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THE MEANING OF PROGRESS

THOSE still able to think of the present as a time exhibiting the fulfillments of human progress ought to be troubled by two insistent realities—facts which need explanation in the face of any such claim. First, then, why should a progressive or advanced society have created the peculiarly confining circumstances which now surround practically everyone on earth? The other reality is the scarcity of great or even distinguished human beings. Why are we so lacking in men of this caliber? So far as the United States is concerned, there were times in our past history when, although the population was tiny in comparison with the present, we were much better endowed with leadership. It is hardly ever asked why this was the case. Perhaps it seems a fruitless question to raise.

The first question is less obscure. That is, one easy explanation for the confinement we experience is that the land is used up—all occupied. It is true that a few places are left where land can be had for little money, but "living on the land" is very nearly a lost art in the United States. Even Daniel Boone would have a hard time doing it today. A man can't bring up a family in the style of the eighteenth century when most other people are content with the standards and dependences of the twentieth century. Besides, it takes considerable skill to be a farmer. Perhaps we should say that deliberately going back to earlier simplicities is likely to prove a difficult evolutionary achievement, just as reaching the level of twentieth-century life was something of an achievement.

But the main point is that today you can't load your belongings in a wagon and take off for a new or unspoiled part of the country. The land is everywhere inhabited, more or less, and "nature" is not the rich resource it used to be. It is hardly possible to get beyond the reach of the social and economic institutions of the twentieth century, and while any family can, by exercising ingenuity, be less ruled by their influence than many others, there is justice in calling these institutions confining when so much effort must be expended to become free of them. Shall we say, then, that progress is progress only for conformists? We ought also to say that genuine progress ought not to bring endless war, and desperate preparation for war, and that it will not train young men to commit obscene crimes in the name of patriotism. Progress, if it has a human meaning, will not drive people to live frantically and anxiously from day to day. A good society is not one from which more and more people long to escape.

It follows, obviously enough, that instantaneous communications and rapid transport should not be taken as a measure of progress, since they bear so little relation to actual goodness of life. And when it is said that now we are able to get people to the hospital quickly when they need to go, and that telephones afford many similar services, a counter-argument would be that there are places in the world—not many, but some—where there are no hospitals and very few telephones and practically no sickness at all, because of the way people live.

Already we are witness to a vast, improvised migration on the part of the young. They are still finding places to go, but the report is that the land in New Mexico suitable for communes is all taken now, and the community described by Herbert Otto in the *Saturday Review* for April 24 was, he said, one "among the eight communes located within a twenty-five mile radius of a small town in Western Oregon." In any event, the members of these groups must find ways of producing supplementary income, in addition to what they can grow on the land. If it wasn't for the affluence

of the affluent society, they would be having a very hard time.

But this leaves out of account the millions of people who lack the mobility of the young and who are literally imprisoned in the wasted areas of the affluent society. In an article in the *Christian Science Monitor* for Oct. 13, 1967, Joseph C. Harsch maintained that while the United States is the wealthiest country in the world, this country "is unique in having serious massive poverty in the midst of affluence." In his opinion: "Not in the whole of Western Europe together would it be possible to find 30 million persons who live in the prospect of wasted lives." He adds: "A person could have a wasted life in the United States at 10 times the annual wage of a successful person in India." This confirms our earlier point concerning the effect of having to live in conformity to the habits and standards of the twentieth century, in order to have relations with other people.

The poor, of course, are found everywhere, but there is a difference between being poor and living a degraded, wasted life. As Mr. Harsch put it:

> Nor does the squalor of even a Sicilian slum debase the self-respect of its dwellers as does the rotting center of many an industrial city in the United States. And the dividing line, surely, is not drawn by money alone but by whether one is needed or wanted. . . . the cold fact is that the United States has tolerated in its midst a degree and quantity of poverty which other advanced societies do not tolerate. On this scale of values the United States is the most backward of modern Western countries.

The victims of these conditions are, quite literally, displaced people. The "progress" of which we are so proud has pushed them out of normal life and made it difficult if not impossible to find their own place in the existing society. What is worse, *there is no place for them to go.* For example, in the years since the end of World War II, the mechanization of agriculture in the American South has left millions of people without work. What can they do? The blacks migrate to the cities. Many of these people are naturally farmers and they like to farm, but they have no land. For them, there is no work at all in the South. In an article in *Fortune* for August, 1968, Roger Beardwood related some of the facts:

> Between 1950 and 1960, 493,000 Negroes and 1,024,000 whites lost their jobs in southern agriculture. In the coming seven years, at least another quarter of a million people, white and black, will be thrown out of work. This collision with agricultural economics has been disastrous for all farm workers. But it has been catastrophic for Negroes; they are confronted by almost unsurmountable barriers of race as well as poverty in the South. Segregated schools have left them less educated than whites, and most jobs are still closed to them because of their color. Thus the Negro's transition from farm to factory, from hoe to lathe, from tractor to office, lies over an obstacle course laid out by a society in which he has no voice.
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> For the dwindling number of Negroes who remain on the land, the problem is how to make a living wage. The U.S. Agriculture Department estimates that in 1964, the latest year for which figures are available, the average Negro farm worker in sixteen southern states worked seventy-seven days a year and earned $353. He also spent twenty-four days doing non-farming jobs—domestic, gardening, and laboring work, for example—and earned an additional $150, bringing his total annual income to $503. That official estimate conceals some wide variations. In 1964, wages on farms in the South ranged from a low 65 cents an hour in South Carolina to a high of 99 cents in Florida. Moreover, some farm workers are earning less than 65 cents an hour, even in 1968.

Yet the cause of the plight of farm labor in the American South is called "progress"! It is appropriate, here, to refer to the booklet by E. F. Schumacher which was discussed two weeks ago in Review, and to quote further from his examination of the causes of the impoverishment of the peasant population of underdeveloped countries. In his paper, "Help to Those Who Need it Most," Schumacher says:

> I am not speaking of ordinary poverty, but of actual and acute misery; not of the poor, who according to the universal tradition of mankind are in a special way blessed, but of the miserable and

degraded ones who, by the same tradition, should not exist at all and should be helped by all. Poverty may have been the rule in the past, but misery was not. Poor peasants and artisans have existed from time immemorial; but miserable and destitute villages in their thousands—not in wartime or as an aftermath of war, but in the midst of peace and as a seemingly permanent feature—that is a monstrous and scandalous thing which is altogether abnormal in the history of mankind. We cannot be satisfied with the snap answer that this is due to population pressure. Since every mouth that comes into the world is also endowed with a pair of hands, population pressure could serve as an explanation only if it meant an absolute shortage of land—and although that situation may arise in the future, it decidedly has not arrived today (a few islands excepted). It cannot be argued that population increase as such must produce increasing poverty because the additional pairs of hands could not be endowed with the capital they needed to help themselves. Millions of people have started without capital and have shown that a pair of hands can provide not only the income but also the durable goods, i.e., capital, for civilized existence. So the question stands and demands an answer. What has gone wrong? Why cannot these people help themselves?

Now, I shall venture to suggest the reply that the cause lies in the impact of the modern West upon these societies and populations. . . . I suggest that the cause of economic misery in a country like India is not the adherence to her own traditions . . . but the turning away from these traditions, and that the cause of this turning away is the mere existence, abroad and in India, of the modern Western methods of production, distribution, administration, and so forth. M. de Jouvenel says that the difficulties to achieve a "take-off" are greater for Asian countries than they had been for the West. This is probably true, but hardly because "the industrial revolution in the West coincided with the democratic explosion, while this explosion occurred in Asia without an attending industrial revolution." A population determined to help itself never finds a shortage of productive tasks to employ all hands. What seems to me of infinitely greater importance is that the West abandoned its own traditions only as it itself developed and applied the modern methods, while the Asian countries—partly owing to European domination—lost (not all, but much of) their own traditions, because of something that had arisen not among themselves but in the West. Thus they fell into an abyss of misery. . . It was his intuitive understanding of these fatal mechanisms which led Gandhi to say in 1912 that "India is being ground down, not under the English heel, but under that of modern civilization."

It was not so long ago that men of the West took an especial pride in the fact that they had outstripped many other parts of the world in certain aspects of material development. Odious racist theories and chauvinist vanities were based on this achievement. So there is irony in the fact that today, when we realize that no "prosperous" people can any longer dare to live in great wealth while vast populations suffer from want, we don't know how to help these other peoples intelligently, and make terrible messes of "foreign aid." And there is more irony in the fact that while we are instructing these far-off peoples in our way of life, the spirited members of our own younger generation have announced that they want none of it, and have demonstrated an uncompromising determination to invent or devise something better. There is, finally, a kind of justice in the fact that these problems are all going to have to be worked out by sheer intelligence, and not by any sort of flight. There is no place to go. There is no place to go for anybody, rich or poor. The new beginnings we now make are going to have to be in terms of reshaping the conditions we have made, since there cannot be a new start in some virgin territory.

This brings us to the second problem we mentioned at the beginning—the scarcity of great and distinguished men. For, quite plainly, we are going to need such men to work out our problems. To whom do you turn for help in a matter of this sort? Not, first of all, to anyone in charge of the production-line sort of education. If we have paid any attention to the critical studies of modern education, we know that its leading defect is the tendency, everywhere present, to stamp out human distinction. Actually, we can go to no one for help on the problem of human greatness except to the great Humanists—to a man like Tolstoy, for example, or to one or two others of like genius or distinction. And Tolstoy, one finds—quite unremarkably, to be sure, after

you have read him a bit—was militantly against "progress" on the ground that he was *for* free human beings. The academic figures, with the sole exception of Maslow, who was a most unacademic academic, are really useless to us for light on this question. Terman's studies of genius, for example, do not help any one interested in learning how good and wise and talented men obtain these distinguishing qualities.

It must be admitted that our society has been far more alert in guarding itself against the influence of distinguished men than in learning how to produce them. Or, as Kenneth Keniston suggested recently in an *American Scholar* article, our idea has been to confine human distinction to rare appearances, safely spaced out in time so that we can be sure to control them and keep them from stirring people up too much. Distinguished men will just have to be orderly in what they do, or we'll get rid of them, one way or another.

Yet we may be well on the way to the right condition for having a visit from a few such men. We are slowly growing humble, questioning ourselves and looking more closely at the assumptions we have been operating on for the past hundred years or so. The truth is that distinguished men are themselves a very humble lot, and they don't get on well among arrogant people.

It was, we suppose, some reading in the new edition of the collection of essays, *Gandhi: His Relevance for Our Times,* just issued by the World Without War Council (paper, $2.95), that precipitated this wondering about great men. This is an excellent book. The contributors have done much more than write appreciations of Gandhi. As the title suggests, the book is intended to show practical applications of Gandhi's ideas. There are some twenty-eight contributors, several of whom appear more than once. Among them are such writers as Richard B. Gregg, Joan Bondurant, A. J. Muste, Stephen King-Hall, Wilfred Wellock, Charles Walker, Mulford Sibley, Horace Alexander, Esme Wynne-Tyson, J. B. Kriplani, R. R. Diwakar, and Raghavan Iyer.

It would be well for the reader to come to this volume with the background of an independent study of Gandhi's life, such as Pyarelal's monumental three-volume work issued by the Navajivan Publishing House in Ahmedabad, and to soak for a while, also, in the anthology prepared by Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections from Gandhi,* also published by Navajivan. The roots of the man's vision and his courage are better understood by a reading of these books. The important question is, what makes Gandhi a man of the stature he undoubtedly had? Short explanations are not much good for the kind of understanding we are seeking. What does it take to have an impact on history of the sort Gandhi achieved? What *is* human greatness? Has it an essence? Do we even have a vocabulary for discussing this question? Of the contributors to *Gandhi: His Relevance for Our Times,* only Wynne-Tyson seems to have given this side of Gandhi some thought. In his paper, "Gandhi's Illustrious Antecedents," this writer finds that Gandhi's "teachings and whole manner of life were in the tradition of an age-old humane philosophy that I have renamed 'The Philosophy of Compassion,' and which is traceable in Western history from the time of Pythagoras, the first great exponent of the way of ahimsa in the West."

What Wynne-Tyson seems to be getting at is the conception of man and of human responsibility which the Platonic and Neoplatonic thinkers gave to Western thought, and which Gandhi found in the *Bhagavad-Gita* and in other sources, not excluding the monitions of his own heart. This is not to say that greatness is the fruit of scholarly studies in antique philosophy, but to suggest a way of thinking about man which has in it the promise of high human development, providing a framework of ideas in which conceptions of the godlike in human behavior are natural, reasonable, and the fruit of disciplined inquiry. It seems that such ideas are at least hospitable to the resolve

that is invariably present in men who are able, by sheer might of human appeal, to touch the hearts of masses of men. For this is what Gandhi did. He worked for and with the penniless but faithful masses of India, who understood him and opened their hearts to him.

Yet Gandhi was himself a shy and even a retiring man without personal pretensions. He did not want to be called a "Mahatma," or Great Soul, and declared himself "literally sick of the adoration of the unthinking multitude." He also said: "I lay no claim to superhuman powers. I want none. I wear the same corruptible flesh that the weakest of my fellow-beings wears, and am, therefore, as liable to err as any."

In an article on education in the book, *High School* (Simon and Schuster), edited by Ronald Gross and Paul Osterman, Theodore Roszak has a passage concerned with the American troops involved in the massacre at Mylai. He writes:

> . . . a few years before they turned their guns on these women and children and shot them, they were perhaps going out for the high school basketball team, planning heavy weekend dates, worrying about their grades in solid geometry. No moral degenerates these: no more than Adolph Eichmann was. But given the order to kill, they killed. Not because they were monsters, but because they were good soldiers, good Americans, doing as they had been taught to do. Given the order to kill, they killed—the obviously innocent, obviously defenseless, crying out to them for pity.
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> Later, one of the men is reported as saying that he had bad dreams about the deed. Did he ever learn in school that there are such dreams? Was he ever asked to decide for himself what his duty is to the state? to his own conscience? Did he ever have a class dealing with the subject "orders one must consider *never* obeying"? Would any board of education, any PTA now demand that such a class be offered? Would the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare suggest it? Would the U.S. Department of Defense suggest it? Would the local Chamber of Commerce and American Legion permit it?

The kind of men we are talking about would do all these things, and reach the people in doing it.

REVIEW
PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

IN view of the growing interest in the unknown, or the as yet not understood, psychic capacities of human beings, the new book, *Progress in Parapsychology* (Parapsychology Press, Durham, North Carolina, $7.00), edited by J. B. Rhine, should be useful to many readers. We found it interesting on three counts. First, since it appears at the centennial of the birth of William McDougall, the English psychologist who conceived the program of investigation that later became a reality at Duke University, the book is dedicated to him. There is a fine portrait of McDougall as frontispiece, and Dr. Rhine tells briefly the story of McDougall's lifelong interest in psychical research. Then, nineteen representative papers give the reader a general idea of what is now going on in parapsychology. The effort is no longer to "prove" the reality of extra sensory perception, but rather to add to our extremely limited knowledge of how it works. A final section of the book is devoted to a historical survey of parapsychology, with emphasis on the relationships with academic psychology and public opinion generally.

Not all the technical papers reporting experiments will interest the general reader, but one in particular, "The Effect of Belief on ESP Success," seems worthy of note. The writers, Thelma S. Moss and J. A. Gengerelli, summarize an experiment involving 144 volunteers, 82 women and 62 men. The subjects fell into three groups—those who believed in ESP experiences and thought they had had them; people who believed it possible but thought themselves without the faculty; and those convinced that ESP does not occur. The subjects were formed into teams of two each, one a transmitter, the other a receiver. The transmitter was shown a scene having some emotional impact, while his receiving partner was shown simultaneously both that scene and another contrasting one, and asked which of the two scenes had been witnessed by the transmitter. Three pairs of scenes were involved, of which the transmitter saw only one of each pair. Following is the analysis of results:

> The number of correct choices for each receiver could be three out of three, two out of three, one out of three, or none. Chance alone would yield an average of 1.5 correct guesses per session. Analysis by appropriate statistical methods showed that neither the Non-ESP group nor the ESP-? group did any better than chance, but all the ESP group scored well above chance. Of the 24 ESP-group receivers, 19 made either two or three correct choices (odds against chance: more than 300 to one).
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> The finding that was perhaps of greatest interest had not been anticipated in the original design: during the experiment it was noted that the artists were outperforming the others even the professional sensitives. After the experiment had been completed, the records of the 72 teams therefore were redivided into groups of both-artists, one-an-artist, and neither-an-artist .
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> The artists were writers, musicians, actors and others engaged in professions that demand creativity. Of the twelve teams of both-artists, eleven had scored either two or three correct choices; and of the 14 teams in the one-an-artist group, 13 had either two or three correct choices (odds against chance of the combined result: 200,000 to one).

These are results which could easily annoy a tough-minded critic. He can't say that the high scores of the "believers" were produced by wishful thinking, since the fact is that they guessed right a lot more than the unbelievers or doubters did. On the other hand, there are many things that people do better if they *believe* they can do them. So thought-transmission is one more ability belonging in that category.

Another kind of tough-mindedness is exhibited by Remy Chauvin in a short contribution on "Parapsychology and Physics." This writer starts out by objecting to the claim that ESP "contradicts" the laws of physics. Newton was not contradicted by Einstein; rather, "Einstein uses another scale and considers other facts." Moreover—

> The existence of psi does not annul the laws of electrical currents, for on a proper scale and for the

facts they regulate, those laws are true. Nonetheless, there may be other facts and other laws not opposing but in addition to them.

Mr. Chauvin points out that although we do not know how psi abilities work, there are many familiar capacities which remain unexplained. We don't know, for example, how, when we "will" to raise an arm, the idea of doing it is translated into the act. Not understanding how it is done does not interfere in the least with our doing it. This writer comments:

> So every day we use a power, the nature and mechanism of which we do not understand. A power we call our "will" gives us the ability to order and arrange matter, even living matter—to manage it. The exact way we manage it we do not know, nor are we bothered by not knowing.
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> This is a process rather analogous to psi, and I am not the first one to remark on this. Who knows what we could learn if we knew more about the nerve mechanism of the volitional act? Or more exactly, about the relations between conscious will and its background of neural mechanisms? But this is a subject almost as obscure as psi.
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> What could psi change in psychology, in the biological sciences, in physics? In my opinion, it could change everything. This is why there is such a passionate reluctance by so many scientists to accept the findings of parapsychology—the fear of profound change. What change? I believe we are not far enough along yet to really answer this question. . . .

What Mr. Chauvin says in this concluding paragraph seems vitally important in relation to all projects which hope to employ the persuasions of psychical phenomena as a lever to induce a higher level of moral behavior in human beings. The argument runs that psychical phenomena cast serious doubt on the assumptions of materialism; therefore, let us use these paranormal realities to raise the sights of human beings to more enduring objects and ends. It seems true enough that a man shaken in his skepticism may be driven to think about the ultimate meaning of things. Yet how are we going to *arrange* to shake this man, so that he may be given furiously to think?

William McDougall hoped through the agency of psychical research to open the minds of scientists and others to the possibility of non-material reality. He thought that if great universities would sponsor such investigations, the tide of materialism would eventually be turned. He went from Harvard to Duke, a new university, in 1927, with such a program in mind, and when Dr. Rhine came there later in the year to work under him for a short period of study, McDougall invited him to stay and to conduct research in parapsychology. But the example of Duke was not widely followed. Other psychology departments did not interest themselves in extra sensory perception. In fact, before McDougall died he realized that it was necessary to take the parapsychological research out of the psychology department at Duke and enable it to proceed independently. It was evident, Dr. Rhine relates in a paper toward the end of the book, that the notoriety stirred by psychical research "was not healthy for the department."

But why "notoriety"? The implications of extra sensory perception are no secret. At the lower level, they blend with the fringes of the "miraculous." The public is quite willing to ignore most of what goes on in universities, but when somebody attempts to interview "ghosts," as a newspaper writer might describe some aspects of psychic research, the vast Sunday supplement and pulp magazine audience wants to know all about it. And editors after circulation are always willing to oblige.

Then, at the other end of the spectrum, is the unsettling prediction that recognition of psi (*psi* is a general term covering telepathy, clairvoyance, and mind-over-matter happenings) *"could change everything."* Scientists are not immune to the attractions of security. They don't want their foundations threatened. They will accept innovation when they must—when it is, so to speak, forced upon them, but their capacity to resist change is not very different from the similar capacity of all other people. Innovators are

extraordinary men, and sometimes they need to be heroes as well as inventive and original. In short, it is the nature of orthodoxy to guard against change, and most especially against sweeping change, such as ESP surely implies. It is simply against nature to expect conventional institutions to sponsor activities which promise shaking effects of this sort.

The response of individuals may be entirely different. Speaking of the activity in psi research in recent years, Dr. Rhine refers to the growth of lay interest in the research and also "active and widespread enthusiasm among students, promising that popular interest in the subject would continue into the future." What has been the response to this?

> The university departments reacted by silence and indifference to the claims of the psi field. They could no longer intelligently criticize the real case for psi, and yet they could not accept it either because, as D. O. Hebb well said, ESP could not be accounted for by physics and physiology. The studied coolness was a natural response.
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> Beyond a doubt the sensationalism which the work with psi inspired was quite aggravating to many fellow psychologists. It provided an excuse for criticism as if the research itself was to blame for the publicity. Parapsychology had been adopted by the entertainer, the popular writer, the comic-strip artist, and even Broadway, and parapsychologists could do little to regulate the public interest.
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> The period ended [in 1967] with relations between parapsychology and other professional fields even less certain than before. Despite all the progress psi research had made, it was a worse time for trying to start a new research center in any university psychology department in the country than when the beginning had been made at Duke a quarter of a century earlier.

This does not mean that psi research has failed to spread and attract attention. Actually, much work is being done in other countries, and in universities outside of psychology departments. The recipients of the McDougall Award, an annual presentation since 1957, are spread around the world, and are persons of diverse background. "Of the fourteen researchers who have won joint or single awards," Dr. Rhine says, "only two were psychologists; three were educators; three were primarily mathematicians; and four represented biology, biochemistry, medicine, and engineering respectively."

The importance of the concluding section of this book lies in its indication of the need to understand more thoroughly the grounds of general acceptance or rejection of research into areas where what may be found out is essentially unpredictable, and quite possibly revolutionary in effect. The kind of "authority" our civilization relies upon and tries to preserve needs critical inspection, in view of what Dr. Rhine relates in his survey of parapsychological investigation.

COMMENTARY
"IN MERE OPPUGNANCY"

THIS week's "Children" again raises the question of the fitness of power as a means to worthy ends. The moral seems to be that while building a strong union and tolerating no exceptions to the pattern of behavior which makes for a united front may win higher salaries for the teaching profession, it also interferes with spontaneous relations between the teachers and the taught. Or, you might say, the best teaching may come to an end.

One could argue that the use of power, however salutary at the beginning, will eventually jettison all larger purposes. It is possible to imagine a society whose balances and harmonies are limited to those which can exist between powerful citadels of self-interest—that, after all, is the kind of peace that exists in the world, today, if it can be called "peace"—but it is not possible to call such a society a *good* society. Take for example a seldom noticed feature of the labor movement. While the unions have done much for the workers in industry, they almost never show any interest in what the workers *make*. If the men are well paid, and pay their dues, it doesn't seem to matter if the product is basically useless, anti-social in its effect, or even a tool of genocidal nationalism. So long as the men have their "rights," the world may go hang—or wither and burn, which seems more likely.

It is as Shakespeare said. When things meet "in mere oppugnancy," then—

> Force should be right; or, rather, right and wrong,—
> Between whose endless jar justice resides,—
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite;
> And appetite, a universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce an universal prey,
> And last eat up himself.

To what school can the young be sent to learn immunity to the plausibilities of power? And if teachers could be found for such a school, who would support it? Such lessons are not learned from the education we have now, for where is the school which considers, as Theodore Roszak suggests (see page 8), "orders one must consider *never* obeying"? Perhaps this is a lesson to be learned only in that larger school of the world itself—the "school without walls," where we learn very nearly everything worth knowing.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
ADVERSARY TACTICS IN SCHOOL

A COUPLE of weeks ago we received for this Department an article about a problem in a high school on Long Island, New York. The paper was fourteen pages and it wasn't really about education except in the institutional sense, so we explained to the writer why we couldn't use the material. Yet he told things that need to be told and said things that need to be said. So we got permission to tell in a few words what the article is about, and to quote briefly from it.

This man, Paul Lissandrello, teaches social studies in the eleventh grade. The students must think well of him because one day fourteen of them came to him for help. They wanted, they said, to do something to improve their school. They wanted to make their learning experience "more meaningful," and what they desired most, they explained, "was a definite cause to which they could dedicate constructive action with the hope of seeing positive results." What did he think?

Well, he had something in mind. The school had no elective program in social studies. While schools in nearby districts gave seniors a variety of choices in social studies, no preferences were permitted at this school. And no effort was made to find out if the students might *have* preferences. Mr. Lissandrello asked them if they did.

> The response was immediate and definite. Of course they wanted a choice. Why couldn't they study psychology rather than political science? What made economics of more use to a student than sociology? Wouldn't it be more important to have a course in American racial and ethnic relations than to pursue the workings of Congress again for the sixth, seventh, or eighth time?
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> The kids were excited. They liked the idea and wanted to know what they could do about the situation. They talked about the importance of electives in other areas of study such as English or science. They wanted my suggestions as to what steps they could take.

So, together they mounted a campaign. The school district happened to be one in which change was especially resisted. The district coordinator, who had to be persuaded, remained skeptical. What to do? He had turned down the idea of electives before.

The teacher decided that the coordinator was nonetheless a man who would bow to demonstrable facts, so he devised a plan to prove the value of electives in social studies. He proposed to the students that if they would come to a twice-a-week elective after school hours, he would teach it. There would be all the usual discipline, tests, term papers, etc. Then, after they had done the work they would gather up the records and visit the coordinator with the evidence of a worth-while course that they had wanted and had taken. How could he then refuse?

> This would be the classic case of students working within the system and we would not let it fail. We were determined to prove that even an uninspired educator could be moved by a responsible approach to educational reform.
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> We decided to entitle the course "New Perspectives in Sociology" and determined that we would deal with special sociological issues which posed problems for life in our society today. We would use paperback materials and we would try to limit the cost to five dollars per student.

Another teacher with a strong background in sociology joined the project and, obtaining the Department Chairman's permission, the two teachers and the students got off to a flying start with over fifty volunteer students at the first session. Attendance went much higher than this, but eventually fell off when the class lost members to activist ecology doings, yet the course could not be called anything but a complete success. But you could also call it a failure, since it did not achieve its purpose of winning the administration over to an elective program.

First, not all the other teachers liked the idea. Some social science teachers used to giving the prescribed courses lacked background in some of the subjects electives would involve. This might lower their professional ratings. But this objection was minor compared to the reaction of the teachers'

union. Two teachers working after school without pay was regarded by some of the members of the teachers' union as practically subversive of the principles of the labor movement. Union stalwarts announced that they were going to file a formal grievance charging the two teachers with violation of the teachers' contract. The news of their offense spread and soon the part-time amateurs found themselves eating alone in the school dining room, and fewer and fewer people saying "Hi" in the corridors. They had some support, of course, but this led to the charge that they were "splitting" the union and thereby weakening its strength in relation to the board of education. Eventually there was a hearing before the union leadership in which the two teachers listened to attacks on what they had "done," and then presented their own view.

> We expressed the point of view that teachers, union and non-union, should be concerned about relevance in education. We said that we should all try to turn young people "on" by dealing with things of interest to them and that this could be done within the framework of accepted disciplines. We also suggested that it could be just as important for a high school senior to know about sociology as it would be for him to know about economics.
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> We suggested also that it was about time the union moved to the leadership in improving the student learning experience. We charged them with being overly committed to teacher prerogatives and not being concerned about what was needed to provide students with relevant education. What did it matter if we were helping teenagers to learn after school without compensation? They, as leaders of the union, should join us or sponsor our effort to move the satisfied and complacent administrators. How long were they willing to tolerate the fact that our district remained one of the few in the area without the type of program we were proposing?

Since there was already bitterness, and some union militants wanted the two men expelled from the union, the executive board was in a spot. So, as with many organizational decisions, the board ruling was an emasculating compromise which seemed "fair" but undercut the basic intentions of the two men. The union agreed that they could finish the course they were giving, but must not offer it or similar courses in the following year. Under this decision the tide of student support for electives could not be used to sway the school administration since the union now prevented them from showing how much the demand would increase the next year. So the two teachers refused to promise they would not teach after-hours courses in the following year. This made the union militants angry. The two teachers were told that *other* unions "broke legs" of intractable members. So the issue grew and grew and went finally before a full membership meeting of the union. It was late on the agenda and many of the members had left when the question of the elective program was raised for consideration. Most of those who remained were hostile. But by then there was no longer a quorum, so nothing was decided. Meanwhile, the student papers were attacking the union as being against educational innovation and represented by teachers who were "lazy and unwilling to change."

All this controversy allowed the top administrative figures in the school to take a blandly "neutral" position. Meanwhile, the time came for a new teachers' contract to be negotiated and a district-wide teachers' strike was imminent. To avoid being "enemies of the people" the two teachers finally agreed not to offer the course during the next year, with the understanding that a committee would look into the question more thoroughly. The union, however, proposed to the board of education that no teacher be *required* to teach an elective, which meant that even if the administration admitted the merit of electives, it could still claim that the union obstructed the idea. So while the committee will meet, nothing will happen.

Teaching is a relationship involving ardor and trust. In no relationship between human beings is the adversary method of solving problems and obtaining justice more out of place. But this is not to single out teachers' unions for attack. The problem is one of the entire culture. The civilization that requires many partisan organizations to operate as pressure groups, simply to achieve justice, is sick from top to bottom. In education, the ill becomes inescapably clear.

FRONTIERS

An Act of Peace

IT first happened in a child's struggle to overcome the endless tedium of a rocking, knocking, rolling train trip to Littleton, New Hampshire, on an unbearably hot day in the summer of 1911. I was that child and I was about to reach my sixth birthday on the 27th of July.

The journey had started in Chicago and my memory of it is vague until the last hours of the passage through New England where the haziness of a distant past clears and emerges with the clarity of a present moment. As I write this, sixty years later, I can still feel the discomfort of my stiffly starched sailor suit and my black patent leather shoes. The windows of the coach are open and the sultry air blows through the car laden with soot. The green plush seats around me are empty save for the ones occupied by the enormous bulk and sweaty smell of the governess, who was not a human being but an image of terror and hatred to the two children in her charge, my older sister and myself. Curiously, the presence of my sister does not reappear in my memory. Only the wildly swaying, clackety passage of the train through the heat, the horrible, inescapable presence of the woman and the turmoil of my anxiety to reach the end of this hopelessly endless journey.

It was the desperate quality of my anxiety that I remember with a vividness that has never left me. My frantic will to have done with the present was smashed and smashed and smashed again by an overwhelmingly aggressive and immovable monotony. In spite of vaguely remembered admonitions to sit down and stay seated I could not for the life of me keep from wandering from one empty seat to another, sitting for a bit and then up again, being thrown from one side of the aisle to the other, defying the woman's anger and knowing but not much caring that cruel punishment awaited me somewhere in that impossible future beyond this endlessness where there would be no prying eyes of strangers to restrain her. Frantically I willed to be no one, to be nowhere; to leave my skin and this unbearable journey for any tangible destination. The one I had been promised, the summer place near the mountain, I had long ceased to believe in. The future, and with it the life-giving sense of desirable expectation, had vanished. What was left of the world of here-and-now was frightening, all-enveloping emptiness. The compulsion to escape the terror of this emptiness propelled me toward any action that would confirm the persistence of existence as I had known it. Heedlessly I provoked the wrath of the woman by climbing in and out of empty seats and challenging the wildly lurching train with sorties down the aisle, inviting the bumps, falls and bruises that ensued. My anxiety enwrapped me like a dense fog. The memory of this painfully corrosive agitation seems to blot out all else, even the beastly anger of the governess.

How did the miraculous transformation, the act of peace take place? My memory suddenly finds me quietly and peacefully, yes, peacefully, sitting upright in a huge, hard, scratchy seat. My eyes restfully staring through the window at a swiftly moving conglomeration of here and gone objects.

What had happened? I cannot say for sure. The actual transmutation from one state of being to another has been lost to me. I am only vividly aware of living through two lives on that train, one incredibly replacing the other, and both as fresh to my awareness as the sound of my pencil scratching this succession of words across a yellow page.

Why have I searched out this long-ago experience? Perhaps to rediscover the power of a child to heal himself with his own kind of self-made inner peace. Perhaps without knowing it I have been looking back to the lost genius of childhood for the final fulfillment that seems beyond the rational grasp of the adult mind. How did this child find his way out of his despair into a

world of quiet serenity? Can this lost moment ever be recaptured and relived?

If the child, grown old and articulate in his seat at the window on the train could speak, perhaps he would say. . . .

> All your life you have been moving away from the truth that was yours to begin with. Moving away from it in the persisting hope of finding it somewhere in the wishful passage of time, just beyond the elusive reality of now, now, and now again; now, now, now, each monotonously ticked off like the idiotic clacking of steel wheels turning on steel rails going nowhere. *Now* is a lie. You discovered this as a child when you suddenly found timeless, absolute reality, without past or future.
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> Relive if you can the self-consuming sense of joyous peace that came to the child when somehow he saw through the lie, turned from it and, for a few precious moments, found the truth of being. How did it happen? It began with the eyes, remember? The anxious life lives in the past and the future and the inner eye that charts the way through memory and expectation cannot function without stealing the sight of the seeing eye and blinding it to the visible presence through which it moves. The child's eyes lost their blindness when his wishful memories and anticipations collapsed under the force of hopeless circumstance. And as he looked up and outward he came alive and his being merged with what he saw. Time vanished and passing moments became visible realities that cluster and collect and endure like the fields and hedges and telephone poles that filled his quietly eager eyes.

What have I learned from the child? This: Look neither back nor ahead—look only outward. Look long and silently. This is the primal act of peace, like the visual meditation of a painter uniting his painted particles into an enduring presence that will remain perpetually here and now, without beginning or end.

ROBERT JAY WOLFF