The ferocious quality of the debate in black America is of recent vintage, and was triggered by three failures—the failure of newly won legal and constitutional civil rights prerogatives to effect any meaningful change in the life situation of black people; the failure of the assault on segregation to halt the trend toward increasing segregation in housing and schools; and the failure of all efforts to have any discernible impact on racism in the nation's society. "Everything has changed, but everything remains the same," one hears constantly in the South. *De facto* segregation throughout the nation continues to rise. The income gap is still widening. Racism, like a miasma, is still breathed with the air.

Black power, quite plainly, is the Negro version of the compelling necessity to *"do it now."* To realize their ends, black men have to live them, ready or not. Black power is only derivatively political. It is basically a matter of self-perception followed by the demand for self-realization. James Farmer puts this well:

The black man must find himself as a black man before he can find himself as an American. He must now become a hyphenated American, discovering the hyphen so that he can eventually lose it. This involves accepting the stark reality that the black ghettos of our cities are not going to disappear in the foreseeable future. Nor is racism.

The Afro-American cannot skip the hyphenated phase of his development, and the losing of his hyphen will be more difficult for him, as I have suggested, because of his high visibility, because of the experience of slavery, and because of a racial mystique, deeply rooted in both white and Negro, which holds the Negro inferior. Paradoxically, the black man must, I think, strengthen his ghetto on the one hand, and continue to provide an exit on the other. He must build the economic and political power of the ghetto as he simultaneously fights for open-occupancy housing, which eventually will destroy the ghetto, but will provide the Negro with a new potency as a full American.

This is bound to be a long and agonizing process, encompassing a series of progressive and regressive steps—some dramatic, some prosaic, some violent, some passive. A thin line separates group-self-pride and self-hate. To expect that all will walk that line without crossing it is naive. To ask that it not be walked because some will step over it is to ask the impossible.

There is a practical wisdom here that all men concerned with broad human problems ought to adopt. Mr. Farmer does not talk about "right" and "law," but about clear psychological necessities, the inevitable outcome of increasing self-consciousness, to which all notions of law and right are but imperfect accommodations. The truth of what he says is inescapable. That is the way it is going to be.

The refusal of the intelligent young to go into "business" is another facet of this general awakening. New kinds of businesses will have to be invented before the really bright graduates will take jobs in commercial enterprise. They are not really interested in money. They are not acquisitive. They don't care about "getting ahead."

But what *will* they do? Investigation of this question narrows down to bottlenecks of disenchantment. Higher education, as dozens of writers have made clear, is almost fatally compromised by its well-paid services to non-student clients, while the students are tolerated as little more than a necessary evil. Small opportunity here for "self-actualization."

Frustration and despair are the lot of young men who enter some branch of the foreign service, hoping to make a contribution to international friendship and world harmony. The policies of the power-state turn their jobs into a no-access situation. The only people who seem to have genuine enthusiasm for their work are those strong enough to remain at odds with conventional practice, and who have an actual *talent* for working against the grain of the times. Careers of this sort are not what available educational programs get people ready for.

What we are confronted with, and on every hand, is the breakdown of the instruments devised to fulfill the eighteenth-century dream. The constitution-makers of that heroic period produced plans for what they hoped would be a *good* society. We, their descendants, have vulgarized their hopes and misused their plans. We have ignored the enormous importance of the changing self-perceptions of human beings in our declarations of meaning and definitions of "progress." We have turned the insights of the eighteenth century into rigid stereotypes and tried to claim that the ad hoc political arrangement of that age could make captive the eternal laws of nature and embody the very machinery of moral good.

Today, "society" as we know it, is becoming an aggregate of the symptoms of all our inner contradictions. It does not, as it was originally intended, accomplish a sagacious correction for human weaknesses, but submits to and emphasizes them. It calls selfishness vigor and acquisitiveness freedom. It identifies manipulation as education and expects this education to provide social control. It mistakes science for philosophical certainty and uses this certainty to deny psychological discovery. It makes anachronistic rules for survival into justifications of hideous cruelties in distant parts of the world.

Thus Society is *sickness.* What could be plainer? Or, to put it more accurately, society is that joint human condition in which the common

ills and disharmonies and false directions of the lives of human beings finally exhibit themselves as massive collective phenomena. The conclusion must be that no normative function of existing society can be uncritically accepted. Its rules in many cases amount to no more than practical adjustments to collective aimlessness. Its programs must often be recognized as attempts to "get along" with the unlovely determinisms of past compromises, mistakes, and betrayals.

This is the frightening discovery that comes with awakening self-perception, with growing awareness of the ideal social symmetries self-perception suggests. And if self-perception as yet remains unable to list the true social priorities for realizing the meaning of human life, this is hardly remarkable in a world where there is no open admission of the failures which lie all about.

One see, here, the logical grounds of the alienation declared by the Existentialists. It is a view which takes social failure and scientific skepticism as the defining realities of the universe, and demands that men behave nobly in spite of these cosmic odds.

Society, we said, is sickness. But sickness is not a "thing." It is malfunction in community life-processes. It follows that behind the sickness that is society is the disordered but living human host. The irrepressible longings of men show that this host is filled with potential good—a good that the sickness hides and suppresses. How can we know this? We know it only from the self-perceptions we experience, and in the determination they arouse in men.

It should be obvious that "society" is not responsible for the awakenings now going on. Individuals are responsible for this awakening. Individuals are seeing what they see and feeling what they feel *in spite of* society and its distorting customs and rules. They are expressing ideas contrary to what they have been taught. They are trying to *transcend* their environment—an effort that is not without some success. They are trying to think and feel their way to the model of a

society that can contain and order its own ills, instead of exaggerating them.

What sort of patterns of behavior will result from the lives of people who succeed in transcending their environment? We don't know. Nobody knows. All that we can now know is that when these patterns of behavior are sufficiently clear to have a social description, they will already have given life to the forms of a free society.

But we also know that the transformations that come about from human activities against the grain of existing culture, in behalf of a less confining, less stultifying environment, are not all-or-nothing phenomena. They do not require elaborate blueprints; indeed, they would probably be arrested if not destroyed by comprehensive blueprints. We do not know enough about human freedom to make blueprints of the paths it may be expected to take. Our intimate experience of confinement and constraint hardly qualifies us as prophets of freedom. It only qualifies us as people who know about confinement and pain. Only the free can define their true condition. And the free are not easily understood.

It is by no means extraordinary, but simply natural, that the demand for freedom, in the present, should be deeply joined with feelings of moral responsibility toward others. The ephemeral social formations attempted by people trying to be free have in them expressions of brotherly feeling toward one another. To many others, these efforts seem ridiculous, impractical, bound to fail. *Of course* they appear to have these characteristics. How could they have any other appearance against the solid background of social sickness that is all about? On a scene accustomed to failure, non-failure—we can hardly speak of "success"—is bound to seem ridiculous and unreal. Ortega has given us the perspective for understanding all such sequences of history:

> Comedy is the genre of the conservative parties. The distance between the tragic and the comic is the same as that which exists between wishing to be and

believing that one is. This is the step from the sublime to the ridiculous. . . .

The hero anticipates the future and appeals to it. His gestures have a utopian significance. He does not say that he is but that he wants to be. . . . As something made to live in the future world, the ideal, when it is drawn back and made to live in the present, does not succeed in satisfying the most trivial functions of existence, and so people laugh. It is a useful laughter: for each hero it hits, it crushes a hundred frauds.

So people are bound to laugh. Let them. Good men always survive laughter.

What, actually, is this "happening" we have called self-perception? How can anything so formless and primary in psychological life be described? Well, initially, it is the feeling a man gets that he is the only possible authority as to who he is and what he must do. It is a growing confidence that other people have these same feelings and value one another for having them and for making their own decisions, each one for himself. It is a sense of the glory as well as the tragedy of being human, and the determination not to relinquish the one or run away from the other. Again as Ortega said:

. . . man is a most strange entity, who, in order to be what he is, needs first to find out what he is; needs, whether he will or no, to ask himself what are the things around him and what, there in the midst of them, is he. For it is this which really differentiates a man from a stone. . . . the inner being of the stone is given to it already made, once and for all, and it is required to make no decision on the subject; it has no need, in order to go on being a stone, to pose again and again the problem of self, asking itself "What must I do now?" or, which is the same thing, "What must I be?"

This is the root-idea arising from self-perception: Man is the being who makes himself. He stops being a man when somebody else makes him over. He stops being a man when somebody else can tell him who his friends and enemies are, whom he must love and whom he ought to kill. A man cannot be a man and accept such instructions. Mansur, paraphrasing Sartre, says almost the same thing as Ortega:

If a human being could coincide with himself, could *be* a waiter in the same way in which a stone is a stone, then he could never escape from that condition, any more than a stone could escape from being a stone. The waiter would no longer be a human being.

The utter simplicity of this formulation may let its essence escape us. The point is that no one has the right, no one is competent, no one knows enough, to define man's humanity for anyone besides himself. Each one has to do it for himself. Whenever men grow seriously lax in fulfilling this obligation, some evil system takes over the management of their lives, in the name of "fixing" things. As Wylie Sypher put it:

The great danger in methodical planning is that it becomes official, and thus of necessity the technician easily becomes a bureaucrat. . . . We should distrust any system whatever. The evil comes when method is used (or abused) technologically— that is, when it is beguiled by its own mechanism.

But, it will be said, people do wild things when left without guidance. Indeed yes. But wilder than, it will be said, people do wild things when left without guidance. Indeed yes. But wilder than Dachau? Than Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Than the children- and women- and homes- and fields-destroying war in Vietnam? How insane and ugly must life become before we dare to contemplate setting ourselves free?

REVIEW
ANOTHER KIND OF PROGRESS

THE "systems" approach to planning, complete with computers and "consultants," is a major enthusiasm of the conventional intelligence of our time. It promises the scientific sanctity of collecting "all the facts," the extensive symmetries unfolded by computer analysis, plus responsibility-relieving external authority, since consultants approximate the role of a secular priesthood trained in the methodology of empirical research. The entire range of technological progress is to be subjected to systematic rationalization, according to Vannevar Bush, who, as one-time director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, was able to speak with a broad over-view of this field of activity. Referring to the devices of automation, he said: "It is no longer a question of whether they can be built; it is rather a question of whether they are worth building." Daniel Bell has detailed the indications that both industrial and governmental management will soon be in the hands of science-and-technology-trained specialists—quite plainly a new sort of intellectual elite.

This is one account of present trends—doubtless accurate enough, so far as it goes. These things are happening. They are developments that can hardly be stopped. Their ominous aspects have been examined by critics of the stature of Erich Kahler, Roderick Seldenberg, and Jacques Ellut, but the "decision-makers" involved are so confident of their problem-solving techniques that the "insight" language used by these critics is not understood, or even heard. The technological universe of discourse has its own proud autonomy, isolated from the universe of moral vision. It has developed a closed-system jargon into which the immediacy of humanistic values simply will not translate.

Meanwhile, in those other regions—the universe of moral realities which secretaries of defense routinely declare *terra incognita*—certain

independent developments seem to be proceeding. In the technological and political no-man's-land of *insight,* a sharp clarity is emerging which can only be compared to the shining exactitude of the slide-rule experts. It is seen in the penetrating awareness of an Archibald MacLeish, in the critical vision of *literateurs* such as George Steiner and Wylie Sypher, and in the synthesizing genius of rare scientists like J. Bronowski and Michael Polanyi.

Could there be, one wonders, a "typology" of insight? No strait-jacket classification, but a hierarchy of ascending humanistic perceptions? Plato attempted something like this in connection with the *Phaedrus* myth, proposing that "the soul that hath seen the most of being shall enter into the human babe that shall grow into a seeker after wisdom or beauty," but not many men have been moved to pursue similar projects. Yet these distinctions are important and might have a part in a genuinely higher education.

What, for example, is the maximum reach of the mind? Why do some men strain after its higher plateaus with all their energy? This is a question to which none of the ordinary classifications has an answer. One of the contributors to the *Saturday Review* "What I Have Learned" series (*SR,* July 29, 1967) began his essay:

> Until the age of fifteen, I made no particular effort to learn anything. I lived in a middle-class family and went to school year after year, paying rather more attention to the subjects taught by teachers I liked and less to the rest. I adored music enjoyed reading, and was delighted when it began to snow and equally delighted when the weather turned warm and I could go swimming. . . .
>
> After I turned sixteen, gradually—I still don't know why—the need to read, to acquaint myself through the printed word with the experience and thought of men who had lived before me, became so strong that if I had not found books in my immediate surroundings—on my father's modest shelves, in the libraries of friends, in shops when I could afford to buy—I would have stolen them. A normal day was now not long enough for me; every morning I got up

at 4 (in winter I would put on my coat to keep from shivering, and go sit beside the kitchen stove which, although unlit, still retained a modicum of warmth), and for three hours before beginning my regular school day, I silently communed with *my kin,* at first more or less at random, then more systematically. Every morning I was deep in one of Plato's dialogues—at least one of the shorter ones—or in a tragedy of Euripides, Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller, Ibsen; then, going back to the beginning of things, in an effort to understand how men who had preceded me had interpreted the world and our life in it, I read the Bible, the Upanishads, the dialogues of Buddha, the Bhagavad-Gita, and on to Dante, Galileo, Tolstoy. I was truly happy.

Guess who?

In any event, this was a man with enviable "kin." He grew into consanguinity with those who declared their compassion for all mankind, and if their companionship had been denied him he would, as he said, have tried to recover it by stealing books! At home he was nicknamed "Let-me-finish-the-chapter."

This boy grew into a man who, while still young, sought out the most desperate, dispossessed, and helpless people he knew about, and made their lot his own:

> I set out for Trappeto, Italy. Sicily, the most wretched piece of country I had ever seen. Ignorant as I was of the problems of the South and of the techniques of socio-economic work (I had studied architecture at the university, but I had always been more interested in the structure of human relations than in the structural relationships of stones), I kept busy by working with peasants and fishermen and by participating in their life from within.
>
> From this time onward, I truly began to learn.

Now began the real life of the man whose story is told by James McNeish in *Fire Under the Ashes* (Beacon, 1965), known increasingly to the world as the Italian Gandhi—Danilo Dolci.

A typology of insight? It seems clear that the highest vision is generated from dwelling in this universal kinship discovered by Dolci. This is the apex of humanistic perception. It has an intellectual aspect or form, yet the light it gives is never from intellectual abstraction, but comes out of the grain of living associations. It has the radical novelty of a man's own life, but a life which has been fired by the coefficient of altruism and given stately dimensions by a searching mind. No matter to whom you go—Dostoevsky Whitman, Tolstoy, Gandhi—it is this irrepressible longing for general human good that creates the universe of insight and gives human aspiration the welcome and encouragement that can have little meaning unless it is generated in the struggles and achievements of other men. Dolci ends his essay for the *Saturday Review:*

> Every morning, before daylight has effaced the stars, I continue to search in silence, before plunging into active occupations: I know that to accept being lost in the complexity of this world—where strenuous efforts to achieve understanding and growth are inextricably mixed with stubborn resistance and enormous waste—means to die a little; I know how reluctant is this world to emerge from the pre-Atomic era into that post-Atomic age in which your life will be my life, and my life cannot but also be yours; I know that we have barely begun to learn and that men cannot truly learn unless they are willing to search and can search together, and that on top of all this there is always the danger of forgetting what one does know.

The organization of the external world could be entrusted to the technologists without qualm if they would begin to show awareness of the necessities of human *becoming,* of which Dolci writes so well.

COMMENTARY
RADICAL CRITICISM

THE most useful writing today gives deep critical penetration. Even while you hunger for warm, affirmative discussion, you see that this is seldom possible before fundamentally new beginnings have been made. The best criticism, then, comes from men who understand the nature of new beginnings.

James Farmer, for example, seems to be such a man. Farmer (see lead article) understands quite well that the whites have created a contradictory situation for black Americans—a situation which the Negroes are going to have to adapt to and outgrow, at the same time. The paradoxes of this situation are lost in critical abstraction. But Mr. Farmer does not write out of critical abstractions. What he says is based on a knowledge of life-processes. The Negro, he says, "must build the economic and political power of the ghetto as he simultaneously fights for open-occupancy housing, which eventually will destroy the ghetto, but will provide the Negro with a new potency as a full American."

The ghetto is itself a screaming, brazen advertisement of racial prejudice. It is "home" for the Negro, but a home shaped largely by white indifference, exploitation, and contempt. People who have allowed themselves to feel "shocked" by the summer riots in the United States need to think about how it feels to be surrounded, at all points, by second-class circumstances which can easily, if you let them, force you into living a second-hand life. Thus the very matrix of urban Negro life is a stereotyped taunt by the white community. And the ghetto is where you must live, for a great many Negroes. This is not to admire or to praise the steaming resentment this situation produces in many black men, but to point out how extraordinary any other reaction would be. Yet Mr. Farmer says, simply, that these are the raw materials of Negro life today, and that black men are going to make something good out

of them. He adds that it will take time, and make some trouble. At least.

The danger from critical writing is not that it might develop or confirm "negative" attitudes, but that, by not being radical enough, it will open no way to new beginnings. Danilo Dolci, for example, is by no means a typical critic. By identifying himself with the most wretched of the earth, the Sicilian peasants, and teaching them to generate in themselves self-respect, self-reliance, and courage, he made their new life into a kind of "criticism" which the world could not ignore. Out of this work are growing new beginnings of social and community life in Sicily. Dolci's story is told in his books, *Report from Palermo* (Orion, 1959) *Outlaws* (Orion, 1961), *Waste* (Monthly Review Press, 1963) and A *New World in the Making* (MR Press 1965).

Something of Dolci's methods is indicated by the "conference" he arranged at the small seaside town of Palma in 1960. Half the Italian cultural and sociological world descended on Palma—a place whose hideous smells overwhelm the visitors before they get into town. It is a community in which 90 per cent of the houses are without water, 86 per cent without lavatories, where three quarters of the children have tapeworms, and housing is on the average five persons to a room. Illiteracy in Palma was 64 per cent. One house out of six hundred inspected was free of rats and mice. Infectious diseases were rampant. Once there had been a hospital in Palma—back in 1666.

Thus the place of the conference made it an unforgettable event. James McNeish has this revealing passage on Dolci at Palma:

He spoke about waste, his perennial theme, and explained what he was trying to do at Partinico and other centers. For Palma he proposed nothing. He merely stated. Afterwards people came up and asked what he intended doing about Palma. He replied, "Go and look at this place." The evasion infuriated many people, and, prodded by a situation which she felt to be a direct incitement to violence, Miss Nott [an English writer] was moved to say, in her frank, hearty

way: "What would you do if you landed yourself in a revolutionary situation where nonviolence was impractical?" Dolci said he didn't understand. Daphne Phelps, whose Italian was fluent, repeated the question. He said he still didn't understand. Miss Nott demurred. Finally, Dolci said "Go and look at this place yourself." "I now see," she writes, "that Dolci could not have answered me in any other way. To have given an answer one way or the other about the future, as it might be determined by his opponents, would be doing a kind of violence to that present which he is trying to initiate. Though to outsiders Dolci can appear somewhat mysterious, I believe myself this is only because he is so obvious, so naïvely honest, and so consistent."

Mr. McNeish comments:

Dolci has always believed that if you solve people's economic problems for them, you don't solve all their problems; and that it is just as important that fifty men should get together and lay their own drain as it is that they should enjoy the benefits of sewerage.

He hoped the Sicilians would do something about Palma themselves. This they are now doing—after some delay, naturally.

There are situations in which the needs of human beings are so great, so urgent, so unspeakably obvious, that to spend time over theoretical considerations would be to make an obscene distraction. Now it may be that for a man like Dolci, *many* things which people feel it suitable to argue about are of this character. At Palma, because the degradation was nakedly physical, he was able to make his point by refusing to argue. Eventually, people *saw*.

Are there, one wonders, comparable situations in which the degradation is just as extreme, but not represented by material conditions? Now and then, at conferences, Dolci simply won't talk. Perhaps he feels that to answer a question about what is obvious is to help the questioner to hide it from view.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

SOME CULTURAL DETERMINISMS

BACKGROUND and support for William Glasser's upsetting counsel, "We should encourage students to cheat, if cheating means helping each other during tests," is supplied in detail by Rachel M. Lauer, a psychologist of New York City's (Board of Education) Bureau of Child Guidance, in *Etc* for last December. Writing out of personal experience, she said:

> From my observation, the great majority of schools are organized so as to deny the principles of interdependence. Much of school life seems to be built upon the principle of independence and mutual isolation. For example, what are teachers teaching children when they call for recitations with the preface, "Now Johnny, I want to hear what you have to say. Don't anyone else help him!" Homework is given out with the admonition: "Make sure it's your *own* work." Exams are given with children separated as widely as possible. Punishments are severe for those who either give or receive help. I realize that a purpose of this isolation is to enable the teacher to evaluate and rank her pupils. But every day? And at such a cost?

There are many ways to test children's ability without insisting that it be on a competitive basis. Making individual achievement seem to rest on outrunning others trains the child in the ugliest habits of Western life and rewards the social abnormality of domination. It turns the natural impulse to share and to help into clandestine conspiracy and by reaction instructs children in the joyfully subversive ethic of "beating the system." As Mrs. Lauer says:

> By basing classroom procedures upon the reality that human beings are interdependent, teachers could help children appreciate each other's value, thus laying the groundwork for healthy and cooperative behavior. Instead, the typical educational system is fostering a sense of isolation, independence, and competitiveness, which lays the groundwork for neurosis and anti-social behavior. In most schools children are broken up into age groups. Older children are isolated from younger children, and they rarely get an opportunity to be helpful to them. They miss their chances to perceive important individual differences and to learn to adapt to them with skill and respect. What they *do* learn is to feel impatient with "those little kids who can't do it right" or to feel envy and resentment of "those big kids who think they're so smart."

Now what, actually, do we have, here? We have the expressions of an individual who has remained whole in spite of the gross defects of the "system" she is describing. Mrs. Lauer understands the anti-human effects of its rules and procedures because her concern is with the needs and possibilities of the children instead of with making the system work. She does not accept the "necessities" of the bad environment in which she came to maturity as a teacher. She is not single-mindedly supplying what the system "expects" of her, simply in order to survive. It's canons of "success" are not hers. But these canons must be admired and gladly accepted by *somebody,* or they would not even exist. In any event, the dominating influence responsible for the character of the system must be traceable to a lot of people who are fearful of giving offense to an authority indifferent to mental health.

This is surely the reason why "changing the system" is so enormously difficult. Before the children can be released from fear and pressure, the teachers must learn that the system is not their security and salvation. *They* will have to be released from fear, too. The system is hardly a natural place for this release to take place, although people like Mrs. Lauer do what they can. When a temperate, reasonable person who has worked in education all her life can say what Mrs. Lauer says about "the great majority of schools," it seems obvious that an entirely fresh start is in order.

The ill-effects of "individualism" and competitiveness all add up to later attitudes which hardly need pointing at today. Mrs. Lauer speaks of this indirectly:

> . . . the concept of man's interdependence needs acknowledgement in the school curriculum. It is true

that social science lessons often point out the reciprocity of nations in trading goods, but often the inference is drawn that countries which can produce the widest range of goods for themselves are the "best" countries and that countries which are more dependent are somehow "inferior." History lessons often omit the significance and *essential relationship* between earlier contributions and our present way of life.

In short, the fundamental interdependence of all peoples is ignored in behalf of the superficial quality of domination, which becomes the psychological basis of self-righteousness. Peace may indeed be "possible," as a recent author assures us, but we are doing what we can in the schools to make it extremely difficult.

It is surely time to acknowledge openly that the higher qualities and longings of human beings are *starved* by the typical public educational system of the day. And we need to take more seriously what is said about the impoverishment of higher education by critics such as A. H. Maslow. In his article in the Fall 1967 *Journal of Humanistic Psychology,* Dr. Maslow writes:

> . . . much of the bad behavior of affluent, privileged, and basic-need-gratified high school and college students is due to frustration of the "idealism" so often found in young people. My hypothesis is that this behavior can be a fusion of continued search for something to believe in, combined with anger at being disappointed. (I sometimes see in a particular young man total despair or hopelessness about even the *existence* of such values.)

> Of course, this frustrated idealism and occasional hopelessness is partially due to the influence of stupidly limited theories of motivation all over the world. Leaving aside behavioristic and positivistic theories—or rather non-theories—as simple refusals even to see the problem *i.e.,* a kind of psychoanalytical denial, then what is available to the idealistic young man and woman?

> Not only does the whole of official nineteenth-century science and orthodox academic psychology offer him nothing but also the major motivation theories by which men live can lead him only to depression or cynicism. The Freudians, at least in their official writings (though not in good therapeutic practice), are still reductionistic about all higher human values. The deepest and most real motivations are seen to be dangerous and nasty, while the highest human values are essentially fake, being not what they seem to be, but camouflaged versions of the "deep, dark, and dirty." Our social scientists are just as disappointing in the main. A total cultural determinism is still the official, orthodox doctrine of many or most of the sociologists and anthropologists. This doctrine not only denies intrinsic higher motivations, but comes perilously close to denying "human nature" itself. The economists, not only in the West but also in the East, are essentially materialistic. We must say harshly of the "science" of economics that it is generally the skilled, exact, technological application of a totally false theory of human needs and values, a theory which recognizes only the existence of lower needs or material needs.

> How could young people not be disappointed and disillusioned? What else could be the result of *getting* all the material and animal gratifications and then *not being happy,* as they were led to expect, not only by theorists, but also by the conventional wisdom of parents and teachers, and the insistent gray lies of the advertisers?

> What happens then to the "eternal verities"? to the ultimate truths? Most sections of society agree in handing them over to the churches and to dogmatic, institutionalized, conventionalized religious organizations. But this is also a denial of high human nature! It says in effect that the youngster who is looking for something will definitely *not* find it in human nature itself. He must look for ultimates to a non-human, non-natural source, a source which is definitely mistrusted or rejected altogether by many intelligent young people today.

It should be clear that only this kind of clear-headed as well as open-hearted seeing can be a reliable guide to an education that will not be rejected by the young, that will give them the support they long for, and which is *owed* to them by all adults.

FRONTIERS
Statement on Vietnam

[On Nov. 27 and 28 of last year, California Congressmen George Brown and Ed Roybal conducted hearings in Los Angeles on the war in Vietnam. One of the witnesses called was Glenn E. Smiley, associate secretary of the Christian pacifist organization, the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Mr. Smiley's testimony, printed below, was a succinct statement of the issues of this war, together with a brief proposal of the steps by which it might be ended.]

THE Fellowship of Reconciliation believes that modern war is morally and spiritually indefensible, and that all wars ultimately betray the highest and best that is within men. It has added its voice to the prophets and sages of all generations who deplore the dehumanizing effects of war, not only on the victims, but upon the victors, and has concluded that in modern war there are no victors—only victims.

We do not doubt the sincerity of men who plan and execute wars, nor of the men who fight them. Modern war is so hideous that men would neither plan for nor fight in wars they did not consider to be of some value to the society in which they lived. And, if we believe this about our own leaders and soldiers, we must grant to others the same charity in the interpretation of their motives.

In fact, this but illustrates the tragic dilemma in which the whole of man is caught, and from which, if he is to live, he must extricate himself.

In no period has this apparent truth been so dramatically expressed as in Vietnam. How do we escape the trap that in our idealism we have laid for ourselves, now that the U.S. has grown into an interventionist power—in fact, the major interventionist power in the world? As such, and under the influence of what we call moral obligations, but whose purposes we clearly do not understand, we have sent over a half million men and immeasurable treasure to fight a far-off war against a technologically backward people, with

what General De Gaulle has called a "taste for intervention." Since the second world war we have put nearly 120 billion dollars into foreign aid (much of it military) to bring about changes in other countries that would reflect our ideals or advance our interests. We have intervened in the politics of other nations, pushing some into new alignments, trying to remake the social structures of others, and have helped to overthrow the governments of not a few, to use the words of Ronald Steel.

The tragedy has been further heightened in Vietnam by insistence on the same old rhetoric to justify what has become the most obscene and brutal of wars.

In a country where the press is censored, dissent is stifled, and the people groan under the weight of government corruption and mismanagement unequalled in modern history, we justify continued U.S. presence in the name of the preservation of democracy and self-determination.

In a country intended to be united by the Geneva Accords of 1954, where, at worst, Vietnamese are fighting Vietnamese, we speak of a war of aggression and back it up with 525,000 American troops, the only foreign troops on Vietnamese soil except those from client nations of the U.S.

President Johnson declared at Catholic University in 1965: "What America has done . . . draws from deep and flowing springs of moral duty, and let none underestimate the depth of flow of those wellsprings of American purpose." What he did not say is that the bombing apparently was undertaken in an effort to shore up the latest in a series of comic opera regimes in Saigon. According to Theodore Draper, the result of the 1965 bombings was to bring about, for the first time, substantial penetration of the North Vietnamese regulars.

Speaking of a land filled with 35,000 amputees, most of them, we are told, from American bombing, 2 million refugees, death from

napalm and fragmentation bombs, starvation by defoliation—not to mention a fact important to American parents at least: almost 15,000 deaths and over 100,000 wounded among American fighters—the administration has recently on several occasions called Vietnam the "proving ground" for the larger war with China.

In such a dilemma as America faces, diversity of opinion is surely a virtue rather than a vice.

We must announce a count-down of actions on the part of our government, calculated to reduce tension and bring about a cessation of fighting. These actions are listed as follows:

(1) Make positive and unambiguous statements of willingness to negotiate the stages of de-escalation of the war with NLF and Hanoi.

(2) Enlist the good offices of any and all nations and international organizations in the reinstitution of peace in Vietnam, including the UN, the Vatican and the World Council of Churches.

(3) Stop the bombing of North Vietnam. The bombing is both morally wrong and, according to many, including McNamara, militarily ineffectual.

(4) Remove restrictions against churches and other humanitarian groups in the U.S. who seek to provide medical and hospital supplies to all parts of Vietnam, in order to care for civilian casualties.

(5) Encourage, rather than assist the suppression of, Buddhist Nationalism in South Vietnam as the only viable third force and liaison between South Vietnam, as presently constituted, and the NLF-Hanoi axis.

(6) Offer massive economic aid of a non-military nature to all parts of Vietnam, realizing that this offer might well be refused by areas outside the Saigon regime. Aid would be more palatable if offered through the UN.

(7) Reconvene the 1954 Geneva Convention to re-evaluate the job of Vietnam unification, rudely interrupted by Diem with U.S. support.

(8) Announce the withdrawal of support from the Thieu Ky government unless it can demonstrate more fiscal responsibility and democratic impulses; stop the violation of civil liberties, allow a free press to operate, and hold elections free of pre-election suppression and corruption.

(9) Offer ways by which those in Saigon who are unwilling to take their chances in a political confrontation with the NLF and North Vietnam can be resettled abroad, at the same time trying to secure guarantees of freedom for all of Vietnam from persecution for political crimes.

(10) Withdraw American troops from Vietnam as rapidly as possible.

Hanoi and NLF should be advised of the countdown and urged to reciprocate.

To those who would say that this proposal is tantamount to U.S. defeat in Southeast Asia, let me remind them of the present dilemma and the consequences of continued escalation in pursuit of ideals and aims long since forgotten. And in closing, I quote the great French pastor, André Trocmé, when he said apropos of Algeria— "France was never so weak as when she was winning in Algeria; nor was she ever so strong as when she withdrew." Our withdrawal from intervention in Vietnam would gain us the respect of most of the world, and could conceivably be the salvation of mankind.