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TIME FOR SEPARATE WAYS

CURRENT inquiry in three large and humanly crucial areas—Education, Psychology, and Evolution—is leading to challenging questions about the scientific method. The questions come down to one insistent interrogation: What do you think or assert about the nature of human beings, and how does what you say affect our lives?

We have three articles which ask this question—one on evolution by Tom Bethell in *Harper's* for last December, a critical discussion by Susan Wright of the views of B. F. Skinner in *Environment* (October, 1978), and a paper by Lance J. Klass concerning the influence of the teachings of Wilhelm Wundt on education in the United States (*The Leipzig Connection,* a pamphlet issued by the Delphian Press). These articles have the effect of putting science on the witness stand and asking: What are your major assumptions? Why do you make them? What do they leave out?

The *Harper's* article shows that science has always set out in a direction indicated by the moral temper of the time. Darwin, Tom Bethell says, was absorbing a book about the life and works of Adam Smith while he was molding his theory of evolution. There is reason to think, he proposes, that "Darwin in fact discerned that nature was constructed according to the progressive business principles of early capitalism."

> Just as laissez faire worked miracles for business (there was no need for government intervention), so "the survival of the fittest" worked miracles in nature (there was no need for God's intervention). Darwinian scholarship, which has been growing exponentially in recent years, continues to provide glimpses of Darwin the unconscious economist.

The writer adds an intriguing bit of evidence:

> One thinker who *did* take note of Darwin's bias was Karl Marx. He wrote to Engels in 1862: "It is remarkable how Darwin recognizes among the beasts and the plants his English society with its division of labor, competition, opening up of new markets, 'invention,' and the Malthusian 'struggle for existence'." Marx admired the book not for economic reasons but for the more fundamental one that Darwin's universe was purely materialistic, and the explication of it no longer involved any reference to unobservable, nonmaterial causes outside or "beyond" it. In that important respect, Darwin and Marx were truly comrades, even if Darwin did decline the honor of having the second volume of *Das Kapital* dedicated to him.

Today the *zeitgeist* is in another key, and Tom Bethell devotes most of his space to explaining why certain biologists, upset by the claim or implication that some "genes" are better than others, are ready to edit if not to jettison Darwin in behalf of the genetic equality of all the races of man. Meanwhile some geneticists, notably Edward O. Wilson, who has written a paper titled "The Attempt to Suppress Human Behavioral Genetics," are beginning to wonder if science must now conform to the rules of a democratic if not holy inquisition. Wilson, the geneticist who wrote *Sociobiology,* is the mildest sort of determinist who declares we have the power to overcome the dictates of the genes, but this did not save him from angry attack at a 1978 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. As he was about to speak, "shouting demonstrators charged onto the platform and poured a jug of water over his head, accusing him of genocide, fascism, racism, and sexism."

Fascinating as this tempest in the scientific teapot may be, the matter of interest here is the weakness Mr. Bethell finds in Darwin's key doctrine of Natural Selection, which, he says, has been expanded into an all-purpose infallible explanation:

> Natural selection can "explain" evolution or extinction, millionaires or paupers, competition or mutual aid. In the end it explains nothing because it can explain everything. It is accused of being an unfalsifiable theory, which, according to the influential philosopher of science Karl Popper, removes it from the realm of the scientific. Darwinian theory, Popper now says, is a "metaphysical research program."

Curiously, what seems the most important statement in Tom Bethell's article appears as a footnote toward the end, in which he says:

> It is not often enough stressed that there are really two logically separate theories of evolution: the theory *that* evolution occurred (which can be simply stated as the theory that all organisms have, and had, parents), and Darwin's theory as to *how* evolution occurred—the theory of natural selection. The latter only is under attack. If Darwin's theory were decisively undermined, it would still be possible to argue that evolution had taken place as a result of mechanisms not yet understood. Some scientists do take this position. Darwin debunked does not leave us with Genesis as the only alternative. Nevertheless, there are those who argue that the abandonment of the evolutionary mechanism would inevitably lead to doubts that evolution occurred at all. *That* is undoubtedly why Darwin is still defended so stoutly—not because his supporters are capitalists but because they are materialists.

We turn, now, to Susan Wright's *Environment* report on B. F. Skinner. Last summer Prof. Skinner spoke at a conference on "Designing Our Descendants" held at the Hastings Institute. Most of the conferees were chary of the idea of making over human beings by means of DNA technology, also affirming that such manipulations are still quite out of reach. The very idea of designing people, one speaker suggested, may be a sign of "terminal chutzpa" among scientists with such presumption. But the famous behaviorist was eager to offer his designs ideas. Miss Wright summarizes:

> Skinner restated the thesis of his book, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, that human behavior and cultural practices evolved through a process of operant conditioning in which certain behaviors have been positively reinforced and maintained because they contributed to group survival. In other words, in Skinner's view, culture is ultimately nothing but undirected operant conditioning.

He maintains that the time has come for "those who know" to change the conditioning—to begin to *direct* it:

> According to Skinner, inherited human susceptibilities to positive reinforcement through, for example, sexual contact or food are out of date in a world characterized by overpopulation, dwindling resources and nuclear weapons. Human behavior must be redesigned if we are to shape present practices so that remote consequences can be taken into account. According to Skinner, "We must have design imposed by those able to predict the future and by those who also know enough about behavioral engineering to arrange contemporary reasons for behaving in proper ways."

The obvious question is, who knows the proper ways? Positive reinforcement may be impressively effective when it comes to getting children to brush their teeth at night and wash their faces in the morning, but there are problems and difficulties concerning which even the best authorities are at odds when it comes to deciding what adults ought to do. Then the question is—

> Who decides who shall be designed? Skinner's response that those already involved in shaping behavior—teachers, governments, and the managers of industry, for example—will continue to shape behavior but could do it better with more effective techniques, hardly addresses the inevitable political problems that arise between employees and management, government and governed, producers and consumers. Who controls the designers?

One conferee, Peter Steinfels, observed:

> "On Skinner's model, controllers are not chosen, nor do they choose to emerge; they simply emerge. After they emerge, they propose certain solutions to certain problems. Some work, some don't, and a process of selection takes place. This seems to be no improvement on the process of natural selection."

Is what we are doing now the result of natural selection? If it isn't working well, then the problem, naturally, is to find out what mistakes are being made and then to decide what changes to attempt. Are these decisions that we are ready to delegate to Prof. Skinner's experts?

In conclusion, Miss Wright speaks of "the drastic reshaping of our environment and ourselves that is proceeding now, often inadvertently, through technologies introduced for quite different purposes."

> For example: the socialization of children through television, the manipulation of wants through advertising, the degrading of the environment and human health through modes of production and consumption, and the shaping of both our own society and of its relations with other societies by an economic system dominated by support for military technology.

The Leipzig Connection is a kind of detective story, one with a villain and victims but no heroes. Prof. Klass's villain is Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt, born in 1832, who, as professor of philosophy for many years at the University of Leipzig, became "the founder of experimental psychology and the force behind its dissemination throughout the world." The men who shaped the prevailing practice of psychology and developed educational psychology were practically all students and disciples of Wundt.

The German professor was a mainstream sort of thinker who absorbed the scientistic spirit of his time and established the world's first psychological laboratory. Prof. Klass writes:

> What did Wundt do? His basic approach was to gather data concerning the physiological functions and responses of the individual in order to clarify how the individual experienced feelings and sensations. Man's perceptions and experiences were what mattered, and they could best be understood from the viewpoint of quantifiable physiological reactions. Wundt believed that reactions began with stimulation, followed by (1) perception, in which the experience exists within the individual; (2) "apperception," in which the body identifies the stimulus and combines it with other stimuli, and (3) an act of the will which results in (4) a reaction to the stimulus. What was will? For Wundt, as it developed, will was the direct result of the combination of perceived stimuli, not the independent intention of a causative individual.

Quite plainly, the campaign to go beyond—or below—freedom and dignity began a long time ago. John B. Watson and B. F. Skinner were but followers in the parade led by Wilhelm Wundt. Prof. Klass formulates his indictment:

> Wundt made two major contributions to the demise of education in the West. The first was theoretical. Wundt believed that man is devoid of spirit and self-determinism. He set out to prove that man is the summation of his experiences, of the stimuli which intrude upon his consciousness and unconsciousness. In directing the work of his students, he focused their energies on minute examinations of sensory perceptions, in an attempt to break down and quantify every aspect of action and reaction.
>
> As a physiologist, Wundt established the new psychology as the study of the brain and the central nervous system. From Wundt's work, it was only a short step to the later redefinition of the meaning of education. Originally, education meant the drawing out of the innate talents and abilities of the individual. To the experimental psychologist, education became the process of giving "meaningful" experiences to the individual so as to ensure correct reactions.

The words of behaviorism may be different, but the music is the same. These people know what is "correct." (So did the Grand Inquisitor.)

How does this affect educational theory and practice? Prof. Klass writes:

> If one assumes that there is nothing there to begin with besides a body and brain and nervous system, then one must try to educate by giving sensations to that nervous system. Through these experiences, the individual will learn, and when given the correct stimulus, will give the correct response. Thus the child is not, for example, capable of volitional control over his actions, or of deciding whether he will act or not act in a certain way: his actions are preconditioned and out of control, because he is a stimulus-response mechanism. He *is* his reactions. Wundt's thesis laid the philosophical basis for the American behavioral psychologists; for lobotomies and electro-convulsive therapy; for schools oriented more toward the socialization of the child than toward the development of the intellect and the continuation of culture; and for the growth of a society increasingly devoted to the satisfaction of sensory desires at the expense of responsibility and achievement.

This eventually led to the reliance on psychological testing by educators. As Klass says:

> After all, if half the students in a classroom learn, that is proof enough that the teacher is teaching correctly. That the other half doesn't learn is obviously not the teacher's fault, as this half heard what the first half heard, and experienced the same stimuli. No, there must be something wrong with the second half, and psychological tests will determine what it is. Before 1900, the way to tell a good teacher was to see if his students, at the end of their studies, knew a subject. With the growth of student testing, however, teaching standards became nonexistent and nonquantifiable, as they depended upon variables inherent in the nervous systems of the children, and thus out of the control of the teacher.

That is what happened when Wundt's theories were applied in the United States. How did these theories take over? Prof. Klass has an answer:

> Wundt's second major contribution to education's demise wasn't theoretical at all: he produced the first generation of researchers, professors, and publicists in the new psychology. This group went on to establish experimental psychology throughout Europe and the United States. . . . The list of Wundt's students reads like a *Who's Who* of European and American psychologists. In succeeding years, one could go to almost any major European or American university and study the new psychology under a student who had received his Ph.D. directly from Wundt at Leipzig.

Who were the Americans? Prof. Klass lists them and tells what each one did. They include, first of all, G. Stanley Hall, who applied Wundt's ideas to child education and exercised great influence on John Dewey. Another who studied under Wundt was James McKeen Cattell, who started the *Psychological Review*, published *Science* for a time, and founded the *Scientific Monthly*.

His influence on psychological theory has been immeasurable. Edward Lee Thorndike went to school to Wundt's followers, later writing a book on the psychology of teaching in which he defined teaching as "the art of giving and withholding stimuli with the result of producing or preventing certain responses." Various other important figures in American education became determined Wundtians. Prof. Klass tells what happened:

> In summary, a German psychologist was convinced that men are as animals, and that they can be understood by analyzing what they experience. His premise and methods were imported into an expanding educational system in the United States, and disseminated throughout the country to teachers, counselors, and school administrators. Within a few generations, juvenile delinquency runs rampant, illiterates pour out of schools, teachers no longer learn how to teach, and generation after generation of adults, themselves cheated out of a good education, wonder if there is any solution to the morass of "modern" education.

Who bankrolled the vast change in educational methods in America? Twenty of Prof. Klass's forty pages are devoted to describing how this worked, but the short answer is John D. Rockefeller, the man who believed that his capacity to make more money than anyone else in the world was the gift of God, and who soothed his conscience by numerous philanthropies. For some reason or other—the billionaire certainly didn't know what he was doing—Rockefeller's gifts to education put Wundtians in power in key posts and institutions, with far-reaching effect on both general and medical education. While today Wundt's name is practically unknown except to specialist historians, his view of the human being dominates the places where top-ranking teachers of America's young are trained. Prof. Klass gives final advice to his readers:

> Question those who went to school before 1917, and find out what it was like. Check out the early works and histories of psychology; verify the facts, the names, the dates, locations and events. Looking further you will find that despite the increasing billions that the Rockefeller Foundation, other large foundations, and, now, the federal government pour into American education, the situation just keeps getting worse. Despite the millions spent every year on the apparent development of psychology, this field has yet to come up with one workable solution to the problems of education many, if not most of which it appears to have created. It is time for the two to go their separate ways.

The Leipzig Connection may be purchased for $1.50 (including postage) from The Delphian Press, Sheridan, Oregon 97378.

The importance of the three articles or papers we have briefly reviewed lies in the fact that they show both clarity and maturity in understanding what we have thought about human beings and its practical effects. They make it evident that the time has come to make deliberate changes in psychological theory, educational practice, and our ideas about evolution. The theory and practice grounded in Materialism don't work.

Where shall we turn for guidance? No expertise is needed to know that looking up Bronson Alcott would make a fine start toward better ways of thinking about children and how they learn. Maria Montessori might also have some attention, and of course John Holt. In the area of psychology, the books of Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality, Toward a Psychology of Being, Eupsyctian Management,* and *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* could be consulted for a new beginning. And on Evolution, Theodore Roszak's *Unfinished Animal* would be a natural starting-point.

REVIEW
SOPHOCLES AND SHAKESPEARE

A BOOK we have been reading—one we wish we'd come across in 1949 when it first came out—is *The Idea of a Theater* by Francis Fergusson (Princeton University Press). It connects up so many things. For example, it puts Paul Goodman's remarks about the importance of a good audience in a framework of broad cultural comprehension—indicating what a playwright is able to attempt in a given epoch.

Why could an ancient Greek audience respond to Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* in a way that is hardly possible for us? First, Mr. Fergusson gives the story:

> When Sophocles came to write his play he had the myth of Oedipus to start with. Laius and Jocasta, King and Queen of Thebes, are told by the oracle that their son will grow up to kill his father and marry his mother. The infant, his feet pierced, is left on Mount Kitharon to die. But a shepherd finds him and takes care of him; at last gives him to another shepherd, who takes him to Corinth, and there the King and Queen bring him up as their own son. But Oedipus—"Clubfoot"—is plagued in his turn by the oracle, he hears that he is fated to kill his father and marry his mother and to escape that fate he leaves Corinth never to return. On his journey he meets an old man with his servants, gets into a dispute with him, and kills him and his followers. He comes to Thebes at the time when the Sphinx is preying upon that City; solves the riddle which the Sphinx propounds, and saves the City. He marries the widowed Queen, Jocasta; has several children by her; rules prosperously for many years. But, when Thebes is suffering under a plague and a drought, the oracle reports that the gods are angry because Laius' slayer is unpunished. Oedipus, as King, undertakes to find him; discovers that he is himself the culprit and that Jocasta is his own mother. He blinds himself and goes into exile. From this time forth he becomes a sort of sacred relic, like the bones of a saint; perilous, but "good medicine" for the community that possesses him. He dies, at last, at Athens, in a grove sacred to the Eumenides, female spirits of fertility and night.

About the Greek audience and players:

> We must suppose that Sophocles' audience (the whole population of the City) came early, prepared to spend the day in the bleachers. At their feet was the semicircular dancing-ground for the chorus, and the thrones for the priests, and the altar. Behind that was a raised platform for the principal actors, backed by the all-purpose, emblematic facade, which would presently be taken to represent Oedipus' palace in Thebes. The actors were not professionals in our sense, but citizens selected for a religious office, and Sophocles himself had trained them and the chorus.

We begin to sense the difference between the Greeks and ourselves! There is more:

> This crowd must have had as much appetite for thrills and diversion as the crowds who assemble in our day for football games and musical comedies, and Sophocles certainly holds the attention with an exciting show. At the same time his audience must have been alert for the fine points of poetry and dramaturgy, for *Oedipus* is being offered in competition with other plays on the same bill. But the element which distinguishes this theater, giving its unique directness and depth, is the *ritual expectancy* which Sophocles assumed in his audience. The nearest thing we have to this ritual sense of theater is, I suppose, to be found at an Easter performance of the *Mattias Passion.* We also can observe something similar in the dances and ritual mummery of the Pueblo Indians. Sophocles' audience must have been prepared, like the Indians standing around their plaza, to consider the playing, the make-believe it was about to see—the choral invocations, with dancing and chanting, the reasoned discourses and the terrible combats of the protagonists; the mourning, the rejoicing, and the contemplation of the final stage-picture or epiphany—as imitating and celebrating the mystery of human nature and destiny. And this mystery was at once that of individual growth and development, and that of the precarious life of the human City.

The drama is both enjoyable and serious inquiry. The people believed with Sophocles that "the mysterious quest of life" is real and must be undertaken. The Theater, then, for the Greeks, had a profundity that it can have for us only rarely or by accident:

> Oedipus is shown seeking his own true being, but at the same time and by the same token, the welfare of the City. When one considers the ritual form of the whole play, it becomes evident that it presents the tragic but perennial, even normal, quest of the whole City for its well-being. In this larger action, Oedipus is only the protagonist, the first and most important champion. This tragic quest is realized by all the characters in their various ways, but in the development of the action as a whole it is the chorus alone that plays a part as important as that of Oedipus; its counterpart, in fact. The chorus holds the balance between Oedipus and his antagonists, marks the progress of their struggles, and restates the main theme, and its new variation, after each dialogue or

> agon [contest]. The ancient ritual was probably performed by a chorus alone without individual developments and variations, and the chorus, in *Oedipus,* is still the element that throws most light on the ritual form of the play as a whole.

This was the Greek idea—a great idea—of the theater that we do not have at all. We have skillful playwrights who, as Mr. Fergusson says, explore "a wilderness which is without form." He calls the fine plays of the present "triumphs of the stealthy hunt in the jungle," adding:

> The centerless diversity of our theater may be interpreted as wealth. And we do not wish to relinquish any of it: neither Lorca nor Eliot, neither Chekhov nor Cocteau. But, thinking of such masters together, we cannot tell what to make of them. We cannot understand the arts and the visions of particular playwrights, nor the limited perfection of minor dramatic genres, without some more catholic conception of the art in general. Thus the pious effort to understand contemporary playwrights leads behind and beyond them. It leads, I think, to the dramatic art of Shakespeare and the dramatic art of Sophocles, both of which were developed in theaters which focused, at the center of the life of the community, the complementary insights of the whole culture. We do not have such a theater, nor do we see how to get it.

Well, this is not review but quotation, doubtless to excess, yet it seemed the best way to convey what the book is about, and to show how it illuminates the subject. A reader wondering about theater and its meaning for himself and the world may find it invaluable. He will of course be frustrated by references to plays he has not seen or read, but this is inevitable and the book will help him to decide what he ought to see or read. The plays chosen for discussion might make a fine beginning. They are *Oedipus Rex,* Racine's *Berenice,* Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde,* and *Hamlet,* with attention, also, to Dante's *Divine Comedy.*

In the chapter on *Hamlet* there are passages which lead the reader to reflect on the greatness of Shakespeare apart from the magic of his language and the intensity of characterization. Mr. Fergusson says:

> Thus it seems to me that the elements of Shakespeare's composition (like those of Sophocles and Dante before him) are not qualities, like those of the romantics with their logic of feeling, nor abstract concepts like those of the dramatists of the Age of Reason, with their clear and distinct moral ideas, but beings, real people in a real world, related to each other in a vast and intricate web of analogies. . . .
>
> There are analogous actions of all the characters, pointing to the action which is the underlying substance of the play. There are the analogous father-son relationships, and the analogous man-woman relationships. There are the analogous stories, or chains of events, the fated results of the characters' actions. And stretching beyond the play in all directions are the analogies between Denmark and England; Denmark and Rome under "the mightiest Julius"; Hamlet's stage and Shakespeare's stage; the theater and life. Because Shakespeare takes all these elements as "real," he can respect their essential mystery, not replacing them with abstractions, nor merely exploiting their qualities as mood-makers, nor confining us in an artificial world with no exit. He asks us to sense the unity of his play through the direct perception of these analogies; he does not ask us to replace our sense of a real and mysterious world with a consistent artifact, "the world of the play."
>
> The age of Shakespeare "moved toward chaos," and the great mirror of his theater was broken into fragments. But it lasted long enough to give us the last image of Western man in the light of his great tradition.

Most of the rest of the book is devoted to showing how the forms of drama since Shakespeare's time have "reduced" the content of the play, and of life itself, to the narrowing views which created our present. He uses the help of some of the most thoughtful scholars and essayists of our time, often drawing on T. S. Eliot, the poet and critic, and on Kenneth Burke and Scott Buchanan. *The Idea of a Theater* is filled with seminal thoughts for the reader to develop for himself, as in the following general reflection on Shakespeare:

> . . . Mr. Scott Buchanan in *Poetry and Mathematics* asks the suggestive question, at what point in history, and by what process, was the clue to the vast system of Medieval analogies lost, the thread broken, and the way cleared for the centerless proliferations of modern culture?
>
> Of this question too Shakespeare seems to have been prophetically aware. Like Hamlet, he felt, perhaps, too wide a sympathy, too precise a scruple. His endless sense of analogical relationships though a good, could "grow to a plurisy." And *Hamlet* can be regarded as a dramatization of the process which led, in the Renaissance, to the modern world and its fragmentary theaters.

COMMENTARY
"A THINKING SELF"

WITH the help of a psychologist and a classicist, we may be able to recognize the relation between "the centerless diversity of our theater," referred to by Francis Fergusson (see Review), and the appalling effects of scientific psychology described by Lance J. Klass in *The Leipzig Connection.*

In the Greek drama, the human being seems to be *both* the plaything of the gods and an autonomous self seeking self-knowledge. The "plaything" view of man becomes evident in the *Iliad*. As Julian Jaynes, who teaches psychology at Princeton, says in *The Origin of Consciousness* (Houghton Mifflin, 1977):

> The beginnings of action are not in conscious plans, reasons, and motives; they are in the actions and speeches of gods. To another, a man seems to be the cause of his own behavior. But not to the man himself. When, toward the end of the war, Achilles reminds Agamemnon of how he robbed him of his mistress, the king of men declares, "Not I was the cause of the act, but Zeus, and the Erinnyes who walk in darkness: they it was in the assembly put wild *ate* upon me that day when I arbitrarily took Achilles' prize from him, so what could I do? Gods have their way." And that this was no particular fiction of Agamemnon's to evade responsibility is clear in that this explanation is fully accepted by Achilles, for Achilles also is obedient to his gods.

B. F. Skinner, it seems clear, wants to put the present-day managers of society in the place of the gods. "We must," he says, "have design imposed by those able to predict the future and by those who also know enough about behavorial engineering to arrange contemporary reasons for behaving in proper ways."

The task undertaken by Plato was to arouse the Greeks to the realization that they could make their own decisions. His quarrel with the poets—with Homer and some others—was that they gave predetermined models of human behavior which the Greeks followed blindly. The poets, Plato in effect said, were "behavioral engineers." As Eric Havelock suggests in *Preface to Plato:*

> When confronted with an Achilles, we can say, here is a man of strong character, definite personality, great energy and forceful decision, but it would be equally true to say, here is a man to whom it has not occurred, and to whom it cannot occur, that he has a personality apart from the pattern of his acts. His acts are responses to his situation, and are governed by remembered examples of previous acts by previous strong men. . . . The Greek ego, in order to achieve that kind of cultural experience which after Plato became possible and then normal must stop identifying itself successively with a whole series of polymorphic vivid narrative situations. . . . It must stop splitting itself up into an endless series of moods. It must separate itself out and by an effort of sheer will must rally itself to the point where it can say "I am I, an autonomous little universe of my own, able to speak and act in independence of what I happen to remember." This amounts to accepting the premise that there is a "me," a "self," a "soul," a consciousness which is self-governing and which discovers the reason for action in itself rather than in imitation of the poetic experience. . . . Such a discovery of self could be only of the thinking self.

The modern drama is centerless because there is no longer any tradition of a "thinking self" in man. This was Hamlet's problem. He wanted to "think" but the compulsive image of his father's ghost would not let him. So he failed. Everything came apart, in him, in Denmark. And as Francis Fergusson says, *"Hamlet* can be regarded as a dramatization of the process which led, in the Renaissance, to the modern world and its fragmentary theaters."

The three articles discussed in this week's lead are efforts to recover for human beings a "thinking self." The extremity of the need for a thinking self seems clear from the letter printed in this week's "Children."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
INADEQUATE ANSWER

NOW and then MANAS receives letters that can hardly have a satisfactory answer. The editors, that is, don't know how to make one. A letter that came recently begins:

> It has occurred to me several times while reading MANAS that you seem somewhat out of touch with the experience of young people in the schools today. I was glad to see a little on Bruce Springsteen in last week's [Nov. 8] "Children." Rock music is very important to a lot of my peers. It's what they listen to almost all the time, and it's what *they believe* in. For some people, it's the nearest thing to religion that they have—in a world where few are even aware of what organized religion is. Television, or movies, serves the same purpose for many other people. I believe you could speak more directly to the experience of these people. Many of my peers feel bored, frustrated and powerless. I've found out over the past few years that many of my friends have felt seriously suicidal, including myself. We are continually taught that "it doesn't matter, there's nothing you can do about it anyway."

Various ideas may occur to one who reads this. Where do you find material that might serve the purposes our reader has in mind? We thought of several writers—Kenneth Keniston for one, another is Edgar Friedenberg—who have useful thoughts about the young people our correspondent is talking about. But they provide "studies" *of* them, not communications *to* them. What seems wanted is someone able to make Plato sound like Carlos Castaneda. We doubt if this can be done.

Perhaps we need another Salinger. A little over ten years ago, a MANAS reviewer (Nov. 6, 1968) wrote:

> What, for example, has been the over-all effect of J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye?* More than anything else, probably, it gave the young of that time a feeling about themselves, and the sense of having a champion. Practically a tidal wave of comment, appreciation, and criticism followed publication of this book (in 1951), making almost a cult of Salinger's work, and he is said to have gone into hiding in self-defense. But since the book appeared, Holden Caulfield's rejection of "phoniness" in the adult world has become a standard response for all but the most colorless and insensitive of youth.

This was an aside in a review of a book by Nat Hentoff—*I'm really dragged but nothing gets me down*—which is introduced by the remark that Hentoff refuses to attempt to explain teen-agers with any sort of "depth analysis."

It's a father-son story. Sam, the dad, can't stand the rock his son is playing, so he yells, "turn it DOWN." He got this reply:

> "Look," said Jeremy, "if you can't listen to this music with the volume up, you're not getting it. It's meant to be loud. Loudness is part of it. It's not listening to, it's listening from the inside. You have to go all the way inside until there's just you and the music, like in a space capsule."
>
> "But you're not living in a space capsule. You're living here with us."
>
> "Oh damn it, it wasn't that loud anyway."
>
> "Why don't you use those earphones?"
>
> "That's not the same as having the whole room turn into sound. Earphones compress the music, they compress me. The whole idea of rock is to break out of yourself. I mean expand yourself, not turn yourself into a little ball."

Maybe it *is* a religion, but after you say this, what can you add that wouldn't be condescending? Jeremy's dad did get condescending, even offensive, and Jeremy got mad, smashed the record, and left the room, slamming the door.

> The father stood, feeling his heart pound, pound to get out, to get at whom? At what? There was a beast inside him in the clotted silence, a non-electronic beast, give it that much credit. That's how Stalin killed Lenin. He knew Lenin had high blood pressure and he made him angrier and angrier until he killed him. I wanted a son, the father stared at the door, and I got my assassin.

Well, there was another side to Jeremy's generation. They may have liked violent music but they refused to become violent people—some

of them refused, that is. In those days eighteen-year-olds were being drafted to fight in Vietnam, and when one of Jeremy's friends, Mike, said he would go to jail instead, a professor asked him how he would feel after he had served his time and then grown to be sixty or seventy, only to recognize "that your country had not changed and the world had not changed"?

> Mike stood up and jammed his shaking hands into his pockets. "Look, there are some things you have to do whether they work or not. Violence is *wrong!* War is *wrong!* Maybe it wasn't against the Nazis. I don't know. I wasn't around then. But I do know it's wrong now and I'm not going to be a part of it. You killed a lot of people, and that doesn't seem to have bothered you very much. I don't want to be like that. And if I let you trap me by what you call reason and logic, I could become like that. I'm just not going to be a part of it. Maybe that's being irrelevant, but you've got to start somewhere if you're going to change the world, and I'm starting with myself. . . .

Well, that's fine, and the momentum that began with such decisions has been rolling along, making some good things happen, perhaps with more to come.

But there isn't any war going on just now, to bring out the hero in the young. And this isn't just the problem of the young, of course. The men who fought in the French Resistance came up against the same situation. After the war was over and France was "free" again, those really heroic individuals who risked unpleasant death fighting the Nazis from underground had to go back to what they found was only a "paper" sort of existence in the business-as-usual world. They felt reduced and deprived, living pointless lives. So being heroes when the chips are down isn't enough, although it's a lot better than never.

Our correspondent seems to want the kind of prose that you might expect from a writer able to combine the strength of a Tolstoy and the simplicity of a Blake with the fascination of a Pied Piper. We don't know any writers like that. Hunter Thompson doesn't come anywhere near it.

Our reader concludes his letter:

> I get the impression that most MANAS readers are rather intelligent, articulate, philosophical "adults," as are its writers. I believe MANAS now speaks very, very well to these people. But I imagine that some readers are not that old yet, and we need support and guidance for our preliminary life experiments—our "Why don't I do that instead?!" moods—that we can understand and use daily. At least, that's how I feel. Maybe more younger people would subscribe if you broadened the base of your articles in this way.
>
> Even if very little changes, I still am very glad to read MANAS each week—the most wonderful ideas pop up and I really do like what you have to say. I strongly encourage you to continue writing/discovering and publishing. I thank you very much for taking the time to decipher my "chicken scratches" (handwriting) and read this letter.
>
> Hoping and working for the best,

After that we don't feel quite so inadequate. The percentages sound pretty good, at least for this reader.

Meanwhile, we come back to our usual apology for not being all we'd like to be. Tom Paine wrote to great effect and gained a large audience, but he had the Redcoats to take aim at. Today the enemy wears no uniform and is hard to identify. He may even like to listen to rock. He may even be one of us! In any event, he is hard to get at, and not all the enemies need getting at. It may be better to look for friends, which is never as exciting as going after the bad guys. Moreover, the Paines come only about once in a century. The Socrateses less frequently. And people don't treat them very well when they do.

FRONTIERS

Vision and Vigilance

IF YOU read enough in the good magazines, it begins to be evident that far-reaching changes in human opinion are on the way—changes which, in general, are good. But perhaps a new "Orthodoxy" is in formation, and this may seem upsetting. Orthodoxies, after all, are bastions of resistance to change.

Isn't one orthodoxy as bad as another? The answer is almost certainly no. Moreover, until people stop believing what other people whom they admire say, orthodoxies of some sort will be inevitable. The good orthodoxies are something like the state of mind of the person who decides that geometry is a science that one should understand, but then doesn't bother to work the theorems for himself. He doesn't really know the answers he uses as tools in his calculations; after all, pioneers of fine character have proved them, and that's good enough for him. If he ever gets around to it, he'll prove them, too.

Well, the weaknesses in this position are plain enough. But it is certainly a lot better than believing claims that can't and won't ever be proved. How did such claims get attention in the first place? Well, they sound like wonderful labor-saving devices. They are systems for winning at Monte Carlo or getting to heaven without really trying. So an orthodoxy based on sensible conformities to the way things actually work—which at least has in it the possibility of finding out for oneself—is a lot better than the ones which discourage any sort of self-reliance. In other words, there are enlightened belief-systems and blind belief-systems. The enlightened ones are properly infiltrated with plans and projects for individual verification. As long as people keep on making the plans and working on the projects, the system will remain "enlightened." In other words, eternal vigilance is the price of any real achievement.

In the old days the contest—a pretty unequal one—was between the priests of organized religion and the mystics who felt that they had to know for themselves. We know who won! Mystics can't lead crusades; they don't know how and don't want to learn; and would probably become fakers if they did. Today the contest is at a different level and, broadly speaking, the struggle in the market place of ideas is between the possessive rich and those who unite practical experimental intelligence with moral concern. The scientific revolution, in other words, is here to stay. But to make it work well we must now take the monopoly of science away from the materialists—materialists in theory and materialists in behavior. There are a few signs that this is not impossible.

Important skirmishes are going on, some of them well-reported by writers who may eventually be recognized as the authors of the better creeds of tomorrow. The best use of their work would be to turn these creeds into hypotheses awaiting demonstration, but that will take time. Meanwhile, see the *Progressive* for last December, which has an article by Daniel Zwerdling on Organic Gardening—"*the secret is it works."* There are ten pages filled with material like the following:

> *Organic?* To most Americans reared on the propaganda of agribusiness and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an organic farm means a backyard garden or a natural food store bin full of worm-eaten tomatoes. Or, as former Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz used to say, a primitive method of farming scarcely befitting the needs of a modern nation. "Before we go back to an organic agriculture in this country," Butz once sneered on national television, "somebody must decide which fifty million Americans we are going to let starve or go hungry."
>
> But during a recent investigation that took me from the Corn Belt to the agribusiness valleys of California and the fertile farmlands of Europe, I found living proof that shatters the agribusiness myth. Chemical farming is not the only way. Organic farming works.

> Although citrus groves have become one of the most pesticide-drenched crops in the nation, I found farmers growing hundreds of acres of sweet, top-quality oranges and grapefruit—organically. In the grape fields of Delano, California, where most growers live by the maxim that they'll perish without their poisons, I visited a $3 million ranch that has not sprayed most of its 700 acres of table grapes in five years.

Reporting on a tour of European organic farms—where the art is more advanced than in America—Mr. Zwerdling tells how the American farmers who went along reacted:

> Even the toughest skeptics on the trip conceded that they were impressed by the organic farmers' sophisticated methods of fertilizing their crops by planting special blends of up to four different "cover" crops, which suck nitrogen from the air and "fix" it in the soil. "That's the biggest thing that impressed me." said Harrington [a New England agricultural extension agent]. These farmers have really made themselves independent of the Arabs.

With another focus of concern, a California state senator, John Garamendi, points out (in the *Los Angeles Times,* last Nov. 12) that California is the seventh largest "country" in the world, and that among the fifty states it "leads in the production of 46 commercial crops and livestock commodities." He wants research in the state universities to be oriented toward benefitting both California and the hungry Third World, advocating "a foreign policy for California where food is concerned." Similar concern with world food supply is surfacing in other quarters. The November *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* gave considerable space to review of the work of the Worldwatch Institute, a group which explores the nuts and bolts of improving world food supply and the means of intelligent economic reform. The Institute, headed by Lester Brown, appeals through books and papers to readers who are actual or potential opinion-makers, saying—

> to retain our humanity we must devote more than attention to the effects of global poverty, we must alter our lives and our values. We must contain our greed, expand our altruism in the name of equality, and reduce our propensity to consume—a kind of redemption through asceticism.

What needs to be done at home is well put by Karl Hess in the Fall 1978 *North Country Anvil.* Working for a free and decentralized society, he says,

> means at the start that your political life is spent in the creation of new ways to work, live, organize, cooperate rather than in trying only to levy claims against existing institutions. This doesn't mean some sort of across-the-board refusal to take anything tainted by state ownership—it just means that it isn't the focus. . . . every move toward getting, rather than building, has to be carefully kept in perspective as a tool, and a minor one, lest it get the best of you and become a way of life rather than a way to a new life.

This is the vigilance we spoke of, aimed mainly at ourselves.