

## "WHAT CAN WE (I) DO"

SO much has been written on how to solve the world's problems at an upper level that the ordinary man or woman usually dismisses any personal involvement with these upper-level solutions. How to bring these problems down to a level understandable to each one seems to me the most necessary project that can be undertaken for enduring peace. There is plenty of evidence available to show that the ordinary man all over the world is against war. This being so, then perhaps we should spend more time looking into what the individual can do with his own capabilities in his immediate environment.

Peace is an educational process, a process which, despite its harmonizing aims, is threatening to many dogmatic values we hold dear. It has no materialistic value (except life) and those who work for it seldom reap financial rewards, yet it has great intrinsic value and gives much personal satisfaction.

Almost the first thing the average man or woman asks when confronted with insurmountable world problems is: "What can we (I) do?" At first it seems almost an impossible project to attempt. The problem of war appears all the more difficult because the gigantic national governments of the world can't or won't solve it. But we too easily forget history—that these same governments in the beginning started out idealistically and with just a few people. A reverse process now has to occur; again we must start with one man (oneself) and attempt to work out small solutions. Our neighbor is as good as any to start with.

If we are to begin with the question, "What can I do personally for enduring peace?" I shall have to become personal and tell about some of my own endeavors—things that I thought of and started in my own house.

The first thing to do concerns the thinking and emotional processes. We have to arrive at and make the decision that we shall think internationally, forget our nationalistic borders and accept the differences among people (whether neighbors nearby or far away). We have to create a desire within ourselves to know others. This isn't always easy. Remember the people who armed their fallout shelters and said they'd shoot the first person who tried to enter? No doubt there are many personality conflicts in the relationships of one human being to another, although our basic functions are the same. We all want to survive, eat, have families, a house over our heads, but to attain these *now*; while we have the atomic cloud overhead, makes for pressing urgency.

The twentieth century not only brought the bomb, but also rapidity of communications. We can no longer ignore one another in isolation. Rapid communications in itself is good, but the BOMB, no matter how you look at it, is negative. These two phenomena force us to reappraise the human comedy.

To attain peace we have to set into motion a whole new manner of thinking. Much more thorough attention has to be given to younger children, so that creative activity is stimulated. We need to learn about the family of man, linking all the educational processes with every child throughout the world. One step in this direction would be to insist that languages be taught from the first grade up. Why wait until high school to approach a child with a foreign tongue? By that time he probably has built up various blocks to prevent his learning with any ease. If all children were taught the concept of world unity, of the interesting differences of all countries, then language would fall into place and come with little effort.

This suggestion is not going to be accepted in many areas of the world, but there is no reason that parents can not personally expose their children to international concepts.

Language differences throughout the world are a serious barrier to solving world problems. I am convinced that the isolation of the American continent has done a lot to discourage world thinking in the United States. The general reaction is: "Who needs another language?" If teaching concepts were changed and the idea of one world was encouraged, languages would become more interesting to children.

Language records used at home and in the schools might acquaint the child with the different sounds of various languages. He would begin to make out distinct words from repetition. This is a first step in getting acquainted with our world neighbors. If every child in the world (who attends school) learned his own language and also one other widely-spoken language, we would begin to be on the way to enduring world peace.

A second step that almost anyone can accomplish is to encourage international visitors in his own home. These visitors sometime live near us without our even knowing it. They may have immigrated to this country recently. Almost all large cities have groups of foreign-born within their environs. With encouragement and friendly interest, these people could be included in lectures and social affairs.

There is an organization throughout the world and in the USA called SERVAS.\* Servas is the Esperanto word for "Serve." Servas is an arrangement of hosts and travelers. Each country has one or more secretaries supplied with a list of prospective hosts. After paying a small fee the traveler is given the names of people who will take the traveler into their house for two or three days, giving room and board and friendship. This enables venturesome students and persons of low

incomes to travel and see other countries and to meet new friends in their homes. Since joining Servas our family has had visitors from Wales, Canada, England, and Japan. Each visit has left us richer in knowledge of our world family.

In our own small, more-or-less isolated area, a Congregational minister decided to interest the community in having international students visit for five days, every Christmastime, in their homes. Arrangements were made through the United Churchwomen of New York City, and the International House. For the past four years, some 75 students from 35 countries have each year spent time with families here in Vermont. Some of the students have later remarked that this was the most rewarding time in their whole stay in the United States. One year we had to stay with us a chemist from Leningrad (studying polymer chemistry at the Brooklyn Polytechnical School). Although we had nothing in common so far as backgrounds and jobs went, we had a very wonderful time with our guest. We now correspond with Boris in Russia.

The lesson we learned from these exchanges was that on a human, person-to-person level, we could tolerate each other's differences and live together compatibly.

The outcome of these exchange visits blossomed into correspondence with people in many countries. Our friendships continued long after the person had gone and the letters brought us closer together. As a small gift and courtesy, I found that the use of commemorative stamps on my letters overseas were very much appreciated. Most families had stamp collectors in them and they liked the different stamps on each letter.

The exchange of magazines and newspapers from their country to ours and vice-versa clarified many misconceived impressions. The nationalistic propaganda on both sides was more apparent. Our thinking widened and the world became one world instead of being divided by closed nationalistic opinion. This exchange of course was only possible where the papers were in a

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language readable by both parties. However, I will add that it is most interesting to see which newspaper photos are chosen to convey the view of one country or another, as personal opinions on a subject of world interest. In such cases, you can recognize the facts without knowing the language.

Sometimes the letters and exchanges of newspapers can be so engrossing that local papers will publish excerpts from them. When this occurs, the interchange becomes even greater and more encompassing.

The practice of "community ambassadors," developed in this area by the Experiment of International Living, in Putney, Vermont, is another educational project. This year our community ambassador went to Israel and upon return gave a series of lectures in all the rural areas, showing his 600 colored slides. No matter what viewpoint an ambassador may take, this is valid in relation to his own personal experience. He is in one way or another bridging an international gap and widening his understanding. He will not be the same on his return, after living all summer with another family in a foreign country.

This year of International Cooperation should encourage even more exchanges. There has been a suggestion that children under twelve (therefore travel at half rate) should be exchanged among families all over the world during the summer months. As children are much more impressionable and flexible, the exchange would be very profitable for our work on enduring peace.

Reaching children is to my knowledge more important than anything else. Unfortunately, very little on peace, disarmament, and economic problems has been written simply enough for the child to grasp. There is great need for a textbook that will relate disarmament, economic problems, human rights, peace, and world community. It should be multilingual. This year various junior high schools and high schools have held debates concerning nuclear war and international controls.

Where are these students to go for information they can assimilate? The world they are going to enter as adults in a few years will have to come to grips with the arduous problems of making peace, yet there is no pool of studies they can readily go to unless the teacher is aware himself and has some material available, but this will be written on an adult level and probably too much for any child to understand clearly.

There is a lot of unused talent lying around that could very easily be used to compile and bring out an attractive book which children would be interested in and from which they could learn about the world community's problems. This book could be expanded to cover the ideas of people throughout the world. It need not be a book for just American children. So much energy is used on the adult level and so little expended on the level of children's education. Think what a difference it would make if an international textbook could be conceived and used in all schools. "A Primer For Enduring Peace" might be the title.

If the idea of international unity and friendship could be taught to children (the children would be able to accept such ideas . . . the difficulty would be with the teacher) the world over, our problems of the cold war, World War III, and the differences between ideologies would vanish. It would be clear that there must be co-existence the world over. This influence can't start at the top and trickle down, it has to start with you and me and our neighbor families.

These are mostly ideas of international cooperation. But for enduring peace we have to consider human rights and civil rights. We can not in truth speak of freedom for the world's peoples and hold down a minority within our own borders.

Living in a strictly white area (the nearest Negro being seventeen miles away), I tried to figure out what I could do for civil rights. (Vermont, I understand, has a Negro population of 600.) Unless I moved 120 miles north I could

not in any way help a Negro in Vermont. There didn't seem to be any practical help I could do, taking into consideration our own low income.

I could send clothing, outgrown, from my family to a family in Mississippi if I could locate the family down there. I wrote the only person I knew in Mississippi and one in Georgia and asked if they could locate a family near in sizes to mine for me to adopt. After asking a number of times to the same person, and continuing to inquire elsewhere, I got the names of families in Georgia and Mississippi. I sent off packages as soon as I could save the postage money. I told a couple of nearby friends about the idea and they asked for a family at Christmastime. So I wrote again and finally got a few more families. It took a whole year before the wheels and gears got oiled sufficiently down there to produce families in any number, and for the families to accept that we really wanted to help them. It was my impression that if I could get families up North personally involved with families in the South, then a reciprocal arrangement would evolve—the material" things going to the South, giving some hope to those who are trying so hard for equality, and in turn their letters coming North, giving us hope that the qualities of faith and goodwill still exist.

Slowly the letters trickled up North, thanking us for packages and giving us our first real insight into the problem down there. Our lines of communication sagged now and then, but slowly this idea of adopting families became a reality.

During the summer we rounded up friends and put on a fair to raise money for the South. For donations we asked people to bring clothing and books. Little did we realize that over 200 boxes of clothing would be dumped into our garage and it would take, with outside help, from July 18 to Dec. 10 to sort (according to sizes of families), package, and send off all that clothing.

For Christmas of 1964, a friend and I sent out an appeal to about 150 people we knew, asking that they send a box of cheer to a family down

South. (We supplied the name.) As a result countless people have asked to adopt the family we gave them on the Christmas appeal, and many more boxes continue to go to Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. These same people have told their friends and those friends told other friends, and my time is now consumed with answering letters every day concerning families to adopt. But the project is still on a small scale, so I can cope with it. To date—June 7, 1965—1500 people are being helped by food or clothing, or money, or scholarships, or medical help, or by all.

I would like to close with a letter from one of the mothers we have sent packages to. This woman has six children and was chosen to go to Washington D.C. in January to challenge the seating of the Mississippi delegation. Upon return to Mississippi, not only was she jailed, but her husband also (even though he had not gone on the trip) . This is her letter:

Feb. 16, 1965 Mississippi

Dear Mrs. Virginia,

I received your letter and the package yesterday on the 15th of Feb. We could use everything you sent. I thank you for it and the \$1 you sent came in good time. I told my husband the LORD will make a way. I am out today to get more people to register to vote. You will always hear from me. I will never forget you. We are still going to factories and plants asking for jobs.

your friend

*How many of us with more material wealth, less children, a job, would go out into a hostile world and ask the impossible? This takes an enormous amount of faith and determination and will to change their world into a better place for children to live. This small black woman has grasped the secret so many of us are seeking, F-A-I-T-H in mankind and the will to seek.*

VIRGINIA NAEVE

Jamaica, Vermont

## REVIEW

### THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUSTON SMITH

THE John Dewey Society lecture for 1964, one might have predicted, would be given by a man who finds affirmative values in existentialist Humanism. But Huston Smith, professor of philosophy at M.I.T., is also known for discussions of religion that have received nationwide response—his book, *The Religions of Man*, having grown out of a national television program. We recall that in an interview with Viktor Frankl, Prof. Smith revealed his agreement with Frankl's central thesis: the psychology of the future must develop from an ontological stance like that of the philosophical Greeks—who, in the Platonic school, assigned a dual polarity to the mind.

In *From Death-Camp to Existentialism*, Dr. Frankl pointed to the significance of the fact that the men who survived the personality-destroying experiences of the death camps were characteristically those who were still seeking *meaning* in their experiences, however terrible. The *noëtic*, meaning-centered mind was awake, and thus what are loosely called "spiritual" forces were generated which sustained an inner life beyond the dissolutions caused by the camp situation. If the mind remained merely *psychic*, with the noëtic faculties stultified, the will to live disappeared. In other words, a man—any man—must seek a philosophical reading of existence in order to express his full potential; and it is in this sense that Huston Smith's brief Harper's volume is titled *Condemned to Meaning*.

Developing a theme familiar to MANAS readers—that philosophical ideas have far-reaching consequences—Prof. Smith synthesizes philosophy and psychology in a way that reaches into the area of religious concern:

Thoughts have consequences. It seems odd in this age of psychosomatic medicine to have to belabor the fact that what a man thinks and believes can affect his life.

Beginning at the level of psychological theory, Gordon Allport argues that the question of whether a person's philosophy of life can be a functionally autonomous motive instead of just a reflection of childhood conditioning or a rationalization for subconscious wishes, is the fundamental problem in motivational theory. His own view is that a philosophy of life can be an autonomous motive. "More and more," he writes, "we are coming to ascribe motivational force to cognitive conditions (cf. Festinger's 'cognitive dissonance' and Bartlett's 'effort after meaning')." It follows that the "ultimate problem" for a patient who is motivated by a distorted world view may be that world view itself, in which case "the ultimate therapeutic problem" is to help the patient to see to it that the distortions in his viewpoint are corrected.

Against the backdrop of this general statement we cite three instances in which articulable meanings appear to have made a difference.

1. We earlier cited Viktor Frankl's conviction that his burning desire to rewrite a confiscated manuscript helped him to survive the ordeals of a Nazi concentration camp. The relevant point to add now is that his case was not atypical. His observations as a psychiatrist convinced him that among his fellow prisoners also it was those who found meaning for their lives and a purpose for living who were able to survive the life-tests of Dachau and Auschwitz.

2. Rock-bottom alcoholics who after ingestions of LSD were able to stay off the bottle for from six to thirty-six months comprised exactly that subgroup—one-third of the total number of those involved in the study—who interpreted their LSD experience in religious, i.e., meaning-giving, categories.

3. Synanon, the "alcoholics anonymous" for drug addicts, has been able to effect an extraordinary 80 per cent cure for members as against the 10 per cent achieved by other methods. It is striking to note that Synanon's "philosophy" contains categories of meaning. . . . *Trust* and *endeavor* are paired in the Synanon's creed, thus: "There comes a time in everyone's life when he arrives at the conviction . . . that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil. . . ." [Emerson]

The import of Prof. Smith's observations on the teaching-learning process comes out clearly when he says that "the ideal of reason is to

increase the proportion of rationality in life, not to deny or ignore portions that currently lie in its twilight zone; admittedly there are aspects of existential meaning that are awkward for philosophy, but philosophers who decline for this reason to consider such meanings will become epigones, for one of the marks of the great philosophers was their refusal to write off any really persisting human problem." The exemplification of "meaning" is, on this view, not only a crucial obligation for the teacher, but should be considered his natural function. The "meaning-import" of subject matter cannot be neglected, and "this is the point of all points about which teachers must be clear: that the problem of life-meanings is not a pseudo-problem."

Lyndon B. Johnson, in accepting the nomination for President of the United States, said that "we seek a nation where the meaning of man's life can match the marvels of his labors." The briefest inspection of the current scene makes it clear that this "matching" is still far in the future, which may make one wonder about Huston Smith's optimism. The sound basis of his hope, however, is disclosed in his concluding paragraph, which points out that the most disturbing features of any period of history often give sharp focus to new insights by men of unusual vision:

Every age is in some respects the best of times and the worst of times. The worse features of ours are its hyperactivity, role diffusion, and vacuity. Somehow we must tighten our hold on meaning, but the old grips are not equal to the task. Until new ones are devised it is worth recalling the conclusion R. G. Collingwood reached through his study of history: that every age in the past has produced men who were wise enough to think what had to be thought, good enough to do what had to be done, and happy enough to find life not only tolerable but attractive. And if one objects, saying, "Some men, yes, but how many?" the answer must be: "More at least than their opposite kind, or human life would long ago have vanished." What sustained them, articulated or tacit, was their sense of the worth of it all. For without this saving insight how could they have undergone the labors, or endured the shame, or faced the loneliness of their Gethsemanes or drunk their cups of hemlock? For

truly, man is condemned to meaning. Without it he begins in joy and hope and ends in the shroud of doubt and defeat.

Arthur Wirth, Chairman of the Commission on Lectures for the John Dewey Society, aptly expresses the burden of Prof. Smith's book:

The plea, simply, is that the thick, rich stream of experience not be restricted to what can be brought within the compass of valuable but partial techniques. This is not to relinquish the position that truth-claims must meet the test of inquiry. Whatever restricts the potential range of man's experience, whether it be tradition and superstition, or sophisticated methods of thought, must be resisted.

If, as Professor Smith argues, man is, indeed, condemned to meaning, the ramifications of the need are as significant for educators as for philosophers. We might well be spurred to confront this challenge—uncomfortable as it may be.

In a decade when man prepares to soar into space we need new departures of the philosophic mind. These intellectual flights will require courage and the capacity to recast problems, just as imagination and daring are required to conquer physical space.

## *COMMENTARY*

### WHAT'S AT THE OTHER END?

THE fact that deepened conceptions of the meaning of human life, seem, in our age, to arise out of the worst imaginable experiences (see Review on the-discoveries of Viktor Frankl while in a Nazi death camp) makes one wonder what is missing in a civilization which habitually waits for last-ditch disaster before changing its thinking.

Serious hunger for truth is felt only after desperate trauma. Many men do not try to order their lives until, battered by circumstances, stripped by their own follies, they stand naked in the pitiless light of awakened conscience. And then, weakened by the dissolutions of what they held dear, they suffer the disheartening realization that a better life means starting at the very beginning.

Isn't it obvious that a true civilization would present a picture in which all this would be reversed? In which the child, in his earliest years, would gain orientation and a sense of identity within a family and community matrix suffused with higher longings? Where lessons would be learned about the heights of human achievement, along paths which lead to the heights, instead of in the depths, after failure and disillusionment?

Some insight—although an insight in reverse, into what may be involved in answering these questions seems to have come to Thoreau, when he wrote:

When, in the progress of a life, a man swerves, though only by an angle infinitely small, from his proper and allotted path (and this is never done quite consciously, even at first; in fact, that was his broad and scarlet sin,—ah, he knew of it more than he can tell), then the drama of his life turns into tragedy, and makes haste to its fifth act. When once we thus fall behind ourselves, there is no accounting for the obstacles which rise up in our path, and no one is so wise as to advise, and no one so powerful as to aid us while we abide on that ground. . . . For such the Decalogue was made, and other far more voluminous and terrible codes.

So we wait, as a society, until we are driven to make the codes; and as individuals, for them to catch us up; and *then* we wonder what can be wrong—why we are ground down by a mindless, inexorable process, just when we thought we were behaving reasonably well, or even a bit better than the next man, or what we see of him, behaves.

This is the "practical" guidance we get from the norms of the *status quo*, and from the gross statistical necessities of all "public" philosophies. These tell us nothing of what a man might be, but only what men, alas, are doing and have done. We make our "objective" models out of these dull averages of our collective swervings, call it "science," and have no time for dreamers like Thoreau. It is time that we began at the other end.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### NOTES IN REVIEW

Two volumes have been recommended by readers: *The Adult Education Movement in the United States*, by Malcolm S. Knowles (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962) and *Education and the Cult of Efficiency*, by Raymond E. Callahan (The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

Dr. Knowles' history of adult education is filled with evidence of a spontaneous "thirst for learning" which has little to do with the motives that cause students to amass credits or degrees. The Lyceum movement of the early nineteenth century, for example, grew out of a grass-roots longing for knowledge consistent with the concept of "life long learning." Henry Barnard, a participant in the Lyceums in 1838, describes the spirit and intent of a movement that had at that time reached three thousand towns:

Lyceums are associations formed for the mutual improvement of their members and the common benefit of society. Their members meet on frank, cordial, and equal grounds. All declare, by joining a lyceum, that they wish to extend their knowledge; and from the manner in which they associate each may become, by turns, a learner and a teacher. All unnecessary formalities, as well as expenses, are to be avoided, that the way of learning may be rendered as free as possible.

The "Chatauqua" tradition, another nationwide educational movement, began in New York in 1874. As Dr. Knowles puts it: "Chatauqua is assured a place in history alone by the influence it has had directly on the lives of thousands of individuals. But it merits additional credit for the contributions it has made to other institutions. It pioneered the development of such new forms and methods as the correspondence course, summer school, university extension, and book clubs, which have been adopted by colleges and universities, public schools, and myriad commercial organizations."

Dr. Callahan's book is in one sense also a history, a condensed account of an entirely different influence. Dr. Callahan began his study in 1957, intending to "explore the origin and development of the adoption of business values and practices in educational administration." He explains why the results of his study caused him great concern:

I had felt that the adoption of business values and practices might be explained simply by the process of cultural diffusion in which the flow of ideas and values is generally from high status or power groups in a culture to those with less status and power. By 1905, as James Bryce pointed out, business was king in American society, and certainly between 1910 and 1929 (if not down to the present time) the business and industrial group has had top status and power in America. On the other hand, it does not take profound knowledge of American education to know that educators are, and have been, a relatively low-status group. So I was not really surprised to find business ideas and practices being used in education.

What was unexpected was the extent, not only of the power of the business-industrial groups, but of the strength of the business ideology in the American culture on the one hand and the extreme weakness and vulnerability of schoolmen, especially administrators, on the other. I had expected more professional autonomy and I was completely unprepared for the extent and degree of capitulation by administrators to whatever demands were made upon them. I was surprised and then dismayed to learn how many decisions they made or were forced to make, not on educational grounds, but as a means of appeasing their critics in order to maintain their positions in the school.

I am now convinced that very much of what has happened in American education since 1900 can be explained on the basis of the extreme vulnerability of our schoolmen to public criticism and pressure and that this vulnerability is built into our pattern of local support and control. This has been true in the past and, unless changes are made, will continue to be true in the future. Thus it was predictable in 1957 that school administrators would respond quickly to the criticism which followed the launching of the first Russian satellite and would begin to place great emphasis upon science and mathematics.

The point, of course, is not whether there should be more "efficient" attention to science and mathematics in the public schools, but that the administrator who forms his decisions on what are usually called "business values" is mainly a weather vane and a politician, not an educator. And this, as Dr. Callahan says, is an "inadequate and inappropriate basis for establishing sound educational policy." He continues: "It is as far as one can imagine from anything that might be called educational statesmanship. Evidence presented in this study shows that such a method of operation does not necessarily result in 'meeting the needs of the community,' and it often results in an abdication of responsibility for educational leadership." Dr. Callahan sums up:

Efficiency and economy—important as they are—must be considered in the light of the quality of education that is being provided. Equally important is the inefficiency and false economy of forcing educators to devote their time and energy to cost accounting. We must learn that saving money through imposing an impossible teaching load on teachers is, in terms of the future of our free society, a very costly practice.

American parents who are really interested in improving the quality of the public high schools might investigate the size of classes and the teaching load that is characteristic of the excellent private schools such as Exeter or St. Paul's or the Country Day schools. The function of these schools is more limited and the curriculum problems less difficult than in the comprehensive public school, but the essentials of the teaching-learning process are the same in both types of institutions.

It is true some kinds of teaching and learning can be carried out in large lecture classes or through television but other vital aspects of the education of free men cannot. Until every child has part of his work in small classes or seminars with fine teachers who have a reasonable teaching load, we will not really have given the American high school, or democracy for that matter, a fair trial. To do this, America will need to break with its traditional practice, strengthened so much in the age of efficiency, of asking how our schools can be operated most economically and begin asking instead what steps need to be taken to provide an excellent education for our children. We must face the fact that

there is no cheap, easy way to educate a human being and that a free society cannot endure without educated men.

Returning to the Knowles volume and its account of the hopes for the future of adult education, we encounter another plea for reevaluation of policy. Dr. Knowles writes:

If youth education continues to define education as primarily the process of transmitting the culture from one generation to the next, then adult education is doomed to advance only in the technology of meeting ephemeral needs and remedying gaps in the existing equipment of adults. For the student body of adult education will continue to be populated by people who perceive their education as essentially completed and who view additional education as merely an occasional vitamin, not as part of a balanced diet throughout life. The educational vacuum will continue to be filled for the most part by vocational palliatives, sectarian propagandizing, and frustrated attempts to provide a program of positive human development. Adult education would still be useful and necessary under these conditions, but it would be peripheral to a society that is on the verge of exploring the moon.

But if youth education should start flooding the adult student body with graduates who perceive learning as a lifelong process and who have learned how to learn, then adult education can become an instrument for helping individuals and society to realize to an increasing degree the enormous untapped power of human potentiality.

This emphasis would seem to be placing responsibility for shallowness of educational goals upon the public schools and state universities. It may be, however, that public education will not improve fundamentally until the meaning of adult education has been vastly expanded. Mr. Knowles is clearly cognizant of the promise in this possibility:

The development of a race of human beings who are capable of approaching their full potentiality would then be possible, and the consequences in terms of the political social, and cultural implications for our civilization would be incalculable. In fact, the concept of lifelong learning may well be our last secret weapon against the destruction of civilization. It is clearly our only insurance against the obsolescence of man.

The obstacles to the reorganization of our national educational system according to the concept of lifelong learning are great. Adults cling to the notion that the education that was good for them is good for their children. Unless they themselves become bored or dissatisfied they resist engaging in serious learning for themselves. Intellectual mobility is not yet a top priority value in our society. The break-through to the new day of lifelong learning will not occur, therefore, unless the current generation of adults is dramatically confronted with the fact of the threat of obsolescence. This, then, is the central challenge of the modern adult education movement. It must educate adults about the new meaning of education, and especially it must help the educators of youth to re-examine the effects of what they do in the schools on the quality of the learning their children engage in when they become adults. The highest priority subject matter for adult education in the immediate future is education about education. If that succeeds, then all education would become unified into a "lifelong education movement."

## *FRONTIERS*

### Being and Becoming

THE bitterest pill of all for a well-intentioned human being to swallow—the alchemical medicine, it may be, that changes his goodness into some kind of wisdom—is acceptance of the fact that even the most obvious moral certainties on which he bases positive action will sometimes, with a change of scene, develop Janus-like another face of meanings, turning his "progress" into dust. And this may continue to happen until he learns the importance of saying, at least to himself, the things that these cherished truths have left unsaid.

"Why is it," mourned a stalwart liberal of a past generation, "that while the Left always makes the Revolution, the Right always writes the Constitution?" There is of course a good-guys-versus-the-bad-guys answer to this question, but there is another answer, too. The trouble with that other answer is that, although it may contain some truth, you can't use it to get on with the revolution. It is natural enough, of course, for people to develop partiality for the truths they can use; if a man is so open-minded as to bother about "useless" truths—useless for the time being, anyway—how will he get anything done? He may even distract others from important business at hand.

Well, you may say, it's only common sense to use truth according to need. As Dr. Glasser maintains, delinquent children may come from broken homes, but that is a truth which, although admitted, doesn't help them to *stop* being delinquent. There is that other truth about human beings: Sooner or later, they have to find *their own reasons* for becoming dependable, self-reliant, and useful human beings, regardless of what other people have done to them. You talk to the general public about the bad conditions that contribute to delinquency, but to the delinquents themselves—if you want to help them—you work with what is not delinquent at all, and try to build on that. Of course, there isn't any formula. But

you have to start with the fact that, after you have done everything possible about changing "conditions," there is still something that has to happen, more or less self-initiated, in the child. And for the child, this is the most important truth of all. Invoking its presence is the art of education, and you never know just how it will come. It may not come for a long time, or even at all.

Dr. Rogers speaks to this point in one of his papers:

I think of . . . a young woman graduate student who was deeply disturbed and on the borderline of a psychotic break. Yet after a number of interviews in which she talked very critically about all of the people who had failed to give her what she needed, she finally concluded: "Well, with that sort of foundation, well, it's really up to *me*. I mean it seems to be really apparent to me that I can't depend on someone else to *give* me an education." And then she added very softly: "I'll really have to get it myself." She goes on to explore this experience of important and responsible choice. She finds it a frightening experience and yet one which gives her a feeling of strength. A force seems to surge up in her which is big and strong, and yet she feels very much alone and sort of cut off from support. She adds. "I am going to begin to do more things that I know how to do." And she did.

Nice going. But what if she were black? If she were, and she talked like that to her friends, they might call her an "Uncle Tom." Suddenly the framework would be different. It would be *true* that a lot of people white people—"had failed to give her what she needed." It would be *true* that the social situation was stacked against her. And it would also be true that the force which "seems to surge up within her" would have the double task of accomplishing both social and personal changes.

Now the problem to be considered, here, is how to maintain a natural balance between these two tasks. If we take the struggle of the Negroes for their rights under the Constitution as a dramatic instance of a historical situation in which the social task is at the forefront of the scene,

then, one may ask, to what extent should the personal task be considered? Or is this strictly a private question? It is certainly a private question if it is tendentiously raised by white men about Negroes. After all, the Negroes have not invited anybody to help them with "therapy." This is their historic hour of "consciousness of the forum." They are asking, and demanding, that their lives and personal struggles be framed by the same principles that prevail for other men. But if it is asked simply about human beings, as a question that all men need to consider for themselves, it is not a private but a universal question.

In *Harper's* for February, this question is examined by Irving Kristol in an article, "A Few Kind Words for Uncle Tom." In striking contrast to James Baldwin's reading of Mrs. Stowe (in *Notes of a Native Son*), Mr. Kristol says:

Uncle Tom was no abolitionist rebel. But he was, for his contemporaries, something a little more important than that: he was a Christian. He was, indeed—and still remains—the only true and most perfect Christian in all American literature.

If none reproached him for not demanding his freedom, it was because he already possessed it—that inner, transcendent freedom which all noble souls possess, and which the human race will never cease to venerate so long as it venerates anything beyond its material self. *Uncle Tom*—like the Negro spiritual—testifies to the fact that, even while they were in slavery, *the Negroes never really were slaves*. That is why the pro-slavery apologists insisted that Uncle Tom was a phantasm of Harriet Beecher Stowe's imagination, and that is why Mrs. Stowe was triumphant to be able to report, as she did, that more correspondents verified the authenticity of Uncle Tom than of any other character in the novel.

Mr. Kristol turns for illustrations "in the life" to a man now dismissed "as a marginal and rather contemptible figure in American history"—Booker T. Washington. In the days before the Jim Crow legislation of the 1890's, Washington devoted his life to developing vocational education for Southern rural Negroes—then the overwhelming majority—to help them move up the socio-economic ladder. The current disrespect

for him "flows from the simple and incontrovertible fact that he was not, by today's standards, a 'militant'." Kristol asks:

But is "militancy" everything? Once upon a time, Booker T. Washington was being visited by a white lady philanthropist. When she left, he accompanied her to the railroad station. As they made to enter, she suddenly stopped in horrified embarrassment. There, before them, were two doors: "Whites Only" and "Colored Only." Washington glanced at them, laughed contemptuously, picked up the lady's luggage and accompanied her, as her porter, into the white section. There he continued their conversation as if nothing had happened.

A servile action or a noble one? We hear it said that racial discrimination is a white, not a Negro problem—Booker T. Washington really believed it. He thought it prudent to accommodate himself, temporarily, to white idiocy. But in his very act of accommodation, he spiritually transcended all the barriers that hemmed him, and his people, in. One wonders: does he really merit the fate of being, along with Uncle Tom, retrospectively lynched in effigy?

Something tells me that I had better make it clear, at this point, that I believe the Negro's struggle for civil equality to be absolutely just, and the use of militant methods in this struggle to be perfectly legitimate. What does worry me is the kind of self-defeating fanaticism that this kind of struggle almost inevitably generates. It is right that the Negro should wish to be equal, in all respects, to the white man. But something has gone wrong if Negroes—and their white liberal allies—seem unable to realize that the Uncle Toms and Booker T. Washingtons were not equal to their white contemporaries only because they were superior to them.

Mr. Kristol quotes Nathan Glazer:

The logic of "protest" led Negroes to construe their condition as solely the product of white activity, and they denied passionately that any action on their part could in any way effect an improvement in their situation unless it led the *whites* into doing something—first changing the law, then changing the conditions that were defined in subtler and ever subtler fashion as the author of Negro fate.

And comments—

. . . there is at the heart of the civil-rights "militancy" a tragic paradox: though militancy is supposed to assert and redeem Negro self-respect, it

can and does work to precisely the opposite purpose. Too often the civil-rights movement seems to regard the American Negro as *nothing but* a negative sociological phenomenon, as *merely* the creature of white prejudice and discrimination—in short, as one who lives a life that can be defined *solely* in terms of deprivation, and whose message to America is a monotonous scream of outrage.

Not long ago, we heard a KPFK broadcast of a program made in Selma. It was mostly songs sung at a Movement meeting led by Judy Collins. This was definitely not a "scream of outrage," but something quite wonderful. The sound was filled with the surging tide of people announcing their humanity and their dignity. You listened, wrapped in awe, to voices which would surely bring down the walls of any Jericho that stood in their way.

Then, during the early days of the student sit-ins in restaurants and drug stores, in the South, a Southern newspaper editorial, inspired by shame, told of the quiet dignity of Negro students who sat silently at a lunch counter, with their textbooks, waiting, waiting, . . . while out in the street leather-jacketed white hoodlums jeered at them, and waved a Confederate flag—symbol, as the editorial remarked in pain, "of the last war fought by gentlemen."

So something is happening on both sides of the ledger—as it should. It is happening this way, and maybe happening at all, because of the presence in these human beings of something a lot greater and more important than a demand for "rights." Lillian Smith, in her introduction to James Peck's *Freedom Ride*, put the affirmations of this presence into words:

We are men, and as men we must declare our right to move freely in our search for meaning; we have a God-given right to be and to become. Sitting at lunch counters, riding the buses, are symbolic rights. They are small, but we need to claim them, not because they are enough or because we really need them, but because an unclaimed human right bars a man in his search for significance.

In an article in the May *Progressive*, Milton Mayer writes in a vein that curiously parallels

Irving Kristol's *Harper's* defense of Uncle Tom. Mayer was living in Selma in 1929—a bad year for the country and a worse one for Selma. Mayer makes a fond inventory of the good and bad in Selma in those days. And whatever was bad in Selma, for the Negroes it was worse. Yet Mayer, with a big, dangerous generalization with some truth in it, suggests that the Negroes were able to create the elements of a good life. "Were they happy?" he asks.

A believer would say yes, and a non-believing psychiatrist would say yes. But a political philosopher would say that that was not the question. If man is a political animal, he is not a man unless he participates in his governance, and that no Negro in Dallas County (and no other County down that way) ever did. And having no part in his governance, he had no human part in his community. No truant officer came to see if his children were in the Negro school taught by near-illiterates. (The white schools looked better, but they weren't much better taught.) For the Negroes, there were no health measures or police protection, no sanitation or sewage system, no water, no paving or pavements; nothing. Between five p.m. and eight a.m. the Negroes of Selma did not exist. But they were a majority of the people of Selma and the County.

What, asks Mayer, could the white Selmians have done if they had cared? "To relieve the squalor of the Negroes—not to say hiring them at white man's wages—would have wrecked that borderline economy in ninety days." Yet there was a kind of "love" in Selma, and Mayer's art is such that he makes you believe it. He makes you believe it, even though, in the next breath, he makes you also admit:

If we Americans were to substitute justice for the scandalous pretense of aid, in a world two-thirds of whose people are hungry, we'd sink the American Standard of Living in ninety days. We have no intention of letting justice or Godliness touch the American Standard of Living. Neither had the white Selmians in the Thirties; and theirs was much lower than ours.

And then he says:

There was a lot more love in Selma then than now, and I trow, a lot more in slave times than in my

day. Without love men fight for justice. And when men fight—whatever they fight for—there is always less love. And without love there is no durable justice in peace. A melancholy circle. But the love of a man for his Nigra—at his mercy, like his dog—is not the love of a man for a man. So the love had to go, in Selma, and the Negro had to settle for justice finally; and maybe lose himself something in the process, and maybe lose us something too. If he is equal to us when he is equal, he won't be equal to much.

A couple of months ago, we happened to read the life of George Washington Carver. We tried to think of how the impact of this book could be made relevant to these times, and gave up in chagrin. Mr. Kristol and Mr. Mayer didn't give up, but managed to say some things that ought to be said. Somehow, the truths of both being and becoming have to get together in a man, and get along in his mind and heart. It isn't easy to make this work.