VOLUME XXV, NO. 8
FEBRUARY 23, 1972

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR EDUCATION?

LAST December, the Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States listened to the oral arguments of the contestants in *Wisconsin vs. Yoder*, a case which will decide whether or not the members of the Amish religious and agricultural community in Wisconsin have the right to refuse to send their children to the ninth and tenth grades of the state public schools. The Amish maintain that any schooling beyond the eighth grade is harmful to their way of life and subversive of their religious convictions. A state court had tried and convicted Jonas Yoder and two other members of the Amish community of violating the compulsory education law, but the Wisconsin Supreme Court reversed the convictions, which had the effect of exempting the Amish from the application of this law on the ground that it is in conflict with their religious prohibition against formal education. Even though the law continues to operate undisturbed in all other instances, the Wisconsin Attorney General appealed for and obtained a hearing before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The story of this action is described by Stephen Arons, a Massachusetts lawyer, in the *Saturday Review* for January 15. Mr. Arons also teaches in a community school and often writes on the implications for education of court decisions. In this article he shows that while the issues of the Yoder case are legally narrow, their argument cannot help but raise far-reaching questions. Basic principles are involved, such as whether state agencies are entitled to more control over children than their parents, and also the much neglected question of the rights of the children themselves. It seems obvious that the state is in this case embarrassed by the exemplary behavior of the Amish, who have practically no crime and little delinquency, and no one on welfare rolls. Why must these children attend the first two years of high school? Of what benefit to the state can enforcement of the law be in this case? The Wisconsin Supreme Court apparently took such questions into account, for in its decision reversing the conviction it said:

> To the Amish, secondary schools not only teach an unacceptable value system, but they also seek to integrate ethnic groups into a homogenized society [and as a result] the education they receive is irrelevant to their lives . . or will make Amish life impossible.

Mr. Arons regards the Yoder case as having great importance in gaining attention for the major issues involved in all compulsory education. But equally or even more interesting is the general recognition, evidenced not only in his article, but also in the Wisconsin Supreme Court decision, that public school education may be as much a problem as it is a benefit to the people of the country. The tone of the sentence quoted from the decision certainly suggests this as a background attitude. Quite conceivably, this decision might not have gone the same way ten years ago. Mr. Arons makes his own feeling plain:

> In its broadest terms, the contest is between the state's definition of education and the Amish definition of education; between the ultimate purposes of life as adhered to by the majority of a materialist society and the religious convictions held by the so-called Plain People; between the limitless and homogenizing logic of compulsory attendance and the rights of individuals and groups to maintain the sanctity of their own socially harmless values against a "pall of orthodoxy."

The Amish endeavor to maintain their agricultural community life apart from the mainstream society. They achieve a remarkable degree of independence by being excellent farmers, by not using electricity or motor vehicles. They get power from windmills and have horses for work and transport. Without churches, they

regard the entire community life as their church, making no important distinction between profession and practice. The end of life is salvation, in their view, and they see all higher learning as a distraction or an obstacle. They have no interest in getting ahead in the world. Mr. Arons contends that their right to have their own way in bringing up their children is at least equal if not prior to the right of the government, which is far from being a higher or dispassionate authority in the matter. He quotes the following from John Stuart Mill:

> A general state education is merely a device for molding people to be exactly like one another, and as the mold in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in government—whether this be a monarch, a priesthood, an aristocracy, or the majority of the existing generation—in proportion as it is efficient and successful, it establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by natural tendency to one over the body.

To show that such interpretations of state authority enjoy current approval Mr. Arons cites from a 1967 *Virginia Law Review* the claim that "in sheer economic terms, the nation's children are an economic resource which the state may legitimately exploit to its full potential by means of compulsory education." In another article in the same issue of the *Saturday Review,* the Wisconsin Assistant Attorney General, who represented the state in this action, presses the argument that in terms of Constitutional values, the right of the state to educate must rank even higher than its power to conscript for war, and he urges that the complexities of modern civilization require more education than was needed centuries ago when the "simple life" was still possible.

Pursuing his argument, Mr. Arons suggests that the compelling interest of the state in the Yoder case is no more than the will to socialize the children in a certain way—"to cast them into a behavioral mold acceptable to the majority." Then he says:

> The Amish challenge to our right to prescribe and teach acceptable values ought to make us think twice about the validity of the old notion that society can be improved upon by means of schooling.
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> One could not deny that any institutional educational setting carries in its structure, pedagogy, materials, and rules of behavior the imprint of the value system that is adhered to by those who control it. As education innovator Ivan Illich put it: "All over the world schools are organized enterprises designed to reproduce the established order, whether this order is called revolutionary, conservative, or evolutionary." The Amish themselves are no exception. The contest is simply between their values and methods of child-rearing and those prescribed by the state.
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> Though the state nowhere explicitly claims that it has a right to obliterate cultural differences, or to homogenize children, or to replace the communal spirit with the competitive or austerity with materialism, the testimony in the case suggests just this purpose. In view of the inadequacy of the other reasons put forward by the state, one wonders how else to explain its vigorous prosecution of the Amish.

While the Supreme Court, if it affirms the decision of the Wisconsin high court, may not take judicial notice of the sort of evidence and argument that Mr. Arons assembles in this article—such as his statement that "almost every article about education in the last five years has admitted, it is the schools, not the parents, that are damaging the children by excessively rigid control of their education"—there seems little doubt that a general disillusionment with the schools will play a part in the vindication of Amish intransigence. The intelligent citizens of the land, at any rate, are no longer at all sure about such things and incline to be quite open-minded. Mr. Arons puts this attitude quite clearly:

> One could sympathize with the idea that compulsory schooling should serve the purpose of providing every young person with the time and freedom and resources to explore and learn freely. According to this idea, the child is freed from work and family pressure and given some psychological space. But school is not value-free; and almost nowhere does it consist of freedom to explore. It is, rather, a maze of requirements and expectations and coercion. Though we might like school to mean freedom, in reality it makes a mockery of the "holy curiosity of inquiry" about which Einstein said: "It is a very grave mistake to think that the enjoyment of

> seeing and searching can be promoted by means of coercion and a sense of duty."
>
> Perhaps the greatest irony of the case is the notion of freeing Amish children from their community. The Amish community experiences little delinquency in minors, causes and fights no wars, uses no polluting machines, eschews materialism, and has no economically based class system. To save these people from the quiet sanity of their lives by forcing them into the center of the psychologically unhealthy atmosphere of modern America strains the definition of freedom beyond recognition.

There is perhaps a further irony in the fact that the contrast drawn by Mr. Arons is made possible or came to his and our attention through a conflict in law between the traditional American view of the importance of education and a much older tradition of child-rearing which has remained untouched by the centuries of "progress" in the United States, and is represented by people who, until almost the present, have been regarded as a strange intrusion from the Middle Ages—a band of benighted "Fundamentalists" unwilling to grow with the times or to accept the blessings of a generously open and liberal culture. Yet now they appear almost as heroes, despite the fact that, if reports can be believed, their ways have changed hardly at all. That they are still here, among us, has provided an effective means of *seeing* a contrast that should have been evident long ago. We may be grateful to the Amish for this, and wish them well in their struggle for independence; but there is also occasion for regretting that we seem unable to take such problems seriously until the issues behind them are argued out in the courts at the *institutional* level.

In other words, the great majority of Americans have stuck to and valiantly defended the rationale of compulsory education all through the period of the decline of the quality of public school education, and are only now ready, by reason of having its failure dinned into our ears by scores of intelligent critics and perhaps millions of rebellious children, to consider the possibility of having to find alternatives to what we have believed in for so long.

How is it possible that a "great" people, so long admired for its resourcefulness and ingenuity by the rest of the world, should prove so stubbornly backward and blind in relation to the welfare of its own children?

In the answer to this question, the moral factors are inextricably mixed with the technical ones. The technical explanation seems simple enough. Americans have great faith in legal structure and rational solutions. They have been enormously successful in developing industrial and commercial organization to a high degree of efficiency. They know how to delegate authority and responsibility. In some areas this works very well, but in others it may accomplish major self-deceptions. When problems involving the incommensurables of human nature are handed over to bureaucracies and disposed of as though they could be solved by skillful manipulation, the long-term effect may be only the multiplication of both problems and bureaus.

The moral explanation is simply that the resort to such means in relation to human problems is bound to seem logical to people who have come to believe that the highest good lies in things and their acquisition. For under this reductive principle, all that is can be regarded as some kind of a "thing" and dealt with accordingly. But the rationale for dealing with things does not really work for human beings. It may seem to work for a while, but eventually it breaks down, as our educational system is now doing.

What is the evidence that this attitude prevails in education? The evidence is all about. For example, Emily Townsend Vermeule, a teacher at Radcliffe, wrote in the December 1971 *Radcliffe Quarterly:*

> Many institutions and many students have confused education with earning a living. The two have nothing to do with each other, except in some marginal sense for teachers. Those of us who don't want to spend the rest of our lives in a classroom have been too often damaged by a ruinous image, drawn from business and manufacturing, which suggests that intelligence can be processed like dogmeat or

> toothpaste, that production-line techniques can be used successfully on the minds of little children and young adults.

In still another article in the January 15 *Saturday Review*, Jerome Bruner tells about a conference he had with some highschool girls who were helping with teaching in the lower grades of an elementary school. They had run into desperate problems:

> What do you do, one girl asked, when you find that a kid disrupts not just because he is trying to get attention but "because he has always had the short end of the stick and wants to destroy what he sees as his torment—school, class, teachers? How do I get that kid to trust anybody?" In a society that specializes as our technical society does, we set up professions and hire practitioners to ask questions of that kind. They are probably the questions that get asked effectively only when they are asked by everybody.
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> Driving home after the meeting, I thought of a story of my father's about a Chinese diplomat attending the naval disarmament conference in 1922. When the weekend came, he was invited by a senior member of the British Foreign Office to visit his country home where, on arrival, he was urged by his host to watch a set of tennis between father and son. The set was close, 8-6 for the father. Towels round necks, they joined the Chinese gentleman and asked him how he liked the game. "Most interesting," said the diplomat "there was but one thing I did not understand." "What was that?" asked his host. "Why did you not get your servants to play it for you?" And why, indeed, do we hire teachers to do it *all* for us, when in one way or another the process of education is everybody's business? And when the teacher fails, why then do we hire counselors to play it for us? And when that fails, in turn, we have the school psychologist to play it for us.

The Amish may not give Bruner's reasons, but they refuse to hire anybody to do the teaching of their children, and apparently they are ready to risk conviction as criminals for daring to insist that their form of community education is better than that of the schools.

It is possible to learn from the Amish without "agreeing" altogether with them. They are certainly right in their acceptance of individual and community responsibility for education, and it is in this that they are succeeding, while we are failing miserably.

Why has it taken us so long to see this? We have been blinded by faith in the rationale of our school system, and have been too long out of touch with both its assumptions and its actual operations.

Both we and the world have outgrown that rationale. The world has outgrown it in terms of going beyond the days of the functional efficiency of the nation-state. The nation-states of the world are now the most menacing enemy of world well-being and peace. The nation-state is a tool for making war; it thrives on war; it knows no other means of survival. Yet war is now completely obsolete. It has become insanity and self-destruction. We know this and say it, but the rationale of the nation-state continues to survive, supported by rhetoric and slogans, perpetuated by men whose own survival, as they seem to think, depends upon beliefs which were formulated many years ago in behalf of national interest and power. And from either fear or habit the people go on hiring these men to maintain the rationale of the nation-states. That rationale is logical enough, but it no longer applies to the world in which we live.

So with other rationales we try to keep alive—the rationale of endless growth in industry and commerce, of endless consumption of goods and forms of personal pleasure. Both are wornout, inapplicable, providing neither challenge nor satisfaction to the generation that is expected to continue them. And if that were not sufficient reason for discarding them, they have well-nigh ruined the world with their wastes, their depredations, and the unhealthy appetites they produce in human beings.

The trouble with coming into focus on problems of this sort as a result of a court action, such as the clash between the Amish community and the State of Wisconsin, is that this fosters the tendency to suppose that such problems do not become "real" until difficulties arise at a gross

institutional level. But nothing will be really resolved by the decision of the Supreme Court, even it if brings a victory for the Amish. The Amish deserve and should have a victory, or course, but the real solution lies, as Jerome Bruner says, in *everybody* assuming a share of the responsibility for the education of the young. Only when that happens will the rationale for what happens in education lose its rigid, doctrinaire character, as a result of the diversified forms of human intelligence which are applied to the tasks of teaching and environment-creating for the benefit of the young.

If we always wait until there is breakdown and disaster in our ways of doing things—if we remain narrowly faithful to the rationales of the past, on the ground that reliance on reason has been the source of American greatness—then the alternatives which are available when change is finally forced upon us can hardly be to our liking. The misuse of reason can lead only to the rejection of reason, which is already characteristic of some of the movements of revolt in the present.

But reason will not be misused, nor will it be rejected, if the rational process is continually reanimated by individual use of the imagination. Reason without vision may have the appearance of exactitude and safety, but the price of the certainties it provides is a narrow complacency which hides from itself the laws of human growth and denies the vital instability of living process. Only the imagination encompasses these things, adding to the use of reason that infinite adaptability which is the quality of high human intelligence.

Surely education is the most important place to apply both imagination and flexibility, and this needs to be done by all, as individuals, so that our communities may also become, little by little, places where education will take place as a matter of course.

REVIEW
BOOK OF NATURE: DIFFERENT READINGS

THE despotism of a simplified version of Darwinian evolution has a discouraging popularity these days. In an article in MANAS for May 6, 1970, called "The Denaturization of Human Nature," Henry Anderson asked: "Why did the 'killer ape' books sell hundreds of thousands of copies, while Fromm's *Revolution of Hope*, for example, sold only a few thousand?" There is perhaps a partial answer to this question in the first paragraph of an excellent review of the latest "killer ape" book, titled *The Imperial Animal*, by Elizabeth Fisher in the *Nation* for Jan. 17. Miss Fisher begins:

> In the 19th century the Social Darwinists appealed to natural selection and the survival of the fittest to justify exploitative capitalism and imperialism. In the 20th we have the animal determinists, who talk of hierarchy, dominance-submission, and aggression as a kind of indirect justification of the military-corporate state and its more sophisticated program for controlling the world. Just as Social Darwinism had its ideological center in Britain during that nation's heyday, so its heirs attract their greatest audience in the United States today.

One theme of the book mentioned seems to be that man is essentially a "hunter" and that the first tools developed by the species were "butchering tools." Even were this true, which may be doubted, it is still not ground for arguing that human beings must stay that way. Human excellence is almost always revealed by some form of transcendence, by the replacement of what was with something better, so that this quality, in itself, may be the identifying characteristic of true humanness, whether today or at the beginning of our history. Arguing against the idea that "tool-making" is the chief attribute of human beings, Lewis Mumford wrote in the *American Scholar* for the Winter of 1966-67:

> By now, I trust, it should be plain that the chronic practice of describing man as a tool-using animal conceals some of the very facts that must be exposed and revaluated. Why, for example, if tools were so important to human development, did it take man at least a half a million years—or three times that period, if we place the dubious hominids of South Africa in the direct line of descent—to shape anything but the crudest stone tools? Why is it that the lowest existing peoples, who support a hand-to-mouth existence with a few tools and weapons, nevertheless have elaborate ceremonials a complicated kinship organization, and a finely differentiated language, capable of expressing every aspect of their experience?
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> Why, further, were high cultures like those of the Maya the Aztecs, the Peruvians, still using only the simplest handicraft equipment a few centuries ago, although their monuments were magnificent and ancient roads like that to Machu Picchu were marvels of engineering? How is it that the Maya, who had no machines, were masters of abstruse mathematics and had evolved an extremely intricate method of time reckoning which showed superb powers of abstract thought? Once one dares to ask these questions the whole course of human history, from the earliest times on, appears in a new light, and our present machine-centered technology no longer seems the sole witness to the far-off divine event toward which all creation has moved.

Why, one wonders, should "animal determination" have become so obsessive a preoccupation? During the height of the controversy over Evolution, Benjamin Disraeli remarked that if one had to choose between apes and angels for ancestors, he would be on the side of the angels, but the temper now seems very different. One reason, no doubt, is that one can do quite a lot of "research" about apes, while angels are not easily accessible to investigation. A further reason would be that human behavior has never been less "angelic" than it is today. But neither the availability of apes for study nor the apparent improbability of the angel theory can justify what seems a total neglect of *man himself*, as a source of information about human possibility. Books about animal behavior, while having their own interest, can hardly tell us much about distinctively human behavior. Who are the best and most interesting people to read about and know about? They are men and women who break out of the limitations of their times, who

triumph over the confines of heredity and environment, giving evidence that human beings do not *have* to behave according to patterns determined by forces outside their control.

The other day, looking into a corner of an old library, we found a bound volume of miscellaneous issues of a magazine called *Arena,* dating from 1890 to 1899. The paper was apparently a staunch supporter of Edward Bellamy, and it is particularly interesting to read material about such a man during the time when he was a living force on the scene. A wide gamut of subjects are dealt with in the *Arena* articles, covering the social issues of the day, all with the outreach of idealism and human striving. The point is that *these* are the qualities which invariably appear, whenever the focus is upon distinctively human activities. Man is a reflecting, meaning-seeking, and aspiring being, and the efforts which are made in these directions can be fairly regarded as the growing-tips of human development.

A library of old but treasured books is a good place to browse as a means of restoring one's sense of the reality of these capacities in human beings. One book we turned up, for example, illustrates how a very different use can be made of natural history and scientific studies. The book is Stewart Edward White's *Credo,* first published in 1925 by Doubleday, Page. White is usually remembered for his minor classics concerned with the "Old West." Few writers were his equal in describing cowboys and life in the Western out-of-doors, as reported in books like *The Cabin* and *The Mountain.* But *Credo* was a rather extraordinary attempt at philosophy, in which the author considered such age-old problems as free-will and immortality.

White pursues a chain of reasoning based upon observation of living processes in lower forms of life, leading to the conclusion that continuity in the case of these forms is achieved through the perpetuation of the species. He thinks of all development as movement in a circle. Whatever is the moving cause begins with utter simplicity, produces form, elaborates the form, works in it and through it, and is eventually resolved into the primordial simplicity, retaining, however, an increment of growth. White maintains that this circle of development applies to all phenomena:

> We must traverse the whole circumference before we find ourselves back again at the original simplicity. This again is true in all cosmos, whether we view it from the standpoint of matter, of life or of consciousness. It obtains in physical nature, it obtains in our own psychological experiences, it obtains in our laboratory experiments, it obtains in the lives of men and the lives of planets. The completed circle is more than a symbol; it is a universal fact.

Since the individual creatures of the kingdoms reflect the species, and fulfill the being of the species, their continuity exists only in the perpetuation of the species, through physical embodiment. White reasons that what is truly individual, which belongs distinctively to an individual such as a human being, requires another sort of continuity which cannot be supplied merely by the species. This is the basis for his theory of immortality, which is that the peculiarly human and uniquely personal qualities of a human being cannot be thought of in "species" terms; they are not visible attributes, but matters of character, making up what is *individual* about the man. "It is," White says, "what has been added by the creature's own and unique effort." This, then, is his conclusion:

> And so we come upon a great and illuminating thought: that any continuity beyond the physical life is not an inherent gift, but an earned thing. It is gained by the individual and personal effort of each creature; *and in no other way!* Whatever life there may be beyond death is the direct result of individual and personal construction, by effort of free will; applied, perhaps through a long evolution, but nevertheless a matter entirely of individual building.

It is a corollary of this idea that the more of his qualities and attributes a creature or being has given to him by his species, the less of an

"individual" he is. Where instinct rules, the equipment for life comes, as White says, "ready-made," but if reason is involved, then the equipment must be developed more and more by the individual, since his life is no longer species-determined and fulfilled. White puts this in italics as a basic principle: "*As consciousness rises in evolution the field of the precise instinctive action is narrowed, and the field of the reasoned—and blundering—experimental action is widened.*"

With individuality comes the opportunity for choice, so that there seems a natural association of the ideas of immortality and free-will. As White puts it:

> As life mounts in the evolution of its qualities, its creatures possess a wider and wider field within which they can do as they like. From this point of view growth may be defined as the enlargement of that circle.
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> But whether the germ of free will and the germ of immortality are co-temporaneous or not, it seems permissible to define their full acquisition in terms of one another. The germ of free will may be said to become the thing itself when it has so far developed as to carry with it as an attribute the knowledge of good and evil between which to choose. Into the terms of good and evil I have no intention of reading a conventional moral sense. Good is what works in harmony; evil is what works against harmony. The knowledge of good and evil is merely a perception, very dim and wavering at best, of the difference between going in harmony and our despairful struggle against the rush of life. When the circle within which free will can work has expanded to make this inclusion, then it has become our enduring property and the tool of an immortality.
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> This is the real free will. It is the gift which at the birth of the soul the Fairy Godmother bestows—as a weapon by which progress may be won, or as a black curse by which its very existence may be destroyed. Heretofore the ordering of the climb has been in the hands of nature. Henceforward it must be man's own.

Hardly anyone seems to dare to think thus freely any more. Yet thought of this sort surely has far more provocation and justification than the doctrines of the "animal determinists."

COMMENTARY
THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS

THE point of this week's lead article is a difficult one to make clear. The discussion seems to pooh-pooh the reform of institutions, but that is not really its purpose. Institutions need to be reformed from time to time, but mainly because people have placed too much confidence in them. If we could understand why institutional arrangements lag so far behind human need, we would not regard them as so important; depending upon them less, we would not have to bring them up to date so frequently.

For institutions, so understood, would tend to be self-regenerating; they would be more like the organs of a living body, adapting from day to day to changing requirements.

Why must there be institutions? Because a large part of the activity of human life is involved in the repetition of necessary functions which are best performed in an orderly way. Human actions are coordinated and made harmonious through institutional patterns. Institutions, in short, are common-sense arrangements, deliberately adopted social habits in behalf of the general good. Another way of thinking of them is that they help to resolve human differences in areas where it is useful, and not harmful, to those affected. This is what "socialization" ought always to be—a means of showing people, often the young, how to work together with others, and how to find enjoyment and benefit in association with others. So one could say that institutions, educationally speaking, are showcases of human behavior. Law, for example, is supposed to embody an account of *necessary* behavior. In contrast to this, the schools might be thought of as providing a complex example of *voluntary* social behavior, illustrating the cooperative movement of human beings toward the realization of a number of ideals. The more the voluntary character of a social undertaking in education is diluted by compulsion, the less effective will be its distinctively humanizing example and effect. A completely compulsory school could not be educational at all.

The individual is always the most valuable means of illustrating the good life, since effort toward human growth begins in the individual, and enduring determination is invariably self-generated. The stronger the presence, then, of individuals and individual decision and action, within any institutional arrangement, the greater its educational usefulness. Hence the desirability of thinking of educational objectives in terms of the influence of the entire community, where all the people in the community are glad to serve in some way as teachers. And while institutional arrangements are necessary to all human associations, in the best societies they will displace individual qualities and individual initiative and action hardly at all.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
ONE TEACHER AT WORK

THE OPEN CLASSROOM, by Herbert Kohl, is not about the British Infant schools, but is concerned with the ideal of natural relationships in the classroom. Actually, it is about how teachers themselves may grow into a greater maturity, along with a discussion of strategy for dealing with the obstacles they are bound to encounter along the way. The jacket says the book is a practical guide to a "new way of teaching." This isn't really so. It is simply about teaching, as distinguished from all the distortions and artificialities which have displaced natural teaching in the public schools of the United States.

Mr. Kohl does not waste any time "attacking" the existing conditions. They come into his account of how to teach in an open classroom, or how to change from an authoritarian to an open style of teaching, because they must. He waits until the last paragraph of the book to say what he thinks, generally, about today's public schools:

> Our schools are crazy. They do not serve the interests of adults, and they do not serve the interests of young people. They teach "objective" knowledge and its corollary, obedience to authority. They teach avoidance of conflict and obeisance to tradition in the guise of history. They teach equality and democracy while castrating the students and controlling teachers. Most of all they teach people to be silent about what they think and feel, and worst of all, they teach people to pretend that they are saying what they think and feel. To try to break away from stupid schooling is no easy matter for teacher or student. It is a lonely and long fight to escape from believing that one needs to do what people say one should do and that one ought to be the person one is expected to be. Yet to make such an escape is a step toward beginning again and becoming the teachers we never knew we could be.

This is a small book of 116 pages, published by the *New York Review of Books* and distributed by Random House. It is filled with practical, workable suggestions and common-sense advice from the first to last page.

Teaching in an open classroom means to rely on one's imagination almost from moment to moment; it does not mean the abandonment of planning, but only of rigid planning. It obviously involves a very real "growing up" for the teacher, and reaching the balance and confidence necessary to this sort of teaching is likely to take years. It took Mr. Kohl years. One of his chapters begins:

> People who have been students in authoritarian classrooms cannot expect themselves to develop their own classrooms easily. I started out as an authoritarian teacher. It was the only way I knew to teach; the way I had been taught. It took several years before I was able to function in a free environment. Indeed, the students were much more ready for freedom than their teacher was. Perhaps it was better to start tentatively than to pretend that a change had come over me suddenly, and to try to turn everything upside down in the classroom. My beliefs in a free, non-authoritarian classroom always ran ahead of my personal ability to teach in one.

He recommends a beginning by trying to do "something different" for ten minutes every day, and then, as the teacher learns, finding ways of letting the open way of teaching grow:

> For ten minutes cease to be a teacher and be an adult with young people, a resource available if needed, and possibly a friend, but not a director, a judge, or an executioner. Also try to make it possibly for the ten minutes to grow to fifteen, twenty, so long as it makes sense to you and your pupils. It is not unlikely that those ten minutes may become the most important part of the day, and after a while may even become the school day.

A wide variety of habits, not only the teacher's, but those of the students, too, have to change gradually for open teaching to be successful:

> The movement to an open classroom is a difficult journey for most of us. The easiest way to undergo it is to share it with one's pupils—to tell them where you hope to be and give them a sense of the difficulty of changing one's style and habits. Facing uncertainty in oneself, and articulating it to one's pupils, is one way of preventing a superficial bias "against authority" which, if it fails, can lead one to believe that the open classroom just doesn't work. Freedom can be threatening to students at first. Most of them are so used to doing what they are told in school that it takes quite a while for them to discover their own interests. Besides that, their whole school careers have taught them not to trust teachers so they will naturally believe that the teacher who offers freedom isn't serious. They will have to test the limits of the teacher's

offer, see how free they are to refuse work, move out of the classroom, try the teacher's nerves and patience. All of this testing must be gone through if authoritarian attitudes are to be unlearned.

Herbert Kohl uses the comparison of two "lesson plans" to illustrate what changes in the teacher's approach when he begins to work openly. The class is in English and the subject for consideration is the short story. Each day's work is outlined in the first plan, which is for the days of a week. The plan outlines what the teacher is to do each day, the "points" to be made, and comparisons offered. This, Kohl says, is a conventional lesson plan, projecting the communication to the students of a series of established opinions about O'Henry and James Joyce.

The second lesson plan is little more than a series of notes by the teacher to himself, exploring what he now thinks of O'Henry, and of one story in particular. He finds it artificial and contrived, and wonders what the class will think about it. He asks himself:

> Does it make sense to talk about "the short story" first, since I can't put it all together myself and have read enough to know that the text's summary is worthless? When we all get together I'll start talking about short stories and see how things develop.

Monday night, getting ready for Tuesday, he makes notes about what happened on Monday as the basis for the next day's discussion. Nothing is really certain, and the lesson plan takes "risks" from start to finish. Nobody knows in advance where the lesson will go. The upshot, finally, was that the "general consensus was that there must be better ways to write about life than O.H. discovered." Kohl comments:

> This matter of breaking down the tyranny of the "curriculum" is one of the most difficult problems facing teachers who are trying to develop open classrooms. Even though the texts are senseless and the children restless and bored, teachers still develop feelings of guilt that they are not "teaching" their students what they're supposed to know. Actually, the whole notion of there being an "orderly sequence" to learning is fallacious. Children's learning is *episodic* rather than vertical or linear. One can think of it as a spider web rather than as a staircase. Happily recent studies by psychologists and other experts are beginning to point this out. See especially Kenneth Wann, et al., *Fostering Intellectual Development in Young Children*, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, 1962, and J. McVicker Hunt, *Intelligence and Experience*, Ronald Press, 1961.

There is a lot more on the difference between "real" and pretended learning or teaching. Kohl tells about out-of-school trips he and his class took, walking around the community, visiting factories, the university, artists' studios, chemical laboratories, film studies, supermarkets, peoples' homes, stores, etc. He says:

> Many other teachers at the school felt that our trips were not educational, and that we were leaving school so that I could avoid doing "real" teaching and the students could avoid submitting to "real" learning.
>
> But the trips were a vital part of our experience together. We saw some of the world, talked to people, got a sense of the environments in which different types of work are done and in a few places made friends and set up after-school programs for the students. The kids got a sense of what adults do with their time and a feel for possible careers for themselves.
>
> Not everything we saw was pleasant. We went to court, the welfare department, the police department, the children's shelter. We hung around and watched and recorded the ways that our society deals with people. And when we returned to class we had things to talk about and study in depth. We compared, for example, our impressions of factory work with the one presented in the school's vocational guidance manual. We talked of justice as we saw it work against poor and black people in the courts and as the civics books explained it.
>
> Visits are valuable, but they are limited. First impressions are often misleading. I feel that it would be a very good thing if young people could spend time as apprentices to artists, technicians, businessmen, etc. They could also be participant observers in places of work, and plan some of their program in the classroom around their experiences away from school. This year some of my students will spend time at a TV studio, a design workshop, a boutique, a highway construction job, a laboratory, and at several departments of the University of California. . . .
>
> The whole community ought to be the school, and the classroom a home base for the teachers and kids, a place where they can talk and rest and learn together, but not the sole place of learning. The classrooms ought to be a communal center, a comfortable environment in which plans can be made and experiences assessed.

More people doing teaching along these lines would go far to help turn the community into a school.

FRONTIERS

The Values of Community

THE word "community" is now charged with so much longing that it seems hardly possible for any enterprise of this sort to be animated by unworthy motives, yet there are undoubtedly great differences in the ideas of the people who set out on adventures in cooperative living. One question certainly ought to be asked: How much obligation is felt, if any, to the larger, surrounding social organism? Is the community to represent only a haven for would-be free spirits, to which they can take flight, or do the members contemplate activities which may, in the long run, contribute to general social reconstruction?

Some observations by Rick Margolies in his article, "Building Communes," in the *Humanist* for September/October of last year, speak to such questions. In one place he says:

> A principal failure of many communes has been "playing house"; that is, members of the commune remain home, or stick together even on the infrequent occasions when they go out. We build walls around ourselves. Thus, though we have begun to purge ourselves of many middle-class values, we haven't cut ourselves loose from the essence of suburbia; that is, from class narcissism, from "our" people. We get together with our people, people who look like us, who dress like us, who like the same music, and we try not to deal with those "other" people. But this kind of rigid class fear and hatred is a key to the sickness of America.

It is true enough that many of the community experiments of the past which enjoyed a comparative success—success being in this case measured by survival—were intended to isolate the faithful from the wicked world. They regarded the outside environment as a source of moral pollution and ordinary people as either blinded by unbelief or actually doomed to be damned and therefore of little interest. In any event, the disciplines of a rigorous religious sectarianism proved to be basic to the thrift and cooperation that community life demanded, as various historians have pointed out.

Mr. Margolies has some interesting comments on past communities which were not especially "religious":

> What has happened, for example, to the revolutionary notions of those young people who fled Europe to set up communities in Israel? Their kibbutzim must be looked at within the state structure of modern Israel, which is increasingly capitalist and militarist, like America. Again, the Communities of Work in France, begun after World War II, sought to communalize living around the productive activities of factories; the movement was started by concerned humanitarian capitalists, who turned their factories over to the workers, and built houses, community centers, and schools that were owned and run communally. These communities also did not fulfill all their dreams. And similar failures may be found in the histories of American religious and socialist communities such as Brook Farm, Oneida, and Amana. Where did they go wrong? I think that the still incomplete or mixed accomplishments of these community movements stem from their acute shortsightedness and naïveté. They did not see themselves as the reconstructive ingredient of a broader-based radical political movement to transform society. Their creators envisioned them as isolated utopian experiments—and that's what they became.

This seems a little hard on these groups. While "survival" must of course be a criterion, it is not the only yardstick for measuring what these often heroic efforts accomplished. The factor of their *influence* is of course indefinable, but it cannot be inconsiderable. There is a natural tendency to judge the effects of a social movement in institutional terms, yet the increment of progress may be realized elsewhere, through a general leavening that affects human attitudes. Institutions, even the best of them, have life-terms of birth, growth, maturity, followed by decline, and since physical immortality is not the measure of a man, neither should the duration of an institution devoted to the higher capacities of human beings be the chief indication of its achievement. Yet Mr. Margolies' additional observations are to the point:

> Today we must build communal forms that *initially* do not depart so radically from the dominant

culture. Achieving agreement on how to develop such a community is a dynamic process that evolves over many months, not at one sitting. Within a neighborhood there are strong differences, deep class divisions, different generations, different perspectives about life. But the essential requirement for resolving differences is that we really say what we think and feel with as little hostility as possible.

Most of the community organizing projects of the left during the past decade have not really "embraced" other people. The style of "politicalizing" by angry rhetoric and long theoretical explanations simply does not reach out. It is an alienated mode of politics that will never waken the dreaming American masses, because it is abstracted from everyday life and intellectualized.

The common objection to suggestions of this sort is that they point to action which is not "radical" enough. This may be so, but not necessarily. Attempting to work out new social forms and arrangements which will *grow* into fundamentally; constructive patterns of human relationships, rather than to establish them by "radical" fiat, before their implications have been understood, and without the subtle infrastructures of consciously assumed responsibility, may be more radical than anything else, for the reason that it is in conformity to natural processes. A number of practical suggestions along these lines were offered by Henry Anderson in his Frontiers discussion, "The Longing for Belonging," in MANAS for last Dec. 29.

It is interesting to find Tolstoy saying, of even the Tolstoyan communities which he advised and helped, but never joined, that it was a mistake to isolate oneself from the world. If a man wants to help the world, "he must not think that he should escape from it," Tolstoy declared in his *Intimate Diary*. In many cases the Tolstoyan communities tried to follow his advice, avoiding isolation and being of service to the neighbors in their surroundings. An excellent pamphlet, *The Communities of the Tolstoyans*, by Henri Lasserre, was published in Toronto in 1944 by the Rural Cooperative Council and Canadian Fellowship for Cooperative Community.