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THE FAILURE OF THE SPECIALISTS

SPECIALISTS—especially confident specialists—usually produce aggressive, righteous arguments when other people try to prevent them from having their way. And if these arguments break into print, they are always worth reading, since they illustrate a common human problem, one which affects people who don't think of themselves as specialists at all. The common problem is that nearly all men tend to think they are right in what they decide to do, and find it difficult to consider that they may be only partly right, or perhaps totally wrong. Few men, of course, succeed in being totally wrong; even people whom we regard as insane are struggling to cope with what seem to them intolerable situations, and they are right to struggle, even if they are very mixed up about what will be useful or valuable to them. Sane people make such mistakes, too. There are doctors of the mind who declare that "sanity" is in some ways no more than a social consensus—a summary of how most people happen to think at the time—and by no means authoritative enough to justify calling deviants "insane." This is a vaguely upsetting view, one we are inclined to resist, since it casts doubt on the sanity of the majority, including ourselves. You could say that it is a case of a few specialists trying to correct other specialists for their oversimplifying assumptions, and in a society in which supreme authority is delegated to the dominant majority among specialists, such arguments among the experts themselves are subversive of peace of mind. If *they* don't know who is sane and who is not, how can *anyone* tell?

A less complicated argument presented by specialists is discussed in the "Public Relations" department of the *Sat*urday *Review* for April 13. At issue is the claim of certain public relations executives—by one in particular, who recently went to Washington to have his say—that "consumer-protection legislation" is undermining the marketing structure of the national economy. These laws, the PR executive contended, amount to saying that the consumer doesn't know what's good for him, and that Big Government must tell him what to think. This is said to be "a highly dangerous course."

Well, it is not difficult to agree, at least in part or in principle, with this claim. Half the nation has been up in arms, in recent months, about another "dangerous course" concerning which many citizens feel they have not been consulted at all, and the war in Vietnam is only one such instance among various important decisions made over the heads of the people.

The PR men, however, have other matters in mind. The *SR* Department editor, L.L.L. Golden, summarizes the legislation they are objecting to:

> The following laws are under attack: truth in packaging, truth in lending, bans on the sale of toxic toys, requirement of warning labels on hazardous household products, protection against flammable fabrics, pipeline safety specifications, and a whole new list of proposed regulations sent to Congress by President Johnson earlier this year. Speeches attacking this kind of legislation intimate a vast conspiracy to destroy the free enterprise system, headed by Congressmen who are only catering to the mob and who, if they are not controlled, will demolish capitalism.

Now even a public relations man is not without his private decencies, and there are usually some shreds of justification for complaints about legislative invasion and control of what used to be matters for individual decision. Anyone in business knows the burdens of filling out all those forms, and in some areas "control" can amount to downright harassment. We vaguely recall that a few years ago the Food and Drug Administration looked suspiciously at a health food loaf of bread—it was so loaded with vitamins that it

ought, it was said, to be called a drug and not a food! And more lately a spaghetti product had to be given a made-up name—it was too high in protein content to be called spaghetti!

In his *Saturday Review* article, however, Mr. Golden presents a case for regulation which, as he sees it, is impossible to dispute. He tells what manufacturers were free to do before the passage of the Pure Food and Drugs Act by Congress in 1906:

> There were no federal laws to prevent manufacturers from selling food or patent medicines or liquor which was harmful or even poisonous. Nor was there any way for the honest manufacturer to protect himself against competitors whose adulterated goods were being sold to the consumer. It was a clear case of the bad driving out the good. Whisky was tainted; drugs were sold under false labels. Opium, morphine, cocaine, and alcohol were used without restriction in patent medicines, and wild and dangerous promises were made that they could cure all kinds of diseases. These frauds could not be stopped, since both the liquor and the meat-packing lobbies worked with the patent medicine business to prevent legislation.

Well, it sounds pretty bad. It sounds almost as bad, in fact, as the conditions reported in 1959 by Drew Pearson, when he pointed out that about 85 per cent of the beef cattle of the nation were being fed an additive called diethylstilbesterol—stilbesterol for short—which, he said, "has been found by the National Cancer Institute to produce cancer in mice, rats, rabbits and guinea pigs." Stilbesterol contains female hormones which have a caponizing effect on male animals, adding no food value but hastening the fattening process—of obvious advantage to those who sell cattle to be slaughtered for beef. At the time of Mr. Pearson's articles (Los Angeles *Mirror-News,* Nov. 18, 19, 20, 1959), the Food and Drug Administration still permitted stilbesterol to be used, despite the Delaney Amendment to the Food and Drug Act (prohibiting cancer-producing additives) the year before, because tests were held to be inconclusive. This is not impossible. As a House Commerce Committee statement quoted by Mr. Pearson put it: "In human beings, chemically induced cancers may not appear until 20, 30, or even more years after the exposure."

Think of the problems of the laboratory expert working on tests in a government standards bureau, trying to find out what is cancer-producing and what is not! After all, if what he finds may result in condemning the product of an enterprising free-enterpriser, he has to be *sure.* Scientists have to get objective evidence. They don't guess!

There is no end to such dilemmas in the problem of control. Take the pesticides that have become so popular in recent years. Some of them contain ingredients which are antagonistic to the catalytic action of the enzymes which govern all metabolic processes. In his introduction to Leonard Wickenden's book, *Our Daily Poison* (Devin-Adair, 19563, Dr. Jonathan Forman says of these and other undesirable elements in pesticides:

> To illustrate the problem of antagonisms, let us consider vitamins a little more in detail. Besides the anti-vitamin chemicals, there are many chemicals which produce a vitamin deficiency even though the person may be eating a balanced diet such as that recommended by the Nutrition Committee of the National Research Council. These agents, other than the anti-metabolites, include most of the chemicals with which this book is concerned and may be classified as follows: (*a*) Those agents which destroy vitamins. (*b*) Those chemicals which act as poisons by inhibiting the activity of the enzyme systems. (*c*) Those chemicals which enhance the development of the opposing enzymes. (*d*) Those chemicals which cause excessive elimination of vitamins.
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> It is most important . . . to recognize that the damaging effects of the antagonists may not be complete but can still definitely interfere with normal physiological processes. The interference may result in a clinical deficiency which may be so slight that it is not even recognized as a disease but only as an unexplained indisposition. Many millions of people are half sick as a result of these antagonisms.

Thus even if the personnel of the Food and Drug Administration are faultless idealists with no interest in anything but public protection, they are

confronted by impossible tasks. Compelling cigarette manufacturers to warn purchasers that "Cigarette Smoking May Be Hazardous to Your Health," on every package, was doubtless a great victory, but if you read the chapter in *Our Daily Poison* reporting the testimony of experts before the Delaney Committee, you cannot escape the conclusion that we are unknowingly exposed to far worse hazards, daily, because of the difficulty in proving that some things are harmful to man, and because of the endless ingenuity of manufacturers in devising risky ways of increasing their efficiency and their income.

How much evidence do we need before we are ready to admit that there are really no adequate bureaucratic (specialists') solutions for any of these problems? No matter how much control is devised, the problems multiply, because the new and cunningly evasive possibilities for the specialist on the "other side"—in the service of the acquisitive functions of our society—are literally infinite. There is no way to stop a specialist from outwitting you in the area of his specialty, if that's what he wants and is paid to do. Controlling him, except in a very limited way, and for a little while, is just impossible.

On the other hand, no one is more frustrated, in our society, than the specialists who are supposed to control or moderate public policy. An area specialist in international relations, for example, is a sort of adviser in control. His particularized knowledge is supposed to aid the government decision-makers, to keep them from making hideous mistakes. But when really crucial choices come up, no one is ignored more than these specialists. For example, specialists in the history and economy of Korea had no influence at all in Washington when they were called in to endorse that country's division into North and South Korea. The generals had already made up their minds and they told the experts they weren't needed.

Then there is the more recent testimony by James C. Thompson, Jr., an East Asia specialist whose knowledge and talents were for five years (1961-1966) available to both the White House and Department of State. The most important issues, in time of crisis, he says (in the *Atlantic* for April), "are deemed 'too sensitive' even for review by the specialists." An increasingly important negative factor in the decision-making process, he says, "was *the banishment of real expertise."* With melancholy brevity, he says a little further on:

> I shall not forget my assignment from an Assistant Secretary of State in March, 1964: to draft a speech for Secretary McNamara which would, *inter alia,* once and for all dispose of the canard that the Vietnam conflict was a civil war. "But in some ways, of course," I mused, "it *is* a civil war." "Don't play word games with me!" snapped the Assistant Secretary.

This recalls a small treatise on another sort of specialist included by John Steinbeck in *Sea of Cortez*—a book he wrote in the early 1940's with the biologist, E. F. Ricketts. Enroute to the Gulf of California for marine research, they briefly docked their chartered fishing vessel in San Diego, where Steinbeck must have inspected a naval installation, since it brought these reflections:

> The military mind must limit its thinking to be able to perform its functions at all. Thus, in talking with a naval officer who had won a target competition with big naval guns we asked, "Have you thought what happens in a little street when one of your shells explodes, of the families torn to pieces, a thousand generations influenced when you signaled *Fire?"* "Of course not," he said. "Those shells travel so far that you couldn't possibly see where they land." And he was quite correct. If he could really see where they land and what they do, if he could really feel the power in his dropped hand, the waves radiated out from his gun, he would not be able to perform his function. He himself would be the weak point of his gun. But by not seeing, by insisting that it be a problem of ballistics and trajectory, he is a good gunnery officer. And he is too humble to take the responsibility for thinking. The whole structure of his world would be endangered if he permitted himself to think. The pieces must stick within their pattern or the whole thing collapses and the design is gone.

Then Steinbeck drew his sober, quiet conclusion:

> We wonder whether in the present pattern the pieces are not straining to fall out of line; whether the paradoxes of our times are not finally mounting to a conclusion of ridiculousness that will make the whole structure collapse. For the paradoxes are becoming so great that leaders of people must be less and less intelligent to stand their own leadership.

There is an embarrassment of riches for supporting Mr. Steinbeck's point, which is also ours. The experts on whom we so heavily rely keep leading us to precipices—to jumping-off places that do not even exist for their specialty—and then, when we act worried about it, they tell us that they are only hired men who do their own thing with style and discipline. Get some other kind of expert, they say, to solve your problem.

Not all the specialists have the "humility" Mr. Steinbeck saw in the gunnery officer. It takes an arrogant as well as stupid military man to tell you, today, that he is a specialist in getting the world ready for peace. There are those who claim this now, with a perfectly straight face.

Well, what can we say? We can say, at least, that there is a law of diminishing returns connected with progress in specialization. There is self-defeat in the climactic achievements of autonomous technology. This is a big generalization, a conclusion after the fact, and it doesn't help us much, except to point to the necessity of another kind of thinking. Ortega y Gasset, who seems very wise on this question, may be the one to consult. He says that technology which is a name for the over-all organization of specialties—by being an elaborate reform of nature, a reform so extensive and far-reaching that it becomes an independent system, a thing-in-itself—has by its requirements displaced man's basic task, which is to realize the meaning of his own life, the nature of his being.

What is technology? It is the technical means we have devised, not merely for survival, but for living well. It gives us time, we say, for the "better things." It releases man from drudgery. Well, these are part of what technology does. But it has also created an enormous preoccupation with itself. Ortega wrote (over twenty-five years ago):

> This new insight into technology as such puts man in a situation radically new in his whole history and in a way contrary to all he has experienced before. Hitherto he has been conscious mainly of all the things he is unable to do, i.e., of his deficiencies and limitations. But the conception our time holds of technology—let the reader reflect a moment on his own—places us in a really tragicomic situation. Whenever we imagine some utterly extravagant feat, we catch ourselves in a feeling almost of apprehension lest our reckless dream—say a voyage to the stars—should come true. Who knows but that tomorrow morning's paper will spring upon us the news that it has been possible to send a projectile to the moon by imparting to it a speed great enough to overcome the gravitational attraction. That is to say, present-day man is secretly frightened by his own omnipotence. And this may be another reason why he does not know what he is. For finding himself in principle capable of being almost anything makes it all the harder for him to know what he actually is.
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> In this connection I want to draw attention to a point which does not properly belong here, that technology for all its being a practically unlimited capacity will irretrievably empty the lives of those who are resolved to stake everything on their faith in it and it alone. To be an engineer and nothing but an engineer means to be potentially everything and actually nothing. Just because of its promise of unlimited possibilities technology is an empty form like the most formalistic logic and is unable to determine the content of life. That is why our time, being the most intensely technical, is also the emptiest in all human history.

Man, in Ortega's view, is an inventor. He has two fields in which to work. He can invent devices to secure his well-being, using the materials and energies supplied by nature; but he is also responsible for inventing *his own life.* His life needs creation as much or more than his habitations and conveniences for well-being on earth. Men who become rich, who are amply endowed with the devices for well-being, are suddenly confronted by their basic neglect of their

actual human lives. Such a man often does not really know what to wish for, now that he has the resources and the time:

> At the bottom of his heart he is aware that he wishes nothing, that he is unable to direct his appetite and to choose among the innumerable things offered by his environment. He has to look for a middleman to orient him. And he finds one in the predominant wishes of other people, whom he will entrust with wishing for him. Consequently, the first purchases of the newly rich are an automobile, a radio, and an electric shaver. As there are hackneyed thoughts, ideas which the man who thinks them has not thought originally and for himself but repeated blindly and automatically, so there are hackneyed wishes which are but the fiction and the gesture of genuine desire.
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> If this happens in the realm of wishing with objects which are there and lie to hand before they are wished for, one may imagine how difficult the properly creative wish must be, the wish that reaches out for things yet nonexistent and anticipates the still unreal. Every wish for this or that particular thing is ultimately connected with the person a man wants to be. This person, therefore, is the fundamental wish and the source of all other wishes. If a man is unable to wish for his own self because he has no clear vision of a self to be realized, he can have but pseudo-wishes and spectral desires devoid of sincerity and vigor.
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> It may be that one of the basic diseases of our time is a crisis of wishing and that for this reason all our fabulous technical achievements seem to be of no use whatever. . . . For this is the absurd situation at which we have arrived: the wealth of material means that present-day man can count on for his living surpasses by far that of all other ages and we are clearly aware of its superabundance. Yet we suffer from an appalling restlessness because we do not know what to do with it, because we lack imagination for inventing our lives.

This diagnosis—quoted from Ortega's *History as a System,* a Norton paperback—fits pretty well with the breakdown of the problem-solving approach of the specialists. For generations we have been desperately trying to fill the vacuum in our lives with clever things made by specialists—including, lately, clever drugs compounded by chemical specialists—with the result that we may now be experiencing the absolute limit of the utility of "things" to man. This man, whoever he is, and whatever he is in certain of his endowments and facilities, is not, himself, a "thing." He is made of some other stuff, he has quite different needs, and a desperate hunger for another kind of nourishment is making itself felt in every department of his life. Even in material ways, the breakdown is evident. We can't even take care of our practical needs, any more, in ways that give us satisfaction.

Our best guide, in this predicament, may be the counsel of distinguished specialists who have stopped being specialists because they feel that they are also men, and they can no longer invent personal lives worth living while pursuing their merely specialist tasks.

REVIEW
THE GOAL OF SOCIAL WORK

WHAT is "social work"? There are doubtless scores of books which have been written to answer this question. These books, and the idea of social work, we may say, arose out of the perception of extreme human need. The beneficiaries of social work are the impoverished, the underprivileged, the backward, ailing, and hungry. They are often people who suffer rather than enjoy the conditions which have been created by the modern world. They may be victims of the ruthless advance of dominant cultures, or people who have simply been passed by, pushed aside, or ignored by the wave of modern progress. Having neither the simple, natural health of the old, traditional societies nor the nervous, engrossing benefits of the new, they live in a declining social limbo. They may be slum-dwellers in the United States or peasant villagers in India. To these people, in order to help them, go the social workers.

Malnutrition, disease, and psychic mutilation are the ills to be erased. The concern of the social worker arises from the spectacle of human suffering and often hopelessness. His responsibility comes from the modern objective of the common good and the obligation of social organization to bring help to the deprived. The program is to restore such people to self-sufficiency and participation in the general opportunities and advantages of the times.

We have for review a book representative of advanced thinking in this area—*Social Work and Social Change* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1968, $6.95), by Sugata Dasgupta, who is joint director of the Gandhian Institute of Studies, in India. This book, subtitled "A Case Study in Indian Village Development," compares two methods of social work, as carried on for a period of years in two regions of West Bengal, each comprising a small constellation of villages. Briefly, the contrast is between the influence of social workers who, in one region (called the "A" group of villages), sought to identify themselves with the people, to help them to recognize their own needs, and then to act as catalysts rather than "directors" of a long process of self-improvement. The "B" group of villages—in this case fortuitously available as a "control"—had the assistance of social workers, also, but a different sort of stimulus was exerted by them. The "B" workers were project- instead of people-oriented. They got quicker results, but affected the attitudes of the people much less. Their help seemed to establish an authoritarian social structure, leaving passive the other villagers who benefited.

Mr. Dasgupta's comparative evaluation of these two approaches is carefully objective and widely instructive. Each had its advantages and disadvantages. As the author says:

> The community in B lay passive and the process that held the elements together was not democratic. In A the responsibility and onus of action were with the local leaders and the community. The process was democratic. The former led to substantial physical development, and the latter to inner development of the rural community. It is difficult for a developing nation to choose from among these techniques and types of development, and say which one it is opting for. There is in fact a national ambivalence in this regard and it has often led to strange conclusions. In their professions, the leaders of the developing societies have always been clear, that the type of development the A group signifies is just what they are looking for, whereas, in their practice, the same leaders and the catalyst bodies have often leaned toward B. Anxious to get results, they have preferred to move forward with physical accomplishments and often ignored the cause of "inner" social development and sustained democratic growth.

Mr. Dasgupta is personally sympathetic to the A approach, since he is the man who organized the help for the A villages, but as a social scientist he points to what might be regarded as inevitable limitations of this method. His book should interest all who concern themselves with problems of community development and adult education. There is ample particular material, including

reports of village projects—how, in each area, they were germinated, discussed, and put into effect. There are detailed accounts of the leaders in both sets of villages, and how they related to other members of the community.

Here, we should like to look, again, at the basic idea of "social work," which seems to date from modern times. This is largely true of modern India. The author says:

> The philosophy of social work in modern India has . . . been greatly influenced by the liberalism of the West and its sciences. To the extent that the core of the Indian philosophy, shaped by its leaders like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ranade, Gokhale, Tagore and Gandhi, has drawn from the impact of the great revolutions of the West (Industrial Revolution, French Revolution, American War of Independence, Bolshevik Revolution, growth of science and technology, etc.), its fundamentals cannot be very different from the philosophy that had mothered the profession there.

One wonders whether, in the last analysis, the idea of "social work" will survive unchanged in basic conception, as there is penetration to the roots of social problems. If you look for its counterpart in the classics of antiquity, you may recognize hints of the "B" approach in Lao tse—in the *Tao Te King* on Government. And Krishna's explanation of the importance of right action, in the third discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita,* is surely an expression of the "A" point of view:

> Even if the good of mankind only is considered by thee, the performance of thy duty will be plain; for whatever is practiced by the most excellent of men, that is also practiced by others. The world follows whatever example is set. There is nothing, O son of Pritha, in the three regions of the universe which it is necessary for me to perform, nor anything possible to obtain which I have not obtained; and yet I am constantly in action. If I were not indefatigable in action, all men would presently follow my example, O son of Pritha. If I did not perform actions these creatures would perish. . . .

Then, going to the beginnings of Western culture, one may see in Plutarch's account of Numa's rule of the Romans a combination of both the "A" and "B" methods, the latter sometimes used in almost a Skinnerian mood!

And yet, in these cases, and in many others, there is a profound difference. The "A" approach is heightened and deepened, and the manipulative aspect of the "B" approach is qualified and mitigated, by the ever-present, over-arching inspiration of antique philosophy, which frames everything that is said and done. "Social" activities, in short, only implement the larger purpose of human life, which is candidly spiritual.

But we are likely to wonder to ourselves whether we can have such explicitly uniting and uplifting vision, today. The secularization of social ethics was a necessity—the alternative of stern theocracy, complete with either Brahminical or Calvinist dictators and enforcers, is not something any intelligent modern man will labor for, or even tolerate the thought of. And there is certainly a sense in which he is right. We do not want to have to fight those emancipating and secularizing revolutions all over again.

Even so, as practical experience in social work accumulates, it is possible to see a kind of return—if only in small gleams—to the full-hearted idealism of ancient philosophy. As for example, when Mr. Dasgupta says:

> . . . the true leader must have his immediate personal gains superseded by the gains of the community of which he is a part and whose spokesman he is. All his motivations should be tinged with the spirit of the sacrifice of immediate personal gain in favor of realizing common human needs which the community under his leadership is still struggling to fulfill.

Conceivably, the holistic effect of philosophic religion, of metaphysically-explained, openly-espoused transcendental purpose, which is the all-pervasive meaning of ancient social systems—as in, for example, the Laws of Manu—would have the effect of leavening and diminishing the contrast between the "A" and "B" approaches. And perhaps, in the present, the really desperate need is for men of the stature of Gandhi, who was

able to restore the splendor of ancient ethical conceptions without permitting the revival of dogmatic theocracy. Nor would he tolerate, on the other hand, the excesses of secularizing, scientific reaction. One never finds Gandhi, for example, speaking of any group of men or any people as "objects." He made no use at all of some of the language of social science, and there is little trace of this language in the expressions of Vinoba.

One might say, however, that the precise objective of the "A" approach in social work is the increase of the strength of the "subjectivity" of all men in the social community—the goal, perhaps, being a stage in human development which would prohibit, simply by the manifest individual excellence of the people involved, any reference to them as "objects." This would represent a social science at last "come home" to philosophy, without losing any of its disciplinary strength along the way. Mr. Dasgupta's book is plainly a stride in this direction.

COMMENTARY
WHAT DOES A MAN DO?

WHEN, in the 1950's, Martin Buber told Leslie Farber that the chief flaw in psychoanalytical theory was its lack of a psychology of the will, he spoke of a general shortcoming of the age. Our entire culture suffers from this lack. We do not know how to strive to become human beings. As Dr. Farber points out, we try to substitute manipulative remedies for characterological weakness; in his language, we confuse the two realms of the will.

Ralph Pomeroy's reverie on the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. (in Frontiers) is a luminous portrayal of the human condition in relation to the ways of the will. Every man of decency and good resolve shares the feeling of impotence to which Mr. Pomeroy gives voice. "So what do I, and you, and all of us do about it?"

The first realm of the will grows slowly, by tiny increments, through processes we do not understand and cannot "control." "I can will knowledge, but not wisdom," says Dr. Farber, to illustrate the two realms of the will. Wisdom is "soul-force." We want it, but do not know how to get it.

Martin Luther King had it. "Purity of heart," says Mr. Pomeroy, recalling Kierkegaard, *"is to will one thing."* And when we lose a man like King, we are driven, once again, to reflect upon the human splendor of the first realm of the will, and to realize, all over again, that its inaccessible powers are the only powers worth having.

It is the austere gift of Martin Luther King's death that it makes us think in this way. To ask the question—What can all of us do?—is to think in this way. We know that we cannot will for others; we can only will for ourselves; and when the attainment we long for involves all men, the first realm of the will becomes doubly remote. Such achievement requires concert, and the longing of a single man is only a type of the common problem.

Mr. Pomeroy puts it differently. He says that King's dream "is too big for any one man; yet he was not too small to dream it."

This is the sort of dream that is sustained from within, that remains undimmed by defeat. You do the things that "represent" it; you do the finite things, the symbolic things—the "token" acts, as Bayard Rustin once put it—but you never mistake them for the dream itself, which can take shape, slowly and imperceptibly, only in the secret places of the first realm of the will.

By grasping, painfully, the difference between the two ways of the will, by having patience, and something called "purity of heart," a man finally reaches a place in himself where he knows what he is doing, that it must be done, and that he will never finish doing it. Then other men wonder at him. Where does he get his hope, his courage, his capacity to will one thing? These are the things we are compelled to think about when such a man dies.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
NOTES IN PASSING

THE delicacies of consideration for others may be even more important in relation to children than they are with adults. Adults acquire an armour to protect themselves from small, slighting remarks, but children do not learn to grow thick skins easily, and they ought not to have to learn it at all. It is often a habit among adults to speak in this way, its unkindness remaining unnoticed. Wry condescension and the humorously demeaning question soon become ordinary ways of conversing.

No one exposes the moral tone of such foibles in human relations more skillfully than the novelist, whose art includes the capacity to put himself in the place of other people and to tell how they *feel*. Merle Miller's *A Day in Late September* (William Morrow; issued in paperback by McFadden in 1964), while ostensibly a light-hearted lampoon of the hypocrisies and self-indulgences of the very rich, is also a book with tender understanding in it. In one place, a father casually attempts to kiss his teen-age daughter and is surprised to find no affectionate response. She runs out of the room. A while later, when she is going to have a baby, the reason emerges. The father asks her why she did not come to her parents:

> "Clyte, I guess what bothers me most of all is that when you were in trouble and needed help you didn't come to either your mother or me."
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> "Mom's got troubles enough of her own. I hope by the time I'm her age there'll be a cure for the menopause."
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> "What about me?" asked Clay, still not turning around. "You used to confide in me."
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> "Okay. Now that you've asked, I'll tell you. A couple of years ago—a little more than two years ago, really, in July—I was going to summer school to repeat algebra, and I hated it.
>
> "One day you came home and first you gave mother a bad time because supper wasn't ready and you were going off to some meeting of some kind, and then you chopped off Ech's [her grandmother's] head because—I don't know why; she was being Ech, I suppose, but she's an *old* woman, after all, and then you came in and I was feeling miserable because Chris was away being a counselor at camp. You asked me how I was, and I said I was okay, which was a lie, and then you asked me how I was doing—I remember just how you said it. 'How are you doing with algebra the second time around?' Which if you ask me was a cruddy way to ask a question. I said fine, also a lie, and then you said you'd had a letter from my smart kid brother, J.P., who was out in New Mexico on this stupid expedition, and you said, 'Your brother has been elected leader of his whole group. He was the unanimous choice of twenty-six other boys.' Well, the way you talked you'd have thought J.P. had been given some Nobel prize or something and I thought, What's that got to do with me? We are two different people, and you are always bringing it up how much smarter he is. You started to kiss me, and I said. 'Oh Dad, stop pawing me,' and then I went upstairs and cried.
>
> "But from then on in I said to myself, 'Why should I ever tell him anything?' "

* * *

Leo Tolstoy wrote extensively on education, but until recently this material was hard to come by. Originally published in the 1860's, these essays, which appeared in Tolstoy's periodical, *Yasnaya Polyana* (also the name of his school), were translated into English by Leo Wiener (father of Norbert Wiener, of cybernetic fame) in 1900. Last year the University of Chicago Press made them into a book with the title, *Tolstoy on Education* ($6.00), and provided an introduction by Reginald D. Archambault, an authority on John Dewey who teaches education at Brown University. Since this book is important enough to have independent discussion, we shall not discuss its contents here, but take note of some of the things said in the introduction.

Prof. Archambault starts out with the fact that ideas about education tend to become formal and sophisticated because of the complexity of its

problems. This creates the necessity for periodic radical reform. As he says:

> Indeed, educational theory often took on such a load of intellectual baggage that, at crucial points, it seemed necessary to re-examine the whole function of education in the culture. There are many who feel that this is true in America today; Leo Tolstoy felt that this was true in Russia of the late nineteenth century.

But Tolstoy, unlike most modern critics, did something. He started a school. Prof. Archambault writes:

> His psychological views were based on general observation, hard pedagogical experience at Yasno-Polyana, and common sense. Once Tolstoy made the climactic decision to reject conventional conceptions of education and traditional characterizations of its elements, he was free to observe pupils without prejudice, as young human beings with anxieties, fears, needs, and with unbounded intellectual curiosity and imagination. Since Tolstoy had no general theory of education, he built up a series of loosely connected hypotheses by trial and error. These trials were tempered by his generally sympathetic attitude toward children; he saw them as basically good, naturally curious, eager to grow and, hence—and perhaps most important—mischievous in their desire to be free. It is by now a cliché that Rousseau was one of the first to see pupils as children rather than diminutive adults. But, for Rousseau, the process of education was still a subtle one of molding a child to a conception of what the tutor wanted him to become. Tolstoy saw education as a striving to maintain and enrich the child's original spirit:

A few weeks ago this page gave space to some well-considered arguments for "permissiveness." Tolstoy, it seems, was wholly convinced of this principle. Both the subjects studied and the discipline of the school were governed by this view:

> Children are free to come and go as they please and masters to teach what, how, and at whatever length they please. Noise and confusion are the natural order of things. The primary role of the teacher is to listen and modify what he hears rather than talk at the children who silently listen to him. There is no thought given to "coverage" of material, no syllabus to be finished, no required learning to be fulfilled. . . .

> There are no sacred subjects which all students must take but only skills and sensibilities which necessity demands that all acquire. While seeking masters for his school, Tolstoy is more interested in their abilities as scholars and teachers than in the specific subject matter they might teach. . . . Consistent with his general philosophic view of life and art, Tolstoy felt that there was no single avenue toward truth, beauty, or understanding, and that individual desires and specific circumstances must dictate the objects worthy of attention. This view obviously implied strong emphasis on the interests and needs of students in dictating any school program.

Tolstoy's idea of the teacher is conveyed by the following:

> Tolstoy's teacher, as well as deciding the method by which the material is to be taught, must also determine what is to be taught, the manner in which it is to be learned, and, specifically, what the student is expected to derive from it. In effect, this gives the teacher a much more comprehensive role with a far greater degree of responsibility than that prescribed by conventional theory. Tolstoy's teacher is not merely expected to transmit knowledge deemed traditionally worthy, nor even to convey the values of his contemporary society. He is not a mere filter for purifying and simplifying a dominant strain of culture. He is, rather, a remarkably independent and creative artist who, by employing the modes of knowledge and inquiry within his subject, stimulates the pupil to understand those aspects of culture that he as teacher deems valuable. The teacher is, then, given an extraordinary degree of independence.

This freedom of the teacher is confined only by his obligation to prepare the student to live in "the real world, of the vital surrounding culture," with no obligation to "create a curriculum that reflects an unreal culture fabricated on the prejudices or artificial conceptions of abstract theorists."

FRONTIERS

Why My Brother Died

I'M writing this during the pre-dawn hours, two days after Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis. All night I couldn't sleep. I can't sleep now. I slept pretty well Thursday night, though, the night that it happened. Yesterday noon I sat among a crowd on the quad of U.C. Davis campus, listening in a kind of stupor to almost a dozen speeches on King. Afterward, many of those listening joined a memorial march to Sacramento, ending on the Capitol steps. I did not march. It took a night and a day for what happened to sink in, to come through to me, to make me awake enough to grope for the meaning of it. It hasn't come through all the way yet. But I react slowly, so slowly; I am such a respectable turtle; incessantly I circle the edges of real significance.

In all this slow circling, am I not typical? (I don't say "typical" to let myself off the hook. I am on the hook, God knows, and I may meet you there.) Am I not a paradigm for the white middle-class American of our time? Am I not a shy voyeur of racism? Am I not reluctant to look directly, reluctant to look even obliquely for very long, but also reluctant to look away?

But who can really look away from it? Let us see it. Let us say it. The soul of America is split. It is split with violence, hatred, super-patriotism, fear, rejection, apathy, greed; and the death of Martin Luther King, and of every man with King's ultimate concern, is a stitch lost or won in the mending of it.

For the death of King was a part of his life. It was meant to be an essential part. He knew this well and said so many times along the way. But King's death is also a part of our lives; and the fact that we must say so in public ceremonies tomorrow, that we must remind ourselves, in tributes on a day of national mourning, of what we could easily forget but should have remembered all along—this is one measure of the split. Another, which we should like to dissociate ourselves completely from but cannot, is that single sniper's bullet. Don't both these measures mark the split, the old, old split, that the stitch of King's life-and-death sought to mend?

So what do I, and you, and all of us do about it? Tomorrow we will hear many answers. Tomorrow we will make Palm Sunday another Ash Wednesday. But today, as I write this, I'm asking: what do you do about a long-standing split that you can neither support, nor accept, nor ignore? What can you, or I, or any of us do about it?

Right now I don't know of any available, workable answer that I can accept unconditionally. All I know is that it's no longer possible for me or anyone else to look away from the split. It's no longer possible, if it ever was possible, to identify King's concern for the mending of mankind with a specific period in American life. Nor is it possible to identify the personal culmination of that concern, which we call King's death, with an individual man (the alleged assassin), a class of men (all the un-alleged assassins), and a specific time and place in one part of the country. How can you define the mass-assassin of Man?

King understood these paradoxes. He built their terms into his life. He said many memorable things about the difficulty and the necessity of resolving these paradoxes. One statement that he made several years ago has stayed with me ever since I heard it: "I want to be the white man's brother, not his brother-in-law." When you think through the implications of this statement, it is disturbing. No doubt it was meant to be. It points to a union which should never take place—a forced marriage and a natural alliance which still remains to be acknowledged.

So why did my brother die?

My brother died because in a time of violence he not only dared to preach but to embody nonviolence. What is it in most men, and in all

men sometimes, that makes them strike down the gentle, the quietly just, the forgiving? Martin Luther King gave his life to solve this riddle. If we cannot solve it, and manage to come to terms with the cost of the solution, we will have lost *both* the whole world and our own souls.

My brother died because he was not content to be an American Negro; he wanted to be, and so he became, a Negro American. If anyone believes that the difference here is merely one of word-order, then he lacks more than a multitude of Wattses and Detroits and Chicagos and Washingtons and Selmas and Memphises can teach him.

My brother died because he was too ambitious for his own good. If ambition be defined as the distance that a man's dreams outstrip his days, then Martin Luther King was a most ambitious man. He has told us, in at least one memorable speech, the dream he had. It was too big for him. It is too big for any one man; yet he was not too small to dream it. It will take this entire nation to dream it all the way through to reality. This may never happen.

My brother died because he had a purity of heart. In saying this, we do not sentimentalize either King or his concern. For purity of heart is something which its possessor suffers as well as enjoys. Purity of heart, so Kierkegaard tells us, is *to will one thing.* If it is possible that a man in truth can will only one thing, then, as many before and after Kierkegaard have told us, such a man must will the Good. It seems to me that King was one of the few men of this century dedicated, in just this sense, to willing one thing. Insofar as he carried through his dedication, may we not take him as one of the pure in heart—those who, according to the Apostle James, can see God and therefore draw nigh to Him?

My brother died because I did not want him to live with me. Nothing need be added to clarify this statement. It is clear enough as written—clear, but hardly understandable.

My brother died because I forgot something. All-too-often I forgot it entirely, as if I never knew it, as if I could not know it—as if, in fact, it wasn't knowable at all.

I forgot it in the angry traffic of the pitiless, acquisitive city.

I forgot it in the pretended liberal outlooks of reactionary neighborhoods.

I forgot it in many public offices and private policies of government clerks.

I forgot it in the yellow checkered sunlight of restricted parks and playgrounds.

I forgot it in the not-so-sheltered precincts of higher education, where *educare*—the root-word for the thing meant—should have stood for the leading out from darkness into light.

And I? What had I done? I forgot what Emerson knew, that at night all men are black. I forgot what impelled Captain John Brown to carry out "as decreed" the raid on Harper's Ferry. I forgot Medgar Evers. I forgot that to lead out, or be led out, of darkness, I must first go into the darkness—or else know, beyond the chance of forgetting, that I was already there.

My brother died because I forgot, once again, that he was my brother.

So he died, and dies, and will die again, remembering to tell me.

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