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TOWARD AN UNMANAGED FUTURE

THE intellectual—which is to say the analytical and critical—capacities of human intelligence have never been so thoroughly serviced as they are in the present. If, as Vannevar Bush says, technology is now so advanced that we are able to make virtually anything we like out of electronic gadgetry, it is also true that our surveys and information resources have armed us with a vast critical knowledge about our "problems." Two review articles in the *Saturday Review* for Sept. 16 illustrate this capacity for sophisticated diagnosis. The books under discussion are both about the loss of privacy; one, *Privacy and Freedom,* by Alan F. Westin, is a general study of the progressive invasion of private life by surveillance devices of one sort or another; the other, *The Spy in the Corporate Structure: And the Right to Privacy,* by Edward Engherg, deals with industrial espionage, but also expands into an investigation of how all citizens are objects of classification—"the way our private lives are being systematically exposed and made matters of governmental (and ultimately public) record."

On the surface, the problem raised by such books is how to strike a balance between the practical administrative and "planning" necessities of our civilization and the traditional idea that human beings have a right to live their lives with a minimum of interference from others. There is a sense, however, in which research of this sort always remains an academic exercise. Unlike our technological resources, our critical facilities do not lead to action. The judicious balance sought is never reached, in practice, by following such painstaking analyses. The critical information, the warnings, and the counter-justifications and pleas of practical necessity serve, for the most part, only the purposes of debate by intellectuals, while the actual decision-makers await the demands of massive external pressure. Even when, because of delays, serious mistakes are made, they are not recognized as mistakes until the signs of breakdown and failure are also massive. Then, of course, it is often too late to do anything effective about the mistakes and the trouble is defined as an unavoidable form of "reality."

But what else can people do? Don't we have to be *sure?* These questions amount to admitting that it seems safer to drift than to attempt to reverse processes so complicated that they are no longer understood. The *SR* reviewer makes this summary of Alan Westin's work:

> What Professor Westin has done in this brilliantly executed work is to tie all the threads together. He begins slowly, with a reflective look at a common need evidenced by both animals and by all mankind—the need to be left alone. Man is also, to be sure, a social being; he needs companionship as well as solitude; at times he needs the catharsis that comes with disclosure of some part of his private self. Yet it has been a characteristic of all societies, until now, to grant every man his secret pool of utter confidence. It is this unspoken contract, Professor Westin suggests, that now stands terribly endangered. With chilling effectiveness he describes the proliferating means by which the state (but not the state only) may destroy aloneness. The ugly art has advanced much further than most Americans probably realize.

Well, why should people prefer a policy of drift when this is happening? One reason might be that the value to be cherished seems pretty vague—"the need to be left alone." We understand the words, but what is really at stake? To what extent is the need for privacy understood? Why, after all, is it so precious? Many people give it up willingly, even eagerly. Often, of course, they demand it back, but is any high principle involved?

There are all sorts of practical arguments against being "left alone." The psychotherapist can help only after he has learned a private secret or two. Some people seem to need to be protected from themselves as well as from each other, and this becomes a responsibility of the social community. More than political ideas is involved here. A recent

study revealed that the people living in the enormous, new, tract-house communities have developed *mores* justifying the invasion of the privacy of families who keep too much to themselves. These families aren't regarded as healthy unless they are willing to mix and be "social." Then there is the recent praise of the mass media which, instead of being condemned as intrusions, are held to provide the sensory stimulation we all "need" in order to remain sane!

These mild, background justifications for maintaining dossiers of people's traits, tendencies, and opinions are not presented in any kind of argument, but to show the common ambivalence of a great many people toward whatever "value" it is that lies behind privacy. People once believed that a man grows strong from keeping his personal trials and problems to himself, but now the main reason for privacy seems to be fear of exposure, wanting to be able to hide anything that might prove embarrassing. In an age of diminished selves, why should a man ever want to be alone? The right to privacy seems to have lapsed into merely traditional status. What substantial element in the dignity of man is preserved by its defense? Is the argument for privacy based upon anything more enduring than a rhetoric of a forgotten as well as "unspoken" contract?

We say that "confession" is good for the soul. When is confession debilitating and emasculating? Should such matters ever be the concern of political managers and social planners? One gets the idea from what is quoted from Prof. Westin's book that in the past these questions were resolved by a kind of intuitive social consensus granting "every man his secret pool of utter confidence." But we now have a rational order, no longer an intuitive order. We are almost certain to do what we know how to do, in specific, practical terms, even if this means detonating nuclear weapons. Nonspecific feelings are ambiguous as a guide, while knowledge lies in precise definition, social need in what can be made plain by objective study. Intuitive longings are far too delicate a form of communication to get into the equations of the planners. Moreover, the special problems of our advanced society, we say, have no counterpart in history. Past practice is of little importance to us. Our progress calls for social invention, a wider use of technological ingenuity.

So the champion of privacy takes his stand on mushily subjective ground. What can he say that will really be *heard* in this brave new world? How can he make his claims relate to existing social processes?

One possibility needs consideration at this point. It is that certain human values may be necessarily garbed in ambiguity except for very rare individuals, and that they cannot be preserved without tolerating some uncertainty about them. It follows that distinguishing their most profound meaning requires exercises in subjective awareness instead of objective awareness. There might be an analogy here to the fact that exposing the roots of a plant to air in order to inspect them usually kills the plant. To remain alive, delicate root hairs must have the privacy of being invisibly embedded in earth. People who understand plant growth know this. People who understand human growth may know the human need for a private life. But this is a metaphysical metabolism, and we haven't run our society according to such vague notions or analogues since we abandoned the Elizabethan world-view.

Let us look more closely at the empirical view of knowledge and its uses. Empiricism declares its sole reliance on experience, experiment, and verification. It exhibits a proud distrust of theory—especially metaphysical-theory, which it attacks as mere chimera—and it accepts as progress only those conclusions which are ground out by the scientific method in the form of "public truth."

If we date the popularity of empiricism from the time of Locke and Hume, we can say that we have had about two hundred years of experience in its use. While this is a very short period of time, historically speaking, within its limits we have passed through a considerable variety of social forms. And because of our acceptance of "experience" as the highest authority, our ideas of human good have varied with the changing relations of people to their environment. The question that must be asked is this: Are there constant qualities, constant needs, constant human

values which would be fundamentally the same in *any* environment?

Quite conceivably, some light on our inability to formulate a workable definition of "progress" would be afforded by the answer to this question. It is very difficult, for example, to accommodate life on the colonial frontier and life in a present-day suburb to the same theory of human nature. "Privacy" was hardly a problem on the frontier. If anything, the settlers had too much of it. There was no anxious discussion of juvenile delinquency in the letters of the American farmer, Crèvecœur, who wrote in the 1780's. Frontier life was so filled with encounters that brought out qualities we ardently long for, today, that any passable writer can soon become popular by turning out romances with a touch of this reality in them. The rudimentary anarchist in us all hungers for primitive circumstances and trials of manhood. The cornucopia of nature seemed inexhaustible in those days, and nobody even thought of the ecological bookkeeping that is now declared to be essential to human survival. So, the thought occurs that if our forefathers had been less toughly empirical, less sure that their "experience" encompassed all reality—suppose, for example, they had been open to the somewhat mystical economic ideas of the American Indians—the world created by the nineteenth-century Americans might have had some very different qualities. And the "real world" of the present might not be the world we now face, but only a bad dream we escaped.

This is a place where we would ordinarily quote Thoreau, as a man well aware of the values in which "experience" gave little instruction during the nineteenth century. "Life Without Principle" would be a logical source for quotation. At hand, however, is a passage from Edgar L. Hewett's *Ancient Life in the American Southwest* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1930) which is sufficiently informing on the metaphysic fostered by the men who settled North America. These were men who had allowed themselves to be shaped by their Old World environment:

> The European brought to the Indian world (America) a densely materialistic mind developed by ages of experience in human society that could have no other destiny than that which has overtaken it. It was a racial mind formed by immemorial strife in a restricted environment—an environment which fostered distrust, war, destruction, armament for offense and defense. All this was accelerated by the discovery and use of metals. In the chaotic ethnic conditions of ancient Europe kingship, overlordship, dynastic government, were inevitable, and individual freedom well-nigh impossible. European nations developed one common characteristic, that of using force for all purposes. Small nations fought for existence, large ones for expansion, powerful ones to impose their will on others. Plans were devised from time to time for getting along with one another, but always to fall back after a brief trial upon the primal method of tooth and claw. Such a life tends to disintegration of cultural activities, industry, esthetics, religion and social order.
>
> The European mind was not prepared to understand a race so different from its own in character and culture as was the native American. Its disposition was to subdue, to subjugate and to convert. One can readily understand the paralysis that would overtake a non-warlike race in such an unequal conflict. To subdue was comparatively easy with the superior material equipment of horses, guns, and training in destructive warfare. To convert was a different matter, involving the eradication of age-old culture, the destruction of the soul of a race.

Well, we haven't changed much—not really—except that we are no longer finding it "comparatively easy" to subdue other races who have learned from us the arts of war.

But the point of this quotation, here, is not for self-castigation. It is rather a background for recognizing the built-in prejudice involved and the elements of self-fulfilling prophecy in this darker side of the American character. What is so unscientific about the idea that the world becomes a mirror-image for a people so energetically employed in giving the world a new face?

The point is also that getting out of the trap of environmental conditioning *requires* a break with empiricism, with its narrow, time-bound definitions of reality, and a deliberate imagining of those human qualities which the past as well as the present has made us neglect. What, in short, ought we to be, regardless or in spite of what we have been or what our past has made us? There is a curious expression of optimism in a forgotten letter of Walt Whitman's,

addressed to the celebrants of the 333rd anniversary (in 1883) of the founding of Santa Fe, New Mexico. After speaking of the mixed ethnic heritage of America, Whitman wrote:

> The seething materialistic and business vortices of the United States, in their present devouring relations, controlling and belittling everything else, are, in my opinion, but a vast and indispensable stage in the New World's development, and are certainly to be followed by something different—at least by immense modifications. Character, literature, a society worthy the name, are yet to be established, through a Nationality of noblest spiritual, heroic and democratic attributes—not one of which at present definitely exists—entirely different from the past, though unerringly founded on it and to justify it.

In the context we made for this quotation, Whitman may not seem entirely logical in his derivations, but neither is "progress" itself very logical, in a determinist view. The point is that for such a change to take place, it must first be imagined as possible, and then substance, generated by thought and action, must be added to the ideal image. This is just about all the meaning you can find for the word "creative." To create is to bring into being something which does not yet exist. It is a process which results from the disciplined use of the imagination, not from an empiricism which insists that reality lies in the limits set by a narrow past.

So, when it comes to hard questions like what to do about the diminishing privacy allowed to the citizens of the technological society, we shall find little help in these learned and detailed books which assemble evidence of all the erosions of individual freedom and which point to what seems the inevitable tendency of these and many other evils to grow worse. The field of concentration in these books is on what has been and what is. We are suggesting, here, that a lack of symmetry in our idea of the human being lies at the root of our inability to *imagine* the sort of change Walt Whitman prophetically declared. And we cannot have a symmetrical ideal of human life without thinking about man and what he ought to be, regardless of his environment.

In practical terms, this means beginning to look at every sort of environment in educational terms—as the circumstances for some kind of *becoming.* It also means regarding a bad environment as the result of a bad sort of becoming in the past—not as a dooming reflection of the "laws of nature." It means recognizing that "empiricism" without a contrasting ideal view of reality is totally inapplicable to man. Man is not man unless he is in some sense becoming *other,* or better, than he has been.

There is no reason to suppose that this "becoming" approach to human development will require turning the affairs of man over to swooners and ecstatics. Every man who has seriously engaged in the practice of education, from Socrates on, has known these things about the growth of human character. Our trouble is that we have allowed ourselves to be persuaded that there can be progress without individual growth, that there can be mastery without individual understanding, that there can be happiness, harmony, and peace without any individual insight into how these rare and wonderful conditions come about. We have accepted the bland deception that our internal excellence will result from sound external management—a "densely materialistic" view. It's almost as silly as hoping to be saved by joining the right church, which involves another sort of external management. Sound external management is what we need for the manipulation of matter, but it can only destroy when applied to man. Only a temporary and constantly resigning management will ever be right for human beings, and the freedom (and privacy) we know by intuitive feeling that we ought to have is best understood by educators. No one else should be permitted even to *think* about the "management" of human beings.

REVIEW
EXTREMES IN THE EAST

WE have for review two books on the East which are about as far apart as subject-matters can get. One is *Conqueror of the World—The Life of Chingis Khan,* by René Grousset (Orion Press, 1966, $6.95); the other, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*—1900-1950, by Holmes Welch (Harvard University Press, 1967, $12.50). A more proper comparison might be between Chingis Khan and the Buddha himself, but these are the books we have, and the contrast is sufficiently striking. They show the great extremes of behavior of which human beings are capable.

Why would anyone want to read about Chingis Khan? (One learns that the correct spelling is Ch*i*ngis, not Chengis.) You don't have to be a bloodthirsty person to become interested in great or heroic conquerors. The mildest of men have enjoyed reading about Napoleon. The fact is that Chingis Khan, Alexander the Great, and Napoleon exert an extraordinary fascination as figures in history. Many readers, one suspects, keep on hoping that the slaughter they accomplished has been exaggerated, or that some extenuation will turn up. It doesn't, of course. The mounds of the dead killed in war remain high as ever, the inhumanity of armed conquest undiminished. Yet some of the fascination remains. It is as though an obscure symbolism is masked by these terrible military exploits. The all-or-nothing quality in men who continually risk their lives is a value we cannot help but prize.

One thing to be said about this biography of Chingis Khan is that it is the first really accurate account of the great Mongol leader. All elements of guesswork and myth have been removed by the author, a distinguished French scholar (he died in 1952) who devoted his life to historical works proclaiming "the inherent values of civilizations that differ from our own." Grousset, Denis Sinor's introduction tells us, "was fascinated by 'great men'." He was an expert on Mongol history and naturally gravitated to study of the most famous Mongol of them all. He believed that "individuals could have a decisive influence on the course of history," and, using research materials not available to earlier writers, "concentrated on the life of the man who transformed a little-known, hungry, persecuted tribe of Central Asia into one of the greatest powers the world has ever known." His careful scholarship will doubtless make this the standard work on Chingis for many years to come. As Sinor says in the Introduction: "Behind each of his sentences, however 'literary,' however evocative, lie years of hard work and a thorough knowledge of the smallest details of Mongol history."

But the unfolding tale of Chingis Khan gains rather than suffers from all this painstaking care. At the time of his selection as king of the Mongols, the reader already retains a vivid impression of the young leader's character, reflected in the following:

> From tribe to tribe, the comparisons were passed of the scrupulous keeping of faith of the young khan, his generosity' his firm yet liberal exercise of royal power, with the brutal tyranny, the veerings of temper, the cruelties, of the other contenders. "This lord Temujin would take the garment off his back and give it to you. He would get down from his horse and offer it to you. This is really a man fit to possess a country, able to feed his warriors, keep his house in good order." So the talk went in the steppe, at evening, in the felt tents, and men took him to their hearts, with a sincerity they were to prove when the testing time came.

Early in his career, Chingis refused to punish the loyal follower of a bitter enemy, simply because he would not betray his totally defeated master. Instead, he eventually made the youth "his trusted delegate in private missions of the most delicate kind." The author comments: "Flashes of nobility like this are legion in the story of the Mongol conqueror."

Is there an answer to the question: What were all those conquests *for?* We don't know. But

something more than bloody empire-building seems to have been involved.

For most Western readers, monasticism as a way of life is as much of an anachronism as hereditary kings. This may be partly because of Western religious history and the Protestant Reformation, but also involved is the disinclination of Western man to submit the regulation of his moral and private life to any sort of institutional control. So a kind of initial distaste is brought by the reader to any book concerned with religious orders. Holmes Welch's study, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism*, covering the period from 1900 to 1950, does not exactly change this feeling, but it certainly illustrates "the inherent values of civilizations that differ from our own." Moreover, the first-hand research and personal contact of the author with more than a hundred informants in Chinese monasteries gives the contents of this book a humanizing reality that could not be obtained in any other way. And while Mr. Welch's work is concerned with "practice" rather than doctrine, one cannot read these pages without growing awareness of the lasting influence of both the high philosophy and the warm compassion of the man who, born some 2500 years ago, "made all Asia mild." This tribute to Gautama Buddha, expressed by Edwin Arnold in *The Light of* Asia, had repetition and confirmation in 1942 when Hu Shih, then the Chinese ambassador to the United States, spoke of the obligation of China to India because of Buddhist teachings. The scholarly statesman said:

> It is a well-known historical fact that India conquered and dominated China culturally for twenty centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her borders. This cultural conquest was never imposed by India on her neighbors. It was the result of voluntary searching, voluntary learning, voluntary pilgrimage and voluntary acceptance on the part of China.
>
> The real explanation was that the great religion of Buddhism satisfied a need keenly felt by the Chinese people of the time. . . . Ancient China had only a simple conception of retribution for good and evil: but India gave us the conception of *Karma*, the idea of absolute causation running through past, present and future existence. . . .

The influence of the Buddha never had any but a *uniting* effect on human beings. Even though, in this exhaustive examination of monastic practice, the foibles of human nature and the erosions of a common fallibility are quite apparent, there is still the presence of that original inspiration. There is a sense in which Mr. Welch is mainly concerned to point this out. He ends his book with these words:

> We have seen a broad gamut of institutions and men, with the good and the bad—"the dragons and the snakes"—side by side. The system had room for both piety and commercialism, scholars and illiterates, vice and discipline—all making up a mixture whose components we know, although we cannot assay the proportions in which they occurred.
>
> When modern Buddhism is discussed in almost any Western book about China, we find vivid descriptions of the commercialism, illiterates, and vice, but seldom a word about the piety, scholarship, or discipline. . . .

After quoting typical condemnatory expressions by Western authorities, Mr. Welch continues:

> . . . such characterizations . . . give only one side of the picture. Yet they have been echoed and re-echoed until now they are generally accepted. How and why did this happen? What were the forces cooperating to give Chinese Buddhism a black name that it does not deserve? More particularly, with regard to the so-called "Buddhist revival," inasmuch as Buddhism in China was still very much alive and what is alive cannot properly be said to revive, was it really a revival after all?

When he started out on this project, Mr. Welch found that Buddhist priests talked easily about their doctrines, but were curiously unaware of or inattentive to the commonplace realities of their daily lives. They spoke in terms of ideal conceptions of practice, as though these were more real for them than the human imperfections exhibited all about. Mr. Welch practiced a sympathetic but firm fact-finding method in gathering his material, which combines responsible

treatment of almost endless detail with an alert appreciation of the deep longings and sense of mission of the men involved. The book was begun in 1961 and was to cover Buddhism in Republican and Communist China. It was to have been finished in a year, but the data accumulated for this book alone took five years to assimilate and record, so that the other aspects of the original plan will be treated in two additional volumes to come. While *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism* is surely a distinguished work of scholarship, its chief virtue, we think, is the human understanding it brings to matters of which the West knows little or nothing; and so the reader, helped in countless small ways to enter into the lives of people whose customs are very different from our own, begins to recognize that the "East" is by no means so mysterious or backward as has been claimed, and that the Chinese have a great deal more to their lives than current newspaper headlines can ever convey.

The diversity remains. Chingis Khan was a man of impressive dignity, yet violence was a major tool of his organizing will-to-power. The Buddha was a teacher and a man of absolute peace, and there is still great power surviving in the heritage he left—a power enabling millions of human beings—a power enabling millions of human beings to control if not to expunge the violent impulses which, if armed as modern nations are able to arm them, threaten the extinction of the human race. So far, the West has been a more willing pupil of Chingis than of Buddha.

COMMENTARY
ON BLOWING THE WHISTLE

HOW deep into a situation must a man get—or how much should he be willing to endure—to find out what is right and good? For an individual this may mean a persistent questioning of his own assumptions. Or, if he thinks he can profit by the help of others, it may mean submitting himself to a Socratic sort of inquisition, accepting whatever risks to his self-esteem may be involved.

In a free inquiry of minds, the only legitimate rule is preservation of the common ground for interchange of ideas. The appeal, that is, must be to reason, not to any authority external to reason, since reason is the indispensable medium of dialogue. This common reliance on reason is of course in some measure an act of faith by everyone taking part. It suggests that the possibility of agreement always exists, in principle, among men who disagree. Simply to discuss the idea of truth with another is an act implying faith that by reason men may dissolve their differences and reach a common conclusion. It is evidence that, despite all the abuses and betrayals of reason of which men are known to be capable, there is still a hope—it is in fact the only hope—that men can have both orderly and free relations with one another. There is a sense, therefore, in which men who lose faith in reason have let themselves become less than human, for how can anyone assume other men to be inaccessible to reason without admitting that the same fate may have overtaken him, too?

Can we say that men who have the greatest mastery of reasoning powers usually show the greatest faith in the reasonableness of other men? We can say this if we take Socrates and Gandhi as models of supremely reasonable men. Both, of course, seemed to draw on faculties or powers that we think of as being above reason, yet they never used these resources to obtain an irrational authority over the thought of others.

Reason is the name we give to the principle of order in thought. It is held to be self-compelling: freedom in thinking, that is, is not lost by submission to reason.

Politics is the name we give to the principle of order in society. And it is commonly argued that freedom within society is not lost by conformity to law. The logic of the parallel is clear enough, and the personal experience of freedom through obedience to law is known to us all; yet there is nonetheless an essential difference between freedom in thought and freedom in society. When you exercise freedom of thought, the freedom follows, is defined by, the path of reason, and that path may change from day to day, even from minute to minute. No one has been able to invent laws which have this immediate flexibility. Ideas and feelings about freedom in society may change to the point of embodying a revolutionary antithesis, in contrast to the social forms created by law. So we have a *parapolitical* reality in the idea of revolutions. If revolution *makes* politics, it must be beyond politics.

It follows that political thinking which is not continually loosened up and regenerated by recognition of the limitations of politics results in a social order insusceptible to change. By ignoring the political paradox of revolutionary situations, it creates static legal forms which make revolutionary situations ideologically unacceptable and therefore inevitable.

Good politics cannot exist, therefore, unless its operations are pervaded by parapolitical insight. This is of course difficult to achieve. It is an order of achievement similar to the faith in reason on which philosophical dialogue depends.

The more any political system uses coercive authority to perpetuate its order and power, the more it cuts its parapolitical roots in reason. And so a good statesman or sagacious politician follows a fundamental rule—never blow the whistle until you must. Irrational authority dooms itself with use.

The intelligent executive knows this rule in another version: never give an *order* unless you must; for if you give one order, it will require you to give many more, until, eventually, the rational ground for coherence of the organization has quite disappeared. A Taoist principle is apparent here.

An appeal to the authority of the law, as the source of order, instead of to the reasonableness of the law, as the protector of autonomy, is essentially subversive of the *dignity* of the law. The reasonableness of the law must always be open to question—however weakening this may be to the enforcers of the law. For reason is the first and last court of *human* resort, and to fear reason in relation to law becomes virtually a confession that the law may in fact have become unreasonable. When this happens, the revolutionary situation exists. The law has lost its (always uncertain) virtue in the eyes of men.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

THERE is probably no more moving work in the literature of psychotherapy for children than Virginia M. Axline's *Dibs—In Search of Self* (Houghton Mifflin, 1965). The story which Dr. Axline unfolds is so delicately natural—so unburdened with professionalism—that it ought not to be identified as "psychotherapy," except for the fact that it does recount a wonderful course of the healing process. It is more like a quiet love story, of the wonderful flowering of a human being.

We should not attempt to "review" this book. Yet we want to get people to read it. Often reviewing tends to diminish what can hardly be experienced except at first hand. The more you say *about* such a book, the less you seem to communicate its quality. With this warning, then—

Dibs is about a six-year-old boy of wealthy and talented parents. His mother and father were very preoccupied with themselves and their unusual professional abilities and for a number of reasons the boy seemed to them an intrusion on their lives. This comes out in the course of the book. The boy's recovery from being a sullen, withdrawn, almost wholly unmanageable child and his development into a youngster who was able to reach through the wall of alienation standing between him and his mother—getting through so well that *she*, all by herself, realized how the wall got built, and who had built it—this is the beautiful and heroic happening of the book. The presence of the therapist seems like a series of creative reticences, of gentle cues, and simple waiting for people to see for themselves. The drama goes on while she plays this Taoist role, except that it is not a "role."

There is absolutely no "blaming" in this book, which gives it a gentle, Dostoevskian quality. From beginning to end, the protagonists—who are both the child and the mother—see what they can of themselves. As time passes, they see more and more. Seeing, they act more and more as themselves, and the result is a joy to all. The art of therapy, in this case, seems entirely the art of getting out of the way of self-perception, or of quietly and almost invisibly removing obstacles to it.

It may be enough, here, to tell a little of the beginning and some of the end of this story. At the start—

> Dibs had been in this private school for almost two years. The teachers had tried their best to establish a relationship with him, to get a response from him. But it had been touch and go. Dibs seemed determined to keep all people at bay. . . . When he started to school, he did not talk and he never ventured off his chair. He sat there mute and unmoving all morning. After many weeks he began to leave his chair and to crawl around the room, seeming to look at some of the things about him. When anyone approached him, he would huddle up in a ball on the floor and not move. He never looked directly into anyone's eyes. He never answered when anyone spoke to him.

Not so many years later, but a considerable time after the "therapy" had come to an end, a friend who taught in a school for gifted boys gave Dr. Axline a copy of the school paper. He did not know about Dibs, but he thought that a letter one of the students had contributed to the paper would interest her. This was the letter:

> This is an open letter of protest against the recent dismissal of one of my classmates and one of my friends. I am indeed indignant at your callousness and lack of understanding and feeling. [The letter was addressed to the headmaster and faculty.] It is whispered about that my friend was "suspended with dishonor" because he was caught cheating on examinations. My friend said he was not cheating and I believe my friend. He said he was verifying a date—an important date in history—and since accuracy of a date is essential to establish its very existence, then it should, indeed, be verified. I think you fail to understand the reasons why we sometimes do the things we do. Do you call it a fault when a person seeks to verify accuracy? Would you

> prefer that he cloud his honest doubt in ignorance? What are the purposes of examinations anyhow? Are they to increase our educational attainment? Or are they instruments used to bring suffering and humiliation and deep hurt to a person who is trying so hard to succeed?
>
> One of the members of the teaching staff said to my friend in front of a group of us yesterday that if the pace of the school was too fast for him and he was forced to cheat to keep up, it would be better for him to go to another school. I am personally insulted by that remark. I am ashamed of my school if it does not maintain at all times an open door to any person who wants to come in and be with the rest of us. There are things far more important in this world than a show of authority and power, more important than revenge and punishment and hurt. As educators, you *must* unlock the door of ignorance and prejudice and meanness. Unless my friend is given your apologies for this hurt he has received to his pride and self-respect and is reinstated, then I shall not return to this school this fall.
>
> With sincerity and intent to act, I am,
>
> "Dibs"

Dr. Axline asked the age of the boy. "Fifteen," the teacher responded. "What's he like?" she asked. This was the answer:

> He is a brilliant boy. Full of ideas. Concerned about everybody and everything. Very sensitive. A real leader. I thought you would enjoy this outraged outburst. And he acts on the things he believes in. The school wouldn't want to lose him. They will probably follow his suggestion. . . .

Stories like this make you wonder—wonder about the potentialities of all human beings. Environment may not make the man, but an adverse psychological environment can certainly confine a human being, suppress his qualities, make him seem subnormal, incapable of behaving like a normal human being.

Dibs was of course an unusual child. This is a reason why Dr. Axline was able to offer such an unusual book. So *much* was hidden in the little boy who crawled under tables and who refused to speak to anyone. And who, if you pressed him, *rioted.* But the principles illustrated apply to all children.

If we were asked to list the most important describable ingredients of the way Dr. Axline helped Dibs to find himself, we should have to say simply, patience and faith. Faith that the human essence in a child would want and be able to find its own equilibrium and forms of outgoing expression, and the patience to wait until, by some obscure, inner rhythm, the time came when he would try. We said at the beginning that this was a quiet love story. The love was there, of course, but it was so natural that you wouldn't ordinarily think about using the word. There weren't any demonstrations—just an openness between two people, which grew and grew.

It seems a pity that societies, in their efforts to get along with one another, are taking so long to learn such obvious lessons from child psychologists. Treaties, summit meetings, and high-level confrontations are not required. Just openness, patience, and faith.

FRONTIERS

The Face of Violence

PEACE-MINDED people who tend to be made uncomfortable by their fondness for tales of blood and thunder may find consolation in Bruno Bettelheim's article, "Violence: A Neglected Mode of Behavior," in *Peace News* for Sept. 15. It isn't the violence itself that we are drawn to, so much as the discipline and style, or perhaps the "code," of the men who use it. Dr. Bettelheim quotes Robert Warshow's *The Immediate Experience* to illustrate this point. Massive, organized violence shocks or horrifies, but the courageous individual wins our admiration. In the Western story, we find, as Warshow says—

> the image of a single man who wears a gun on his thigh. The gun tells us that he lives in a world of violence, and even that he "believes in violence." But the drama is one of self-restraint: the moment of violence must come in its own time and according to its special laws, or else it is valueless. There is little cruelty in Western movies, and little sentimentality; our eyes are not focused on the sufferings of the defeated but on the deportment of the hero.
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> Really, it is not violence at all which is the "point" of the Western movie, but a certain image of man, a style which expresses itself most clearly in violence.

But impersonal, genocidal violence *is* the point of the war made by modern Western nations, and it is this which presses its obscene horror home.

There is always the possibility that a man may deepen his being through participation in conflict, but this possibility has diminished almost to the vanishing point in the confrontations of modern war, which applies technological system to the mass production of death. It is this technical efficiency in violence, raising the negation of life to a prime function of our civilization, which fills us with self-disgust.

We often speak of how "individuality" is honored in the West, yet in the use we make of violence individuality is the first thing to be suppressed. Historians point this out in recounting the difference between the aggressive intentions of the white men and the resistance of the American Indians. The Indians simply did not understand the acquisitive drives of the settlers. As George F. Willison says in *Saints and Strangers:*

> The Indians did not understand the symbolism of fences. When they "sold" lands for a few beads or other trinkets, it was often with a misconception of what was involved. In their minds they were merely selling the whites the right to use the land as they themselves had used it and did not anticipate being entirely dispossessed, which explains the ridiculously small price they were prepared to accept in such transactions. . . . One day, when exploring the Cape beyond Eastham, a party of Pilgrims pointed to a particular section and asked the Indians who owned it.
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> "Nobody," was the Indians' reply, meaning everybody.
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> "In that case," said the Pilgrims, "it is ours."

When driven to fight for their lands, the Indians did not conduct decimating wars, but regarded the encounters with the whites as opportunities to practice their "style"—to count coup and establish their valor as individuals. They were testing themselves more than they were trying to "win a war." They could hardly succeed against men who were quite willing to turn themselves into a merciless juggernaut of destruction.

But, oddly enough, the Western literature which has grown out of war has always recognized the prior importance of the personal involvement. Except for military chronicles, which interest only specialists, war novels are concerned with the unfolding of individuality—not with "victory" on an epic scale. A passage from *The White Witch,* a story of England's first civil war (1643), by Elizabeth Goudge, carries the only lasting sense human beings have ever made out of war:

> "It has come upon us," he said.

"I know," she said impatiently. "Is it only today you realize we are at war?"

"I don't mean the war," he said. "I mean our time of judgment, yours and mine. These scourges that come upon us, wars and disasters of all sorts, they're the retribution that the sin of the world pulls down upon itself and collectively we're all guilty, though individually we may be innocent. Men choose one side or the other, making the best choice they can with the knowledge they have. Yet they know little and the turns and twists of war are incalculable. They may fight for a righteous cause and yet at the end of it all have become as evil as their enemies, or they may in error espouse an evil cause and in defense of it grow better men than they were before. And so the one war becomes each man's private war, fought out within his own nature. In the last resort that's what matters to him. . . . That's his judgment."

When war no longer serves as this sort of ordeal for individuals, it has hardly any excuse at all, but stands exposed as nothing but naked inhumanity—a corruption of both means and ends.

If there are any lessons to be learned from history, the absolute evil in the collectivization of violence now stands revealed. When individual courage, discipline, and control no longer have any meaning in war, the moral obligations of the individual in such an epoch are massively defined by hideous objective reality. War has become totally wrong. Either that, or individuality is totally without meaning.

A comment by Warshow reveals one curious effect of our reluctance to admit this increasingly obvious truth of our time:

We train ourselves to be shocked or bored by cultural images of violence, and our concept of heroism tends to be a passive one: we are less drawn to the brave young men who kill large numbers of our enemies than to the heroic prisoners who endure torture without capitulating.

In this general perspective, we begin to realize that the rejection of "efficient organization," the insistence on personal expression, whatever the cost to collective effectiveness, is really a way of declaring one's humanity, even in the midst of dramas shaped by violence. In his "Open Letter on White Justice and the Riots" (*Trans-action* for September), Lee Rainwater, one of the editors of *Trans-action* writes at length along these lines:

Finally, the particular quality of the riots reflects the Negro cultural emphasis on expressivity over instrumentality—practical, goal-directed action. A WASP riot under similar conditions would probably be a much more hard-nosed and certainly much more bloody and violent event. The "carnival atmosphere" noted by observers at all major riots is probably a direct reflection of the expressive emphasis in all group activity among Negroes, whether it be church participation, the blues, a rock and roll concert, or street corner banter.

This is perhaps also part of the key to why the riots seem to be relatively unorganized, both locally and nationally. Discussion of an organized national conspiracy is probably a white projection. Whites find it very difficult to understand why Negroes aren't more efficient in their rebellion—why there is no national cadre, no command structure, no greater efficiency in doing damage. A good part of this may be because this is not the Negroes' preferred way of going about things. Rather, in the midst of an ineffable group solidarity, a kind of free enterprise prevails in which each individual works for himself, perhaps cooperating for short periods of time with others to accomplish some immediate goals, but in the main doing things his own way as an expression of his own feelings. The expressive focus may be very important in formulating an ideology, and thus ultimately have a strong effect on the frequency and nature of rioting. But, that effect is achieved not by *organization*, but rather through *communication* of a developing social doctrine.

To distinguish between "expressivity" in a riot and the lethal violence of modern war may not seem important, since dead men remain dead, whatever the mood of those who do the killing, but a form of violence which does not concentrate on destruction as an end in itself is still, at least, a human expression.