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HOW RESPONSIBILITY IS DEVELOPED

IN our effort to understand ourselves and the world we live in, the historian of ideas is probably the most useful of all our resources, since, first of all, he makes it evident that what we think about ourselves is largely based upon what we believe. The historian of ideas also helps us to understand how and when great changes in human belief take place, and how such changes bring about far-reaching revisions in the certainties we acquire regarding the nature of things. A work that examines such changes at length is Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* published by the University of Chicago Press in 1969.

A much shorter essay, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," by Lynn White, Jr., which appeared in *Science* for March 10, 1967 (and later as a chapter in White's book, *Machina Ex Deo*), encompasses a wider field, undertaking to explain to some degree the exploitive tendencies of modern times. This essay was reprinted in a collection of writings published by Macmillan of Canada with the title *Crisis* in 1971, from which we quote. The subject is ecology. White writes:

> What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by religion. To Western eyes this is very evident in, say, India or Ceylon. It is equally true of ourselves and of our medieval ancestors.
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> The victory of Christianity over paganism was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture. It has become fashionable today to say that, for better or worse, we live in "the post-Christian age." Certainly the forms of our thinking and language have largely ceased to be Christian, but to my eye the substance often remains amazingly akin to that of the past. Our daily habits of action, for example, are dominated by an implicit faith in perpetual progress which was unknown either to Greco-Roman antiquity or to the Orient. It is rooted in, and is indefensibly apart from Judeo-Christian teleology. The fact that Communists share it merely helps to show what can be demonstrated on many other grounds: that Marxism, like Islam, is a Judeo-Christian heresy. We continue today to live as we have lived for about 1700 years, very largely in a context of Christian axioms.
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> What did Christianity tell people about their relations with the environment? . . .
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> By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve, to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image.

Thus we have indication from the Deity Himself that it is God's will that man exploit nature as he wishes. This was a great change. As Lynn White puts it:

> In antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own *genies loci*, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men, but were very unlike men; centaurs, fauns, and mermaids show their ambivalence. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.

As Lynn White was well aware, what he was saying would be found objectionable by many Christians. Yet he points out that about a century ago science and technology "joined to give mankind powers which, to judge by many of the ecologic effects, are out of control. If so, Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt." We regard ourselves as superior to nature, "willing to use it for our slightest whim." White recalls that

Ronald Reagan, when he was governor of California, spoke as a Christian in saying, "when you've seen one redwood tree, you've seen them all."

> To a Christian a tree can be no more than a physical fact. The whole concept of the sacred grove is alien to Christianity and to the ethos of the West. For nearly two millennia Christian missionaries have been chopping down sacred groves, which are idolatrous because they assume spirit in nature.

So far as present-day Christians are concerned, Lynn White hopes that they will look into the teachings of St. Francis, who proposed "what he thought was an alternative Christian view of nature and man's re-relation to it," yet who failed in this objective.

> Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecological crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must think and refeel our nature and destiny. The profoundly religious, but heretical, sense of the primitive Franciscans for the spiritual autonomy of all parts of nature may point a direction. I propose Francis as a patron saint for ecologists.

Another essay in this book, *Crisis,* is "Clean Air and Future Energy," by E. F. Schumacher. His approach to the subject is through an examination of the domination of modern thought by economics, which he very much deplores. Economics began as an academic discipline about 160 years ago at Oxford University. There was considerable objection to it at the time, from scholars who feared that it would "usurp the rest" of the curriculum. Their fears, he points out, were justified. Today economic growth and expansion, he says, "have become the abiding interest, if not the obsession, of all modern societies."

> In the current vocabulary of condemnation there are few words as final and conclusive as the word "uneconomic." If an activity has been branded as uneconomic, its right to existence is not merely questioned but energetically denied. Anything that is found to be an impediment to economic growth is a shameful thing, and if people cling to it, they are thought of as either saboteurs or fools. Call a thing immoral or ugly, soul-destroying or a degradation of man, a peril to the peace of the world or to the well-being of future generations; as long as you have not shown it to be "uneconomic" you have not really questioned its right to exist, grow and prosper.
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> But what does it *mean* when we say something is uneconomic? . . . Admittedly, economists often disagree among each other about the diagnosis and, even more frequently, about the cure, but that merely proves that the subject matter is uncommonly difficult and economists, like other humans, are fallible.
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> No, I am asking what *it* means, *what sort of meaning the method of economists actually produces.* And the answer to this question cannot be in doubt: something is uneconomic when it fails to earn an adequate profit in terms of money. The method of economics does not, and cannot, produce any other meaning.

There are many things that people do which are uneconomic—they have social, aesthetic, moral or political reasons—making the judgment of economics quite fragmentary. In consequence, actual economic judgments are necessarily narrow.

> For one thing, they give vastly more weight to the short than to the long term, because in the long term, as Keynes put it with cheerful brutality, we are all dead. And then, secondly, they are based on a definition of cost which excludes all "free goods," that is to say, the entire God-given environment, except for those parts of it that have been privately appropriated. This means that an activity can be economic although it plays hell with the environment, and that a competing activity, if at some cost it protects and conserves the environment, will be uneconomic. . . . All goods are treated the same, because the point of view is fundamentally that of private profit making, and this means that it is inherent in the methodology of economics *to ignore man's dependence on the natural world.*

Little by little, Schumacher is getting ready to talk about clean air and why we don't have it. He says:

> Modern economic thinking, as I have said, is peculiarly unable to consider the long term and to appreciate man's dependence on the natural world. It is therefore peculiarly defenceless against forces which produce a gradual and cumulative deterioration in the environment. Take the phenomenon of

urbanization. It can be assumed that no one moves from the countryside into the city unless he expects to gain a more or less immediate personal advantage therefrom. His move, therefore, is economic, and any measure to inhibit the move would be uneconomic. In particular, to make it worthwhile for him to stay in agriculture by means of tariffs or subsidies, would be grossly uneconomic. That it is done none the less is attributed to the irrationality of political pressure. But what about the irrationality of cities with millions of inhabitants? What about the cost, frustration, congestion and ill health of the modern monster city?

Schumacher now turns to pollution, beginning with nuclear pollution.

Of all the changes introduced by man into the household of nature, large-scale nuclear fission is undoubtedly the most dangerous and profound. As a result, ionizing radiation has become the most serious agent of pollution of the environment and the greatest threat to man's survival on earth. The attention of the layman, not surprisingly, has been captured by the atom bomb, although there is at least a chance that it may never be used again. The danger to humanity created by the so-called peaceful uses of atomic energy is hardly ever mentioned. There could indeed be no clearer example of the prevailing dictatorship of economics. . . .

What, after all, is the fouling of the air with smoke compared with the pollution of air, water, and soil with ionizing radiation? . . . One might even ask: what is the point of insisting on clean air, if the air is laden with radioactive particles? And even if the air could be protected, what is the point of it, if soil and water are being poisoned? . . . We cannot leave this to the scientists alone. As Einstein himself said, "almost all scientists are economically completely dependent" and "the number of scientists who possess a sense of social responsibility is so small" that they cannot determine the direction of research. The latter dictum applies, no doubt, to all specialists, and the task therefore falls to the intelligent layman, to people like those who form the National Society for Clean Air and other, similar societies concerned with *Conservation.* They must work on public opinion, so that the politicians, depending on public opinion, will free themselves from the thralldom of economism and attend to the things that really matter. What matters, as I said, is the *direction* of research, that the direction should be towards nonviolence rather than violence; towards an harmonious cooperation with nature rather than a warfare against nature. . . .

In still another essay, Edward T. Hall writes on "Human Needs and Inhuman Cities." He says in some summarizing passages:

When Europeans first settled North America, man was presented with an entire continent rich in resources. He had the tools, the know-how, and the energy to exploit it. No such situation had existed before, nor will it exist again on our planet. In the four generations since the Civil War, when this country was forming itself, we acquired some very bad habits which permitted every man to do as he pleased. Now we have suddenly run out of frontier, and we have produced an economy which, like a chain reaction, is self-sustaining. Our prosperity could ruin us, not because it is bad to be prosperous, but simply because we don't know how to plan for the added dwellings, automobiles, boats, and airplanes. Nor have we learned how to dispose of the resulting pollutants, or how to design the spaces for the masses of people that are moving in and out of our cities each day.

In the United States we allow individuals to do virtually anything: pollute the lakes, contaminate the atmosphere, build a high-rise next door that makes our own living space uninhabitable because it shuts off the view, create walled-in slums in public housing high-rise, transform a potential recreation area on a lake into a run-down industrial waste, plow up the countryside, bulldoze trees, and build thousands of identical prefabricated bungalows in open country. . . important decisions on the national scene are often made by officials, both public and private, who have little or no knowledge of the consequences of their actions.

. . . I would like to stress the importance of considering this small planet as an entire ecological system. This concept is basic to any planning for the improvement of our environment. We can regard our cities either as disaster areas beyond remedial action or as opportunities to learn more about man and his relationships to his environment. If we choose the latter course we will find that most of our urban problems merely reflect basic inadequacies in our total environment; inadequacies which will have to be remedied if man is going to persist on this planet.

One thing that becomes clear from a book like *Crisis* is that the contributors to such a text all, in one way or another, regard the problems of the world as *their* problems. At some point in their lives they realized that whatever they might accomplish as individuals, it would not be enough

to bring about a major change in human behavior. This recognition widened their sense of obligation. They were now *educators* as well as responsible individuals. And the question before them had become: how are people generally to be made aware of this larger responsibility which has, almost suddenly, become an essential part of being human? We say, "almost suddenly," because a century ago there was comparatively little in human experience which made us feel responsible for what was happening in other parts of the world. Today, however, it is increasingly evident that our corporate decisions as a nation affect the lives of the most distant peoples, as, a few years ago in Vietnam, and in the present in Central America and elsewhere. We are beginning to feel both innocent and guilty for a great many happenings of this sort—that is, both responsible and powerless. As a result of contradictory feelings of this sort, citizen groups have been forming to make a beginning at dealing with such problems. D. A. Chant, writing on pollution in *Crisis*, describes one effective organization in Canada:

> A number of citizen anti-pollution groups are springing up across Canada. One of the most successful is Pollution Probe at the University of Toronto. Its formation and methods of operation suggest principles of action that may be useful to other groups with similar aims and to the informed reader who wonders: "What can *I* do?"
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> Pollution Probe came into being at the University of Toronto spontaneously in February 1969. Many students and staff had been alarmed for some years over the rate at which our environment is deteriorating. . . . They decided to band together. . . . They studied air pollution intensively. They decided . . . that there were ills in a society that permitted such moral outrages that called far more urgently for condemnation than the Vietnam war or the lack of decision-making rights of university students. And they decided to do something about these ills.
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> That "something" was to organize a university-based group that would, on the one hand, fight pollution and the polluters with their own weapons of publicity and government pressure, and in the courts; and on the other, seek out the basic roots of our environmental crises and change them if possible by education and even by advocating new kinds of institutional frameworks for our society as a whole.

What effective principles of action has Probe applied? The active members found that they need to work as a group, since individuals acting alone are powerless. They must be shrewd tacticians. They must determine the facts and know them well, drawing on the background of specialists. They must reach out to the public with educational programs and give talks in the schools. And, finally, they must be responsible and accessible. D. A. Chant says:

> Scientists in universities are independent of both government and special interest groups and are in the most advantageous position to exercise their social conscience and relate to controversial problems of the real world. I am not suggesting that a university as a whole should take a policy position on environmental problems—far from it, although the University of Toronto has given open, substantial support to Pollution Probe. Rather it is the professionals in universities who either have special competence through their research or, simply as educated citizens, have a sophisticated concern about environmental quality, who must take leadership in public action programs.

That is one approach and the record of Pollution Probe's achievements shows that it is effective. Others are able to develop other approaches, and all together will in time generate impact and the necessary changes. There are already a number of such groups working both individually and cooperatively in the United States. Meanwhile, as D. A. Chant says:

> Pollution action programs, however, often depend on data obtained by inference, extrapolation, and perhaps even intuition. Usually they cannot wait for time-consuming, rigorous scientific study and analysis. Environmental problems beset us from every side and they are right-now problems; they are crises, and action right now is required for their easement.

These are some of the means by which the human sense of responsibility will be expanded.

REVIEW
THE QUEST FOR MEANING

WE have, presumably from a reader, two paperback books by Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* and *The Unconscious God.* We read the first of these books when it first came out in English translation in 1959 (Beacon), when the title was *From Death Camp to Existentialism,* and reviewed it late in 1959. The other book we are reading now for the first time. In it he speaks of "man's search for meaning" and proposes that religion be defined as "man's search for *ultimate* meaning." It was, he goes on, Albert Einstein who once contended "to be religious is to have found an answer to the question, What is the meaning of life? If we subscribe to this statement we may then define belief and faith as *trust* in ultimate meaning."

But first let us give attention to *Man's Search for Meaning.* Dr. Frankl spent three years as a prisoner of the Nazis in four different concentration camps. Except for one sister, his entire family perished in these camps. He writes, as he says, about "the sacrifices, the crucifixion and the deaths of the great army of unknown and unrecorded victims." Worst of all the inmates were the Capos, prisoners who were chosen by the SS men to run the camps. While the ordinary prisoners may have had little or nothing to eat, "the Capos," Frankl says, "were never hungry."

> Often they were harder on the prisoners than were the guards, and beat them more cruelly than the SS men did. These Capos, of course, were chosen only from those prisoners whose characters promised to make them suitable for such procedures, and if they did not comply with what was expected of them, they were immediately demoted. They soon became much like the SS men and the camp wardens and may be judged on a similar psychological basis. . . .
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> Apathy, the blunting of the emotions and the feeling that one could not care any more, were the symptoms arising during the second stage of the prisoner's psychological reactions, and which eventually made him insensitive to daily and hourly beatings. By means of this insensibility the prisoner soon surrounded himself with a very necessary protective shell.
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> Beatings occurred on the slightest provocation, sometimes for no reason at all. For example, bread was rationed out at our work site and we had to line up for it. Once, the man behind me stood off a little to one side and that lack of symmetry displeased the guard. I did not know what was going on in the line behind me, nor in the mind of the SS guard, but I suddenly received two sharp blows on my head. Only then did I spot the guard at my side who was using a stick. At such a moment it is not the physical pain which hurts the most (and this applies to adults as much as to punished children); it is the mental agony caused by the injustice, the unreasonableness of it all. . . .
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> The most painful part of beatings is the insult which they imply At one time we had to carry some long, heavy girders over icy tracks. If one man slipped, he endangered not only himself but all the others who carried the same girder. An old friend of mine had a congenitally dislocated hip. He was glad to be capable of working in spite of it, since physically disabled were almost certainly sent to death when a selection took place. He limped over the track with an especially heavy girder, and seemed about to fall and drag the others with him. As yet, I was not carrying a girder so I jumped to his assistance without stopping to think. I was immediately hit on the back, rudely reprimanded and ordered to return to my place. A few minutes previously the same guard who struck me had told us deprecatingly that we "pigs lacked the spirit of comradeship. . . .
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> When the last layers of subcutaneous fat had vanished, and we looked like skeletons disguised with skin and rags, we could watch our bodies beginning to devour themselves. The organism digested its own protein, and the muscles disappeared. Then the body had no powers of resistance left. One after another the members of the little community in our hut died.

These camps were devised by the Nazis as programs of deliberate dehumanization, a way of justifying what was being done to the victims. This was accomplished with some, but there were others, Viktor Frankl among them, who found themselves purified and even ennobled by the experience. Frankl writes:

> Man *can* preserve a vestige of spiritual freedom, of independence of mind, even in such terrible conditions of psychic and physical stress.

> We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

As a psychotherapist, Frankl wrote:

> Any attempt at fighting the camp's psychopathological influence on the prisoner by psychotherapeutic or psychohygienic methods had to aim at giving him inner strength by pointing out to him a future goal to which he could look forward. Instinctively some of the prisoners attempted to find one on their own. It is a peculiarity of man that he can only live by looking to the future—*sub specie aeternitatis.* And this is his salvation in the most difficult moments of his existence, although he sometimes has to force his mind to the task. . . . As we said before, any attempt to restore a man's inner strength in the camp had first to succeed in showing him some future goal. Nietzsche's words, "He who has a *why* to live for can bear with almost any *how,"* could be the guiding motto. . . .

This principle became the foundation of the therapeutic philosophy of Viktor Frankl. If you have a purpose in life you can be a well human being. In *The Unconscious God* Frankl writes:

> We have heard that man is a being in search of meaning. We have seen that today his search is unsatisfied and that this constitutes the pathology of our age. The time has come to ask ourselves, What is the therapy? In order to answer this question, we must focus first on another one: namely, how does this meaning-seeking being search for meaning, and also, how does he manage to find it? There is no doubt that meaning must be found and cannot be given. . . . To give meanings would amount to moralizing. But I for one think that if morals are to survive they will have to be ontologized. Ontologized morals, however, will no longer define what is good and what is bad in terms of what one should do and what one must not do. What is good will be defined as that which fosters the meaning fulfillment of a being. And what is bad will be defined as that which hinders this meaning fulfillment.

What more can be said?

> So meaning must be found and cannot be given. And it must be found by oneself, by one's own conscience. Conscience may be defined as a means to discover meanings, to "sniff them out," as it were.

This seems a good place to suggest the reading of biography. Men and women whose lives are worth writing about may seldom or never use the word conscience, yet conscience or some practical equivalent is the foundation of their lives. Read for example Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America* to find the themes of a man who is ruled by conscience. Then turn to the essays of Simone Weil. Such works are *illuminating*. They show how people are set on fire by a vision or an ideal.

Toward the end of *The Unconscious God* Viktor Frankl writes:

> A doctor cannot give meanings to his patients. Nor can a professor give meanings to his students. What they may give, however, is an example, the existential example of personal commitment to the search for truth. As a matter of fact, the answer to the question What is the meaning of life? can only be given out of one's whole being—one's life is itself the answer to the question of its meaning. . . .
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> The fact remains that a psychiatrist cannot show the patient what, in a given situation, the meaning is. But he may well show the patient that there is a meaning and, as we shall see, that life not only holds a meaning, a unique meaning, for each and every man, but also never ceases to hold such a meaning—that it retains it, that it remains meaningful literally up to its last moment, to one's last breath. . . .
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> *We psychiatrists are neither teachers nor preachers* but have to learn from the man in the street . . . what being human is all about. We have to learn from his *sapienta cordis*, from the wisdom of his heart, that being human means being confronted continually with situations, each of which is at once a chance and a challenge, giving us a "chance" to fulfill ourselves by meeting the "challenge" to fulfill its meaning. Each situation is a call, first to listen and then to respond.

There is a passage in *Man's Search for Meaning* which seems to come close to what Frankl is trying to get across, concerned with an attitude that humans find it very difficult—almost

impossible—to adopt, and yet is the heart of the matter. He writes:

> What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life. We had to learn ourselves and, furthermore, we had to teach the despairing men, that it *did not matter what we expected from life, bat rather what life expected from us.* We needed to stop asking ourselves about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life—daily and hourly. Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual.
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> These tasks, and therefore the meaning of life, differ from man to man, and from moment to moment. Thus it is impossible to define the meaning of life in a general way.

An individual may find a way to speak of the meaning of his life in a general way, but this will be almost meaningless to other people. Each one must discover his own sense of meaning.

COMMENTARY
INVISIBLE CRAFT

SPECIAL note ought to be taken of what is quoted from Viktor Frankl on page 8—that *"it did not matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us."* This has to do not so much with specific expectations as with a pervasive mood. Are our thoughts largely concerned with getting or giving? Will life eventually "reveal" its meaning to us, or do we give life meaning by how we spend our energies?

When we read something like this in a book we are likely to feel only the moral pressure that the question exerts. Yet the fact remains that for the individual to whom the decision to serve comes naturally, he feels no pressure. "Life," says Frankl, "ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual."

What is the "right answer"? Obviously, what is right for one individual is likely to be meaningless for another. What one cares about is the main factor in being right, and the "caring" is usually what concerns us. It seems to need no justification. Yet there are elements of experience which affect what we come to care about. In *Search for Meaning* Frankl tells about what he and others went through in the concentration and death camps of the Nazis. It is hard for us to imagine the suffering involved. Yet he says: "At such a moment it is not the physical pain which hurts the most (and this applies to adults as much as to punished children); it is the mental agony caused by the injustice, the unreasonableness of it all." This even though they were slowly starving to death. Yet in the case of Frankl and some others, it was the plight of the other men which purified and ennobled them, leading them to discover that what these victims of injustice needed most of all was a sense of purpose in their lives. Frankl writes:

> It is a peculiarity of man that he can live only by looking to the future—*sub specie æternitatis*. And this is his salvation in the most difficult moments of his existence, although he sometimes has to force his mind to the task.

As a psychiatrist, a doctor of the mind, Frankl learned from going through this ordeal that the key to mental health is having a purpose in life, going on to conclude that a lack of purpose constitutes "the pathology of our age."

> We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

But Frankl also discovered that a sense of meaning cannot be given, it has to be earned, except in the case of those few to whom it seems to come naturally. Those are people in whose company we delight, who are the enrichers of the human race.

Through the years, we have tried to call the attention of readers to such writers, by reviewing their books. These are books which never get "dated" and never lose their vitality. Thoreau is a good example. Aldo Leopold is another.

As a writer said recently of Leopold, urging us to read him:

> He prefers a limpid, everyday vocabulary; avoiding jargon, scientific names, and verbal pyrotechnics. His words, in short, do not call attention to themselves. Nevertheless, one senses that each word carries a great deal of meaning, as if chosen with the utmost care. The smoothness and transparency of Leopold's prose belies its density. Like hand-rubbed wood, its surface conceals its craft.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE BECOME TEACHERS?

THIS week we have only an array of what seem good quotations from books about education. The first is from *Collaborative Learning,* by Edwin Mason, who teaches in England. (The publisher in this country is Agathon Press.) In one of his early chapters he says:

> If there is any truth in the assertion that families are breaking up it lies in two areas of family life where discontinuity appears to occur. Firstly the young leave their families earlier and so the parents are younger when their children leave home; secondly a young couple on marrying are more likely to live at a distance from their own parents and siblings, so that their children are brought up with much less intimate contact with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. While this is happening within the family, a similar dispersal is taking place within the community, despite greater population density. There is less intimate neighborliness, less continuity in jobs which are central to community life; the milkman changes often; the shopkeeper is not a rooted familiar person—the supermarket is killing the corner sweetshop anyway; police officers ride about in cars. There are few stable knowable people around. Mobility and economic rationalization are influencing all trades and the childhood lore of adult life has lost its steady roots.
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> This lack of stable figures who may be known intimately and long enough for youngsters' understanding of them to develop and change over the years, truncates both in depth and extent the experience of adults they need to compose a repertoire of examples of genuine adult behavior. We have to know people quite well to identify ourselves with them or to rehearse what we intend to be, and youngsters need to know numbers of adults well if they are to rehearse all the possibilities that strike them in the years of fluctuating selfhood that characterize mid-adolescence especially. Sensitive literature can be a help if it is read bearing in mind what is already known of people and helps to deepen this knowledge. It cannot help if adolescents have no real experience against which to measure the literature. Most of the "real" people encountered via the mass media have been trimmed for show and are exercises in publicity rather than selves.

It becomes evident that this writer has given attention to matters that most people ignore. For example:

> Unless we can come positively to prefer questioning and critical behavior from our students rather than inert obedience (and we know that most teachers really don't like creative awkward customers) we shall fail in simple terms of the accuracy of the information we purvey. We use information to provide a meeting ground with the young and there is no need for us to lean over backwards to try to produce some kind of information-free meeting—the young rightly expect us to know what we are talking about—but we do have to be prepared now constantly to change our perception of all information or we shall find ourselves defending as fact far too many displaced or suspect hypotheses.
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> A shift of emphasis is called for. The best learning is now most likely to happen where the itemized syllabus is abandoned and the distinction between teacher and learner is blurred to the point where, exploring together patterns of information new to both of them, the teacher's skill as a learner becomes apparent to the pupil and can be used as a model which need not be slavishly imitated but can be modified and elaborated. I think this has always been true and that it is from just such relationships at the research level that all our advances have come.

Mr. Mason's approach spreads out to have wide applications:

> It would be better to accept wherever we can (and we certainly can in schools) the need the young have of each other, and to accept that it is stronger than any need they have of us. Accept that they have a persistent desire to "live in the group," to avoid those aspects of individualism which are more curse than blessing, and encourage it as a natural solution to their urge to rehearse and then claim full adulthood. We should give houseroom in every possible way to the dialogue of the group (not Socratic dialogue) with all the jockeying, jostling and thrashing about of values it entails. . . . To replace conscience and custom by law and policemen, to replace normal human care and concern by welfare officers, to replace knowing how society works by professional sociologists, knowing about people and their human feelings by professional psychologists, and to replace the experience of growing up, seeing

what people must do to survive and enjoy life, by professional teachers actively destroys society.

Here is a man who has learned what folly too much organization can lead to. He also understands the process which leads to the authoritarian personality.

We now go to another book—*Teaching as a Subversive* Activity by Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner. These writers say:

> In class, try to avoid *telling* your students any answers, if only for a few lessons or days. Do not prepare a lesson plan. Instead, confront your students with some sort of problem which might interest them. Then, allow them to work the problem through without your advice or counsel. Your talk should consist of questions directed to particular students, based on remarks made by those students. If a student asks you a question, tell him that you don't know the answer even if you do. Don't be frightened by the long stretches of silence that might occur. Silence may mean that the students are thinking. Or it may mean that they are growing hostile. The hostility signifies that the students resent the fact that you have shifted the burden of intellectual activity from you to them. Thought is often painful even if you are accustomed to it. If you are not, it can be unbearable.
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> There are at least two good accounts of what happens when a teacher refrains from telling students answers. One of them appears in Nathaniel Cantor's *The Dynamics of Learning;* the other, in Carl Rogers' *On Becoming a Person.* You may want to read these accounts before trying your experiment. If you have any success at all, you ought to make your experiment a regular feature of your weekly lessons: one hour every day for independent problem solving, or one hour every week. However much you can do will be worth the effort.
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> Try listening to your students for a day or two. We do not mean reacting to what they say. We mean listening. This may require you to do some role playing. Imagine, for example, that you are not their teacher but a psychiatrist (or some such person) who is not primarily trying to teach but who is trying to understand. Any questions you ask or remarks you make would, therefore, not be designed to instruct or judge. They would be attempts to clarify what someone has said. If you are like most teachers, your training has probably not included learning how to listen. Therefore, we would recommend that you obtain a copy of *On Becoming a Person* by Carl Rogers. The book is a collection of Rogers' best articles and speeches. Rogers is generally thought of as the leading exponent of non-directive counseling, and he is a rich source of ideas about listening to and understanding other people. . . .
>
> It is important for us to say that the principal reason for your learning how to listen to students is that you may increase your understanding of what the students perceive as relevant. The only way to know where a kid is "at" is to listen to what he is saying. You can't do this if you are talking.

This book, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, is a remarkably valuable book in various ways. We have been quoting from the last chapter, which offers a number of suggestions, among them the following:

> Our last suggestion is perhaps the most difficult. It requires honest self-examination. Ask yourself how you came to know whatever things you feel are worth knowing. This may sound like a rather abstract inquiry, but when undertaken seriously it frequently results in startling discoveries. For example, some teachers have discovered that there is almost nothing valuable they know that was *told* to them by someone else. Other teachers have discovered that their most valuable knowledge was *not* learned in a recognizable sequence. Still others begin to question the meaning of the phrase "valuable knowledge" and wonder if anything they learned in school was "valuable." Such self-examination can be most unsettling, as you can well imagine. . . . The question "Why am I a teacher, anyway?". . . produces answers that are encouraging: for example, that one can participate in the making of intelligence and, thereby, in the development of a decent society.

FRONTIERS

Village Improvement in Sri Lanka

IN a pamphlet issued earlier this year, *Learning How To Live in Peace,* Detlef Kantowsky describes the work of the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka, pointing out that this movement, Gandhian in origin, may be the one way in which the people of the island may be able to neutralize the tensions in their country and to provide constructive forms of coexistence. The reason for this hope is the scope of the Sarvodaya Movement and the extraordinary influence of its leader, A. T. Ariyaratne. Kantowsky says:

> Such hopes are not just founded on the spectacular peace marches and actions of the movement in recent years; they are based above all on the results of the ever expanding grassroots work carried out by Sarvodaya since the end of the 1950s in the villages all over Sri Lanka.
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> The Sanodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka was founded in 1958 by A. T. Ariyaratne, then a 27-year-old teacher at the Buddhist Nalanda College in Colombo. Inspired by Gandhi and his disciples Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, he further developed the—originally Gandhian Sarvodayan concept "for the welfare of all." The name of his movement he explains as follows: "Sarvodaya signifies a thought and Shramadana the implementation of that thought." "Sarva" meaning All and "Udaya" meaning Awakening are two Sanskrit words which are also current in the Sinhala language. "Shrama" literally means energy or labor and "dana" means sharing. Therefore Sarvodaya Shramadana literally means sharing of one's time and energy for "the awakening of all."

The work in behalf of the villages included the improvement of access roads, the cleaning of irrigation ponds and canals, the construction of brick wells, public buildings and schools repaired.

> But right from the start the changes of consciousness and behavior that took place in all the participants in the course of a work camp were much more important to the movement than the concrete, visible results of such mutual endeavors. . . .
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> Between 1958 and 1966 more than 300,000 volunteers participated in hundreds of such activities and "Shramadana" became a household word in the discussions about self-help in Sri Lanka. The Bandaranaike government officially supported the movement and recognized it in 1965 as a public charity. But the further expansion and professionalization of its work was only made possible when foreign donors also became increasingly aware of its developmental significance and started promoting it.

The headquarters of the Movement is in Moratuwa, 20 kilometers south of Colombo. There a staff of 225 carry on the work of administration, and Ariyaratne trains the workers from the 5,620 villages in which Sarvodaya is now represented. Kantowsky says:

> Sarvodaya is thus one of the largest Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the Third World, without, however having fallen victim to a hydra-like bureaucratism, a danger frequently to be observed in similar cases of expansion. A six member commission appointed by donors from Canada, Holland, Norway and Britain expressed the overall opinion in the assessment they made in September 1987 that the achievements of the movement within the past years had been quite remarkable and the confidence of the foreign promoters was justified; Sarvodaya was utilizing the funds "effectively and in the interests of the rural poor in Sri Lanka."

This means the organization of rural development work for mutual self-help. The villagers organize themselves in five different groups—children, mothers, young people, farmers, and old people. They develop a community center and work out plans for cooperative use of natural resources. Then there are training programs for young men and women as village helpers, nursery school teachers, and nutrition and health advisers.

> Only when the village population as a whole has thereby undergone a psycho-social transformation and individual members have been trained in certain social responsibilities or technical skills as well, does "village development," or what is understood as such, begin, but the goals are quite different from those generally envisaged by development projects. . . .
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> At first sight it may seem surprising that the desire for a socially intact, materially well-balanced and ecologically and psychologically sound

> environment ranks first on the scale of needs, which was subdivided into 167 points altogether, but it reflects precisely what is lacking in many villages in Sri Lanka, especially when they are situated in areas exploited by exclusively monoculture agriculture e.g., the coconut, rubber and tea plantations, which are still a decisive factor in the national economy because of their export revenue. . . .
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> Sarvodaya trains the village helpers to assist the groups in their decision-making and how to advise them, particularly about ways and means of gaining access to the scarce national development resources. In addition an attempt is made to coordinate the measures thus initiated in a particular region. To this end 282 divisional centers were created below the level of the 28 district centers. Sarvodaya is actively represented in all 28 districts of the country! Sarvodaya is currently active in 8000 villages, but 5620 of these villages work on a programmed basis in 1120 clusters of villages known as Gramadana units.

The Sarvodaya workers are trained to be careful in the way that they work, producing only commodities genuinely needed in the village.

> For Sarvodaya considers all possessions in excess of basic essentials as theft and—like Gandhi—as one of the main reasons for violence. In contrast to destructive self-assertion at the expense of the environment, the movement advocates a Buddhist-inspired mode of self-realization through sharing with one's fellow creatures, so that *all beings*—not just human beings!—may be well and happy. For, according to Sarvodaya, the earth still has enough to offer us, if we could but learn how to live in peace and started, not from artificially induced desires, but from our basic needs.

A central objective of the Sarvodaya Movement is the rejection of violence and working for peace. Kantowsky writes:

> A mere 24 hours after the massacres of July 1983, when none else ventured out of doors, the Movement began to organize relief for the injured and to set up refugee camps. Tamil and Sinhalese helpers worked together in the respective groups so as to set an example of reconciliation amidst the general group hatred.
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> On 2nd October of the same year a "Peace Conference" was organized by Sarvodaya in the "Bandaranaike Memorial Hall," the largest public building in Colombo. Two thousand distinguished persons from all over the country and the leading representatives of all religious communities participated. They passed a "People's Declaration for National Peace and Harmony" which was carried in full by all the mass media in Sinhala, Tamil and English.