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A NEW GENESIS

KNOWLEDGE brings responsibility. This is something we know without the help of experts. It could be called a statement of moral law, although the relativities it implies create much of the difficulty we experience in making moral judgments. Our meaning when we say "innocent" usually depends upon this idea. The content of the word "maturity" would be largely lost without the operative meaning of this psychological principle. The language of literature, as the chief support of civilization, would be impoverished if no notice were taken of the obligations created by understanding. The force of obligation is a function of the power of the imagination. Consider the effect on daily and hourly human relations if there were no monitor of individual behavior except the accumulated social pressures of Freud's super-ego—the external "ought" of custom, tradition, and parental authority, compressed and internalized as a censorious "Big Brother." Or think of the world as the Behaviorists seem to regard it, for whom the expression "moral responsibility" can have very little meaning. The greatness of Socrates and the self-created agony of Hamlet are without substance for these people.

While the world may be confused and arrested in its development by such doctrines, the likelihood of them ever being seriously embraced seems very slight. After all, the *technical* side of the principle that knowledge brings responsibility is the basis of Freudian therapy, and also for deciding on behavior that should have "positive reinforcement." You need to know what complexes warp your emotional life before you can establish order and control. And when you think you know how people ought to arrange their lives, then you can begin to "condition" them in the right direction.

Here, we are interested in wider, humanist applications of the principle. Take the conception of self-knowledge, both cultural and individual. In some measure, this sort of knowledge grows from historical understanding, using "historical" in the broadest sense. In the *American Scholar*, Autumn, 1973, René Dubos devotes his "Despairing Optimist" essay to the view of the human species that has been adopted and spread by a number of writers during recent years. For sources to review, he uses the anthologies on his bookshelves:

> Most of the scholars quoted in these anthologies take a dark view of man and of his civilizations. Whether environmentalists, psychologists, or sociologists, they affirm that modern life is degrading all aspects of the natural world and that man has a pathological desire to enslave or to destroy even the members of his own species.
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> The rape of nature has been so widely discussed during the past two decades that the topic is somewhat stale and may soon be unfashionable. But the view that man is probably the most destructive and wicked of animals is becoming increasingly popular, so much so that it makes for a new best seller almost every time it can be stated under a catchy title. Rousseau believed that man is fundamentally good but has been spoiled by civilization. In contrast, most modern authors seem to rejoice in the thought that man was nasty and brutish from the beginning, and continues to exhibit the worst traits of his animal ancestry.

This tendency is reflected in most of the sciences relating to man. Dr. Dubos speaks of the recent reports of the plight of the Ik, a small tribe of northern Uganda, whose self-centered indifference to each another, and glee at the misfortunes of a fellow Ik, created dark apprehensions about "human nature" a year or so ago. But the Ik were victims of ruthless colonial administration, and are no better examples of human types and potentialities than were the

inmates of the death camps that Bettelheim and Frankl described after the war. There was a time, Dubos says, when the "carefree generosity and happiness of the Ik people . . . made them appear—at least to visitors—as the epitome of Rousseau's healthy happy savage."

The burden of Dr. Dubos' essay is that compassion and care are as much traits of mankind—in our "genes," he puts it—as aggression and brutality. He is concerned with evidence that man can and does improve on nature that often nature unaided makes bad mistakes, and that while human beings are *"in* nature, we are no longer quite *of* it." He deplores the modern tendency to assimilate human beings to a mindless, primordial matrix, as though they had no distinctive destiny of their own, no role as collaborators and improvers, along with their obvious dependencies.

What "knowledge" is promised by such reflections? Well, the systematic low-rating of the human species suggests that we may have been done in by our own polemics of a century ago, carried to an extreme. A hundred years ago the Darwinists were still in the thick of the struggle with the clergy for the right to declare man a product of nature, not a miraculous creation. But as is usually the case in a war between old and new beliefs, the ideas used as weapons, unless carefully chosen, become the prisons of the victors. Not content with persuading the educated classes that man is an animal, the evolutionists—or most of them, and especially the popularizers—went on to insist that man is *nothing but* an animal. And this campaign still continues, as Dr. Dubos shows. The fact that evolution does not require materialism is hardly noticed, since such admissions would be regarded as overt weakness at the level where the controversy is conducted. In 1925, Bertrand Russell observed: "As a rule, the materialistic dogma has not been set up by men who loved dogma, but by men who felt that nothing less definite would enable them to fight the dogmas they disliked." It probably did not occur to them that this policy, in the long run, would lead to partisan revival of the Fundamentalism they despised, and perhaps of the religious authoritarianism that had restricted science to purely physical considerations in the early days of its development—as, for example, in the case of Galileo.

Of course, proof of the teachings of biological evolution may not be the only motive behind the enthusiasm for a brutish conception of man. This idea also gives support to tough-guy politics, justifying a powerful military and habitual distrust of everybody but ourselves. A low estimate of human nature always brings belief in strong, arbitrary authority. The influential doctrines of Thomas Hobbes are an example.

Literature spreads the dominant conceptions of an age, gradually turning them into folkways and cultural reflexes. It was not long before the Darwinist "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest" began to shape the modern novel. Rampant individualism, with "brute instinct triumphant," determined action in an accidental world. Then, after a time, came Freud and the psychological novel. After World War I, following the brief interlude of the Jazz Age, the great Depression produced angry portrayals of man as Victim. By this time the idea of man as protagonist seems to have lost all acceptance. Claude Magny, writing in *Twice a Year* for 1948, referring to Dos Passos' trilogy, U.S.A., and O'Hara's *Appointment in Samara,* remarks that these are novels about "people dispossessed of themselves." He continues:

> These writers communicate a very special malaise; the same malaise that we find in some of the magazine stories, that are so useful a study for anyone interested in the sociology and sociopathology of the United States; with their characters stuffed full of clichés, real social mannekins, dressed in platitudes and satisfied to be nothing else; all the more terrifying in that they lack even the relative existence which suffering gives to any consciousness however empty it may otherwise be. The profound truth to which this whole world of American fiction bears

> witness is that nothing in man belongs to him; considered in himself, he does not exist; he is reduced to a bundle of physiological and social determinisms. Whether Dos Passos' heroes succeed or fail, are happy or unhappy, satisfied or dissatisfied, the cause is never in themselves; it is due neither to their force of character, their ability nor their wisdom.

So, the conception of man had come full circle: from the creature of Jehovah, he had been turned into a creature of external forces, of circumstances not of his own making and beyond his control. The brief interval of "freedom" between Biblical and Darwinian determinism meant hardly anything at all. Dos Passos, of course, had a social purpose: he wanted his readers to change "the system"—the economic system which had made his characters into what they were. But these impotent people, "dispossessed of themselves," could never undertake any sort of revolution. There isn't a breath of individuality in any of them.

Such criticism can be brought up to date with the help of another essay in the Autumn *American Scholar*—"Signs of the Times" by Thomas W. Molyneux. This writer, who teaches at the University of Delaware, begins with a discussion of the short stories of today, especially the work of Donald Barthelme and Leonard Michaels. First he notes that the reader is impressed by how "brilliant" these writers are, not by the characters in their stories. A little later he says:

> Barthelme and Michaels assume a great deal. They assume, for one thing, despair. They assume hopelessness. They assume more importantly, sameness. And they assume it all on behalf of their characters and of their audience. . . .
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> The vision of the modern world that they seem to proceed from is one in which men have become uniform, predictable nearly interchangeable, and one in which man s particular individual actions amount to very little. The first part of that vision is a product of commonplace and fairly inarguable assumptions: the media *do* inundate us, leveling our diction, values and aspirations; our mobility, both social and geographical *has* tended to a similar uniformity; we *do* know too much, at least so long as we continue to know too little; eccentricity *has been* explained, does become co-opted, or institutionalized, et cetera, et cetera, You know them.
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> The second and more important part of that vision stems from the fact that we are a society that has come, consciously or not, to judge individual man by his direct effect upon his society. Perhaps a main source of this is that we have recognized that each of us has so many possibilities and alternatives that all our decisions are (or seem to be) arbitrary, and so we have ceased to believe in final consequences and have put our faith in the second chance, we seek our meanings now not in accommodating but in altering. This leads to a highly political vision. I, for one, can think of no surer route to despair than such an order of values; nor to sameness; publicly we are each, after all, about the same.

This third paragraph is a bit obscure, but Mr. Molyneux seems to be saying that we think what we do doesn't count unless we make ourselves politically felt—which, he goes on to show, means to have impact only as a democratic statistic, an influence very different from what Shelley was talking about when he spoke of poets as the unacknowledged legislators of mankind. This is the *minimum* conception of the role of man—that is, his role in terms of his sameness, not in terms of his distinctive individuality. In view of the uses of political power today, this conception of social man is indeed an invitation to despair.

Molyneux is so effective on the decline in the substance of literature that we draw on more of what he says, although his point is made. He speaks of the tendency of modern writers to do the reader's work for him by turning symbols into signs. A symbol in the writer's hands invites the reader to interpret its meaning, to make a discovery. A sign *tells* the reader the meaning. A particular character does things, and the reader wonders what he is about, whether the acts have an inner meaning. The modern writer manipulates the meanings, hardly bothering to have his characters contain them. They *stand* for them, like signs.

> When . . . Fitzgerald has a man walk across the street, at least one of his purposes is likely to be to get him to the other side. This is now less likely to be so. Now actions become images, and images become

> metaphors. . . . One thinks in this connection of Flaubert's advice to Maupassant that, if he wanted to describe a cab horse standing in a line of fifty cab horses, he must search until he found the one word, and with it the one detail, that would make that cab horse stand out from all the other forty-nine. That advice seems reversed now, so that we see Michaels and Barthelme searching not for the word or detail that would, as Flaubert wanted, particularize, but for the one that will generalize, not for what makes the horse stand out, but for what makes him the same.

For the rich ambiguity of literature, for the meanings hidden in the grain of life faithfully portrayed, we have now the brilliance, the pyrotechnics, of the writer, who awes us but leaves us with no cud to chew, no material for the imagination to work on. Molyneux says:

> This seems to me a tremendous diminishment of the possibilities of fiction. It springs, I think, from a vision rooted in an equal diminishment of the human condition. To be sure, if our goals are worthwhile, we will fall short of them. We will in countless ways flub our lives. We will go astray in our loves, be rejected by our children, tell tales on our best friends, covet, look the other way, wonder about our courage, walk for days in the world without recognizing it. All people will. But the same people—or some of them—will renew those loves, forgive those children, sustain those friends, will come out of a quiet house at dawn after a troubled, sleepless night and stop still at the thin precision of the low moon, the biding steadiness of an elm, a mysterious and solitary light in a neighbor's window.
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> So long as the subject is people, or particular people, those contradictions are possible, and with them the splendid ambiguity and complexity and wonder that they generate. Such contradictions have traditionally been fiction's province and it is by such contradictions that fiction has extended and altered our lives. Once the subject becomes ideas, or parts of ideas, all that is lost.

Discussion of ideas as ideas has of course an important place, as in the essay. What this writer is contending for is the restoration to imaginative literature of the *humanness* of human beings—their capacity for changing themselves, for doing the unexpected, the splendid, as well as the mean; and even the mean, when the action of a real human being, is set in a framework of awareness of what he failed to do, what he fell from in his meanness. Constrained, motiveless behavior is the behavior of some species other than man.

Seeing all this, recognizing what has happened to our world by reason of the excesses in the campaign to make man a "natural" being, the responsibility grows to find richer, more ennobling meanings for the "natural." This cannot be accomplished, of course, by moralistic propaganda. The verity which creates authentic responsibility does not come from preachment but from discovery. No one instructed Ivan Karamazov as docile student in a monkish school. It was his saintly brother, Alyosha, who had the inadequate instruction that was no protection against Ivan's shattering questions. The great tradition loses its greatness the moment it is formalized, taken for granted, when it is transmitted as answers instead of as questions.

Quite evidently, fresh exploration is required, and has, as a matter of fact, already begun. The swing away from the "nothing but" conception of man, so prevalent until the 1940's, is at last being worn away by distinguished scientific thinkers who are contesting it within the area of their own specialties. The generalists working toward a truer vision of man and the human condition are perhaps better known—such writers as Mumford and Roszak and the late L. L. Whyte.

Then there are scholars of the quality of Giorgio De Santillana, who are bringing a fresh and meticulous scholarship to the study of ancient lore and tradition—free from the arrogance of an adolescent civilization and the conceit that the ancients knew nothing worth repeating.

In *Hamlet's Mill,* De Santillana speaks of a "great worldwide archaic construction" already in existence when the Greeks came on the scene, of which something survives in myths and fairy tales no longer understood. The original themes, he believes, were preserved in the thought of the Pythagoreans and Plato, as "tantalizing fragments of a lost whole." Plato, De Santillana declares, could speak "the language of archaic myth" and

built the first modern philosophy on this foundation. A new spirit pervades research which looks to the past with almost reverent respect:

> Behind Plato there stands the imposing body of doctrine attributed to Pythagoras, some of its formulation uncouth, but rich with the prodigious content of early mathematics, pregnant with a science and a metaphysics that were to flower in Plato's time. From it come such words as "theorem, "theory," and "philosophy." This in its turn rests on what might be called a proto-Pythagorean phase, spread all over the East but with a focus in Susa. And then there was something else again, the stark numerical computing of Babylon. From it all came that strange principle: "Things are numbers."

The idea of souls which come from the stars is a part of that old system, reflected in even tribal traditions in America among the Indians. After giving various illustrations of this idea, De Santillana says:

> These examples will do. What they demonstrate is this: the *Timaeus* and, in fact, most Platonic myths, act like a floodlight that throws bright beams upon the whole of "high mythology." Plato did not *invent* his myths, he used them in the *right* context—now and then mockingly—without divulging their precise meaning: whoever was entitled to the knowledge of the proper terminology would understand them.

Another scholar to whom we are indebted is Kathleen Raine, whose two-volume work, *Blake and Tradition* (Bollingen Series, Princeton University Press, 1968), shows that Blake drank at the same springs of ancient thought, going back to the Orphic Mysteries as its origin in the West. Again, the new spirit in scholarship shows itself:

> Whether we approach Blake's thought through his myths or through his philosophic aphorisms, by way of his Neoplatonic and alchemical roots or his criticisms of his contemporaries, we are led to the same central affirmation: mind, and not matter, is the only substance, and the material world has its existence in mind, as maya. Matter has no independent existence apart from mind. The mistaken belief in the independent substantial existence of matter Blake recognized as the blind spot of the modern West, and he attempted to destroy it by every means in his power. Yet what he himself so plainly saw he encountered not so much as a conscious belief as an underlying assumption, a climate of opinion, a mental limitation of which the English nation, to whom he addressed himself, was hardly even aware. . . . To Blake . . . immortality of the soul was a question not of afterlife, with or without a physical body, but of a true understanding of the nature of consciousness.

With works of this quality appearing as representative of modern scholarship, a new foundation for thinking about man should gradually form, helped by the widespread breakdown of academic authority and the spread of independent thinking expressed in countless small periodicals being published by the young. We live in an epoch of new beginnings, which fits perfectly with the realization, now becoming common, of the needless and useless character of the old materialism, and with recognition of the degradation it has worked in both science and literature concerning the nature of man.

REVIEW
THE ROOTS OF GANDHI'S THOUGHT

MOHANDAS GANDHI, who now belongs to the ages, offer, seems a personage more conjured with than understood. But so great was his impact on our century, and so beneficent the leaven of his thought, that even those who invoke his memory with inadequate knowledge seldom do harm, although they may accomplish little good. But despite dozens of works about him, it has been difficult to understand Gandhi well, by reason of the enormous spread of the record of what he thought, said, and did. It is with satisfaction and pleasure, therefore, that we now draw attention to a work which, by placing Gandhi's thought in relation to the central religious and philosophical ideas of both East and West, and by comparing it with the key conceptions of the Western political tradition, reveals the roots and development of the convictions he lived by and made the foundation of his life. The book is *The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi* by Raghavan Iyer, professor of political science at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Calif. It is published by The Oxford Universitv Press in New York, at $12.50.

Dr. Iyer considers one by one the leading themes in Gandhi's thought and work, showing their grounding in Indian philosophy. He begins with a chapter on the impact of Gandhi's criticism of Western civilization, showing his objections to be based upon ancient Indian conceptions of morality and right action, which for Gandhi were not merely "traditional" but living truths about the nature of man. The far-reaching reforms proposed in *Hind Swaraj*, the brief work Gandhi wrote in 1908, were to him the planks of salvation for India. And as time went on, he hoped that the saving influence of the fundamental ideals of *Satya* (Truth) and *Ahimsa* (non-violence) would spread around the world.

The second chapter is titled "The Purification of Politics." Gandhi is too casually called a politician. He was a most unusual politician in that he believed that the high standards of individual morality ought to have application in politics, and that "reasons of state" could never justify compromise or neglect of moral principles. He saw no distinction, firally, between the good of the individual and the good of society, and while he was not unaware of the slow rate of development of man in the mass, he felt that progress toward a social ideal would be not merely slowed further, but actually prevented by failing to work toward wholly worthy goals. He thought of politics as a practical application of religion, and religion, for him, lay in religious values rather than religious beliefs—"with the fundamental ethics that he believed to be common with all religions, rather than the formal allegiance to received dogmas that becomes a barrier to religious experience." The "secular life," therefore, could have no meaning for Gandhi, while the spirit of religion could never be sectarian or partisan in any of the senses that the secular is intended to guard against. True reform in religion would dispense with the political need for secularization. Dr. Iyer shows the quality of Gandhi's political thought by comparing his conception of the State—or rather of Society—with the Hobbesian order in which rule is maintained through fear and self-interest, without any real support or participation from the people.

> The contrived nature of [Hobbesian] society excluded any natural dependence among the members. A political machine, by definition, is devoid of any subtle connecting tissue of needs and affections which blends the parts into an organic whole. It is this modern notion which Tagore attacks in his essay "State and Society." There is a basic element missing in the modern monistic view of State power, which the classical Indian and Greek thinkers never neglected. Gandhi in India like Rousseau in the West, was anxious to reassert the idea that the stuff of power is not to be found in the passively acquiescent subject, but in the "engaged" citizen, with a capacity for public involvement and active political participation.
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> The State has a distinct power of direction but its effectiveness depends on the ability to elicit other

> forms of power to support its own. For Gandhi the corollary to this statement is that if individuals recognize the power in their hands and use it constructively to secure the social good (*sarvodaya*), or to engage in non-violent resistance (*satyagraha*) against unjust laws and repressive measures of the State, the monopolistic effectiveness of State power would be reduced and its coercive authority would be morally and materially undermined. In this way the purification of "power politics" would become possible. Hence the enormous importance that Gandhi gave to what he called the "Constructive Program" launched by the voluntary servants of the people—dedicated missionaries and conscientious revolutionaries bound by vows, willing to introduce the monastic as well as the heroic ideal into political and social life.

There could be no "double standard" in Gandhian politics. Human weakness might be acknowledged but weak aims would never be allowed. He would not let a fault become the defining basis of a goal. Even if perfection could not ever be achieved in politics, moving in the right direction would bring the social health of mankind. This is a key idea with Gandhi: Striving and working toward the ideal are practical, not impossible utopian objectives.

In a later chapter, Dr. Iyer remarks that "Moral Ideals depend upon the force of men's imagination." This is a conception that will bear reflection, since very nearly all hopes for the future depend upon some realization of moral ideals. The strength of sustained imagination is necessary to moving toward ideals which are presently quite remote, and this is certainly the case in relation to very nearly all significant goals—peace, a self-reliant, decentralized society, the restoration of community, moderation and limit in our economic life, and production for use—all objectives which require reversal of present-day habits. Gandhi saw this, and he saw, also, that great individual strength as well as patience would be needed for pioneering in these directions. He seemed to have the makings of this strength in himself from the beginning, and his greatest value to the world may be as an example of a man who deliberately learned how to increase his own moral power, consciously rooting it in philosophical principles. He envisioned what needed to be done, then committed himself to do it, making a *resolve.* The part played by absolute values and vows is thus another chapter in this book, since in Gandhi's view, this sort of commitment is fundamental to human development or progress. It is the nature of man to commit himself to the fulfillment of moral law, or duty. Gandhi believed in this as in, as part of, the laws of nature, of the cosmos. "The sun is a great keeper of observances; hence the possibility of measuring time and publishing almanacs."

Here was a man who was absolutely convinced of the heroic potentialities of every human being; and one who, at the same time, identified with the lowliest of Indian villagers, the powerless, often hopeless peasants. He became their friend, champion, spokesman, and inspiration. The soul's rebirth, taught in both Hinduism and Buddhism, was for him the mode of human progress, the means of the gradual perfecting of the human race. "If," he said, "for mastering the physical sciences you have to devote a whole lifetime, how many lifetimes may be needed for mastering the greatest spiritual force (non-violence) that mankind has known? For if this is the only permanent thing in life, if this is the only thing that counts, then whatever effort you bestow on mastering it is well spent."

Two principles are the verities on which Gandhi relied as the dynamics of his work:

> Gandhi proclaimed two values as ultimate—*satya* and *ahimsa*, truth and non-violence. These could be invoked by every individual in every situation. Like the Stoics, he believed that the good man will not live in solitude as a hermit, for he is naturally sociable and active. Virtue is a disposition or capacity of the ruling "principle" of the soul assured and unchanging, worthy of choice for its own intrinsic quality, and its exercise is a continuous activity, i.e., never interrupted by lapses and omissions because it can never be lost. The appeal to intrinsic, eternal values could be used to reject conservative as well as meliorist creeds that justify the present by appeal to the past or the future and also

the means employed by the distant ends they are supposed to serve.

To Gandhi it is necessary to do what seems to be right in scorn of consequences, and every single act must be justified in terms of the ultimate, unchanging values rather than the results that are expected to emerge.

Hence his extraordinary emphasis on conscience, while at the same time he pointed out that conscience is a faculty that develops only under cultivation:

Wilfulness is not conscience. A child has no conscience. The correspondent's cat does not go for the mouse in obedience to its conscience. It does so in obedience to its nature. Conscience is the ripe fruit of strictest discipline. Irresponsible youngsters therefore who have never obeyed anything or anybody save their animal instinct have no conscience, nor therefore have all grown-up people. The savages for instance have to all intents and purposes no conscience. Conscience can reside only in a delicately tuned breast.

Dr. Iyer adds:

Gandhi was concerned with socializing the individual conscience rather than internalizing the social conscience. This can be understood in the light of his concept of human nature and perfectibility. Man is viewed not as a creature moved by self-interest but as a person who asserts his autonomy by recognizing obligations owed to himself in the quest for self-perfection. Gandhi perhaps underestimated the urgency of self-interest and the reality of conflicts of interest in society. But he was acutely aware of the tragic self-alienation of man in a society centered on material interests and relegating conscience to the margins of political and social life. He was deeply concerned to find the basis for social solidarity and authentic community life in action motivated and checked by conscience.

Most useful, perhaps, to the admirer of Gandhi as the expounder of non-violence and as the man who succeeded in planting in the modern world the idea of working movements for human betterment without using the energies of anger and hostility, is the chapter on *Ahimsa*—harmlessness. This conscious abstention from any thought, word, or act that will hurt another living thing is an essential part of the *dharma* or Moral Law of the ancestral religions of India—a necessity of salvation. Recollection of this rule was aroused in Gandhi by his reading of Tolstoy, and it became linked with the idea of Truth as the foundation of his philosophy. A reading of this chapter helps to show that Gandhi's greatness as a worker for peace grew out of the wholeness of his thinking in respect to every aspect of life, for the play between non-violence and truth makes endless subjective subtleties in the understanding of what is indeed "true" and what "non-violent." Gandhi made no easy condemnations of others. As Dr. Iyer says:

Gandhi differed from many Western pacifists not merely in their exclusive emphasis on conscientious resistance to conscription and military service but also in that he did not share their sense of uniqueness in loathing war. While he consistently condemned all violence in terms of universal principle rather than personal sentiment, he also felt that "if war had no redeeming feature, no courage and heroism behind it, it would be a despicable thing, and would not need speeches to destroy it."

There are chapters on Satyagraha, Swaraj (self-rule) and Swadeshi (self-reliance), and the idea of Satya or Truth is shown to mean, for Gandhi, the bedrock of reality—as that in which man as knower, and all that can be known, find union and identity.

Readers interested in comparing Gandhi with Western political thinkers will find deft parallels indicated and distinctions made, but the chief value of this book, we think, is in its showing of Gandhi as one who tested by use everything he learned, and who restored as a possibility for modern man the idea of a heroic life.

COMMENTARY
AID TO DRIFTERS

THE three who wrote *Dealing with Deviants* (noticed in "Children") spend no time exploring why deviants have become deviants, but work with the hard realities of their lives, trying to find out what will help them.

Turner makes the interesting observation that being in prison may give the prisoner respite from the pressures that overwhelmed him outside. He may get some stamina, but no real preparation for release. The idea of the hostel was to create contagion for the idea of a constructive life, since the new resident would meet there others doing what he hoped to do—get a job, pay for his board, and enjoy personal freedom in the evening. The inadequate, passive offenders gained the most benefit from living in the hostel; it helped them to "drift" into better habits of life. The formation of actual stability might take years. Eventually, Turner saw the need for a "Second House" as another station on the way to living in the world, but the additional freedom it provided and the self-reliance required made it a shaky enterprise. The Second House finally settled down to the function of the "next step," and then a Third House was added—again with disaster at the beginning, and then some recovery and some progress. A lot can be learned from a book like this.

The editors of MANAS cherish its back issues as the only tangible evidence of work done in the past, and have a similar respect for the back issues of other magazines. Seeking recently for a place for some old copies of the *Nation*, we came across a long essay (or memoir) by the late Edmund Wilson on Edna St. Vincent Millay, on the occasion of initial publication of Vincent Sheean's *Indigo Bunting*, which Wilson admired and made the occasion for his own recollections of Miss Millay (in the *Nation* for April 19, 1952) . Wilson's "memoir" occupies some thirteen pages of the then much larger *Nation* and is quite informing. He knew the poet well, having, in the early days, asked her to marry him. What comes through, mainly, is the intensity of her life in everything she did, and the seriousness of her work. (Our review of the new edition of *Indigo Bunting* appeared in the Oct. 24 MANAS.)

Belated Christmas gift suggestion: *The Manas Reader* ($4.95 in paperback), available at bookstores or from MANAS (Californians add tax). Selected articles from twenty-three years of weekly publication.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
WHAT THE BEST TEACHERS HAVE ALWAYS DONE

WITH *Saturday Review* conjoined with *World* and back under the hand of its old editor, Norman Cousins, the section on education included in the Nov. 6 issue reminds the reader of the former quiet excellence of the *SR*, which was lost for a while and is now at least partly regained. During the days of the other publisher, it sometimes seemed as if the paper's policy was to overwhelm the reader with cleverness and brilliance, instead of supplying him with good reading (nourishment). Apparently, it didn't work, or it cost too much; at any rate, it didn't last, and the restoration of the magazine to Mr. Cousins is a welcome change.

This issue has an article by Roland Barth, "Should We Forget About Open Education?" Mr. Barth is author of *Open Education and the American School*, reviewed in MANAS for March 21. He now finds that American educators have carefully studied the British approach to informal teaching in the British infants and primary schools, have written reports about what teachers do, the materials they use, and how they relate to the children, and that with all this carefully assembled information, some people thought they knew how to reproduce the English system in the United States. But, alas, it isn't really a "system," and after nearly ten years of promotion of "open education"—which is our expression, not theirs—the results have not been impressive. Dr. Barth has this explanation:

> What we have done, in fact, is to create an *orthodoxy* of open education; we have developed one more rigid formula for reform that can be imposed in the schools from the outside. This is educational reform the American way: academic analysis, prescribed (and proscribed) materials and equipment, codified and circumscribed teaching behavior, and, presumably, consequent achievement of the desired behavior by adults and children.
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> Contrast this with the way informal class rooms have evolved in England. Although there is no clearly defined procedure underlying recent changes in British schools, certain conditions prevail. Perhaps most important is that British school superintendents usually give headmasters of local schools great autonomy. In contrast with typical practice in the United States, most heads tend to do likewise with teachers, who in turn have given children a great deal of responsibility and assistance. The children, with a broad range of possible experiences and materials before them, have tended to involve themselves productively—and to learn.

English classroom practice varies greatly with individuals, depending upon the special interests and talents of teachers. Some teachers work alone, others in pairs. They learn about children in individual ways and use what they know in different applications. The resemblance of one British classroom to another is, Barth says, a *"coincidental, unsought-after outcome of the education process"*—not the result of following any common model. It probably should be said that the best of American observers—like William Hull and Joseph Featherstone, and some others—know this, and try to explain the importance of independent initiative and the imaginative work of individual teachers, but have not been able to get these essentials across to Americans who are looking for "answers." Barth says:

> In America we have accurately analyzed and even replicated informal British classrooms as *product*—we have made a neat package of the vocabulary, the appearance, the materials, and sold it to the schools. But we haven't really examined, recognized, let alone attempted to employ, the *process* that has led to the product. Consequently any resemblance between what happens to children in Britain's informal classrooms, on the one hand, and in America's open classrooms, on the other, is at best superficial. At worst, we will have another in a long line of "movements" that disappoint. We need no more failures in our schools, even in the name of reform.
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> Americans who would capture the success of British classrooms would do better to focus on skillful observation and diagnosis of children's behavior and on finding ways of deriving rich information from these diagnoses. Only from such observation can

> teachers discover how children learn and how their learning can be facilitated. . . . All too often we don't know how to observe—or even what to observe—much less how to modify our teaching in response to what we observe. Not knowing, we depend on formulas; we lend ourselves to pat orthodoxies; we make decisions about curriculum, materials, and methods out of faith in, and submission to, authorities outside the classroom—whether these authorities are seen as malevolent (school principal, director of curriculum, superintendent, state law) or benevolent (John Holt, Charles Silberman, Lady Plowden). Yet innovations from outside the classroom usually bring with them greater rigidity of thinking and practice and less learning than whatever they replaced. In the orthodoxy of open education, teachers unfortunately remain actors and role players in the educational production.

In confirmation of this general view, and in introduction to Roland Barth's article, James Cass, *SR* education editor, quotes an English lecturer on education, Alice Yardley, as saying that "educational change starts with the thought of the teacher." The development in England which American educators so much admire occupied a number of years. It began with studies of how children learn:

> Gradually a fresh view of the nature of childhood emerged, and the knowledge gained was translated into classroom practice as each teacher's convictions evolved. The result is not radically new; it duplicates in large part what the best teachers have always done in the classroom. But each teacher is expected to repeat the process and develop her own convictions about children and the way they learn. The speed with which a teacher arrives at the goal of understanding is not important; some confirmed traditionalists, according to Miss Yardley, take several years. On the other hand, she notes, "Some of our firmest advocates have proved our worst enemies because they tried to make changes too rapidly without understanding them."

Dealing With Deviants (Schocken, 1973, $8.50) by three individuals is not the kind of a book anyone would go out of his way to read, without a special reason, but it is nonetheless quite interesting if it gets thrust into your hands. The book deals with the evolution of several types of therapeutic community. Stuart Whiteley, a psychiatrist, tells about the work of Henderson Hospital in England; Dennie Briggs, trained as an academic psychologist, describes what is being done at Chino Prison in California, where an attempt at a therapeutic community has been going on for years; and Merfyn Turner, a former school teacher who discovered the inadequacies of the prison system in England while seeing a term as a conscientious objector, tells how he established hostels which became models for similar places. Since all three of the writers chose to work with deviants, the book reflects this strong intention, reveals the thorough background of their experience, and provides informing accounts of the innovations they were able to bring about.

The book is filled with the sort of fact that persons with no experience of deviants or delinquents would never think of. Telling about Norman House, one of the hostels, Turner says:

> It is likely that the rules of the house would have been more stringent if they had been formulated by the residents. Unlike the *aggressive recidivist* who fights his environment, the *inadequate recidivist* has been conditioned by experience to accept it But contrary to expectation, his tolerance of nonconformist behavior in others is low, and his treatment of it is general!' severe. Few residents at Norman House would have been given a second chance if the authority had not rested with the staff What was important was not where authority rested but how it was used. It had to be seen to be fair, and in that sense it had something of the quality that is vested in the true therapeutic community.

FRONTIERS

Organic Farming: Joys and Problems

GETTING converted to the "organic" method of food production is fairly easy—you read some of the Rodale publications, or better, one of Albert Howard's books, and see the common sense of it. Then, if you are able to do some gardening yourself, the feel of the earth under natural cultivation and the taste and nourishment of organically grown vegetables and fruit complete the persuasion. But if you plan to become a supplier of organically raised produce to others, various socially-created problems appear, some of which have no solution just yet. There is value in reading what such people say, if only to graduate from the "slogan" stage of enthusiasm for the organic approach.

A fine farmer in Costa Rica, who raises citrus by organic methods, has found himself unable to avoid using chemicals on other crops. He told a visitor that their use by all the surrounding ranchers made stable biological control impossible for him. This is reported in *Survival Times* for October. Another article in this paper (published by the Community Environmental Council, Santa Barbara, Calif.) deals with the experiences of Laurie Kokx, who manages a 75-acre citrus ranch in the Ojai area. The interviewer asked Miss Kokx how she would define "organic." She said:

> I feel that a person, in order to define "organic," would really have to be a soil analyst. There are so many things to consider. If my trees are splitting in half because it's cold, I'm going to start smudge pots. Does the crude oil I use in smudge pots pollute the soil? I don't know what effect it would have on the soil, and that is one reason I do not feel qualified to define "organic." How long does it take soil to become organic? How long do you have to be on a mulching and composting program to create this system?

Miss Kokx is obviously thinking of the term in application to the quality of gardening products, as distinguished from motives and initial intentions. She shows that organic methods in growing for the market require much thought and individual experiment, since the usual "recommended" practices must either be ignored or modified. For example, February, she says, is the time for applying nitrogen fertilizers to citrus, but the three or four pounds of urea per tree recommended results, she believes, in "false stimulation," so that she uses only a little urea, adding chicken manure, compost, and sometimes blood meal. Then, because chicken manure locks up certain minerals, she varies the program, sometimes using steer manure, which is expensive—it has to be spread, and it's full of bermuda grass seed and other weeds. She added ammonia nitrate to the steer manure, which is slower acting and contains less nitrogen than urea. Result: "Our crops are not always heavy like those in the groves which use a heavy fertilizing program, but our trees are healthy and the crop has quality." This sort of fertilizing costs more, but the organic method saves on biological pest control (an earlier article on her use of beneficial insects had some attention in MANAS for May 23).

Large producers of organically grown vegetables may have less trouble in finding markets for their produce, but Miss Kokx suffers frustrations from the mass distribution methods which dominate food wholesaling and retailing.

For example, she calls food plants that serve a purpose in pest control among the citrus "trap crops." In setting out trees, she leaves room for these plants:

> Maybe tomatoes or squash—some seasonal crop to maintain the pollen and nectar and to see which insects they attract. Marigolds and onions are examples. Trap crops for the black scale are oleander and tobacco. The only vegetable I know which could be used as a host crop is the banana squash.

Some vacant land—vacant because the orange trees had been hit by tristeza (a citrus virus disease) and had to be removed—was planted with broccoli. However—

> I couldn't sell it and I couldn't eat any more of it. I tried to sell it to the natural food stores, but they weren't interested. This is the problem of creating a

> market for your crops. I was really idealistic about this. I wanted to put row crops in when I took out the oranges because the soil there was loam—just beautiful soil, and I didn't want to plant oranges or lemons or avocados because they don't require that richness of soil. I also planted beautiful zucchini and nice tomatoes and corn and I couldn't sell them.

She might have let it go to seed and sold the seed, but she wanted people to eat these vegetables.

> I had perfect organic soil. It had not been sprayed or treated for at least eight years. This soil was so fine it would go through a sieve. I had germination of those seeds in about three days. Ideally, if I had a market for them, I would plant row crops between the trees. I would have a winter crop and a spring crop. I would thus keep my insect population going, find out which vegetables I should grow to attract beneficial insects, and I would also have pollen to maintain them, so I would be doing two things at once. In this way I would not waste water. Because we irrigate on two sides in the summer and then we go down the center occasionally. So that all that water that's just irrigating the feeder roots could also be irrigating the crops.

Time was required to persuade the Ojai area markets to handle her oranges, although now they want more than she can grow. Educating the markets took about a year, because people had to *taste* her fruit to discover how good it was. This citrus hadn't been in cold storage, it hadn't been fumigated, and it hadn't been washed and waxed. You can't wash an orange without waxing it because after washing decay sets in if you don't wax it.

Selling the wholesale market involves various problems, inevitable under the government controls which in this case cause waste. The Federal prorate board tells each grower how many boxes of oranges he can sell each week, and those which cannot be sold by reason of this regulation must go to the packing house and be washed, waxed, fumigated, and stored until the Board releases them for sale. If sale is delayed too long, the fruit is good only for juice or is wasted.

Is there any solution?

> I cannot create a wholesale organic market unless they lessen the prorate and standardization laws. The state standardization laws have to do with carton size, labeling, waxing and storage. I do not have enough money to build a packing house, and I couldn't afford the 69 cents cost-per-box which the consumer eventually has to absorb. Therefore, I cannot sell my top quality orange in the big markets of Los Angeles without having it waxed and packaged.
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> We feel that people producing natural foods should be exempted from the prorate regulations because we are not in competition with their markets; for we are selling solely to consumers interested in natural foods and not to large concerns who think in terms of quantity, not freshness. Further, since natural foods are in such demand, we should not be subjected to the prorate regulations which are solely concerned with stabilizing market prices and with compensating for over-production by forcing the farmer to assume a 70 per cent loss of his fresh fruit sales. What incentive does an organic farmer have, if 70 per cent of his labor, especially in natural foods which require more work, never reaches the consumer?

These problems are very real, indicating the sort of social support and cooperation organic farmers may in many cases need from the people who want to eat what they raise. Just "buying it" is not enough. Helping to create a community sort of economic relations, first on a local, then a regional scale, may be the only way to bring the benefits of organic gardening to more people, and at the same time take its produce out of the category of "luxury" goods.