

FROM CRISIS TO INSIGHT

THERE is nothing inconsistent with past experience in the idea that discoveries are now being made which may in time bring order out of the chaos of present events. Times of deep crisis may also be times of urgent inquiry, since disorder and destruction are repugnant to human intelligence, and widespread cruelty and injustice drive the best of men to look more deeply into conditions which threaten to become both intolerable and the rule.

Some effort is required, however, to discern the areas of investigation where, just possibly, valuable discoveries are occurring. The public prints are seldom in the hands of persons who have a comprehensive concern for the general good, and even the publications of institutions devoted to learning have become so involved in furthering the interests of narrow departmental specialties, that even the occasionally useful contributions found in these sources may need translation into the common speech.

Yet the need for clear communication becomes more apparent as time goes on, and a considerable number of specialists have turned away from the callings for which they were trained, in order to speak to a larger audience. Some of these individuals are frequently named in MANAS, as for example Michael Polanyi, who went from chemistry to sociology and philosophy in order to speak more urgently to scientists and scholars throughout the world. Catherine Roberts, author of *The Scientific Conscience*, is a microbiologist who in recent years has devoted herself to considering the moral implications of modern biological research.

Much has appeared in MANAS concerning the work of A. H. Maslow, pioneer humanistic psychologist, and Carl Rogers and Rollo May ought also to be named as contributing to the

focus that has developed for the study of psychology from a humanistic stance. Trigant Burrow, an earlier and almost forgotten reformer in the practice of psychoanalysis, should be remembered, too, since the lines of his influence may some day be recognized as helping to point the way to some fundamental discoveries or rediscoveries concerning the nature of man.

Last week we gave some attention to Ernest Becker's book, *The Lost Science of Man*, in which the writer faced squarely what might he termed the "original sin" of scientific inquiry—the need and methodological requirement of objectifying whatever the scientist decides to examine. Objectification, Becker shows, reifies; it makes whatever is looked at into a definable "thing," and when the matters studied involve human beings, this may become a serious offense against the humanity of both the investigators and the objects of research. Yet how will science achieve impartiality without sealing off the emotions connected with sympathy and self-identification? This is the dilemma of the scientist who studies man, and while Mr. Becker does not resolve it, calling attention to its reality so insistently is no small contribution. Perhaps this is the only resolution that is possible in the practice of a science of man; if so, the discovery should have a radically reforming effect on all the "disciplines" which claim to be a part of this science.

But we spoke of other "discoveries" being made: Can any of these be listed or discussed briefly?

For this purpose we might turn first to one of the distinguished forerunners of present-day psychological science, Trigant Burrow, who died in 1950. Burrow, too, was concerned with a kind of "original sin," constituted by the splitting of the original unitary consciousness by the human

individual, in consequence of his *self-consciousness*. Perhaps Burrow's most perceptive study of this psychic dichotomy is the posthumously published *Preconscious Foundations of Human Experience* (Basic Books, 1964) edited by William E. Galt. (Further information about Burrow's works may be obtained from the Lifwynn Foundation, Westport, Conn.) Burrow came to believe that both the individual infant and "primitive" societies show this unitary consciousness in their behavior, and much of this book is devoted to evidence that separate individuality, such as modern man feels so strongly, is not characteristic of either babies or primitive peoples. It is the symbolizing capacity of man which accomplishes this separation, producing the objectification of the external world. Without a sense of independent self, there can be no real distinction between self and the environment, and what we term "knowledge" is then indistinguishable from feeling. Quite evidently, what we think of as knowledge "about the world," which we call science, and what we term morality and good and evil—and, indeed, all "progress"—depend entirely upon this sense of conscious separation of the human individual from the rest of the world. It is this separation which makes us men, but it is also, quite plainly, the origin of evil. In Burrow's conceptual scheme:

It may be said that, with the development of the symbolic, linguistic capacity, there occurred the organism's—the phylo-organism's—separative, or partitive, reaction. With the increase of symbol usage and the coincident transfer of the organism's total motivation to this linguistic system, man developed a self-reflective type of consciousness. Interest and attention became deflected from the functional relationship of organism and environment and, to a large extent, centered on the *appearance*, or *image* of the self and its behavior. Man's symbolic function became systematized into the special organization or entity I have called the "I"-persona. The organism's total identity, its primary interest and feeling, was no longer experienced as a reaction common to the species as a whole. The reaction of the organism no longer sprang from a common center of motivation, of feeling, and of being. . . .

The individuality became a private principality separate from every other, and at the same time the organism of the individual as a whole suffered a loss in the exercise of its primary function in relation to the surrounding environment. Men came to judge one another on the superficial basis of their mental agreement or disagreement. That is, they "liked" or "disliked" one another on grounds of the imaginal advantage of their separate "I"-personae. This bias marked the origin of the symbolic distinction between "good" and "bad." It marked the origin of the superficial dichotomy of "right" and "wrong." In short, it introduced the biologically extraneous element of self-advantage and morality among individuals in place of a relational coordination that rests on the common advantage of the species as a whole. Men did not any longer function in cooperation with their fellows or with their common environment. The solidarity of the species was henceforth submerged in favor of the pre-eminence of *me*—of the "I"-persona.

Despite the clearly biological foundations for this reasoning, Burrow turns to poets and eminent writers for evidence of the articulate longings in some men for the ancient unity which they have lost by becoming "separate" individuals. Gorky, Ibsen, and Sherwood Anderson are quoted, and Burrow gives a passage from Olive Schreiner on the dawning sense of selfhood in a child. He takes a paragraph from Cassirer's *Essay on Man* to explain what happens to human consciousness as a result of symbol-manipulation:

No longer can man confront reality immediately; he cannot see it, as it were, face to face. Physical reality seems to recede in proportion as man's symbolic activity advances. Instead of dealing with the things themselves man is in a sense constantly conversing with himself. He has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols or rites that he cannot see or know anything except by the interposition of this artificial medium. His situation is the same in the theoretical as in the practical sphere. Even here man does not live in a world of hard facts, or according to his immediate needs and desires. He lives rather in the midst of imaginary emotions, in hopes and fears, in illusions and disillusions, in his fantasies and dreams.

One might see, here, why Plato felt that the world of "becoming," with which science is

concerned, was of secondary importance and ought not to become a preoccupation of serious men in quest of knowledge, since knowledge was not of this world of changing appearances, but of the self and the needs of the soul.

Another modern psychologist, Frank Barron, at the University of California in Berkeley, has written perceptively about the "split" in the original, unitary consciousness. He observes (in a contribution to *The Study of Lives*, 1963):

Perhaps the most basic antinomy psychologically is the distinction between self and not-self. It is fundamental to common sense and may be thought of as the first achievement of the ego or the beginning of perceptual structure. All of logic and causal thinking begins with this distinction and its corollaries. Whether things are going on inside us or outside us is the first distinction we must make. With that established, space and time can take on separate existence; distinct events at specific space-time coordinates can be described, and, above all, our separate self belongs to us alone, our mind is distinct and separate from all other minds.

This, then, is the "normal," the common-sense condition which all human beings accept. And yet both Burrow and Barron point out the persistence of longings, often among the most sane men we know, for "the feeling of unity with the entire universe, utter merging of self in the infinite, a relinquishing of the experience of boundedness and separateness of subject from object." What if "normality" is not staying exactly the way we are, as common sense might suggest, but involves instead a consistent endeavor to recover the primordial unity we once enjoyed, and which poets and visionaries apparently taste from time to time? Other ages and times—indeed, whole civilizations—have founded their conceptions of the good upon this idea. Mr. Barron continues:

A temporary abandonment of the distinction between subject and object can be a great and freeing delight, for though we make our antinomies for profit, we suffer a loss with them as well. . . . To enjoy the advantages of sanity and at the same time have access to the arcane pleasures popularly imputed to psychosis has been the goal of many men throughout the ages. Plato has unfortunately been vastly

misunderstood in the passage in which he links poetic inspiration to "madness." The Greeks were fully aware of the dreariness and stultification of human personality represented by psychosis the "madness" they praised was always something added, a gift from the god, and not, as we know psychosis to be, something subtracted. It was an extension of clarity and coherence of perception; furor or frenzy were certainly not of its essence, although they might indeed play a part if Dionysus had a hand in the game. . . . To express this in the terms of our modern psychology, it appears that creative individuals have a remarkable affinity for what in most of us is unconscious or preconscious. . . . The concepts of discipline, responsibility, and committed, enduring attention are all too often left out of account in descriptions of the creative process, simply because what so often impresses us in the personality of the creative artist is unconventionality, self-assertiveness, independence of judgment, impulsiveness, a skipping wit, and a tendency to take lightly what we are wont to take seriously.

Is there any evidence that this view of the human being is beginning to affect the sciences devoted to man? Ernest Becker's book, already spoken of, is a direct consideration of what happens to the human sciences when the realities of man as a subject are lost sight of in the interest of morally neutral objectivity. And last year, in San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Inc., published *Sanctions for Evil*, a large volume which gathered together essays by sociologists, psychiatrists, political theorists, psychologists, and others, all of which deal with what is now an urgent moral issue.

Why, in this age of supposed "enlightenment," are so many evil actions permitted to continue without even effective reproach, much less serious attempts at control? The editors of *Sanctions for Evil*, Nevitt Sanford and Craig Comstock, say in their Preface that while they had been working on the book for several years when the story of the My Lai massacre became public, they moved more rapidly to complete it thereafter. The question for which they sought an answer was: How do massively destructive acts, inhumane procedures, habits or attitudes, gain social acceptance, so that there is

open sanction for evil? The Vietnam war and its massacres are current evidence of this sort of sanction; but, as these writers point out, such practices are nothing new:

. . . consider a very simple case, reported in a San Francisco paper of a century ago: "Some citizens of this city, while hunting in Marin County yesterday, came upon a large group of miserable Digger Indians. They managed to dispatch thirty of the creatures before the others ran away." We may assume that those hunters had not been appointed by the law to hunt down Indians. Yet we are not told that these early San Franciscans felt it was wrong to shoot Indians as if they were coyotes. Seemingly, the law against murder did not apply, even though the victims were helpless, not aggressive. The hunters undoubtedly felt they had a social sanction to dispatch certain kinds of people, a sanction which might take the abstract form of "the only good X is a dead X." Whether X is an Indian, a "nigger," or a "gook," the phrase serves as sanction for acts which a person would not with clear conscience commit against a member of his own group.

There are eighteen chapters in this volume, presented in four parts. Part I describes destructiveness as a social process; Part II examines psychological sources; III deals with the nature of evil, and IV considers resistance to destructiveness. In the sense of getting at the root of the problem, the two contributors to Part III, Robert N. Bellah and Charles Drekmeier, are the ones we found most interesting. Bellah traces the sanction of evil to the early religious training of Americans in the belief in their own righteousness, remarking that "the assertion of the fundamental unity of man and the assertion that whole groups of people are defective and justly subject to extreme aggression are genuinely part of our tradition." The establishment of this polarity of good and bad people leads to personification of evil in particular groups. And then, as Bellah puts it:

Another consequence of this primitive form of splitting of good and evil to which Americans have been so prone is that the good, being good, can do no evil. Any action against groups seen to be evil is justified, for the good can have only good ends in view. Thus in America the enslavement of the blacks, the mass murder of Indians, the lynching of Negroes, the atom bombing of Japanese, and the massacring of Vietnamese have all had their defenders. Other Americans have condemned these

actions and have worked to make America in many ways a humane society. But just as the army has not established an effective sanction system which would prevent My Lai and the many small My Laies that take place every day, so more generally in America we have not been able to establish effective controls over aggression against a variety of powerless out-groups.

What then ought to be done?

If we begin to specify what needs to change, perhaps the most fundamental thing is our view of man. We have lived for a long time with a model of man as one charged by a stern God to carry out his commands, a man who must be up and doing, a man in quest of mastery and success. On the basis of that model we have built a remarkably dynamic society, and we have created resources for vast enterprises such as the conquest of space. But the limitations of that activist, achieving image of man are now our greatest problem. The man narrowly pursuing mastery and success has had to repress too much of himself, to narrow his sympathies too drastically to be able to respond adequately to the deepening problems of the twentieth century. We need to be able to accept and use creatively much in our personalities which we have had to deny during the long upward climb. We need a conception of God who is not only external and commanding but also deeply inner and who speaks from depths of ourselves of which we are scarcely aware. That conception of God implies a new conception of man.

The long essay by Charles Drekmeier, "Knowledge as Virtue, Knowledge as Power," is a profoundly valuable comparison of the Socratic idea of knowledge with the Baconian view which has been adopted not only by science and technology, but also by politics and the man in the street. The displacement of values from any decisive role in modern life has been the result. Mr. Drekmeier says:

Advanced technological systems are unable to tolerate behavior that does not fall within certain categories relevant to research and production. . . . Classical liberalism, in stressing productivity and justifying production with a psychology of unlimited desire and a theory that removed the onus from unlimited appropriation, reduced experience to instrumental terms and encouraged a perception of the self which is essentially a self-in-opposition, which defines its boundaries in competitive activity. . . .

It is widely held that the major factor in the growth of industrial production is knowledge. Less appreciated is the fact that scientific-technical progress has become the major basis of legitimation in industrial societies. . . . I suggest that the presuppositions of this knowledge and the tendency for instruments to become confused with purposes have dangerous or at least highly ambiguous consequences. When man is placed in the service of knowledge, the only measure of knowledge is its own development and the growth of the forces of production. But in this process science loses its rationale, its telos, which has been the safeguarding and amelioration of human existence.

Science, or the identification of objects separate from ourselves, and their manipulation through abstract control, is a part of being human—it is a specialization of the means by which we come to be aware of ourselves—yet it is also the source of man's inhumanity to man, since the submergence of our larger sense of self in the mechanisms of control shuts out the meaning of countless subtle relationships. Mr. Drekmeier sees this clearly, suggesting it in his own way, as have Burrow and Ernest Becker before him.

In the broad view, this shutting-out process can be seen as the origin of the sanctions of evil in human life. In isolation through a life lived in terms of abstractions, the man no longer feels his kinship with others. The project for today, then, is to learn to see objectively without closing out as nonexistent or unimportant what our abstractions do not include. As Drekmeier says:

This "ignoring" is the essence of modern immorality. Willful ignorance of the systemic nature of our world, this ignoring is perhaps not so far removed from the classical understanding of evil as ignorance. Sin and evil are the separation of man from man, man from his environment, man's own ego from the other parts of his personality. Of course without separation there is nothing to overcome. The experience of love makes clear the dependence of fulfillment and happiness on the act of overcoming the separation. Love preserves the other (who is both subject and object of love) while seeking union. Evil, then, is best seen as the inability or unwillingness to overcome separation. It is the refusal to see the world as process.

Here, surely, is insight approximating "discovery," for it represents the use of many modern approaches to the study of man, and ends by lending their weight to a Platonic maxim and a Buddhist diagnosis.

REVIEW

RUSSIAN ENIGMA

AFTER reading Vasily Grossman's *Forever Flowing*, a brooding reverie concerned with Russia under Stalin, in the form of a novel (Harper & Row, 1972, \$6.95), one cannot help but think of other books which make the reader know that Grossman is drawing on actualities, not imagined horrors. To speak of "Stalinism" is too easy a classification for the dark epoch which this story covers. Why were the Russians so vulnerable to the almost unbelievable evils which he made into common practice? How could they "believe" so completely? How is such "faith" made? Fear played a large part, but fear alone could not create that monolithic psychic unity.

The books we are thinking of are not books which are especially anti-Russian or anti-Communist, since these have only superficial intentions. One is Vladimir Tchernavin's *I Speak for the Silent Prisoners of the Soviets*. Tchernavin loved his native land, was wholly sympathetic to the Russian revolution, but had the misfortune of being an intellectual of upper class origins, and so spent years in a concentration camp. Unlike most of the others in the camps, he managed to escape. Another book which brings to the reader the grain of life in the camps of Siberia and Kazakstan is *The Dark Side of the Moon* (Scribners, 1947), anonymously compiled by a friend of General Wladyslaw Sikorski. It is made up of numerous personal reports by individuals who were among the *million* Poles collected from the Soviet-occupied area of Poland after the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 1939. Under agreement with the Nazis, the Soviet troops took over some 78,000 square miles and immediately began registering particular Poles for deportation. These included all those with *any* known political opinions, socialists first of all. The account of the sufferings of these people in the camps is pieced together from documents written by scores of individuals, old men, women, sometimes young girls.

Why should we remind ourselves of these terrible things? Because they are a part of the common stuff of human nature. That these things happened in Russia is a fact, but no great help in producing an explanation. We cannot say, for example, that the Russians were latecomers to European civilization, as the Czechs, with some excuse, might feel like saying, since the Germans, who were wholly civilized by "progressive" standards, literate, and scientific, had camps that were if anything worse. Nor can people who have a Tolstoy and a Dostoevsky in their history be disposed of as barbarians. It is the layer or streak of barbarism that, on occasion, becomes apparent in *all* civilized peoples that we need to understand.

So Solzhenitsyn, and now, Vasily Grossman, are of great help to our understanding, and a humanizing influence on thought, once we realize that their works are grounded on unquestioned realities.

Forever Flowing is Russian character, Russian aspiration, and Russian agony, seen mostly through the eyes of Ivan Grigoryevich, after his release from some thirty years of imprisonment and hard labor. He comes from the camp to Moscow, sees an old friend who is now a successful scientific bureaucrat, encounters on the street the man who betrayed him to the secret police, but apparently knew nothing of what this—also now "successful"—contemporary had done to him, and goes on to Leningrad, where he finds employment in a factory manned by handicapped people. He has a brief interlude of love with his landlady, a sensitive woman made prematurely old by what she has seen—the deliberate starvation of millions of kulaks in 1929-30—and other immeasurable cruelties. They talk together, tell about their experiences, think about their meaning. A quiet compassion has come to them both, from witnessing so much betrayal and pain. Then the woman dies of cancer of the lung, and Grigoryevich is left alone with his thoughts.

But these thoughts, throughout, really constitute the book. Love of freedom has been Ivan's practical undoing, starting in his student days. He argued with his teachers at the university about dialectical materialism, and criticized dictatorship openly in a lecture hall. For this he was exiled for three years. After a year or two of freedom, he suffered nineteen years of continuous imprisonment.

One particularly poignant chapter concerns the informers—four types of "Judases"—who are given an imaginary trial, in which their crimes against their fellows are described, and they make some defense of what they did. Their denunciations were almost always faked, their victims almost always innocent. Why did they do it? To secure their own safety, in a period when everyone could be suspect.

The life of each informer is considered. This one had his reasons. There were terrible pressures upon him. He betrayed his friends out of mindless desperation. And so with them all. They all had their reasons. The defense goes to great lengths to show that the informers did only what the State and the Party demanded of them, and they informed on the condemned class. ". . . the people scheduled for destruction belonged only to particular social and ideological strata." And the accusers, after all, behaved as their weak human nature dictated.

The counsel for defense elaborates on all the good things that the informers did, despite the betrayal of their comrades, ending:

Yes, yes, they are not guilty, they were forced to it by gloomy, leaden forces, and trillions of tons of pressure were put upon them, and among the living there is no one who is innocent. All are guilty, including you, Comrade Prosecutor, and you, defendant, and I, who am considering the defendant, the prosecutor, and the judge.

Yet the fact remained that many of the informers now had good jobs, wore well-tailored clothes, ate gourmet food, while their victims were either dead, still in the camps, or often

completely broken human beings. When Pinegin, who had denounced Grigoryevich, met him accidentally on the street, he was shocked and frightened until he realized Ivan did not know what he had done. Then, as a gesture of friendship, he offered him some money:

With alert and sad curiosity Ivan Grigoryevich looked unrepentantly into Pinegin's eyes. And Pinegin for one second only, just one brief second or perhaps two, felt he would gladly sacrifice his country house, his government decorations and honors, his authority and his power, his strength, his beautiful wife, his successful sons engaged in studying the nucleus of the atom—that he would give up every last bit of it, just so as not to feel those eyes resting upon him.

"Well, good luck, Pinegin," said Ivan Grigoryevich, and went off in the direction of the railway station.

The state of mind of the prisoners in the camps was astonishingly uniform. The camp population was made up for the most part of thieves and petty criminals, and political offenders who were usually quite innocent. The politicals had been informed against, or were subject merely to suspicion. Yet many of these persons regarded all the others as guilty—a "mistake" had been made only in their case. Very few dared to challenge the awesome righteousness of the Soviet State:

An emaciated, twitchy former official of the Youth Comintern, a hair-splitter and dialectician, explained to Ivan Grigoryevich that he had committed no crimes against the Party, but that the security organs were right in arresting him as a spy and a double-dealer. For even though he had committed no crimes he nonetheless belonged to a stratum hostile to the Party, a stratum which had given rise to double-dealers, Trotskyites, opportunists, whiners, complainers, and skeptics.

The thieves robbed the political prisoners without interference, regarding them as "fascists" and fair game. A few older men, who had as Mensheviks or anarchists actually opposed the government, were in a class by themselves. A person imprisoned for due cause was a wonder in the camps. Such individuals were a confusing

intrusion of reality in a situation fabricated by group belief. As Grossman puts it:

But the surprising fact was that the people who had been imprisoned for due cause, for active and genuine opposition to the Soviet state, thought that all the political zeks were innocent, that all of them, without exception, should be freed. But those who had been framed and imprisoned on the basis of cooked-up, fake charges—and there were millions of them—were disposed to propose an amnesty only for themselves, and made effort to confirm the authentic guilt of all the other falsely accused "spies," "kulaks," and "wreckers"; they were quite willing to excuse the cruelty of the state.

Toward the end Grossman has musing chapters on Lenin and Stalin. He wonders about the contradictions between Lenin as a private man of sensibility and his public ruthlessness and destruction of democratic structures, even while proclaiming all power to the Soviets, which never did get any power. He thinks about Stalin as the destroyer of the heritage of Lenin's good qualities.

After the revolution, under Stalin, the new State had no further use for daring or imaginative men. What it needed was clerks of narrow honesty who would do what they were told:

Terror and dictatorship swallowed up those who had created them. And the state, intended as the means to an end itself turned out to be the end. The people who created it had conceived of it as a means to the realization of their ideals. But it turned out that their dreams, their ideals, were merely a means, a tool, of the great and dread state. Instead of being a servant, as it was meant to be, the state had become a grim tyrant.

The people weren't the ones who needed the terror of 1919, who destroyed freedom of speech and of the press, who required the death of millions of peasants—for the peasants made up the largest segment of the people. It was not the people who in 1937 needed prisons and camps crammed to overflowing, who needed the ruinous resettlement in the taiga of the Crimean Tatars, the Kalmyks, the Balkars, the Russified Bulgarians and Greeks, the Chechens, and the Volga Germans. Nor were the people the ones who destroyed the freedom to plant and sow as one pleased and the workers' right to strike. Nor was it the people who heaped up all those

monstrous taxes and surtaxes and levies on the production cost of consumer goods.

The state had become the master. What had been envisioned as national in form had become national in content; it had become the essence. And the socialist element, which had been envisaged as the content, had been forced out reduced to mere phraseology, mere external form, a shell. And it was with tragic clarity that the sacred law of all life defined itself: freedom of the individual human being is higher than anything else, and there is no goal, no purpose in the world, for which it may be sacrificed.

This is Ivan musing, and Grossman writing. The question is this: Why did so many Russians prefer to believe in Stalin, to the exclusion of believing in one another?

COMMENTARY

TWO VIEWS OF THE VIETNAM WAR

Two current reports—an article by a New York University psychologist, and a book review—provide rawly shocking material for any consideration of "sanctions for evil." (See lead article.) The psychologist, Chaim Shatan (*New York Times*, May 6), tells about disturbed combat veterans of the Vietnam War. Some of these have formed "rap groups" to help one another, since they distrust "establishment" psychiatry or can show no "service connection" for their trouble.

One man fears not knowing a "friend" from an "enemy" when he walks down the street. Discharged five years ago, he is still in the grip of the "post-Vietnam syndrome." Others feel guilt for the maimed and dead on both sides. They speak of "paying their dues" for surviving intact, picking self-defeating fights and provoking rejection by others. Common is the feeling of being victimized, "deceived, useless, betrayed." Resentment of exoneration of high command officers for atrocities sometimes becomes antagonism toward society at large. A rage which once had release through counter-insurgency action builds up. "Once home, veterans have great difficulty mastering these impulses in the face of the ambivalent civilian reception." The hatred generated by combat brutalization can no longer be directed at the enemy, but the reflexes of hatred remain. Dr. Shatan says that the most poignant of the difficulties of these men is their doubt that they will be able to feel love again. Taught to avoid close friendships, "lest a buddy should die," these ex-soldiers suffer from unconsummated grief—grief denied expression by brutalization—and now they realize that compassion is missing from their lives.

In the *Nation* for May 1, Richard Walton describes Richard Barnett's account (in *Roots of War*) of the "security managers" of the country—"those awesomely bright, fearfully well-informed, prodigiously energetic men":

Barnett explains, convincingly to me, how these super-achievers, moral in their personal lives, could do such appalling things to faceless and nameless but flesh-and-blood human beings in the poor nations of the world. He discusses their capacity for the abstraction and quantification that turn human beings into numbers. He discusses their chauvinism, their puritanical self-righteousness, their passion for controlling human aspiration. . . . Barnett's judgment upon them may be as close as the responsible politicians will come to being brought to justice. . . .

Yet these men had their power from the people. Sanctions for evil of these dimensions are not narrowly derived.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

A CHANGE OF SUBJECT

SOONER or later, people who write good books about education stop writing about how to improve the schools. Good ideas about improving the schools don't seem to take hold—they don't have a lasting effect. The same sort of comment applies to discussions of penal law and prisons and the courts in relation to crime. Commissions are appointed, reports are made, recommendations are offered, but almost nothing happens to reduce the crime rate. Similarly, hundreds of conferences and meetings are held to determine what ought to be done to control the numerous abuses and excesses of technology, but few of the conferees speak optimistically of the results of these get-togethers, although there are from time to time reports of the reduction of some abuses.

In most cases the solution offered seems to be some sort of agency that is intended to exercise supervision or control, in behalf of the general good. In education, that agency has long been the public schools. The police and the courts are supposed to maintain external order in society, while an agency has yet to be created in behalf of the ecological interests of all the people—that is, an agency with both authority and power. Actually, such an agency is hardly conceivable.

We know, however, that the agencies we have perform very inadequately; and, as we suggested, their improvement seems extremely difficult if not impossible. What then is the trouble?

One answer to this question was given in last week's "Children" in a quotation from Willis Harman. He said that numerous individual micro-decisions, apparently innocuous when regarded one by one, add up to seriously destructive macro-decisions, when taken together in their total effect. We see only the disorders, not the tiny interchanges by which they are caused, and as a

result suppose that the controlling agencies are not doing their job. This is true enough, but the diagnosis is superficial. They *can't* do their job, because what is expected of them is beyond the realm of possibility. The real responsibility lies in all those little micro-decisions.

This is obviously true, say, of what people expect of the police and the courts. And it is even more true of the schools. So, sooner or later, teachers and writers really concerned with education stop writing about the schools and come into focus on larger questions—such as why the schools keep on failing to do what they are expected to do.

School systems are now enormous and it is hardly possible for any one writer to look at them as a whole. For example, in the morning's mail we received two things about the schools. One was a reprint of an article by Adah Maurer which appeared in *Freedom News* for October, 1971, in which this writer continues her campaign against corporal punishment in the California public schools. A great many people, she shows, are unaware of its legality in this state:

Just as with child battery and abuse, corporal punishment thrives in the shadows. No department of educational psychology in any university teaches that hitting children is an acceptable educational procedure. On the other hand, they never mention that it is wrong either. It is simply never discussed.

Ten State Colleges were asked what they taught about paddling. Three bothered to reply. "It hasn't come up." "We assume that our students have no need for such instruction." "The subject is well covered in supplementary reading."

Yet the law permits. And custom decrees it to be a fact of everyday routine in 80 per cent of California schools. A survey made in 1964 drew poor response, but enough frightened anonymous notes arrived to indicate that cruelty . . . was outrageous in many schools, particularly in the inner cities and isolated rural areas, but even the suburbs were not immune. Yet nine out of ten knowledgeable people will look you straight in the eye and gasp, "Why, that's against the law!"

People refuse to believe the horrifying facts. . .

Those state colleges must be out of touch. The other thing about schools we got in the morning's mail was John Holt's new book, *Freedom and Beyond* (E. P. Dutton, \$7.95), which starts out this way:

"Maybe the time has come when we should stop talking about 'education'," George Dennison said to me, about the time his book *The Lives of Children* was coming out. I was not quite sure what he meant. I thought he might mean that even to use the word "education" suggested wrongly that it was a process separate from life. .

At that moment, it certainly did not look as if the time had come for me to stop talking about "education." In the next two years I was to talk to and with hundreds of people at meetings, large and small, almost all in schools or colleges and supposedly about "education." But more often than not and particularly if we had time to get deeply into the subject, we found ourselves talking not about education but about such things as human nature, the meaning of life, the relation between children and adults, or American society. It has become hard to talk seriously about schools anymore, even with people who work on or in them, without finding soon that the subject of the talk has somehow moved outside the school building.

This is from the first chapter, which Holt ends with a consideration of the idea that the schools need to have more "freedom" in them. This leads to the more difficult consideration that there is very little understanding of the nature of freedom. So the next chapter looks at this question.

But why is it that the schools can't be made to work well? There are dozens of answers in this book, and we'll get to them from week to week, since *Freedom and Beyond*, like Holt's other books, will be "reviewed" over and over again. Here we'll look at the answer he gives in the last chapter, which is that there might be some hope for the schools if they were really meant to do what we say they're supposed to do, but since they have various other purposes, not exactly concealed, but not talked about either, they don't work well at all for helping children to grow up. We say that that's what they're for, and that,

surely, is the purpose of every dedicated teacher. But, as Holt says:

Universal compulsory schools are not and *never were meant to be* humane institutions, and most of their fundamental purposes, tasks, missions, are not humane. Our schools, school people, above all school reformers are ineffective because they are working at cross purposes, because most of what they give with one hand they have to take back with the other. Of the many tasks they have been given to do, some they cannot do alone, some they cannot do well, some they ought not to be doing at all. But above all else, these tasks are in conflict with one another. Good or not, necessary or not, unavoidable or not, they cannot be done together in the same place at the same time. The more we try to do of some, the less by necessity we can do of others.

Human growth means developing the ability "to see a wide range of choices, to choose wisely among them, and to recognize and change choices that prove to be unwise." It means that the human being acquires "a strong sense of his own freedom, dignity, and worth, and of those same qualities in others." This is the natural task and interest of teachers, and especially those who are drawn by their ideals to go into teaching.

But—and here is the rub—the schools have other missions other functions. They acquired them slowly, over many years. Perhaps nobody ever planned deliberately that they should have them. But they are there. One of these we might call the custodial function. Society demands of schools, among other things, that they be a place where for many hours of the day, many days of the year, children or young people can be shut up and so got out of everyone else's way. Mom doesn't want them hanging around the house, the citizens do not want them out in the streets, and workers do not want them in the labor force. What then do we do with them? How do we get rid of them? We put them in schools. That is an important part of what schools are for. They are a kind of day jail for kids.

Many teachers get very upset and angry when I speak of schools being in the jail business. They say, as I would once have said myself, that they personally are *not* in the jail business. Perhaps not. But the fact remains that if their students did not go to school, and within that school to their class and even their desk or seat—if they did not do that they would go to jail.

What about those great places where
experiments that are reported here and elsewhere?
they
Holt discusses some of these wonderful
they do happen is not at issue. Sometimes, by a
inspiration, great things happen in a school. But
sad story of what happened at the school that
McNeill's was about.
it's like a jail, again. Which means that genius and
teachers to play at concert pitch, over the level of
always present, but this does not provide a plan

Much of Holt's book is devoted to various
it before long.

FRONTIERS On the Printed Word

SOME years ago, in one of the magazines, a writer on special subjects did an article on the fact that no matter how much she "researched" a question, she always found, afterward, that there was more she should have known when she wrote. No one realizes this as acutely as a serious journalist, or any writer who is interested in accuracy, and not in manipulating opinion. There is something unreliable about even the most conscientious report—a situation which can be relieved only by the general realization that *no* report can ever cover the endless flux of either natural or human reality. Plato might have had something like this in mind when he minimized the value of written communication as producing only "the illusion of wisdom."

It is an illusion which widespread literacy imposes on practically everyone these days. We recognize this vaguely, but are nonetheless convinced that our lives would be crude and primitive without the daily newspaper. Sometimes, however, it is brought home to us how much we live by the fabric of invention, not subject merely to the inevitable incompleteness of printed reports. Publication of the *Pentagon Papers* was an example of the shocks we get from time to time, bringing, as Hannah Arendt has suggested, appalling evidence of deceit in the high places of government. But there are also exaggeration and plain carelessness of the sort illustrated by Russell B. Nye in the May *Progressive*. Mr. Nye shows how estimates of the number of American draft-eligible war-resisters who have taken refuge in Canada spiralled as high as 100,000, within a period of two years. Starting in 1968 to track down the sources of these claims, Mr. Nye found that newspaper men were all quoting other newspaper men. Guesses ranged from 4,000 to 10,000, while the initial inflated figure, Mr. Nye thinks, came from a Toronto antidraft group. The *New York Times* estimates skipped around wildly, once going from "several

thousand" to 60,000 within months—and after the *Times* said it, everybody else seemed sure it was right. Meanwhile, a Montreal resisters group offered a figure of 100,000 in 1971, admitting that it might be high. Lately, Mr. Nye says, the papers seem to have settled on 70,000 as the approved number.

He concludes: "Canadian embassy and consular sources that have no ax to grind will, if asked, estimate about 10,000 draft evaders in Canada (about the same number of Canadians have volunteered for the U.S. Army), but nobody asks them." But whether that figure includes men who are illegally in Canada is not made clear. Mr. Nye has reason to think that the number of draft-resisters in Canada is really unknowable.

Can what happened, here, be the same as that which led to the deceptions described in the *Pentagon Papers*? That is, was the primary interest in supplying these figures the creation of a strong, anti-war "image" instead of reporting facts? (We find this *Progressive* item a bit embarrassing since in MANAS for Feb. 9 we quoted a columnist as saying, "The usual estimate is that up to 70,000 men have fled the country to avoid the draft.") Maybe the actual figure *is* higher than the Canadian consular authorities reveal, but Mr. Nye's point is that none of the reporters he questioned could or would point to an authoritative source for their figures. Perhaps his conclusion is the only one we can draw: "As for me, I trust the press no more than before, nor do I have any more information than before."

Is a world without "image-making" possible, or even conceivable? The initial hazards of getting accurate information at second-hand, as in a report, are bad enough, but when reports come to be regarded as little more than the raw material for creating an impression, for consolidating a point of view, or generating a feeling, then the idea of a world without *professional* image-makers begins to seem more and more desirable.

That may have been the idea that Socrates had in mind, in the way he went about his work of

education or teaching. He asked iconoclastic questions. He hoped to generate a field for the attainment of difficult but reliable moral convictions, while exposing the fallibilities of too-easy belief.

Is there, one wonders, a faint reflection of the Socratic idea—even if hardly conscious—in the present and unexpected decline in the registrations for many of the universities and colleges of the country, this year? A report in the *Los Angeles Times* for April 30 on the drop in enrollment on several of the California University campuses, with greater drops in state and private college enrollments, suggests this possibility. Ivy League universities in the East, too, are said to have reported a decline in applications. While the increasingly high cost of education is one explanation offered, some admissions officers speak of "a degree of disenchantment with higher education on the part of students and parents alike." It is also said that a college degree is no longer a guarantee of a job. The California Institute of Technology reports a decrease in freshman applications of 20 per cent. The director of admissions at Cal Tech said:

We attribute it partly to the high cost of private education and partly to the disenchantment with science and engineering that is going on around the country. Many young people seem to feel it's science's fault, technology's fault, that things are so polluted. They feel that technology has made a botch of things in general and it's better to go into social sciences, where you deal with people.

This admissions officer believes that scientists and engineers will be needed to get rid of pollution, and that next year "common sense" will return, bringing applications to Cal Tech.

The general drop in enrollment, however, began last fall, for many of the University of California campuses. And a state college official said that among bright, affluent students, the determination *not* to go to college is beginning to be regarded with some respect.