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THE WHOLE OCEAN IS OURS

NARCISSUS, it is said, found a delusive fulfillment—a love which gave him security—in his own reflection in the waters of a tranquil pool. What if the water had drained away, leaving only a dark, bottomless abyss? Perhaps he would have crouched, forlorn, deserted, wondering who he was and how he could regain his mirror of reality. Or, endowed with a greater dignity, he might have felt some of the despairing emotions which made the Emperor Julian exclaim, "The Gods are dead! Only their pallid, shadowy images remain. The substance of their life and truth is wasted by the evil, unbelieving days which have come upon us!"

Modern man suffers something like the plight of Narcissus and Julian. Known and unknown conspirators have joined to surround him with bewilderments. Intemperate Sampsons in the plausible dress of Rationalism have not only struck down the walls of the temple, but have made the very earth tremble beneath our feet. Swarms of manmade, mechanical Furies haunt the skies, their deafening buzz filling the air with promise of obscene destruction. Physical horrors unmediated by protective cultural institutions perform angry gyrations in not-quite-outer space. The philosophers of the age can tell us nothing of the raw incommensurables of the world of physics. The forces generated by skeptical rationalism and agnostic science have broken their tether and now rage about us in wild, unpredictable independence, mocking at the comfortable conceits of their creators. An equal confusion pervades the inner world of the mind and the feelings. The image of man's identity is lopped, pared, and shredded with the various cultural blenders invented by psychological Procrusteans of New York and Hollywood.

Yet it is possible to see in all this turbulence and uncertainty the bed of either death or birth. Throes, paroxysms, and cries of desperation accompany both events. Indeed, birth and death are doubtless both part of the same reality, the one creating the necessity for the other. What shall we say, then, about the present scene? Shall we listen to the stertorous gasps of a paralyzed past, or try to divine ("divine" is the word, for who has real evidence of what is coming to birth?) the meaning of the future? But there are perhaps premonitions—premonitions if not symptoms—of the direction that may be taken in the questions that present themselves insistently to human beings.

We have a letter which assembles with considerable symmetry a number of the questions now being asked, in what may be termed the "religious" field of inquiry. The letter is long and will leave only a little space for comment. However, what the questions of this letter call for is not "answers" but a continuous process of clarification of the significance of the search they represent.

Your lead article, "World Without Measure" (Jan. 20, 1960), stresses the liberation of the human spirit which has been made possible by the decline of institutional religion. This hopeful attitude is particularly encouraging to me because I am a person who once believed in, and needed, traditional religion, but then, growing older, found, as have so many others, that I had to choose between intellectual honesty and religious faith. Intellectual honesty seemed the necessary choice. A widening horizon, of course, was the result. . . .

Yet often, since, I have wondered if I did not lose, along with faith, some things as important as those I gained with the greater breadth. And, since our whole society has been through something similar over the past hundred years or

so, I have wondered, more generally, if this is not true for all of us—we have had to lose the moorings we had, on a safe little island of belief, and are now adrift in the ocean, in danger of being devoured by sharks. . . . It means that the whole ocean is ours; but it also means that, at the moment, we have no home. . . . For years now I have been seeking, as I sense that you are, a new synthesis of everything, which could be a sort of "home in mid-ocean," so to speak.

To make such a synthesis which will include everything in all our vastly expanded age—this, no doubt, is our basic and ultimate task. It is something that will take all our work, all our lives—and still maybe be uncompleted when we die.

At the moment, as part of hacking away at the problem, I'm wondering what honest and helpful replacement a modern, more or less pantheistic view of the Universe can find for the old "faith in God" as a basis for individual and social emotional security.

The old view of God, as a benevolent Father who is always watching over everything and always ready to give spiritual help to anyone who turns to Him in prayer, has the following beneficial results for the life of the individual believer:

> (1) It encourages the practice of daily prayer, in which one turns each day and places the life of that day before God. In the process, things have a way of sorting themselves out in order of importance, there is less waste motion, less going off on tangents, more following of one's central impulse; sometimes a correction, which feels as if it comes from outside, of one's personal lack of balance and perspective; and, as a result, a more hopeful and creative approach to living.
>
> (2) It helps the individual to believe that he will be given strength to meet whatever obstacles and difficulties arise, to live his best, and to accept tragedy, illness, and death, when they come, as part of the Universal scheme of things, and not as a negation of life.
>
> (3) It prepares the individual, at best, to face life with a sort of humility—to do his best to solve his own problems and those of the world; but also, having done his best, to face failure, should it come, without an overpowering sense of guilt, because he is, after all, only a tool; God is the Creator. . . .

We in our age are faced with a twofold problem in trying to find a suitable substitute for this kind of faith.

In the first place, our conception of God has had to expand to include a Universe in which light takes millions of years to travel from one galaxy to another, in which there may be life on many different planets, in different stages of development, etc. It is hard to imagine this Universe being inhabited, let alone created or controlled, by an anthropomorphic God who either listens to individual prayer or loves or tries to give strength in time of need or arranges anything with any specific individual in mind. An individual who is trying to find the old sort of strength in the new sort of Universe may still find that his thoughts sort themselves out in times of silent meditation, and may still find, welling up from some source within him, the strength to live creatively, and to find courage in the face of disaster. But that he is not responsible for things, he cannot believe any more. Who else is? If a period of meditation is unfruitful, it may be because the individual has some psychological problem standing in the way. If so, God is not going to remove it. One knows that there is no one listening, if one prays. . . . Some people find their way. . . . Some people get lost. . . . But no one is listening. . . . If everything is going wrong, that is a tough break. A man's whole family is destroyed in a fire. Who is to tell him today that such is God's will? The building wasn't fireproof, someone was smoking in bed, and the firemen just didn't get there in time. Tough luck. Human error. But not God's will, or even the Nature of the Universe—except insofar as it is the Nature of the Universe that we all die some day. . . . A child darts out in front of a moving truck. He is killed. A minute sooner, or a minute later, and the child

would have been alive—perhaps for seventy more years. Momentous things are determined by inconsequential things like sixty seconds—like a cigarette—like a virus that enters somebody's body at the wrong time. Blind chance is the master of our fates—not God. Blind chance, and human error.

In other words, while a non-theistic substitute may be found today, to a certain extent, for (1) above, it has become harder to find an adequate substitute for (2) than it used to be; and almost impossible to find an adequate substitute for (3). As God's responsibility for the daily things that happen has seemed to diminish, Man's has increased. If Man is the highest form of intelligence accessible to this planet, then he is the being most responsible. He finds it not only harder, but almost irrelevant, to relax and trust.

Along with this, comes the second half of the problem: the increase of scientific knowledge has not only faded God out of the picture, but has also simultaneously increased man's absolute control over his environment to a frightening degree. Literally, we hold in our hands today instruments that can bring death to every living being on this planet; and, conversely, we have the power to prevent death and to prolong life to an extent unknown in previous history. With this increasing power has come, again, increasing responsibility. A couple of hundred years ago, a mother whose child died of smallpox could only say it must have been God's will. Now, if a child dies of smallpox, the question is raised why the child wasn't vaccinated—whose fault was it? Human beings have the power to build dams, to control floods, to drain swamps, to prevent diseases, to determine their own fate as never before. And with each increase in power comes a further increase in responsibility. . . . People could starve in a famine-stricken land a thousand years ago, knowing only that it had always been so, since the beginning of time—that people had lived and died, famines had come and gone, and a few had always survived—that must be the way the Universe was set up—God made it so. Today, if people starve in Asia, it is with full knowledge of America's bulging warehouses of surplus grain. . . . Much of the social unrest of our time, with all its bad as well as its good connotations and consequences, stems from increasing human knowledge of human responsibility.

Of course, a lot of our difficulty comes from the fact that our social institutions haven't kept pace with our changing technology or with changes in other social institutions, so that while we *have* responsibilities, we often are not able socially to *fulfill* them. Institutions through which to act effectively seem to be lacking. Individually we are aware of our danger, and of our responsibility, but our society sleeps on. . . . This leads to a lot of the tension and turmoil within all of us who are socially aware—we feel, as members of society, individual responsibility for so changing society as to enable social responsibilities to be better met—but we don't know how to do it. . . . We try, and fail; and if our ultimate failure leads to the explosion of the world, we will find no peace in saying, "We did our best," as everything goes up in mushroom clouds. . . . We will only know that our best was not good enough.

The questions of what we should do, and how, and what is in our way, and what we can do about it, are major problems before us.

The central question I want to ask now is: spiritually, can we in our modern age find a way of accepting our responsibility—not dodging it in any way, or pretending that no responsibility exists, beyond that of living our personal lives creatively—can we find a way to do this and still be at peace with ourselves and the Universe, in the way in which the "believer in God" used to be able to be at peace? A sense of inner peace is necessary to spiritual health and creativity, isn't it? Are inner peace and the acceptance of social responsibility antithetical? I feel that they shouldn't be, but find that at the times when I'm feeling most peaceful I'm feeling least responsible,

and vice versa! Do others have the same experience? What is the answer?

Can we find a sort of attitude toward our new environment through which we can function as creatively as the believers in God used to be able to do? I don't mean only in individual relationships, but in relationship to our Universe as a whole?

I don't mean in the above, of course, to challenge your thesis, set forth in "World Without Measure" and elsewhere, that the institutional religion of the past frequently stifled creativity, and, by its very nature, set limits to it. With this I wholeheartedly agree. Yet the institution, like a hard nutshell, often served to transmit a core of something living, with which individual believers could come in contact and through which they could find mystical experience that was really creative, and which we have largely lost today. Our knowledge of our responsibility seems to have alienated us from a former sense of harmony with the Universe. Is there any return possible, on a deeper level?

In this matter of what may be "possible," it is plain that, with the space that remains, no more than one or two of the questions raised can be examined. However, the first question—"What honest and helpful replacement can a modern, more or less pantheistic view of the Universe find for the old 'faith in God,' as a basis for individual and social emotional security?"—is so far-reaching that any position taken in relation to it will affect decisively what is thought about all the other questions. Let us look at the circumstances which make this question seem important to ask. Can we generalize concerning the need which the old "faith in God" served to satisfy? What sort of crisis precipitated the feeling of need? When is a person likely to feel deprived when left without it?

An initial difficulty results from the fact that "faith in God" is not a formulation that is clear in meaning. Two individuals might use these words, but give them altogether different meanings. One might think that this faith enables him to feel that a beneficent and powerful observer is watching over his fortunes, so that whatever his trials, everything will "come out all right" in the end, even if he does not really deserve such attention. The other might mean that there is an essential order in the universe and in human experience, such that honest efforts in behalf of the good cannot be wasted, despite seeming disasters and discouragements.

There is a radical difference between these viewpoints. One embodies confidence in a paternalistic arrangement which not only allows, but virtually guarantees, special privilege. The other, without reasoning very much about it—since reason would probably insist upon a change in vocabulary, at the very least—instinctively rejects the idea of special privilege as almost a species of blasphemy.

So, if we restrict the meaning of "faith in God" to the first sort of faith, we may redefine it as, in negative terms, an expression of personal inadequacy, and, more positively, the expectation of outside help in time of crisis.

When is the ability to cherish that expectation important to such a person?

He wants help, we may say, whenever the classic form of tragedy threaten him: In the presence of death, his own or that of a loved one; at a time of disgrace or dishonor, whether or not deserved; when he fears to lose love, and when he fears some absolute frustration, such as the inability to do his work, or whatever it is that imparts a sense of meaning or validity to his life.

Manifestly, a "replacement" for help at such times is not going to be easy to arrange. It is not simply the role of Loving Father that must be replaced, but all the numerous psychological consequences of belief in a personal Creator as well. The universe constructed by such a being is almost inevitably conceived of in the terms of some sort of cosmic doll's house over which its

Creator presides. The dilemmas which arise for a man habituated to this kind of belief are not the same dilemmas which confront one with naturalistic or pantheistic convictions. That is, the latter individual will formulate his problems differently. He will not "set up" his thinking about problems in such a way that he feels oppressed by the absence of a Friend behind the cosmic veil.

There are, say, two possibilities for such an individual. He may take the Stoic position, which is, ostensibly, bravely agnostic. (Since there are many excellent statements of the Stoic view, we shall not repeat them here.) Or he may adopt some Gnostic philosophy or pantheistic wisdom tradition which offers a comprehensive metaphysic capable of meeting his questions on an intellectual level.

It should be useful to compare this latter outlook with that of the theist. The theist, when threatened, looks outside himself for help. The philosophical pantheist looks within. When confronted by threat of disaster, the pantheist holds a dialogue with himself, instead of appealing to a personal deity.

When pain comes, he looks in himself for the blindness the pain should serve to cure. Pain is a symptom of separation, of violation of some natural unity. It is that, or it represents the emotional aspect of a transition from some limited unity to another, wider kind.

Embodied existence is for consciousness—and we are consciousness—either a temporary or a permanent identification with some set of physical and environmental circumstances. The more profound the involvement of the identification, the more inescapable the pain.

Obviously, a man's idea of himself will largely affect his experience of both pleasure and pain. While there is a minimum of absolutely unavoidable pain, due to life as a human being, it should be evident that much more than this amount of suffering comes from our psychological involvement in temporary situations. The dozens of suicides which followed the financial panic of 1929 gave evidence that many men had identified their being with their wealth; without it, life was unbearable to them. For other men, however, loss of wealth may mean nothing or almost nothing.

What is at issue, here, is the fact that the idea of God is really a function of the idea of self, and *vice versa*. What does this lead to? It leads to such questions as the immortality of the soul, the long-term meaning of human existence and its relation to cosmic meaning, if, indeed, the latter exists, and to serious consideration of the possibility of a Promethean role for human beings.

These are some of the immediate implications of the pantheistic philosophy. They need development in order to provide a framework of general meaning to which the other questions of our correspondent may be referred. The idea of responsibility for others—*social* responsibility, which is the note on which our correspondent's letter ends—cries out for illumination from some basic view of how human beings are related, *ultimately* related, to one another in terms of the authentic purposes of human life. All the various and graded meanings of "welfare" must be explored, in order to give substance to the idea of responsibility.

REVIEW
"A THEORY OF EVOLUTION"

HANS CHRISTIAN SANDBECK'S *Nature and Destiny—a Theory of Evolution is* a 353-page volume issued by the University of Oslo Press in Norway, furnishing evidence that even though the ground may be frozen a good part of the year in Scandinavian lands, the human mind there is not. We know nothing of the author of *Nature and Destiny* save that the University of Oslo is quite evidently proud to present his book. The publisher's announcement describes Sandbeck's intent:

> The author contends that idealized conceptions such as "righteous," "good" and "beautiful" are manifestations of a subconscious awareness of a *general goal* of all natural phenomena. In order to give a sensible verbalized explanation of the actual meaning of such words, it is necessary to make a clear verbal formulation of *this teleological principle.*
>
> This has been done as the main conclusion of this treatise based upon a profound analysis of means and ends in science art and life in general. The conclusion includes the opinion that, in view of arguments pro and contra, it appears most probable that personal consciousness is the outcome of a continuous and irreversible process, and thus an everlasting—rather than a merely transient—series of phenomena.

Mr. Sandbeck's introduction makes it plain that he considers no single "theory of man" adequate. The word "nature," he insists, must include all that is imaginative in the life of humankind and also a realm usually deemed "spiritual." Paralleling the conclusions of W. Macneile Dixon in *The Human Situation*, Sandbeck invites consideration of the philosophic significance of such intangible human assets as the sense of humor. Sandbeck discovers in humor evidence of what Viktor Frankl calls the "will to meaning," and we select for quotation a passage to indicate how Sandbeck often avoids the formal approaches of biology and sociology:

> It is natural to ask the question: Why do human beings find so much wonderful pleasure in such surprising "bisociative" connections between "two series of events which are absolutely independent of each other"?
>
> The answer to this is here given as follows in close agreement with the main line of thought in the present essay:
>
> No two series of events are absolutely independent of each other. It merely appears to be so, superficially considered. Actually all our concepts and symbols of the universe are interrelated, and the discovery of this generality is pleasing because it represents one aspect of the mental self-expansion which is a prime universal principle.

Readers who enjoy the writings of Dixon and Ducasse on the question of human immortality will also appreciate the conclusion of *Nature and Destiny*. Here Sandbeck asserts that "nature" reveals herself to us through human imagination and longing, as well as by verifiable experiment. The question of immortality, on this view, becomes a *real* question—just as real as those relating to our political or social dilemmas. The author proposes:

> Any assumption as to the possible future of individual consciousness is of course unverifiable. Principally, however, this is also the case with all other assumptions as to the future. It is of course impossible to verify today what is supposed to happen tomorrow. Nevertheless, predictions of the future are held to be "scientifically founded" if they are based upon series of observations which predominantly develop in a definite manner.
>
> It has repeatedly been contended in this essay that people actually live as though biological death should be merely a passage into another phase of individual life, with previous experiences still recallable and the whole of personal identity unimpaired.
>
> A great majority—including *declared disbelievers* as well as *declared believers* in such an idea—exhibit a feeling of responsibility for the consequences of their actions, not only far beyond their own death, but also regardless of the very probable extinction of all earthly life at some—possibly far ahead, but certainly approaching—future date. . . .
>
> It has repeatedly been stressed in this essay that all ideas of justice and morality and all attempts at

> influencing other people in any other way than that which would increase the material or biological utility of the person in question would be completely irrational if human life were really believed to be just as brief as it is known to be biologically.

Sandbeck attempts to outline the sort of "teleology" to which the man of scientific background can with good conscience subscribe. He sees the greatest "reality" of all in the principle of "self-continuation," which he feels should be expanded from its obvious meaning in terms of the integral identity of personality to the farthest reaches of the universe. He ends *Nature and Destiny* by saying:

> Destiny, as an unvarying principle characterizing the procedure of nature in general, and of human beings in particular, is expressible by the word *Self-continuation—comprising the preservation of an identity within an ever-changing self, and the infinite expansion of such individual identity—particularly the individual consciousness.*
>
> Experiences (things, events, attitudes) which commonly are characterized as "good," "ethical," "valuable," "beautiful," are *evidently* in accord with both the polar complements of this teleological principle.

Throughout, Sandbeck insists on a sharp distinction between religion and theology, for the field of religious experience can be held to include the totality of our "nonverbal understanding of universal relation and coherence." From this basis he approaches the question of immortality without reference to either theological doctrine or such data as collected by Dr. C. J. Ducasse in *Nature, Mind, and Death.* His underlying spirit is reminiscent of W. Macneile Dixon, and we are reminded of how Dixon liberates the question of immortality from its conventional context. In the last chapter of *The Human Situation,* Dixon writes:

> Our interest in the future, how strange it is if we can never hope to see the future. That interest rarely seems to desert us, and in itself appears inexplicable were we not possessed of an intuition which tells us that we shall have a part in it, that in some sense it already belongs to us, that we should bear it continually in mind, since it will be ours. . . . A future life is, you think, unbelievable? How clear it is that death is death for men as for all living things.
>
> Well, I should myself put the matter rather differently. The present life is incredible, a future credible. "Not to be twice-born, but once-born is wonderful." To be alive, actually existing, to have emerged from darkness and silence, to be here to-day is certainly incredible. A philosopher friend of mine could never, he told me, bring himself to believe in his own existence. A future life would be a miracle, and you find it difficult to believe in miracles? I, on the contrary, find it easy.

COMMENTARY
NOTES ON RESPONSIBILITY

WE can't resist adding a scatter of notes on the questions raised by the correspondent who appears in this week's lead article. It happens that the relation between social or humanitarian responsibility and the values of the religious life is the subject of a scholarly book recently drawn to our attention by a reader. The book is *William Blake—The Politics of Vision,* by Mark Schorer, now available in a Vintage paperback. Blake, it seems apparent, could not stand the spiritual "isolationism" of conventional mystical religion; nor, on the other hand, had he much sympathy for the materialism of the reform movements of his day. Prof. Schorer identifies Blake as a revolutionary, and proposes that mysticism and revolution are irreconcilable:

> The mystic and the revolutionary are opposed in principle, for the revolutionary . . . wishes to alter institutions in order to produce a better human situation; the mystic . . . assumes that the human situation is good enough for what it is supposed to be. The typical attitude of the mystic is exemplified in the *Theologica Germanica*. . . "they know very well that order and fitness are better than disorder, and therefore they choose to walk orderly, yet know at the same time that their salvation hangeth not thereon."

It is plain that a part of Prof. Schorer's liking for Blake arises from the poet's clear rejection of this sort of "mysticism." Such books, however, ought not to be a substitute for going to Blake himself, to see how he resolved the dilemma of his age. If one follows Blake faithfully for a time, he will know his way by the shattered definitions which lie along the path. Prof. Schorer wants to save Blake from identification with any sort of conventional mysticism. So Blake, he tells us, was not a mystic. But why not say, instead, that Blake was the best of the mystics, because he broke with the tradition of spiritual selfishness which attaches to any human activity which has personal salvation as its goal?

The thing that becomes evident from reading Blake, or even a good book about Blake, is that his convictions arise from his own primary experience. Recognition of the power of this sort of "knowing" is of greater importance than any of Blake's inspired conclusions, since such synthesis cannot be had at second hand. Blake was a prophet of the temper, now widespread, represented in the letter from our correspondent. Blake denied the reality of Jehovah by asserting: "He [Jesus Christ] is the only God," but adding, "and so am I and so are you." Further:

> Thou art a Man, God is no more,
> Thine own Humanity learn to Adore.

A further note on the question of responsibility is encompassed in the sacramental phrase of Albert Schweitzer, "Reverence for Life." Schweitzer has accomplished a synthesis of what might be termed reverential and agnostic attitudes. No doubt he is far from satisfied with his own solution of the problem of social responsibility. The fact of the matter is that no *individual* is able to solve this problem by himself; all he can do is what seems to him to be *his part.* This Dr. Schweitzer has done, with far more success than most of us; and it may be said that the meeting of our social responsibilities would be an easy task if a decent minority of other men would carve out from life a portion to labor with, as he has done.

More on "Responsibility": Years ago, in *Richer by Asia,* Edmond Taylor wrote about the reaction of the people of India to the atom bomb tests put on by the United States at Bikini. He said:

> If India had been in a position to speak with authority—as I believe that she will be able to do before long—at the time of the American atomic warfare tests at Bikini atoll, we would have heard, not only through the Indian press but from the official diplomatic sounding boards of the world, a message of great importance to us. We would have learned that without quite committing a social crime, we were following in the pattern of crime, and were guilty of national blasphemy, not of a grave offense against Russia or even against peace, but against the dignity of man and the harmony of nature. . . . The Indians would have told us that our blasphemy, like the Nazi ones, arose from an idolatrous worship of the

> techniques of science divorced from any ethical goals, that the man-made cataclysm of Bikini was a black mass of physics as the German experiments were a black mass of medicine, that it was a mob-insurrection against the pantheist sense of citizenship in nature, which we share with the Hindus in our hearts, but consider a childish foible. . . .

For further readings in this subject, we suggest a return to Emerson's "Compensation," some attention to the books of Joseph Wood Krutch and, perhaps, to what Nancy Newhall has to say in accompaniment of Ansel Adams' photographs in the recent Sierra Club book, *This Is the American Earth* (see passages quoted in MANAS for February 17). What may become apparent is the possibility that one of the tasks of an awakened human being is the definition of his own responsibility. A man can thrill to self-discovered responsibility with an ardor impossible to those who are "told" what to do!

It is true enough that belief in a benevolent Heavenly Father may introduce a sense of proportion and balance to a person's life, but there are various systems of equilibrium, some of them more lasting than others, and some of them shutting out less of the larger realities of meaning than others. There is a sense in which human life is a succession of passages from system to system, as the radius of perception reaches farther and farther out into the field of universal experience. Each time we change the reference-points of our philosophic thinking, there is an interval of confusion. It is then that we ask, *Upon what can we depend?* The Christian mystics called this loneliness the Dark Night of the Soul; the *Bhagavad-Gita* terms it the Despondency of Arjuna. It may be necessary to recognize that experience as an essential process in the growth of human beings. The finding of new reference-points, both without and within, may be a critical stage in our development.

Our correspondent speaks of the lag in present-day cultural institutions. Conceivably, the moral vacuum left by the ineffectuality of these institutions is precisely what we need to provoke us to find a better guide to meaning than any that institutions can afford. It may be that institutions have grown incompetent to define our responsibilities, by reason of the subtlety, today, of the latter. Institutions can make rules and dogmas, but can they create values?

We have the habit of looking to institutions as authorities. Possibly we shall not be able to construct institutions useful to the present and the future until we learn to regard them as no more than tools, and limited tools at that.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

"IF YOU LIVE WITH LITTLE CHILDREN"

WE hope that this review of the above-titled book will result in some new purchases. For, though the authors of *If You Live With Little Children*, Carolyn Kauffman and Patricia Farrell (Putnam's 1957), do practically no talking about "psychology," it is immediately apparent that they approach informal education from the same standpoint as that indicated by so many of our correspondents—one of whom wrote us from Florida to make sure we took notice of the book. The best introduction is provided by its Preface:

> This book is a collection of ideas for having fun with preschool children. It is during these first five years that parents have their main opportunity to know and play with their children. Yet these years are often filled with so much confusion, so much "getting through" the daily routine, that this opportunity just to have a good time together can be lost. When our children start school the problems change, and an interesting, delightful age has slipped by.
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> We believed that if parents had the time—which they certainly do not—to have a cup of coffee with lots of different parents, they would probably pick up tips that would make life easier and more enjoyable. So this is how we did the research for our book. We talked and sent questionnaires to all our friends, and friends of friends, who, simply by living with little children, have learned many useful "tricks of the trade."
>
> Some of the ideas are old ones that will be new to many of you. Some of the ideas are brand-new. And none of them depend on much money, special equipment or even special talents.
>
> We do not expect, nor even suggest, that you use all of these ideas. But we think it is a book you might open in the evening, after a day that did not seem to go quite right, and discover a suggestion that will give you a needed pickup, a fresh start, for the next day.
>
> Besides this, we have included ideas for special events, such as Halloween costumes you can make, recipes for preschool cooks, ways to entertain a sick child, and many others.
>
> We are not child psychologists, and are not advising you how to *raise* your children. Instead, we have filled the book with different ways to enjoy them.
>
> One of us has taught in a nursery school for many years. The other has published a number of children's stories.
>
> But we think our most important "credential" is that we both live with little children, too.

The 144 pages of *If You Live With Little Children* are filled with concrete suggestions respecting the construction of simple toys and play equipment, ways of teaching a child how to do things for himself—and a constant theme in the background emphasizes conservation of all resources. Do you know, for instance, that a tire used beyond repair does not have to be hauled away? Take a saw and cut it down the middle, as you would a jelly roll. The two halves filled fairly full of water become two circular "rivers" in which small boats may be floated.

What do you do with your old oatmeal boxes, toilet paper tubes, wax paper tubes, egg cartons, etc.? Kauffman and Farrell, in a section "Things to Save and Why," provide pages of diagrams for the construction of preschool toys. The child can understand these instructions, and help to carry them out. We recall, here, our own observations several years ago, when the instinctive preference of most children for the *created* toy was discussed. Just as the child may show greatest affection for a rag doll which he can *imagine* looks any way he *does* imagine it, so do the elaborate and costly toys which leave nothing to the imagination receive less of a child's genuine interest. Compare, for example, an expensive toy fire engine which squirts water (and of all small toys, water-squirting devices are bound to rate the highest) with a gift our five-year-old requested for his birthday: what he wants is an inner tube encased in gunny sack, top "deck" removed, so that he can get in and paddle it like a boat along the seashore. This inner tube, which may cost less than a dollar, and the gunny sack, which may cost a quarter, can be companion to a number of

adventures. And to have it becomes infinitely more important to the child than a $10.00 replica of adult equipment.

Kauffman and Farrell also give counsel on teaching the child to dress. There is nothing new about these suggestions, and many of us have tried something similar, yet it is easy to forget the efficacy of applied common sense:

> Your ultimate aim, of course, is to help him eventually to help himself. As your child grows older, it helps to *talk* the dressing, as you dress him. For example: "Now we put on your underpants, and now your undershirt, and now we pull up your trunks, and now we put on your shirt, and now we button it."
>
> There is no point in keeping the process a mystery to him. Try to dress him in the same order each time. You can also let him fasten the last button, for practice.
>
> It also helps to give a young child his own dressing table even if it is an orange crate. A mirror, hung low, a brush and comb, and low hooks on which to hang clothes, all enable him to dress himself sooner, at least when he feels like it.
>
> Design a boy (or a girl) on the floor, out of the clothes he will wear the next morning. Put his undershirt on the floor, then his top shirt over this, then his underpants underneath, then his jeans over this, then his socks under this, then his shoes under his socks. If you have a doll's or stuffed animal's head, or a coconut or orange or ball, use it for the head. And you can put a hat on this, if you want to. Then, when he awakens in the morning, there is the "boy," already to become a real boy.
>
> Or, he can help you lay his own clothes out the night before.

We wonder what the author of *Where Did You Go? Out. What Did You Do? Nothing.* (Robert Paul Smith) would make of Kauffman and Farrell. Smith believes that children should be left alone to invent their own forms of play, and that parents should stop reading so many books about what to do with them. Yet it seems to us that the kind of help afforded in *If You Live With Little Children* is precisely the help which will make the very young more self-reliant when they reach the age level with which Smith is chiefly concerned. Kauffman and Farrell quote from David Riesman's *Lonely Crowd* a text which indicates a basic rapport with Smith. Dr. Riesman emphasizes the modern parent's dependence upon too much advice: "For in their [parents'] uneasiness as to how to bring up their children they turn increasingly to books, magazines, government pamphlets, and radio programs. These tell the already anxious mother to accept her children. She learns to look into her own psyche whenever she is moved to deny the children anything, including an uninterrupted flow of affection. If the children are cross then the mother must be withholding something. And while these tutors also tell the mother to 'relax' and to 'enjoy her children,' even this becomes an additional injunction to be anxiously followed."

We have little doubt that parents who use *If You Live With Little Children* will enjoy their children's play a great deal more. Also, if you are willing to "work" with them, they will naturally feel more amenable to working with you on necessary tasks around the home.

One section of the book which will be of interest to neighborhood parents tells how a "baby-sitting club" may be formed. Taking turns in homes of friends helps give perspective on one's own youngsters, and may foster a practical sense of community among those of like mind.

FRONTIERS

The Truths We Know. . .

UNTIL a friendly reader sent us a copy of *Sight and Sound,* a British quarterly on films, we had resolved to say nothing of *The Savage Eye,* a thinly disguised documentary on life in and around Los Angeles. However, Eric Rhodes' discussion of this movie *(Sight and Sound,* Winter, 1959-60) seemed so pertinent a comment that we decided to borrow some of it as basis for a discussion of our own.

This picture will shake any normal spectator. Its ephemeral story line is quite forgotten while you watch the almost epileptic twitching of elderly men and women, caught by the hidden camera in the throes of religious frenzy at a Los Angeles "faith healing" service. The "realism" of tired and disgusted people moping through their defeated lives, the essential vulgarity of the beauty parlor, a clinical look at a burlesque show, the tattered ugliness of people disclosed at their daily, commonplace worst—all this, plus the inescapable "honesty" of the makers of this film, makes you say to yourself, Why, *why* did they do it? Isn't there something else to photograph?

There is, of course. But at least this version of a discredited mankind has "impact," and it is not without truth. *Sight and Sound's* reviewer says:

> Although the image is one-sided, its exclusions and insistences force us into accepting it as typical of a whole society whose people are satiated and pampered, and yet who are also restless, violent and bored. It would be true to say that the one ideology common to all these people—that the primary fact of life is the ceaseless striving to satisfy the physical appetites to the exclusion of everything else—has failed them. The anonymous world around them, of new cars and full shops, is an ironic comment on their misery. It is to the credit of this film that it shows us in great detail how these dispirited folk struggle to find a new identity, a new ideology, a new sensation, by what are often grotesque means: fat old women seek rebirth through gymnastics or weep at the funeral of a dog, while transvestites shimmer and sadists find ecstasy at a wrestling match. All of them, and especially a colony of divorcees, wait sheepishly for Love.
>
> That all this is bitterly funny is not surprising, for in a world where starvation is still a major fact it is difficult to take these people seriously. It is difficult to praise or blame them for their behavior. Now this is an odd comment to make on any society and quite baffling, until one notices that even the most ravaged of these passing faces has the sulky unhappiness we associate with lost children, then one realizes that this is a world where no one has grown up . . .
>
> *The Savage Eye* doesn't make this point clearly, but then it is difficult to see what the film *is* clear about. There is little discrimination in the location photography, which muddles together the fascinating and the obvious. Seemingly to compensate for this, the story leashed to all these documentary shots is of a self-pitying divorcée, Judith McGuire (played by Barbara Baxter), who half-heartedly seeks a meaningful way of life and through whose "savage eye" we see Los Angeles. The inability to explore Judith's character, the ineffectual transition from self-pity to her final affirmation, and the floundering rhetoric by which she converses with a *persona* which modestly describes itself as "your wild dreamer, your hunchback creator, your god, your double," reinforce our feeling that Ben Maddow, Sidney Meyers and Joseph Strick, the makers of this film, are in much the same predicament as the society they are dealing with. They too lack a viewpoint from which to present their material.

This final comment, while not inaccurate, seems too harsh. It would be more just to say that with this documentary material they had a tiger by the tail. You get the impression that the offstage voice of Judith's "better self" is their attempt to hint at a rich, full life for all human beings, but there just isn't any context of appreciable reality to get its high counsels off the ground. They are sound without the drive of living intentions, shadow without the substance of hope.

It would be more to the point if the men who made *The Savage Eye* had found a way to say, *We don't know how to end this picture.* They could have pressed their honesty that far. It is a part of the integrity of their art to confess a failure, which is not their failure, but the failure of us all.

This situation is worth talking about because it is a common problem in the arts. There is magnificent skill for depicting degradation, violence, and failure in contemporary art-forms, especially in films. These are the truths we know how to handle. We do them so well we can hardly let them alone, and we feel the "insincerity" in anything else. Here, at any rate, is an "honest" excuse for the failure of *The Savage Eye* to achieve an upward-and-onward conclusion. Unfortunately, the excuse was not offered, but only a halfhearted attempt that seems hypocritical because it is transparently moralistic.

Well, what ought to be done? It's not a matter of achieving a nice feeling at the end, complete with green valley, white picket fence, and a Unitarian church up the street. Perhaps this difficulty lies in the fact that you can't go from righteous indignation to a profound transformation in attitudes and people and have it believable. The anger gets in the way. Instead of anger, you hunger for a little compassion. You want evidence of some kind of leverage, somewhere, on the part of someone.

Instead you get a lot of dos Passos reporting on how hopeless everything is. These people aren't even human. They're just the puppets of angry men who want you to understand their contempt for the mess. There is no dignity in the mess, and nobody can change anything. Judith tries, but she doesn't make it. Nobody makes it. The angry men wanted to add some hope, but they didn't know how. Then why not have an honest failure at the end, instead of a specious success? Whose myth are they defending?

In conclusion, let us add that people who have liked James Agee, Manny Farber, and Robert Hatch on films will probably like the reviewers in *Sight and Sound*, published in London, with U.S. offices at 306 West 11th Street, New York 14, N.Y. The price is 75 cents a copy.