

## KINGS MUST BECOME PHILOSOPHERS

WITH a touch of melancholy, Plato speaks in the *Republic* of the small likelihood that his dream of an Educational Society would be realized, since its requirement was that philosophers become kings, or kings philosophers, and the condition of man in Plato's time gave little encouragement that this could ever come about.

Is there anything that can be said of the condition of man, today, that might support a more optimistic view? The most casual look at the modern world suggests the opposite, yet how much do we really know about how kings—or any other people—become philosophers?

One change in the condition of man since Plato's time is obvious. There are many more kings. That is, many more people are acknowledged to be king in name, for this is the meaning of democracy—the people rule. But if the people now rule, they are certainly not philosophers, it will be said, since they are ruling very badly. On this all will agree.

Yet there is something to be added to this agreement. It is that the idea of a change in rulers is no longer a source of hope for a change in the human condition. If people are now the rulers, a change in rulers could only bring an abandonment of the principle of self-rule, and this, whatever else it might mean, would not be regarded by anyone as progress. If in a democracy the people are already kings, then a popular revolution would be a nominal transaction. The people have the power now. If their condition is to be bettered, this can come about only as a result of their being better rulers. In short, to improve their lot, they have no choice but to become philosophers.

What, in the Socratic view, is the first step toward becoming a philosopher? It is clear enough what Socrates thought about this question. Before a man will develop an interest in thinking clearly, he has to suffer confusion. Thus bringing confusion was always Socrates' initial role. He went about Athens spreading uncertainty. And not only

Socrates. Other teachers of philosophy followed the same disturbing course. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Krishna's first instruction to his disciple, Arjuna, had the effect of rendering him disconsolate and confused. The novice, then, in philosophy, is a man of much confusion and many complaints. One might conclude that a calm and serene situation is no place in which to learn philosophy. For the man intent on understanding what it means to love the truth, shipwreck and disorder may make a better environment.

It follows, then, that if you ask a real philosopher for instruction, he is likely to begin by destroying your certainties and impugning your faith. Socrates, as we know, brought consternation to his hearers by asking them unsettling questions. His effort, as he sometimes explained, was to teach people how to find their own way. He said, in effect, what another lover of his fellows, Eugene V. Debs, declared many centuries later: "My brothers, if I could lead you out of this wilderness, somebody else could lead you back in." So Socrates dealt in questions, not answers. His idea as a teacher was to help men to become independent of teachers. A philosopher-king, he believed, would be a self-governed, self-informed, self-reliant man.

Now what, exactly, is a teacher? He is a man with some capacity to mirror the nature of things so that people, by using this focus, will eventually learn to see for themselves. The end of teaching is freedom. And since freedom is knowledge of necessity—the way things are—teaching is the art of "telling it like it is." But since teachers are not infallible authorities, and since even if they were, there would still be the problem of filtering the truth through the misconceptions of the learners, the good teacher never "imparts" truth. He teaches not discoveries but a method of discovery.

Now the question before us is this: Can the force of circumstance substitute for a teacher? The answer ought to be yes. If a teacher is a mirror of

life and its circumstances, why shouldn't the circumstances themselves be able to generate the same questions that are asked by a teacher? The main difference between learning from a teacher and learning from circumstances is probably that a teacher, by showing that he has some kind of knowledge, may inspire confidence in the pupil that he, too, may grow in understanding. There is also the consideration that a teacher is compassionate. Frequently he is able to inform about circumstances without letting their full weight fall upon the learner. Unassisted learners are often crushed by the weight of circumstances, and one reason a man becomes a teacher is in order to reduce this possibility.

Yet men are sometimes able to deduce certain truths of philosophy from the force of circumstances alone. A prime illustration of this is found in an article "Democracy and the Problem of War," by John Somerville, in the May/June *Humanist*. Mr. Somerville, who is a teacher of philosophy, starts out with a description of the present-day "character and consequences of war." He shows that the nature of war has changed. In the past, he says, war did not "threaten the existence of the planet earth or the continuity of the human race." But today: "War is capable of wiping out not only all existing human values, but the very possibility of creating any future human values to replace them." This is the immeasurable threat of nuclear war. It is a threat which presses the writer to ask basic questions:

Is there any longer the same meaning—or any meaning—in the traditional distinction between a just and unjust war when wars will be fought with thermonuclear weapons? What concept of human justice would be compatible with the total annihilation of all actual and potential human values? Has not the world reached the point where the responsible philosopher must unambiguously teach that armed warfare between sovereign states has become unjust and immoral, something which can never again be regarded as the lesser of two evils, which henceforth must always be regarded as the greatest of all evils? To take this view demands courage and may invite reprisals; but is there any other view that is humanly defensible in the year 1967?

Here is a man hearkening to circumstances for instruction in a truth of philosophy. What is that

truth? It is a truth maintained by Socrates in terms that are virtually a corollary of what Mr. Somerville proposes is the case with war. "It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong," is the Socratic proposition. As Hannah Arendt pointed out in her *New Yorker* (Feb. 25) article—which took this proposition as its text and theme Socrates had great difficulty in persuading any of his hearers of the truth of this proposition. Even his closest admirers were skeptical. Discussing the credibility gap concerning this view, Miss Arendt observes that Socrates' proposition belongs to an order of value that remains unperceived except for those devoted to the examined life. In Socrates' time, only intense reflection could produce conviction of the truth in this proposition. As she put it:

To the philosopher—or rather, to man insofar as he is a thinking being—this ethical proposition about doing and suffering wrong is no less compelling than mathematical truth. But to man insofar as he is citizen, an acting being concerned with the world and the public welfare rather than with his own well-being—including for instance his "immortal soul" whose "health" should have precedence over the needs of a perishable body—the Socratic statement is not true at all.

What is the common form of the denial of the Socratic proposition? Essentially, it is the moral argument for a "just" war. Men cannot be left to their own guidance in life. The authority and, if need be, the power of the community are required to keep them in shape. Even war, as the tool of power, may be needed to make them behave. That is the argument.

Mr. Somerville challenges this argument by giving evidence that in recent years the war-making power of the social community (the State) has been used not to increase order but to disturb it—to pull the lives of people out of shape. And the central principle of democracy, self-rule, has been violated again and again. Speaking of the constitutional provision that only Congress has the right to declare war, he points out:

The actual problems arise in a different way through situations in which there was no direct attack on us, and no action by any power large enough to give rise to fears for our immediate security. This

was the way in the Mexican war of the 1840's, the Korean war, and the present war in-Vietnam. In these cases there was ample time for Congressional deliberation, or even a national plebiscite, as to whether what was at stake was worth a war or not. But the pattern followed by the Executive was to order into action military units of so small a size and on so limited a scale that the operation could be referred to as a mere police action, or as a mission of advisers, part of the conduct of foreign policy short of war. Then, when our soldiers began to be killed, it was asserted that they must naturally be protected in the performance of their duties by sending reinforcements. As the casualties increased, the scale of operations increased, until everyone had to admit it was a war although it had never been declared, nor even discussed, as a war before the sacrifices of life were ordered. In his day, Henry David Thoreau on the first page of his *Civil Disobedience*, made this penetrating observation: "Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals . . . for, in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure."

Now it is true that such arguments, which are superficially concerned with the *unmanageability* of war, rather than its essential wrong, are not the same as the ideal, Socratic declaration: *It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong*. But Mr. Somerville's article accumulates evidence which, in total, amounts to the same thing. This is in the nature of instruction from circumstances, which presents *weight* rather than principles. We might say simply that for a thinking man, the weight makes the principle become visible, and inescapable. That is what Mr. Somerville says: "Clearly, a new moral evaluation must be undertaken."

If you are willing to take a metaphysical view of the pressure of circumstances, you could say that, as the underlying causes mature, it presents precisely that aspect of life which men have left unexamined—concerning which they have refused to philosophize. For those laggard in the human obligation of self-understanding, circumstances become the agent of the retributive principle which the Greeks called Nemesis and the Buddhists Karma. By this means experience, as teacher, *demand*s attention. Ethical principle is now also embodied as brute fact.

Mr. Somerville makes the circumstances he describes into an occasion compelling philosophic decision by individuals. He proposes that the citizen-rulers of a democracy have now both need and necessity to become philosophers. As he puts it:

It is important to note that war as we are speaking of it is not an activity of individuals as individuals. It is not even an activity of large groups as large groups. The sovereign state, through its government, is the only kind of large group which possesses the resources, power and authority necessary to carry on the kind of war which constitutes our problem. It is even more important to note that war can be carried on only if individuals as individuals agree to participate. In a sense, it is first a matter between the individual and his conscience, then it is a matter between the individual and his government.

Considering these facts one need not be simply fatalistic or pessimistic about war. It is far from being a phenomenon which is beyond the control of human beings, like the gradual cooling of the sun or the expansion of the universe in space. Although war is a social phenomenon, it is also individually voluntary in a very high degree, and in a way that makes it humanly controllable. In point of fact, it is more controllable than government itself. In a large part, government is something done to me rather than anything I do; something often silent, elusive, of which I may not even be conscious. It does much of its work through the accepted routines of normal life, by inertia, as it were. The individual, as worker, consumer, or citizen, may never be aware of myriads of enforced regulations standards and prohibitions which enter into and determine in so many ways the warp and woof of his daily living conditions in regard to the buildings in which he dwells and works, his supply of water and other utilities, all that goes into buying and selling, education, entertainment, travel, and the whole social and economic spectrum. To a large extent, I can be governed without knowing it, but I can never fight a war without knowing it. Government without consent of the governed is relatively easy to bring about. War without consent of the warriors is impossible. Conscience, if it has the courage of its convictions, can remain in control.

But is refusing to fight in a war the same as becoming a philosopher? Well, it may be. It may be the form of behavior which corresponds to the Socratic proposition. It may also be a decision through which a man gains more control of his own

life than he previously had. Anything which leads to self-control may be regarded as philosophical—as a step in the practice of philosophy. And if Mr. Somerville's argument stands, this step may now be an inescapable one for thinking human beings.

Could there not result from such withdrawal from the political decision—or indecision—of the majority a great disorder and lack of social control? Apart from the rejoinder that there could be no greater disorder than nuclear war—and that even limited war is hideously destructive of life—there is the fact that rejection of war has a long, long record in human history, with very little in it to confirm the claim that it causes "disorder." The idea that it is better to suffer wrong than to inflict it is far older than Socrates. It first occurs in the philosophical literature of the Orient, as the ancient principle of *Ahimsa*, or Harmlessness, and is a cardinal idea in the Buddhist faith. Since the Buddhist religion is doubtless the most philosophical religion that the world has known, it is quite natural that the practice of Buddhist priests has been, for more than two thousand years, to teach by precept and example, never by indoctrination. Harmlessness is a way of life to which serious Buddhists are committed, and a priest of Buddhism has no special authority, but only the obligation to embody as well as he can the principles taught by the Buddha. So it is that no war undertaken by a country populated by Buddhists has ever had a religious sanction. A soldier who is also a Buddhist knows that his action lacks the approval of his teacher. It can hardly be claimed on historical evidence that the harmlessness of practicing Buddhists has contributed disorder to human society. On the contrary, the adoption and popularization of the principle of *Atimsa* by Gandhi in the twentieth century, as the root principle of his activist program of non-violence, and of the liberation of India, points to an opposite view.

It could easily be argued, from the premises of Mr. Somerville's article, that the philosophy departments of modern colleges and universities would be fully justified in adopting the entire corpus of Gandhi's writings as the basis of their curriculum, since virtually every philosophical issue is considered by the great Indian leader, as soon becomes apparent

to any serious student of his work. (See the four-part series of articles on Gandhi's philosophical thinking, contributed by an Indian scholar to *MANAS* for Aug. 15, 22, 29, end Sept. 5, 1962.)

It is sometimes not realized that Gandhi placed the highest value of all on the autonomy of the individual. He would permit no externalizing analysis of human behavior. As he said in one place:

Non-violence works in a most mysterious manner. Often a man's actions defy analysis in terms of non-violence; equally often his actions may wear the appearance of violence when he is absolutely non-violent in the highest sense of the term and is subsequently found so to be. All I can then claim for my conduct is that it was, in the instances cited, actuated in the interests of non-violence.

You could say that, here, Gandhi proved himself consistent as a philosophical teacher like Socrates. He was willing to endure—indeed, he sought to preserve—the confusion that is inevitable for those who place self-discovery and the examined life above all else. He would pervert no man from doing what he thought was right, but if a man was troubled by problems of decision, and asked Gandhi what *he* thought, then Gandhi would explain the ground on which his own decisions were made. This is surely the opposite of disorder, from both a philosophical and a democratic point of view.

In a democracy, every man is a king. Where there is freedom of religion, every man is his own priest. And in a society pressed upon by the circumstances of modern war, with all that this entails, the need for every man to become a philosopher, in the primary sense of accepting full personal responsibility for acts of war and peace, can no longer be ignored.

## REVIEW

### WHAT'S MISSING IN MC LUHAN?

MARSHALL McLUHAN'S latest book, *The Medium Is the Massage* (Bantam, \$1.25), reminds you a little of the venerable folksinger who plays a harmonica, a twelve-string guitar, a *fotdella* (four-stringed, piano-like affair), cymbals, and a base drum all at once. You see this musician with gadgets hanging all over him and wonder doubtfully until he starts to play. So with McLuhan. You wonder about the tricky title, the flashy book design by Quentin Fiore (which nonetheless works), and then, after reading a little, you realize that the main objection to what McLuhan does is the unrelieved high-jinks excitement in the way he does it. He would probably claim that a sober, analytical version of what he has to say would never make his point, and he may be right about that.

McLuhan demands that you be startled by his discovery, "All media are extensions of some human faculty—psychic or physical." He wants an *ooh-ah* instead of an *uh-huh* response. He argues that we are *changed* by the new modes of electric communication:

Electric circuitry profoundly involves men with one another. Information pours upon us, instantaneously and continuously. As soon as information is acquired, it is very rapidly replaced by still newer information. Our electrically-configured world has forced us to move from the habit of data classification to the mode of pattern recognition. We can no longer build: serially, block-by-block, step-by-step, because instant communication insures that all factors of the environment and of experience co-exist in a state of active interplay.

Mr. McLuhan's fundamental contention:

Environments are not passive wrappings, but are, rather, active processes which are invisible. The ground-rules, pervasive structure, and over-all patterns of environments elude easy perception. Anti-environments, or counter-situations made by artists, provide means of direct attention and enable us to see and understand more clearly. The interplay between the old and the new environments creates many

problems and confusions. The main obstacle to a clear understanding of the effects of the new media is our deeply embedded habit of regarding all phenomena from a fixed point of view. We speak, for instance, of "gaining perspective." This psychological process derives unconsciously from print technology.

Print technology created the public. Electric technology created the mass. The public consists of separate individuals walking around with separate, fixed points of view. The new technology demands that we abandon the luxury of this posture, this fragmentary outlook. . . .

The poet, the artist, the sleuth—whoever sharpens our perception tends to be anti-social; rarely "well-adjusted," he cannot go along with the currents and trends. A strange bond exists among anti-social types in their power to see environments as they really are. This need to interface, to confront environments as they really are, is manifest in the famous story, "The Emperor's New Clothes." "Well-adjusted" courtiers, having vested interests, saw the Emperor as beautifully appointed. The "anti-social" brat, unaccustomed to the old environment, clearly saw that the Emperor "ain't got nothin' on." The new environment was clearly visible to him.

Being more showman than moralist, more scene-changer than dramatist, Mr. McLuhan is at cross-purposes with himself. In the same breath with saying that we "must" submit to the phantasmagoria of total sensuous involvement, he argues that the artist is able to see through environmental façades and to defend himself against their pseudo-reality. But if the new electric media have at last made "really living" possible, why bother?

So far as we know, Mr. McLuhan has never expanded on this point. Yet he understands and explains, after Eric Havelock, Plato's opposition to "the poets":

What the Greeks meant by "poetry" was radically different from what we mean by poetry. Their "poetic" expression was a product of a collective psyche and mind. The *mimetic* form a technique that exploited rhythm, meter, and music, achieved the desired psychological response in the listener. Listeners could memorize with greater ease what was sung than what was said. Plato attacked

this method because it discouraged disputation and argument.

But Plato did this because he was concerned with the discipline of philosophy, with the reflection which leads to self-knowledge, and with distance from all biasing or distracting environments, so that truly independent decision might become possible. Mr. McLuhan vaguely hints at this ideal from time to time, but his high-jinks style is the enemy of serious reflection.

What happens when reflection is added to the facts of the McLuhan analysis? One answer to this question is illustrated by the opening paragraphs of James F. T. Bugental's paper, "The Challenge That Is Man," in the Spring 1967 *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Dr. Bugental begins by saying that all knowledge is founded on a psychological position—"where one stands makes a difference in what one perceives (or thinks he knows)." We all stand in *some* environment, and so, as McLuhan maintains, it is important to recognize where we stand. But what then? Dr. Bugental continues:

To make a statement about a distant galaxy is to make a statement about oneself. To propose a "law" of the action of mass and energy is to offer a hypothesis about one's way of being in the world. To write a description of micro-organisms on a slide is to set forth an account of human experience. The psychology of the human condition is always the predicating set of assumptions on which all others rest. One says "I see things out there in such and such a way," neglecting to add what is even more fundamental, "I see them so because I have made such and such assumptions about what it means to see, to describe, to speak, to hear, and so on and on."

We interrupt Dr. Bugental here to suggest reference to a full-dress documentation of what he says—E. A. Burt's modern classic, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* (Anchor A4I), which declares in its last paragraph that "an adequate cosmology will only begin to be written when an adequate philosophy of mind has appeared." Dr. Bugental continues:

We may as well recognize that the attempt to circumvent this dependence of all else on an implicit

human psychology by introducing instruments does nothing of the kind. It simply adds several more assumptions to our psychology, for at one end of the line is a human observer and reporter, and at the other end is another human listener or receiver of the report.

If Mr. McLuhan had done his philosophical homework, he would be making similar statements; but he does not, and we can only conclude that he prefers show business. That he is good at show business no one will deny.

Mr. McLuhan evades recognition of the "dependence of all else on an implicit human psychology" by celebrating the complexity and impact of "new instruments." He is like a youngster in his first encounter with a kaleidoscope. He can't seem to get over the wonder of the changing configurations, and because he is not a youngster but a sophisticated grown-up he knows that there will be lots more kaleidoscopes to look through, and that they will continue to take most people by storm. You can write a lot of books about that. It may be of some service to help people to realize they have been looking, not at "reality," but into or through some kind of kaleidoscope, but the basic question, "Then what?," remains.

A therapist is a man who combines study of the commonly accepted "environment" with the development of various "anti-environments" of his own. In McLuhan's terms, he is "the poet, artist, or sleuth" who tries to help other people to sharpen their perceptions—"to see environments as they really are."

But how do you decide what "they really are"? The therapists had no answer to this question until the humanistic psychologists began to recognize and announce that it *needs* an answer. And, as Dr. Bugental shows, whatever answer you make will depend on what you think of yourself—that is, on "an implicit human psychology."

So, both psychology and environment-identification depend upon self-knowledge.

Having seen this, the humanistic psychologists were able to make some definitions of what they were about. Dr. Bugental does this with clarity:

At this time, humanistic psychology is as much distinguished by what it is not or by what it opposes as by what it affirms. However, I think this situation is a growing pain of this reborn orientation rather than a necessary and lasting condition.

Humanistic psychology has as its ultimate goal the preparation of a complete description of what it means to be alive as a human being. This is, of course, not a goal which is likely ever to be fully attained, yet it is important to recognize the nature of the task. Such a complete description would necessarily include an inventory of man's native endowment; his potentialities of feeling, thought, and action; his growth, evolution, and decline; his interaction with various enviroing conditions (and, here, a truly complete psychology of man would subsume all physical and social sciences since they bear on the human experience actually or potentially); the range and variety of experience possible to him, and his meaningful place in the universe.

We are now able to identify precisely what Mr. McLuhan leaves out: "*an inventory of man's native endowment.*" For only by understanding our native endowment can we learn how to cope with the rapidly changing environments of our time. Asides about "artists" are not enough.

## COMMENTARY

### NIRVANA COMES AT THE END

IN a comment on Henry Anderson's "Case against the Drug Culture" as reprinted in *Peace News*, where this comment appeared (March 31), Theodore Roszak extends and deepens the "case" by showing how reliance on chemical stimulation distorts thinking about the arts. "Creativity," he says, "becomes totally accessible to all comers, especially the dislocated and impatient young anxious to make a big creative splash early in life." He continues:

Friends of mine who teach at the San Francisco Art Institute, one of America's leading art schools, tell me that they have been inundated these past few years now with 18-year-old kids who want desperately (and arrogantly) to believe that all the art of the past is a hopeless drag and that every least gesture they produce—especially if it is part of a trip—is just as good as anything Rembrandt or Cézanne ever did. . . . The misfortune about all this is that it is leading an entire generation to screen out of its life depths of human experience that are invaluable and indispensable—but which can only be reached with some willingness to be humble and to accept an intellectual discipline: a willingness to live with and learn from and to grow in the company of great souls who are our natural allies in the struggle against dehumanization.

Mr. Roszak speaks of the total absorption in creative activity of several contemporary artists, observing that "the creative act grows out of disciplined study, undertaken in an attitude of love, and out of intense and lifelong preparation." He then says:

I know that I, myself, have never had my consciousness more potently—and often painfully—"expanded" than while performing Shakespeare with an amateur group or while—quite simply—reading Tolstoy. The depth of such experiences is beyond exhaustion—but it is not easily or cheaply plumbed. Ironically, many of the founding fathers of the drug culture—men like Alan Watts, Aldous Huxley, Gary Snyder—have been men of great cultivation who have brought to the drug experience a deal of disciplined study. I think this may even be true of Allen Ginsberg, when he is at his best (which is not, I fear, when he is pouring out torrents of semi-literate

verse). But unfortunately, in the hands of vulgarizers like Timothy Leary, the search for humanization becomes a facile manipulation of push-button psychic techniques, which, I feel, cheapens not only the meaning of human culture, but of human personality as well. And the cheapening of culture and personality is precisely what all the contemporary forces of evil . . . are out to accomplish. The Buddha, you know, located nirvana at the end (not at the beginning) of the eightfold path. Does anyone remember, I wonder, what the stages of that path are—and what they demand of us?

It is by this means that Mr. Roszak justifies his judgment that the drug cult, so often associated with "compulsively avant-garde and aggressively experimental art," sometimes seems "prepared to 'drop out' of the entire cultural heritage—and indeed to devastate it cruelly."

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves AN OBSTACLE RACE?

DISCUSSIONS of classroom cheating focus on the pressures exerted on children to get good grades or to turn in "correct" work. The diagnosis is almost always that the children have been exposed to a distorting reward-and-punishment system, causing them to think that cheating is the lesser of two evils. For example, in one analysis it is said: ". . . cheating involves choosing between coveted goals—between transgressing socially expected behavior patterns to fulfill one's craving, and adhering to social standards to gratify one's conscience. How the dilemma is resolved depends upon which is the more compelling." From this it follows that "Honesty is instilled in children by teaching them two things: first, to recognize the social value of gaining ends by 'acceptable' rather than 'deceitful' practices and, second, to know how to resist temptation."

In another study, this definition is given:

Cheating may be defined as any behavior aimed at gaining approval (or other rewards, such as attention) and avoiding disapproval by methods other than those prescribed by the teacher or parent. If we are to cut down on cheating, we must change those conditions in the school or the home that make such behavior likely to pay off. . . . Undesired behavior is most readily eliminated by eliminating the payoff and by reinforcing the desired behavior, supporting it immediately with praise, attention, special privileges, treats, or tokens (such as grades and stars).

Since these explanations of the "cheating problem" are quite typical, it is obvious that what needs critical attention is not the children and their quite predictable responses to adult ambivalence, but a theory of moral education which is hardly more than a euphemistic version of the program of the Grand Inquisitor (in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*). The true measure of a free and independent human being is the degree to

which he is indifferent to *any* scheme of rewards and punishments.

There is a close relation, for example, between rewards and punishments and competitiveness. Both tend to establish standards of achievement which depend upon comparison with others. Such excellences are always superficial and, in the long run, blighting to the person who strives for nothing else.

The teacher of an art knows by a sure intuition that the child who wants to do better than so-and-so is off on a track of self-deception. He is off not only in a moral sense but also in a practical sense. He will never find out his own capacities so long as he measures them by comparison with the capacities of someone else. No work of art can ever be produced in this way. Art begins with the authenticity of a perception, and is followed by the action, of a self. It has a center and a circumference of awareness belonging to that self, and when these are established the skills of technique and execution may come into play. And only the skills of technique and execution are subject to comparison. But even here comparison remains unimportant, since technique and execution are at their best when they become invisible servants of authenticity.

These are the essential values in education—not just art education but any kind of education. It follows, therefore, that education in which grades play a predominant role is an anti-educational kind of education. "Cheating" is only an incidental side-effect, a secular epiphenomenon.

But how can we make such a wild and sweeping statement? After all, the entire ladder of cultural achievement, academically speaking, is based upon the excellences that are measured by grades.

Well, it is true that the measurable excellences have some importance. They become anti-human only when they are allowed to conceal the

existence of the immeasurable excellences, such as individual authenticity in thought and action. The measurable excellences have a role in education similar to the role of science in relation to philosophy and religion. They often serve as finite analogues of the immeasurables, and they become useful critics of the gross errors men make in thought when the immeasurables are weak or have been perverted beyond recognition.

Consider the sort of conversation and interchange of ideas which take place among the members of a mature group of human beings. In spite of everything, such people exist. There are those who, somehow or other, manage to complete the hazardous obstacle race from immaturity to maturity and who, in their relations with one another, find personal comparisons, competitiveness, and imitation (and of course cheating, which is a form of imitation) to be activities wholly irrelevant to serious human interests. They take technique for granted. The important things begin where external, measurable excellences leave off. Competition obscures authenticity, making it an infantile pursuit.

Such people, when they encounter a victim of our educational system, wonder mainly if there is anything left in him to salvage by way of an undefeated longing for authenticity. Has he maintained a core of personal integrity throughout all the calculated attacks on his essential humanness? Has he been able to "render unto Caesar" without joining the Praetorian Guard?

Is this account of our educational system an exaggerating attack? A passage from a paper by Rudolf Ekstein, of the Reiss-Davis Child Study Center in Los Angeles (published in *Young Children* for March), supplies some evidence on this question. Here he is discussing "society in its battle for the mind of the child, and its battle to control and influence the educational system." Dr. Ekstein writes:

Because we have become great and powerful, we are being challenged from the outside, living as we do in a divided, a "dualistic" world. . . . Pressure is then

put on us in the educational field by a society that wants to compete with those who created Sputnik. We are told that we ought to get to the moon first, that we must reach outer space first. Suddenly pressure is put on us, telling us that a strict, scientific and demanding curriculum should be put back into the elementary school, the kindergarten and perhaps even the nursery school.

The school should put less stress on personality development and more on the development of skills in physics, chemistry and all the hardware sciences. . . . We found ourselves facing a task which we had not chosen ourselves, but which had been imposed upon us. The curriculum is not simply developed by teachers, but rather is decided upon by administrators. The administrators are appointed and paid by the community, and the community frequently reacts to the administrators in terms of its adult problems. The community does not always react to the child in terms of the needs of the developing child, but rather reacts in terms of the needs of society. . . . There is hardly a day when the funds that come from government agencies for our educational systems and our training are not clearly recognized as being dictated by the political affairs of man. The vicissitudes of political issues directly and indirectly exert their vast pressures on the educational system and on us, the educators.

Dr. Ekstein speaks also of other pressures, resulting from domestic crisis, but our point is already made. The gross measures of technical achievement have powerful champions who exercise far-reaching influence on the educational process. Education for authenticity is a schismatic influence in our society, gaining its strength only from the resourceful integrity of the teachers themselves.

## *FRONTIERS*

### Response to "Community"

[We combine here the response of a MANAS reader to the article, "The Longing for Community" (March 15 issue), with a report on the feed-back obtained by Henry Anderson as a result of his KPFA broadcast, "War on Alienation," which was printed in MANAS for Feb. 22. First, then, the letter from a reader.]

THERE is a way of providing the climate of "Community" around oneself in almost any circumstances. If one learns to listen to the person who is speaking, to listen with empathy, and patience, and understanding, something will happen both to the speaker and to the listener. And both are important. Such learning is a simple enough idea; but to actually learn it is not altogether easy. It requires a willingness to communicate, to really communicate with another; and it takes patience, and also practice.

What you must do is to make a real effort to understand, in a deep and not just a superficial sense, what it is the speaker is trying to say. Reflect back his idea and his feeling in words that he can accept, before offering him your judgment or advice. In fact advice, or judgment, or even comment, should come last. He may not be the greatest brain, or the perfect performer of his task, but as a human being he is worthy of your respect whatever his present level. Your respect will put him into a little better relationship with himself, and thus enable him to find capacity for being a more effective person.

To withhold your judgment of him while he is talking is one of the greatest disciplines, one of the most character building exercises I have ever encountered. We Westerners are great for body-building, sports and health programs. What I am saying is that we can also do definite things to build strength of character, mind, and even soul, however that may be defined.

What we lack in high degree is the ability to relate to others with an accepting, non-hostile feeling. We do not have to be in any special

community to learn this. Almost any group will serve, and it does make it more interesting to try to learn it in a group. Our churches might undertake such a project, but they don't seem to be doing it.

In starting such a program one should find out first what sort of replies one is in the habit of making. So, ask yourself some questions:

1. Did I judge what he was going to say before he got it out of his mouth? Perhaps answering him before I really knew how he felt about it?

2. Did I finish his sentence for him, not only plunging in before I knew how he felt, but before I really knew what he was intending to say?

3. Did I try to divert him, perhaps for my own convenience, so he really didn't have a chance to tell me what was the trouble?

4. Did I belittle him by saying, "It isn't very important," before I had time to see that it was extremely important to him?

The number one effort is to find out what your spontaneous reply is apt to be. Most of us have our own special habit of response. Do you judge, or teach, or reassure? Next: listen to what he says with respect, even expectation. Feel with him, without judging him. This is not easy, but you can try it, and if you persevere, you will become aware of the magic in it. Gradually you will find that an empathy develops which puts you in closer touch, in closer relationship than anything you could have imagined. Rather suddenly, people become much more interesting than they ever were before; and there you are—in "Community."

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A notable thing about the letters and personal meetings resulting from Henry Anderson's "War on Alienation" is that nearly all of them disclosed

what other people were already doing or starting out to do to combat alienation. These people, with an exception or two, didn't criticize Mr. Anderson's ideas; they just thought he might be interested in other ideas—as he was. Finding out about their activities became for him evidence "that men in great' urbanized, industrialized, managerial, bureaucratic societies do not *have* to be estranged and demoralized." "There are," as he puts it, "things they can do together, and find *esprit*, morale, joy, energy, purpose, thrust in living—and, in the process, alter 'power structures' and deflect the juggernauts of history." One listener said:

I am currently involved in a kind of "noble experiment" in community with a distinctly practical bias—to wit, the organizing and development of a consumers' coop . . . based primarily in the Bayview-Hunters' Point area and the Western Addition [of San Francisco]. . . . Perhaps you would like to get involved yourself in what I consider to be the most seminal movement to date—regardless of how few realize it—to come out of the Negro struggle for civil rights. . .

Another listener wrote in part:

I know of a half-finished house in Brisbane . . . a big, roomy old place, hand-built by a loving and dedicated amateur. I think of this and any other rugged setting with a view of the Bay and a fireplace as setting for [a] good community of free discussion and open forum. . . . I am aware that I may be putting the cart before the horse by starting with the *setting*, but this is the way your plea to combat alienation has worked creatively in me.

Mr. Anderson met with this listener and they conversed about other places for get-togethers where physical liberation from "exhaust fumes, noise, congestion, ugliness, sameness," might be possible.

Another result of the broadcast:

I have talked with persons [Anderson writes] from three campuses—Berkeley, Stanford, and San Francisco State— about overcoming the alienation of knowledge factories by means of "free universities," organized by the students themselves, in which there would be serious and unfettered discussion and research on subjects of interest and importance which

the present educational Establishment treats badly or not at all. One thing has led to another, and I am now planning to conduct a seminar on Agricultural Labor at the Free University of California.

A training supervisor concerned with a New Careers Development project at the Vacaville Medical Facility wrote to say that he wanted to incorporate suggestions made in the broadcast in a training program for prisoners. Mr. Anderson comments:

This forced me to begin thinking seriously about a type of isolation which is more complete and more coercive than most, and imposed more directly and intentionally by society-at-large: the isolation of prisoners. To think of this as a small, atypical group, without much to do with thee and me, just won't wash clean. A society may be judged by the ways in which it chooses to treat its most aberrant—those it regards with the most distaste and fear. The whole subject of crime and penology holds up a dark mirror into which we may not care to gaze. But we should.

In a somewhat similar vein, I received a letter from the Division of Alcoholic Rehabilitation, of the California Department of Health. It is no new idea, I am sure, that alcoholism is related to alienation, but I gather that it is a new idea to sit down and talk seriously about how to translate this plausible theory into some kind of program of action.

Also revealed was the existence of an unusual "helping" institution in the East Bay area—"an extra-mural psychotherapeutic cooperative"! Mr. Anderson describes how it works: "The members make the decisions about fees, about hiring and firing of professional staff, and everything else. It is unique in the entire country, so far as I know. It seems to me to hold the highest order of potential for doing battle against personal and group alienations in their more acute manifestations."

The broadcast brought Mr. Anderson into contact with a man who had been blind for fifteen years, and from this meeting the following picture developed:

There are at least 32,000 sightless persons in California, and their face-to-face relationships often tend to be limited to *de facto* segregated

centers for the blind. It would be difficult to devise or imagine an alienation more total: enforced by a combination of a natural order which has behaved unkindly and a social order which has behaved indifferently. I learned, among other things that I should have known before, that many sightless persons do not read Braille. For all practical purposes, their continuing contact with the sphere of literature and ideas requires the spoken word—through recordings, or through someone's living presence. Apparently, the nearest source of tape-recorded books is the Library of Congress—3,000 miles away. The waiting period is at least four weeks. And the catalogue of books available in this form is pathetically limited. I looked through it for some authors I would miss particularly achingly if I were deprived of access to them. There was nothing at all in the catalogue by Paul Goodman; nothing by Gordon Allport; nothing by Jung, or Jaspers, or Heidegger; very sadly, from my point of view, nothing by Abraham Maslow; saddest of all, from my point of view, nothing by Martin Buber. . . . If a sightless person wants to maintain his humanity through continued familiarity with the world of letters and ideas, to a very large extent he can do it only through a sighted person reading to him. And to a very large extent that means, under present circumstances, he has to hire someone—out of a total income that averages \$120.25 a month. I trust you can appreciate the possibilities for a war on alienation here.

Mr. Anderson concludes this summary of the response to his broadcast by pointing out the diversity in what people are doing out of their own resources—the planning and action "springing spontaneously from man's ineradicable need for authentic community of some sort."