

UNTOUCHED BY NUMBERS

THE modern world is still Cartesian. To Descartes we owe our habit of insisting that accuracy and truth must be based on quantitative measurement. History, the oddities of culture, the mysteries of character, held no interest for him. Reason, he believed, is a perfect instrument, and humans err only because they allow themselves to be distracted from its application. Numbers are what impress the modern man. When someone says, "I'll give you the important numbers," we pay close attention. Numbers make the "bottom line." If you are looking for a job, a well-paying job, the favorable numbers you have accumulated are persuasive to a prospective employer. Grades achieved in school, your I.Q. rating, what others have been willing to pay you, have importance. For the better jobs in the professions, intellect is the decisive factor. And measurement of intellectual ability—the capacity to manipulate symbols—is used to identify the best candidates. That is about all we know about the differences among human beings. The smart people will get ahead. What else do you need to measure in a world like ours?

We also classify, using numbers. The libraries are filled with books which classify and record—population statistics, the incidence of disease, income by race, sex, and age-group, the frequencies of crime, the ranges of economic production, how big are the armies of various countries, how much food people grow, how much they owe, the distribution of a population by religious denominations, and so on. Writers use these figures in other books, sometimes drawing dark conclusions, sometimes finding ground for hope. We read the books and quote the figures to make a point in an argument or discussion. We may feel "informed," but we're not any wiser. Such figures are a basis of action only for managers, not ordinary people. A great distance

separates the average person from the field of action defined by statistics. The schooled reference to the Gross National Product of the nation and how much of all that money, say, is spent on past, present, and future wars reads like fantasy. But if you declare an indifference to statistical reports, you may then come across the figures on world hunger and malnutrition, and feel guilty for ignoring them. Yet what can you do?

(*What Can We Do?* is the title of a manual by Frances Lappé and William Valentine, rich in suggestions for answering this question.)

It is true enough that numbers and classifications get things together so that we can say something and more rarely do something about them, but the realities untouched by numbers seem far more important to our everyday lives. Some recently published reading material—a book and an article—that has come our way will illustrate. In *The Road Less Travelled* (Simon and Schuster, 1978), Dr. M. Scott Peck, a psychiatrist, describes the struggle of Kathy, a girl brought up in a Catholic family, to manage her own life. This was the background of her life which, it seems, brought her to the point of desperately insisting that she was "going to die."

Mother ran the family. Alone, unchallenged, uncontradicted, unopposed, she ran it. She was kind but firm. She was giving but never gave in. Peaceful and implacable. "You mustn't do that, dear. Good girls don't do that." "You don't want to wear those shoes, dear. Girls from nice homes don't wear those kind of shoes." "It isn't a question of whether you want to go to mass, dear. The Lord wants us to go to mass." Gradually Kathy came to see that behind the power of the Catholic Church lay the enormous power of her mother, a person so softly yet so totally domineering that it seemed unthinkable to defy her.

When he first met Kathy, the doctor says, she was "the most frightened person I have ever seen." She seemed unable to stop chanting, "I'm

going to die." After a time the doctor obtained a clue:

Suddenly it clicked. "Your days are not long. Not long on this earth. That's it, isn't it, Kathy? Honor your mother and your father that your days may be long on this earth. The Fifth Commandment. Honor them or die. That's what's happening, isn't it?"

"I hate her," Kathy muttered. Then louder, as if emboldened by the sound of her own voice saying the dreaded words, "I hate her. I hate my mother. I hate her. She never gave me . . . she never gave me . . . she never gave me me. She never let me be me. She made me in her image. She made, made, made me. She never let any of me be me."

Recovery was a long process.

Rejecting her mother's domination, she had to face the process of establishing her own values and making her own decisions, and she was very frightened. It was much safer to let her mother make the decisions, much simpler to adopt her mother's values and those of the church. It took much more work to direct her own existence. Later Kathy was to say, "You know, I wouldn't really trade places for anything with the person I used to be, yet sometimes I still long for those days. My life used to be easier then. At least in a way."

Things eventually worked out for Kathy, in both her personal life and her career. She got a job in a clothing store and became an assistant buyer. Dr. Peck relates:

After terminating therapy she was promoted to buyer, and most recently I heard from her that she had moved to another, larger firm in the same capacity, and was quite pleased with herself at the age of twenty-seven. She does not go to church and no longer considers herself a Catholic. She doesn't know whether she believes in God or not, but will tell you frankly that the issue of God just doesn't seem a very important one at this point in her life.

The psychiatrist comments:

I have described Kathy's case at such length precisely because it is so typical of the relationship between religious upbringing and psychopathology. There are millions of Kathys. I used to tell people only somewhat facetiously that the Catholic Church provided me with my living as a psychiatrist. I could equally well have said the Baptist Church, Lutheran Church, Presbyterian Church, or any other. The

church was not, of course, the sole cause of Kathy's neurosis. In a sense the church was only a tool used by Kathy's mother to cement and augment her excessive parental authority. One could justifiably say that the mother's domineering nature abetted by an absentee father, was the more basic cause of the neurosis, and in this respect too Kathy's case was typical. Nonetheless, the church must share the blame. No nun in her parochial school and no priest in her catechism class ever encouraged Kathy to reasonably question religious doctrine or in any way whatever to think for herself. There was never any evidence of concern on the part of the church that its doctrine might be overtaught, unrealistically rigid or subject to misuse and misapplication. . . . Kathy's church—and this is also typical—made not the slightest effort to assist her in working out a more appropriate and original personal religion. It would appear that churches, generally, if anything, favor the hand-me-down variety. . . . And the fact of the matter is that psychotherapists must spend enormous amounts of time and effort in the struggle to liberate their patients' minds from outmoded religious ideas and concepts that are clearly destructive.

Well, there are Catholics and Catholics. The article we spoke of earlier is in the tenth anniversary (January, 1981) edition of *The Catholic Agitator*, a paper published in Los Angeles "in the tradition of *The Catholic Worker* of New York and *The Catholic Radical* of Milwaukee." This group maintains two Hospitality Houses for the poor and down-and-out, a Hospitality Kitchen which serves lunch every day, a medical clinic, an at-cost food store for skid row families, a bakery, and a park playground for children on skid row. The anniversary issue is dedicated to Dorothy Day, founder (with Peter Maurin) of the Catholic Worker Movement in 1933, who died last November. The following from an editorial gives an idea of what these people do:

Every night we have a group of homeless men from the neighborhood who sleep on mattresses on our parlor floor. It is clean, and indoors, and warm at night, and much better than the garages and cars they usually have to sleep in. . . . We have fixed up our back shed for a clothing room and want you to know we have a special need for men's clothes, underwear, socks and shoes. We are giving them out each day to

the men coming out of the Central Jail so they can walk back into town with some warm clothing and some sense of dignity. . . .

We are beginning again to serve a hot meal on the street on skid row, to 400-500 men each day, two days a week only. We would do it every day, but to do so we need more people to help on a regular basis. . . . We know we are not as poor as most of the people we are trying to serve, but that doesn't stop us from trying to possess as little as possible and to share what we do possess with the people who need it the most. [Gifts of clothes or money may be sent to the Los Angeles Catholic Worker, 632 N. Britannia Street, Los Angeles, Calif. 90033.]

"Faithfulness to the simple ideal of taking the Gospels seriously" is the basis of this work. The article we picked out to quote is from an issue of the *Catholic Agitator* of five years ago (April, 1976), reprinted this January. The writer is the editor, Jeff Dietrich, who describes the milieu of Catholic Worker efforts in a Los Angeles slum area:

As I write this statement I am down in the basement of our free kitchen on East Sixth Street, just a few blocks from Fifth and Wall. I can hear the creaking floorboards overhead as the men file in for a hot cup of coffee and a piece of toast. Bessie is playing our old Wurlitzer piano for every note that it is worth. When the Saints Come Marchin' In . . . Bessie's style lies somewhere between an old Baptist preacher and a New Orleans jazz singer. When the Saints Come Marchin' In—two to three hundred of them for a cup of coffee and a piece of toast. . . .

Jimmy Ladd Davis is not in our coffee line this morning. He is in jail because he shot Jonah in the stomach with a sawed-off ten gauge shotgun. Folks on the street say that "he probably shudda got a medal if Jonah hadda died." But Jonah didn't die. They replaced his stomach with a sheepskin, a miracle of surgery learned from much experience in Vietnam.

Jimmy copped a plea and got time served. He should be out pretty soon. I have mixed feelings about Jimmy's return to the streets. No man should be caged up like an animal, but Jimmy is dangerous. Last summer he tried to stab me in the face. He missed with his first swipe and before he could make another attempt my friend Cheehand Turner grabbed him by the collar, took him outside and decked him. I was a little too shaken to explain to Cheehand that as an advocate of nonviolence I abhor such tactics.

All I could do was thank him. "Ain't nobody messes with you while I'm alive," he said.

Unfortunately, Cheehand is no longer alive. He was shot by police on August 16, his fifty-first birthday. It was two rookies in the Wilshire District that did it. Cheehand was behind the Bank of America taking a pee when they came to arrest him. He grabbed one of their nightsticks so they shot him to death. His friend Footsie said, "It never woulda happened down here on Sixth Street. Cops around here all know Cheehand, and besides, they was both just rookies." . . .

I don't relate these incidents to shock you. We all know that the world is full of inhuman and degrading experiences, that is the reality of the human condition. . . . The great task of changing the world seems quite often to leave the poor shortchanged. Too often the victims of the revolution are the very ones for whom it was fought. . . .

The call to work with the poor is not a special individual one, but rather it is a call given by Christ to all who would call themselves Christians.

Of what value, then, is it to classify people as Catholics, when the identification covers so much moral variety? Or as Baptists or Presbyterians? It should be added, however, that the Catholic Worker Movement is a tiny fraction of the "Catholic" population, and that, probably, among all Christians, the number of those who make their religion for themselves by taking the Gospels seriously is also small. But there is no way to get that human quality entered on a sociologist's questionnaire. No Cartesian approach will find such people out, nor is there any psychiatrist who can tell you how to produce more of them. So it is fair to say that the conventional classifications of our time are not of great value. They tell us very little about what people are like, and even less about human potentiality.

The last section of Dr. Peck's book, you might say, is about the puzzles of potentiality. Not everybody, he shows, really wants complete mental health, by which he means that most people have an aversion for responsibility. A lot of men in the army, he says, do not want to advance to a higher rank. There are plenty of sergeants and other noncommissioned officers

"who would rather die than become officers and who, often repeatedly, reject offers of officer training for which, by virtue of their intelligence and stability, they would seem to be well qualified." Dr. Peck thinks that they shrink from responsibility, and this may be approximately right, but there are also men willing to serve in the army but who refuse to use their intelligence or executive ability for military purposes. Such men show responsibility of a particular sort. William Saroyan, when drafted to serve in World War II, told the officer who wanted to exploit his talent as a writer, "You can have my body, but not my mind."

In general, Dr. Peck's point seems well made:

It is not remarkable that so many well-qualified sergeants have no desire to assume the mantle of an officer. And it is no wonder that patients in psychotherapy have little taste for the power that accompanies genuine mental health. A young woman who had been in therapy with me for a year for a pervasive depression, and who had come to learn a good deal about the psychopathology of her relatives, was exultant one day about a family situation that she had handled with wisdom, equanimity and facility. "I really felt good about it, she said. "I wish I could feel that way more often." I told her that she could, pointing out to her that the reason she felt so well was that for the first time in dealing with her family she was in a position of power, being aware of all their distorted communications and the devious ways in which they attempted to manipulate her into fulfilling their unrealistic demands, and therefore she was able to be on top of the situation. I told her that as she was able to extend this type of awareness to other situations she would find herself "on top of things" and therefore experiencing that good feeling more and more frequently. She looked at me with the beginning of a sense of horror. "But that would require me to be thinking all the time!" she said. I agreed with her that it was through a lot of thinking that her power would evolve and be maintained, and that she would be rid of the feeling of powerlessness at the root of her depression. She became furious. "I don't want to have to think all the goddamn time," she roared. "I didn't come here for my life to be made more difficult. I want to be able to just relax and enjoy myself. You expect me to be some sort of god or something!"

Curiously, our culture hasn't even tried to understand the differing levels or way stations in moral development. Maslow's scale from deficiency-needs to being-needs in motivation might be an exception, and Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development another, but there is really little to compare with the ancient Indian conception of caste, in which the Kshatriya or hero represented a climax of both capacity and responsibility, a peak of development which had its Western correspondence in the medieval Knight. The idea of *noblesse oblige* has no counterpart in our civilization, save for the example of a few public servants, beginning with the Founding Fathers, and including a handful of other notable individuals since— people like Jane Addams and Arthur Morgan, and Simone Weil in France. We have no mythic image of such individuals to hold up to the young, no category of human excellence and not even a theory of what excellence really means. The Greek word, *areté*, is practically untranslatable. ("The Greeks believed that every living organism, human and nonhuman, possesses a potential of supreme excellence characteristic of the group to which it belonged."—Catherine Roberts.) For this, in some measure at least, we can blame Descartes.

Perhaps the intellectual questions that submit to the Cartesian style of analysis need settling, and will some day have their final answers. But in other ages there have been world teachers who maintained that human beings must put first things first. This becomes evident from a Pali Buddhist text used by W. Norman Brown in *Man in the Universe* (University of California Press, 1966) to show what Buddha thought was most important for humans to do. One of his disciples, after puzzling over some difficult questions, such as whether or not the world is eternal, came to the Buddha and asked him to answer them. "Did you and I agree," the Buddha asked him, "that you were to have an answer to such questions, when you came to me to study?" When the disciple admitted that no such promise had been made, the

Buddha told him that he would wait a long time for the information he sought.

"It is as if, Malunkyaputta, a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his relatives and kinsfolk, were to procure for him a physician or surgeon; and the sick man were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learnt whether the man who wounded me was a Kshatriya, or a Brahman, or a Vaishya, or a Shudra; or whether he was tall or short or of medium height; or whether he was black or dusky or tawny. . . .

"The religious life, Malunkyaputta, does not depend on the dogma that the world is eternal or on the dogma that the world is not eternal, nor on any of the other dogmas which you have cited. Whichever alternatives among these pairs of dogmas obtain, there still remain birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair, for the extinction of which I am prescribing. . . . And what, Malunkyaputta, have I elucidated? Misery I have elucidated; the origin of misery have I elucidated; and the path leading to the cessation of misery have I elucidated. And why, Malunkyaputta, have I elucidated this? Because this does profit, has to do with the fundamentals of religion, and tends to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom, and Nirvana, therefore have I elucidated it.

And in the *Dhammapada* the Buddha gave his way of identifying the Brahman, representing high human achievement:

Not by matted locks, not by lineage, not by caste does one become a Brahamana. By his truth and righteousness man becomes a Brahamana. He is blessed. . . . Him I call a Brahamana who has done with likes and dislikes, who is cool who for renewed existence is seedless; he is the hero who has conquered worlds.

The Buddha, Prof. Brown suggests, probably knew the answers to his disciple's questions. "But he had a message for the average mind, which could not comprehend philosophical subtleties, and by avoiding discussion of such subtleties he gave strength to that message." By common consent of all the world, the Buddha was a great philosopher, but he was before that a *teacher* who

understood the priority of moral psychology in his own time, and for ages to come.

REVIEW

ON READING GANDHI

THE question of what to "review" comes up every week. Sometimes the mail brings an answer, in a book that cries out for immediate reading. Yet there is often the need to make a choice, and considering the way the world is going, the horror and folly of violence require attention more than anything else. One thinks, therefore, of Gandhi.

Through the years, several readers have asked what to read by and about Gandhi. We reply by naming the books we have read, usually giving the address of Greenleaf Books, Weare, New Hampshire 03281, a small outfit that refuses to make a profit on selling Gandhi books, has a good stock, and offers various "package deals" helpful to the indigent worker for peace. But for one simple answer to the question, there is a book that might be best of all to start with—if a copy can be found—*Gandhi Through Western Eyes*, by Horace Alexander, published in 1969 by Asia Publishing House in New York. The book, as is proper, was printed in India—well printed.

Horace Alexander is an English Quaker who spent many years in India. He knew Gandhi and worked with him. He learned from him; and learning from Gandhi means making the profound ideas which inspired the Indian leader, patriot, and lover of mankind, one's own. Gandhi was one of the really self-reliant men of this century, and Horace Alexander has a similar quality. As you read him you realize that you have a rare guide. He says in his Preface:

Gandhi does not belong only to India or only to any special section of humanity. He is, in a very special sense, a world figure, a man who belongs to us all, and has something to say that all the world should attend to. In a unique way, he made himself the friend of all humanity. When the news of his death spread over the world, people in far off lands which he had never visited, people who had never seen him or heard his voice, wept in the streets. And these were the common people. They knew they had lost a personal friend. Why? One way in which he

was unique was this: he never changed his way of life from the simplicity that he had adopted in early life. Even when he was world famous, he was still easily accessible to everybody. When, at the end of his life, he could have become Prime Minister or President of India, he took no office and continued to have no assured personal income. He identified himself with the poor as much as was humanly possible to the day of his death. Fame did not spoil him.

Gandhi spoke to the world with both simplicity and strength. Today people—a great many of them—are looking for the meaning in their lives. Gandhi was a man who found meaning—not "happiness," but meaning—and he may become a teacher for those who feel ready for a similar consummation. There seem to be more and more of such people, so that it may be said that Gandhi will eventually become a real success. To agree, of course, you have to redefine success; and the only way to redefine success is by redefining the purpose of human life, while taking into account the sort of obstacles barring its fulfillment. Gandhi helped people to learn how to do this. No matter how they begin, they find that they can't learn from Gandhi by copying him, or echoing him, or waving some kind of Gandhian flag. They become Gandhians by becoming independent of the influence of anything but ideas they have found to be true. So "Gandhian" is a misleading word, although we have to use it as a make-do form of speech until our language is considerably enriched.

Horace Alexander's Preface goes on:

If there is one expression which, more nearly than any other, expresses Gandhi's contribution to the world, it is the word "non-violence." This is a poor word, but what it seeks to express is rich. I hope the pages that follow will do something to illuminate Gandhi's non-violence. But his way of life was all of a piece; therefore, it is scarcely possible to disentangle his principles of action from his daily political activity. Gandhi was first and foremost a man of action. That does not mean that he was a superficial thinker, or that he allowed political expediency to rule his course of action. Far from it. But he believed that thought and action are not to be separated. It is idle, in Gandhi's view, for a man to talk about his "faith" unless he can be seen practicing it. So, when

anyone came to Gandhi and asked him to expound his philosophy, he was apt to reply, in effect: "Come and watch me work." Yet he never stopped thinking or trying new methods of expressing his convictions. He called his own autobiography *The Story of my Experiment with Truth*. Truth was God to him. In this sense he was a scientist. When he was seized with a fresh hypothesis, which appeared to contain essential truth for man's life on earth, he started next morning to see how it worked out in practice. This he would do with total disregard to his own comfort and convenience—sometimes, too, with little regard for the comfort of his friends and associates. Therefore, to understand his experiments in non-violence, it is important to study his whole life. This is not to disparage such an admirable systematic study of his methods as can be found in Dr. Joan Bondurant's *Conquest of Violence*. Both this and Richard Gregg's classic, *The Power of Non-Violence*, should be studied by all who want to substitute sane methods of struggle for the madness of armed conflict.

Here, between the lines, Horace Alexander is asking his readers to question themselves: How serious am I in looking at this man? Do I want to place him in my scheme of things, or do I want to understand what made him tick, and am I prepared to change my scheme of life enough to get at the substance of the being of such a person? For that, really, is what is involved in any actual learning from someone else.

As for what to read, Mr. Alexander names two good biographies, one by Louis Fischer, another by B. R. Nanda. He recalls the exhaustive work in three volumes titled *Mahatma Gandhi* by Pyarelal—which make splendid reading; we have reviewed two of them. However, as our author says, "in the end, once a reader has a general picture of Gandhiji's life, he may learn more from reading extracts from his innumerable writings than from straightforward biography." We have found this to be the case, too. We continually mine two excellent anthologies which have fair indexes—*Selections from Gandhi*, by Nirmal Bose, and *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi*, by Prabhu and Rao, both published by Navajivan in Ahmedabad, India. They may still be in print, or

later anthologies may be available. Greenleaf Books might have information on this.

How does Mr. Alexander deal with his subject? Well, he picks out for discussion the aspects of Gandhi's life that he thinks will be most useful to the inquirer. When you consider that the collected works of Gandhi will eventually number ninety volumes or more (published by the Government of India), it is evident that selection is necessary. Gandhi and Horace Alexander were friends and co-workers from 1927 on, until 1948 when Gandhi died. They understood each other. We trust the selections in this book.

In an Epilogue, the author discusses Gandhi's outlook and position in terms of familiar categories. Was he a "liberal"? Yes and No. Was he a socialist? Yes and No. Was he a "conservative"? Yes and No. Such classifications are useless, a barrier, except when used as a means for getting behind them, which is what Horace Alexander does. For example:

Was Gandhi a communist? Again, as with his socialism if the question means, did he accept certain doctrines, such as class war, dictatorship of the proletariat, the necessity of violent revolution as the only means to a classless society, dialectical materialism or any other materialistic interpretation of history, then he is no communist. But if practice matters more than theory, then Gandhi was much more truly a communist than most of those who subscribe to communist theory. Those who lived with him even for short periods had real experience of a commonwealth in which the principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" was the practice of daily life.

Then the writer says:

A rather closer analysis is needed of Gandhi the anarchist. One is often tempted to believe, when reading his comments on public affairs, that he believed that that country was happiest which had the least government. His ideal was a land of self-governing villages, knit together by a minimum of central control. His deep faith in the common man—or rather, in common men, for it was one of his most singular characteristics that, in an age that tends to deal with human beings in the mass, he still saw every single villager, however humble and

anonymous, as a soul to be respected and treated as an individual—this deep faith led him to believe that decentralization of authority accords best with the dignity of man.

Since we must stop quoting somewhere, this seems as good a place as any. How, then, will you classify Gandhi? What is "fundamental" in his life and thinking? How he looked at others seems the basic key—he saw all humans as individual souls, "to be respected." For Gandhi, there was no abstract "they." This, it may be, is the simplest and most all-inclusive aspect of his genius.

It may be useful here to consider other great men who felt the same way. In his *History of English Literature*, Lafcadio Hearn said this of Shakespeare:

I must try to tell you in the shortest way possible, how Shakespeare is great, why he is great, and what are those particular qualities of mind and heart by which he surpasses all mortal men.

The first distinction to be noted between the work of Shakespeare and all other dramatic work is *life*. In Shakespeare the characters live with an intensity far surpassing that of any other figures in any other drama. We see them, feel them, hear them—love them or hate them—laugh at them or weep with them,—just as if they were real people. Real people they are: there is no question about that. The second thing to notice as a distinction between Shakespeare's characters and all the other dramatists' characters is that they are intensely *individual*. Not only are they alive, they are individually alive, personally alive. No type-character can be completely alive.

There is a very important sense in which Gandhi and Shakespeare were doing the same work. Classification of such individuals hides from us their common ground.

COMMENTARY ON "GROWING UP"

THE "ordinary and difficult problems of growing up," referred to by John Holt in this week's "Children"—and which, he suggests, may be the means of "getting a sense of one's own identity and worth"—are seldom given the right sort of attention. Conventionally, people try to isolate their children from all pains, even when they are necessary "growing pains." Feeling "left out," as Holt suggests, may be the means to independence and moral courage.

In all such questions, the character of both the parents and the children are decisive factors. Some children seem to thrive on unique circumstances in an unconventional environment. Others pine, feeling that their lives are distorted. Only an abstract rule, therefore, can be made. There are values in both conformity and nonconformity. It isn't fair to a child to create circumstances in which he must be a lonely little hero whether he wants to or not. Yet if those circumstances prove unavoidable, for either practical or principled reasons, the feeling "left out" or some other juvenile privation becomes a natural part of the child's life, and having to "make-do" is a learning experience no one can do without.

Growing up has other facets. In the case of Dr. Peck's patient, "Kathy" (see page one) was denied the right to make her own decisions, and she became emotionally ill. Nonconformity to her mother's version of authoritarian religion restored her health. Obviously, health for children depends in part on being allowed more and more freedom as they grow up—the progressive transfer of responsibility from parent to child. Maturity is feeling complete responsibility for what you do. Yet responsibility often seems burdensome, as it did to Kathy, now and then. While she wouldn't exchange places with "the person she used to be," she remembered that in a way her life had been "easier." All decisions were made for her. One of

the problems of "growing up" is learning to want to. A push from the environment, planned or circumstantial, may be in order.

The need for decision goes on and on. Dr. Peck's other patient (page 7) fought against gaining an additional maturity that might subtract from her enjoyment of life! She didn't want to become "some sort of god." Happily for the rest of us, there have been those willing to try.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

VITALITY AND AUTONOMY

IN *Growing Without Schooling* (No. 15) John Holt reprints a portion of the letter he wrote to a parent who had said that the child she was teaching at home felt "left out" of things, in spite of numerous social activities apart from school. The point is that, in the long passage from childhood to maturity, being "left out" may not be as bad as being "included in." A lot of course depends on the child. Holt comments:

Home-schooled children are certainly, by definition, out of the mainstream of their culture, no two ways about it. This will still be true a generation from now, even if my prediction that 10% of children will be home schooled comes true.

I can see how your child would feel left out, but I do want to say that from the age of 11 I felt left out, and never more so than when I was in school. I think that for most children in our society the experience of growing up is an experience of being left out, partly because of our worship of beauty, wealth, power, athletic skill, etc.

Being an outsider was somewhat tough on me during my growing up, and I think I would have been better off if I had felt, and been, *somewhat* less left out than I was. But it gave me the independence and moral courage I needed to do things in my adult life that most people weren't doing, to follow work that seemed important.

My point, then, is not only that children would not escape the feeling of being left out even if they went to school, but that if children operate, as yours seem to, from a base of love and support, it doesn't do them any harm to feel a little unusual and may indeed prove to be an asset.

I think that many of the children at Ny Lille Skole (see *Instead of Education*) feel left out some or much of the time. That school, or club, also had its leaders and its followers, its stars and its minor part players, its extraverts and introverts. The school did not *cure* the ordinary and difficult problems of growing up and getting a sense of one's own identity and worth. All we could say is that it didn't make this problem any *worse*. I would say the same of unschooling [teaching children at home]. It isn't and

can't be a solution for many of the problems of being young, or growing up in an anxious and confused world, or in a society that generally has no use for young people. But at least home schooling doesn't make those problems worse. . . .

Another point would be that teaching children at home really requires the right sort of home environment and parents eager to invent and devise. There is, for example, this letter from a parent in Virginia:

Recently we bought a hand printing press. I cannot imagine a more suitable acquisition for unschoolers of any age. We have had it in operation one month, and it is a great excitement and pleasure for the whole family.

We began by reading a couple of library books and ordering catalogs from type companies listed in *Popular Mechanics*. Then we dealt with the Kelsey Company, P.O. Box 491, Meriden, Conn. 06450, and bought our entire outfit from them. They provide information and supplies for even the rawest novice and are very efficient. Our total expenditure was about \$1,000, though we could have economized, made, or made-do in many ways. The smallest presses start at \$130 (shipping weight 35 lbs.), and most type is available in small, medium or large fonts. We selected one of the larger presses, and another major portion of our investment was in a type stand and type cases. . . .

We take the press seriously. We are meticulous about spelling, grammar, punctuation, and design. Our four-year-old (the oldest) is archivist for the press. He gathers all the test impressions after we have printed, punches holes, and files them in a loose-leaf binder. He is just beginning to read, and has been acutely interested in reading [the type in] the galleys with a mirror and finding out what everything says even before it is printed up.

Printing does require discipline: type is made of lead and cleaners are toxic. Printing procedures are simple but essential. A slight oversight can severely damage the press or type. Yet young children can print and learn that the reward comes not from larking around, but from doing a careful, responsible job.

As a bonus, we've already found the press handy for making "official" forms, such as this letterhead for our unschool.

One of the print jobs gotten out by the family was the following:

KNOW That by His first Act of Will
Zachary Miller Kent
Joined his Mother Carol in Life
At twelve fifty-four by Moonlight
On the sixteenth Day of April
In this eightieth Year
Of the twentieth Century
Being attended on His Journey
By his Father David
And welcomed by His Brother Robert
And His Sister Susannah

Mrs. Kent adds this note:

As to the birth, we've learned in three tries to do it all by ourselves. Anyone interested in free-lance birthing is welcome to contact us. Like unschooling, it's the only rational approach. . . .

This seems to justify a quotation from Proudhon who, many years ago, said that he had seen "beneath the apparatus of government, under the shadow of its political institutions, society was slowly and silently . . . making for itself a new order which expressed its vitality and autonomy." People looking around in the same mood might say the same thing today, when they come across papers like *Growing Without Schooling*, *Rain, Self-Reliance*, and *Resurgence* from England.

Another good sign was reported something over a year ago in the *New York Times* for Sept. 9, 1979. Writing on the growing respect for autodidacts—people who educate themselves—Ronald Gross reminds his readers that the "professors" do not own their scholarly specialties, that "before they became academic 'fields,' the sciences and humanities were pioneered by amateurs." The word "amateur" certainly needs redefinition. Now it seems to mean ineffectual people who play at doing serious work. Once it meant people who work well at what they love to do. Meanwhile, by reason of too much pretense, too much arrogance, and indeed too much greed, the word "professional" is becoming an epithet.

Ron Gross tells about the notable achievements of "amateurs" in a number of activities, and the following is of general interest:

In the humanities, history is a special area of amateur activity, from the historical societies in virtually every community to major scholars such as Barbara Tuchman, William L. Shirer, Theodore White, Gary Wills, Frances Fitzgerald, Philippe Aries and Arthur Koestler. "I can't belong to the academic world at all," Mrs. Tuchman said. "I never took a Ph.D. It's what saved me, I think. If I had taken a doctoral degree, it would have stifled my writing capacity."

Gross quotes a Washington consultant who remarks: "You simply can't even compete for money from the Feds unless you are ensconced in an Institution. It's as if the Government's unspoken principle is that all good ideas come out of institutions. What an unAmerican idea!" And the director of the Office of Small-Scale Technology (Department of Energy) says that "People are working out their ideas in basements, garages and backyards, one-man machine shops, high school laboratories. Why shouldn't the inspired, capable individual get support, as well as the corporation or university research operation?" Some day, perhaps, we'll have a society in which big institutions (both political and economic) won't have the deciding voice because they won't exist. Meanwhile, it is progress of a sort, we suppose, for government employees to ask such questions.

FRONTIERS Instead of Punishment

PRACTICAL problems are sometimes the means of giving common sense a chance, when a poor way of doing things begins to break down. The jail and prison system, based on the Anglo-Saxon common law principle of punishment for offenses, is now breaking down. As an article in the *Los Angeles Times* (Dec. 23, 1980) puts it:

Faced with bulging prisons that appear to have little effect on the swelling crime rate, judges, prosecutors, probation officers and even defense attorneys across the country are turning increasingly to alternative ways to deal with nonviolent, first-time law-breakers.

Each month, thousands of adults convicted of crimes ranging from arson and manslaughter to jaywalking and traffic offenses are given "community service orders"—legal commands to somehow pay back society for breaking its rules.

This is obviously a good idea. Already in California—which has pioneered this mode of sentencing—there are forty-six such programs in thirty-four of the state's fifty-eight counties, and similar decisions are being made by other states. In New Jersey, for example, when a fifty-year-old woman was convicted of stabbing her drunken husband to death ("after he hit and cursed her once too often"), a Superior Court judge sentenced her "to spend three years working full-time for a local hospital, counseling other victims of cancer (an ill from which she suffers) instead of serving ten years in prison for manslaughter. The woman, Judge Paul Kramer said, "had led a life of hell for 24 years," although, on the other hand, "you cannot have open seasons on husbands." Community service, he believes, is a better alternative to imprisonment than probation, which "means very little." Most probation officers would probably agree.

Restitution instead of punishment is common sense. Locking people up does no good to either them or the community, and is costly to taxpayers. This principle, of course, is not new. It was

applied in ancient Ireland, according to the Brehon Laws, under which offenders were required to make amends to the person who had been harmed.

The *Times* reporter, Mark Stein, says:

Exactly how society is repaid is left to the imaginations of people in the criminal justice system—sometimes even to the imagination of the offender. Such unusual sentences not only make criminals pay for breaking the law, but also keep offenders out of prison—a place that many experts believe is more likely to teach inmates to commit more serious crime than to rehabilitate or discourage them.

The Associated Press writer, Patrick Breslin, who reported on the New Jersey law (passed in 1979) that permits community service sentences, notes that Judge Kramer may give an alternative sentence to a pharmacist convicted of defrauding Medicaid. "What's the point of sentencing that man to jail," he asked, "when I could send him to work in a hospital for 20 hours a week for free?" Such offenders, it should be said, have a choice. If they don't want the alternative community service sentence they may go to jail or pay a large fine. Mark Stein gives some sample alternatives:

A prominent Milwaukee child psychologist, convicted of bilking the Wisconsin Medicaid program of \$13,285, is sentenced by a state circuit court judge to spend three years nursing sick children in India.

Meatpackers in Los Angeles who bribed federal inspectors to falsely grade poor cuts of meat are ordered by a federal judge to hire and train unemployed convicts as meat-cutters.

An unemployed Atlanta man, convicted of burglary, is sentenced to a "restitution center" where he volunteers in a local service agency and gets help finding a job. He goes to work, pays the state for his room and board, then repays his victim for what he stole.

There are so many of these programs in California that an organization has been formed (with headquarters in San Jose) to provide guidelines to judges—the California League of Alternative Service Programs—which is preparing a short course in community-service sentencing

for judges in areas without such programs. In the Los Angeles area, an agency handling assignments to various jobs for persons with alternate sentences is the Los Angeles Voluntary Action Center, 621 S. Virgil Avenue, which helps to find appropriate work according to the background of the offender. Ten thousand people were placed in such jobs, in cooperation with the courts, during the fiscal year 1979-80. A great many of the offenders were drunken drivers, and some 70 per cent of the jobs were with non-profit groups needing help that their budgets could not pay for.

According to Los Angeles Municipal Judge Eric Younger, typical sentences involve "80 or 100 hours of community service." Speaking of California generally, the *Times* writer says:

On the average, more than 3,000 community service orders are handed down each month in municipal, Superior and federal courts in this state. Urban areas are the most active . . . but many rural counties also have embraced the practice.

John David Pevna, a staff member of the California League of Alternative Service Programs, estimated that between 10 and 15 million hours of volunteer work was done by court-referred volunteers last year in California alone. "I don't know how some nonprofit agencies would survive without this help," he said.

Most alternative sentences in California consist of a guarantee of probation or fine if certain conditions, usually a number of hours of volunteer service, are fulfilled. Most volunteer for a city—cleaning parks, planting trees, and so on. . . .

Judges sometimes exploit any unusual abilities in assigning alternative sentences. A former, Chico, Calif., city treasurer, for example, was put to work raising money for the American Cancer Society after being convicted of land fraud. And a Chicago dentist, convicted of falsely billing an Illinois service agency, was ordered to work one day a week for six months fixing the teeth of Cook County Jail inmates.

Interestingly, prostitutes picked up in droves on the streets of Los Angeles proved themselves quite useful to various agencies. "They turned out to be pretty good volunteers," a United Way spokesman said. "Many of them weren't trained in any sort of skill, so we sent them to convalescent

homes, where they would feed people, wheel them around, talk with them. They were very good at it."

Everybody involved, it turns out, is for this program. This includes the offenders, some of whom learn a great deal and even find new careers.