

THE FALL

WHILE there are both philosophical and theological explanations of evil, the one with which we are most familiar is the scientific explanation, which says that evil comes from a failure in need-satisfaction. The remedy, quite naturally, lies in more science, and more skillful use of science, to meet the demands of human needs. An outcome of this theory, which has great initial plausibility, is that the man who experiences true good will be a perfectly satisfied man.

But is it possible to produce with science, or with any other external means, a perfectly satisfied man? Doubts enter with the question. Such a man is difficult to imagine as a living human being. We know from our experience of human behavior that we should have to invent new dissatisfactions for him to cope with, or to improvise preoccupations such as "art" or "philosophy" to engage his energies. For some reason or other, the image of "satisfied man" has little admirable or even likeable in it. So we complete the need-satisfaction theory of human good with these after-thoughtish additions, arguing that the objective of satisfied man is still, after all, a long way off, and when we have a finished scientific product to deal with it should then be easy enough to keep people busy with "constructive" things to do. Meanwhile, a long catalog of statistically verified needs enables the advocate of need-satisfaction to turn into a contemptuous moralist, almost at will, whenever he encounters a persistent humanist critic. C. P. Snow is a handy and quite willing example of this sort of advocacy.

What is the philosophical explanation of evil?

Philosophers who address themselves to the problem of evil are hard to find, these days, so, for both convenience and clarity, we shall return to Plato. It is clear from the *Phaedrus* that Plato, along with other ancients, thought that the evil in human life comes from alienation of human beings from some original high estate. In the Platonic system of thought, man is some kind of "fallen" being.

Constrained by bifurcating and contradictory desires, deceived by the colorful imagery of inconstant forms, and misled by half-intelligent opinion concerning what is good and true, man is continually generating misery for himself. Plato's dialogues are devoted to defining this condition and to plans for extricating human beings from it. They conceive the social community as a school; much attention is given to the training of teachers and how they shall be prepared to teach, and then there are illustrations of what, but most of all how, they shall teach. The project is restoration after the Fall. There is some management involved, some practical administration, but the fundamental situation in Plato's ideal society is educational, and the fundamental activity of the learners is voluntary self-engagement. Demonstrations of truth remain the obligation of the learner. The environing society is only suggestive, never decisive. Plato was well aware that, on this basis, human progress or emancipation would take a long, long time.

One might even argue that Plato set such difficult conditions for the realization of his Utopia that in effect he made sure it would remain a speculative ideal. His defense might be that manipulative methods of achieving the educational Republic, far from assisting human development, would make absolutely certain that it could not come about. Plato was convinced that there is no way to "condition" men into knowing the truth. Knowledge which men do not realize for themselves is not knowledge.

Now, to the scientific mind, an explanation which leaves unanswered what seem basic questions of genesis and cause is no explanation at all. It solves no problems. Science is identified by the fact that it answers the crucial questions it sets out to investigate. So, if a philosopher does not tell where human beings have come from—on the theory, perhaps, that this question has no answer except in infinite regress, or on the theory that causal

explanations only confuse problems which have timeless ingredients—the scientific mind is not inclined to take the philosopher seriously. And if the philosopher's explanation has been altered—compromised, one might say, by the addition of theological pseudo-certainties concerning matters on which the philosopher is convinced no certainties exist; and if, moreover, these theological additions have transformed the educational situation of the philosopher into a manipulative situation presided over by the authority of a priest, why, then, the scientific mind has all the more reason to reject both the original philosophical explanation and its theological substitutes. This is more or less the intellectual condition in which we find ourselves today.

There are, however, what might be called spontaneous "cosmic echoes" of the ancient philosophic teaching of a "fall." These come as insinuating intuitions, poetic insights, and nostalgic reminiscences. Too independent to be religious, and without the order required by science, they declare in accents which have their own kind of certainty that—

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's star
Has elsewhere had its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory. . . .

It is a fact of more than incidental interest that when you add art to science—as in medicine these "cosmic echoes" impose various subjective necessities on the abstractions of science. And, oddly enough, certain doctors of the mind have found themselves compelled to define the human condition as indicative of a kind of "fall." The deep pessimism of Freud grows out of this conclusion. Civilization, he came to believe, is a "sickness," and while he had virtually nothing to say about the preceding state, he must have had *some* idea of health—the condition before the "fall"—in the back of his head. He wrote in *Civilization and its Discontents*:

If the development of civilization has such a far-reaching similarity to the development of the individual and if it employs the same methods, may

we not be justified in reaching the diagnosis that, under the influence of cultural urges, some civilizations, or some epochs of civilizations—possibly the whole of mankind—have become "neurotic"? An analytic dissection of such neuroses might lead to the therapeutic recommendations which could lay claim to great practical interest. I would not say that an attempt of this kind to carry psychoanalysis over to the cultural community was absurd or doomed to be fruitless. But we should have to be very cautious and not forget that, after all, we are only dealing with analogies and that it is dangerous, not only with men but with concepts, to tear them from the sphere in which they have originated and been evolved. Moreover, the diagnosis of communal neuroses is faced with a special difficulty. In an individual neurosis we take as our starting point the contrast that distinguishes his patient from his environment, which is assumed to be "normal." For a group all of whose members are affected by one and the same disorder no such background could exist; it would have to be found elsewhere. And as regards the therapeutic application of our knowledge, what would be the use of the most correct analysis of social neuroses, since no one possesses authority to impose such a therapy upon the group? But in spite of all these difficulties, we may expect that one day someone will venture to embark upon a pathology of cultural communities.

For reasons growing out of intimate contact with human beings, Freud diagnosed the general condition of man as in some sense a distortion of, a fall from, health or normality. Evolution, then, wherever it may be going, is complicated by this reading of the disorders of civilization. Plato's similar diagnosis is contained in the expression "double ignorance." If he had known the word "neurosis" he might have used it; at any rate, the distinguished Plato scholar, Robert E. Cushman, wrote an entire book, *Therapeia*, devoted to the idea that Platonic philosophy ought to be conceived as psychotherapy, with Socrates as the physician of the soul.

What is the importance of this view? Well, for one thing, growth and correction are not identical processes. They may sometimes be similar, but they are not the same. Simple growth has no place in its psychological aspect for a deep sense of loss or failure. Not long ago it was a common assumption among psychologists that guilt-feelings have no

natural role in human life, and that the healer must erase them by whatever means he can. Today, as ideas of mental health become more existential, there is growing recognition that there are "good" guilt feelings as well as bad ones; that is, the intuition of neglected responsibility is seen as an essential part of a sensitive and increasingly aware inner life. There is guilt which emasculates, but there is also obligation which stirs and inspires. The one must not be mistaken for the other. And one could argue that if there are transcendent possibilities in human development, there may be authenticity in the sense a man has of not living up to those possibilities. To what extent is "health" a continuous becoming? Without consideration of such possibilities, how will a man deal with the haunting feelings which disturb his psychic life? What "other people" say on so subtle a question is likely to be both misleading and stultifying. Finalities taken from others can only short-circuit the process of inner discovery. And so it is that men find, in both their own lives and in history, that the "total" sort of psychological explanation always has a dehumanizing effect.

There would be no difficulty in going back, in at least a speculative way, to some earlier doctrine of the "fall"—to, say, Plato's mythic conception, or even to religious philosophy such as the Upanishads offer, or to Gnostic Christianity—but such open-hearted metaphysical systems have been "used up" by the distortions of manipulative religion. To a man whose intellectual discipline has been developed, tendon by tendon, in prolonged polemical rejection of science-fearing, thought-controlling, organized religion, these rational projections of subtle states of consciousness remain uninhabitable. If a scientifically minded man is to work out a conception of the Fall, in order to understand the essentials of psychological behavior in present mankind, he must find other symbols for the original, innocent condition.

A thorough-going effort in this direction was made by a seldom mentioned psychotherapist of the first half of this century—Trigant Burrow. Burrow's posthumously published book, *Preconscious Foundations of Human Experience* (Basic Books, 1964), is a lucid statement of the idea of the "fall" from a psychoanalytical point of view. Early in his

practice of therapy, Burrow became aware of the fallacy of regarding a patient who had "adjusted" to conventional society as a person restored to mental health. He saw that conventional society is filled with anti-human influences. How did he establish this? By self-validating conclusions drawn from his daily work. He began to know how it *felt* to be a healthy human being. In a paper published in 1963 (*Acta Psychotherapeutica* 11: 37-88), "Reflections on Group- or Phylo-Analysis," Dr. Hans Syz, long associated with Dr. Burrow, outlines Burrow's theories and shows from the contemporary literature of psychoanalysis and other sources that Burrow's basic conceptions have been "in the air" for years, although not articulated or developed to the extent found in Burrow's work. Dr. Burrow began the work of group-analysis with a number of associates and friends, the object being to identify the *social* pathology of conventional reactions. As Dr. Syz says:

In these social settings, then, a consistent attempt was made by the participants to gain insight into the latent motivation of their interactions. The meaning of habitual responses was examined at the moment of their occurrence. Gestures, emotional attitudes, verbalized opinions, and the very process of observation were subjected to scrutiny and challenge. The phenomena thus examined had to do with alternations of sentimental dependence and hostile oppositeness, with flatteries and irritations, praise and disapproval, moralistic bias and defensive excuses, with competitive assertiveness and withdrawing aloofness, with partisan sub-group formations, and with a host of other vacillating moods, attitudes and actions, including prerogatives of professional and social status. For instance, regarding a reaction of irritation in oneself or others, whether openly expressed or disguised in intellectual aloofness, attention was called to the evidence of authoritarian self-enhancement associated with contempt for the *vis-à-vis*, to the ever-ready tendency to project the cause of one's discomfort upon outside agents, to the moralistic and punitive attempt, to the irresistible stream of self-justifying rationalizations, and to the group's approving or disapproving participation in the reaction displayed.

In the observation of these experiences and responses, a consistent theme recurred in many variations, namely, a discrepancy between an obsessively self-centered undercurrent and an outward

appearance of good will and social cooperation, a widespread self-contradiction against whose acknowledgement individual and group showed unremitting resistance. This dissociation was found to occur throughout the group as a whole, i.e., within the normal self-identity, in habitual social interactions and in the community's institutionalized modes of behavior and values.

The recognition of the general or group nature of this behavioral defect was especially elusive. . . . However, in our investigations we made a concerted effort to overcome the inevitable prejudice in favor of the individual item, and to recognize that actually we were not confronted with the task of unmasking individual disguises or defenses, but rather with getting in touch with a socially sanctioned dissociation. Burrow drew attention to this functional inadequacy pervading the larger whole when he coined the term "the social neurosis" or "mass neurosis" and stated that, on the basis of his observations, we are faced with a phyllic defect. Phylo-pathology and phyloanalysis were for him the scientific field and procedure devoted to the study of this community-wide behavior disorder.

While, obviously, these group sessions were not the same as the dialogues conducted by Socrates, there are some interesting parallels to be drawn. Plato, as Eric Havelock points out, was confronted by the necessity of making a complacent, self-satisfied culture aware of the contradictions in its own thought and behavior. He had the same sort of "seamless web" of unexamined assumptions to cope with (the situation which Freud regarded as practically hopeless). The Socratic inquiry produced similar embarrassment and resistance among the Athenians. Plato regarded the unquestioning acceptance of the oral tradition of the Greeks—what Havelock calls the "tribal encyclopedia"—as a vast sickness of the mind, the socialized form of the unexamined life. For Plato, the Dialectic was the means of getting people to examine the very roots of their motivation. There is, he maintained, an "I" which is independent of all this posturing and self-justification and rationalization, an "I" which has its own work to do, and standards of behavior to evolve in accordance with the Good. What is the Good? It is the condition of man before the "fall."

For Burrow, the "good" is also the condition of man before the "fall"—before he is overtaken by the

universal habit of self-definition in the form of the imagery built up by society, of the half-truths and interest-dominated rationalizations which our very capacity to think—to abstract, and to symbolize—has made possible. So, in a very real sense, the claim to knowledge of good and evil in terms of our short-run opinions on the subject is for Burrow the fall.

What then is the therapeutic objective? What is "health"? To be recovered, in Burrow's language, are "the tensional patterns governing the organism's primary adaptation to the environment." His symbol of Utopia is the primordial mother-child relationship. There is a preverbal, preconceptual harmony which exists between mother and child, characterized by spontaneous feeling activity which declares the unities between the two. Burrow saw this ideal condition in some measure paralleled in primitive peoples who "seem to have a degree of integration and coordination with their fellows which far surpasses that of our highly individualized and sophisticated Western societies."

For the means of regaining this state, which will be far more than regressing to primeval simplicity, Burrow proposed a relentless self-examination which would produce, in time, certain noticeable consequences—even physiological consequences—for the individual, accompanied by the birth of ethical awareness and a dissipation of defensive and hostile self-imagery. The "divisive factors give way to organismic coordination." Dr. Syz says:

Burrow conceived of man's present biosocial phase as a transitional stage in the development toward a type of existence in which human wholeness can be reached on a more mature and culturally advancing level. As he expressed it: "Man is still early—too early to know how early he is."

One reason for drawing this loose parallel between Plato's thought and Burrow's is in order to recognize a striking difference between the two. Original sin, for Burrow, is anti-organic conceptualization—the turning of the symbol-making faculty into the tool of false self-imagery and partisan representations of "good" behavior. Burrow "saw in the advent of the symbolic mode . . . an interruption of the organic unity between human beings and

between man and his world." The second part of Dr. Syz's paper is largely devoted to showing the consistency of this analysis with the insights of other workers in psychological research—as, indeed, a leading discovery of the age, in which Burrow was a pioneer.

Plato, on the other hand, sought his remedy in the discipline of conceptual or abstract thinking. His objection concerning the self-imagery of Greek oral culture—the culture dominated by Homeric poetry, from which was obtained the popular version of what a well-intentioned Greek is supposed to do—was that it rendered self-criticism impossible. Plato sought through the dialectic to establish the reality and identity of the independent ego. As Havelock puts it in *Preface to Plato*: "The doctrine of the autonomous psyche is the counterpart of the rejection of the oral culture."

Both see the existing society as a sick society; both find the error of both the individual and society to be in distorting self-imagery; but Plato identified the trouble as a misuse of "feeling," while Burrow and many others see it in the misuse of ideas. Plato worked to correct the misuse of feeling by the discipline of ideas, whereas Burrow sought to free men from the confinements and mutilations of an abused intellectuality. In both cases, the method of therapy was self-examination, and in both cases the objective was an ideal "republic" or good society.

These parallels are drawn at the cost of simplification, yet in the similarities and differences noted there may be something to be learned about both Plato's time and our own, as well as a lesson as to the symmetries uniting all intensive efforts to construct self-validating theories of human regeneration or—"salvation." Conceivably, a statement of essential paradox quoted by Dr. Syz from Gardner Murphy has application here:

The definition of the individual man, encapsulated and sharply divided from his fellows, may well have basically missed the most important point in the human equation. . . . in some yet unexplained fashion man is more completely himself when he is not completely himself, when he has in part lost his personal identity within a larger whole.

There is yet another way in which the high promise of human potentiality may be considered—the sense that it is *there*, present in all men, but only momentarily accessible. This is the sense suggested by the peak experience. The self-actualization of which Dr. Maslow speaks seems in some sense a recovery, a realization of what is there, and what may have been there from the "beginning." How can we tell about this? The need to become what we essentially are may be a self-validating description of the evolutionary project.

What, then, is reform in religion, in science, in psychology? Why can't we say that there is a therapeutic achievement of truth whenever men insist on self-validating approaches to self-understanding? The symbols of the approach may vary with prevailing doctrines and theories, but the *dynamics* of self-discovery remain the same. If this should be the case, then what is the foundation of useful discussion or dialogue? The more extensive and symmetrical the ideas of the nature of man, the more the levels of authentication available to individuals. There could develop, conceivably, a commonly reinforcing harmony of mystical, rational, historical, and empirical authentications—with a total lack of "authority" at all points of subjective decision.

REVIEW

NEGLECTED DELICACIES

A SOMEWHAT mythic man who moves through the pages of Mary Renault's early (1939) novel, *Promise of Love* (Popular Library paperback), confronts the reader with a seldom inspected side of death. The man's body was smashed in an automobile accident and he lies quiescent in the hospital. He knows he is dying, and so does the hospital, but they have very different views of the matter. Learning that as a matter of routine his father is being sent for, he asks the nurse:

"Why haven't I been told?"

"Well. . . ." Her voice trailed away. . . .

"My father's busy on a book. It's a very awkward journey; it serves no purpose; and I haven't asked for him. Tell them, at once, please, that I don't want the message sent."

"I think it's gone."

"Gone? Do you suppose these people realize I'm of age?"

"You were too ill to be worried. They just assumed you'd want to see him, I suppose."
"Sister [an English nurse] will be talking to him, you know, before he comes in here. Perhaps, if you've quarrelled, she could say something first that would help."

"Quarrelled?" He said it with a kind of dubious astonishment, like someone savouring a new joke in very bad taste. . . . "If we'd had enough in common to quarrel, it would be important for him to come. We simply have nothing to say to each other. We never have had. It happens, you know, between people sometimes. How long is he going to be here?"

"It depends, I suppose, on—on how you get on."

"You mean he's going to *wait*?"

"He'll want to stay for the present, I expect."

"But this is quite fantastic. You've sent for my father without consulting me, in order to let him sit on the edge of the chair waiting indefinitely for me to die?"

"It doesn't mean that. People often come and—"

"You know perfectly well that's what it means. You haven't lied about it like the others. No, I'm sorry. I know you all mean to be helpful. But surely someone could have asked me whether I wanted to

spend my last hours making conversation to an almost total stranger?"

"He's on the way, I believe."

"What, on the milk train? They got him up at night? Really, this—this is too bad."

"He would probably prefer it," she suggested.

"He'd think he ought to prefer it, no doubt. Poor soul, I can see him sitting among the milk cans, wondering how long it will last and what he'd better talk about. You say they always do this?"

"You judge us rather strictly, I think. In a place like this we have to act for the majority. And a great many people, you know, aren't equal to being alone."

"I see. I hadn't thought of that. . . . I'm sorry, I've been unreasonable."

"No. Too reasonable, perhaps. . . .

Sickness, he mused before he died, means "not belonging to yourself." Leaving the bed for a moment, the nurse returned to find him gone:

His eyes were open, and his mouth set; but his face had no look of resistance or dismay, rather of an intent and eager concentration. The spent traces of a striving which might have been of the body or the mind, only made more complete the alienness of death, the absolute having done with effort, with direction, with desire. She looked down at him, confused with doubts and discoveries of herself, bewildered by what she felt; turning to him as though, if she asked him, he would clarify it all; but he was no longer concerned with her.

A thousand deaths and human wonderings about them are here drawn together—possibly, for some readers, for the first time. Such things, if they are important to think about, are rarely brought to our attention except by the novel. Does not a man deserve his freedom right up to death's door? And does not his very helplessness make the time of greatest social obligation to him? How would an ideal consideration for both the living and the dying finally balance out in custom? How would the idea that we can never completely belong to ourselves affect the matter?

A great many people seem to think that the ideas and customs of a civilization are as inevitable as seasons and tides—as irrevocable as natural disasters. Another way of looking at these things would admit that changing human conventions is

difficult but not impossible. This would mean recognizing the truth in a saying of the Spanish anarchist educator, Francisco Ferrer, that a child's education has to begin with his grandfather. If we don't think about social change in this way it will always seem "too late" to attempt any fundamental improvement.

A generation ago, Ralph Borsodi pointed out that preoccupation with "bigness" on the part of industrial engineers had created a social pattern of built-in ugliness as well as concentrations of power which led to anti-human versions of "efficiency." Why couldn't the inventive genius of engineers have been turned to discovering the possibilities of small-scale production? An industrially decentralized society might have become even more efficient, in some respects, than the one we have now. It may not be aimless to ask if such matters are related to our "manners" at the time of death—how all such things may run together somewhere in our being.

Some wonderings of a parallel sort are quoted from Tanizaki Junichiro in an article by E. G. Seidensticker in a recent *Japan Quarterly*. Tanizaki is little known in the West, but in Japan he is a famous writer. In an essay published years ago, he asked how Japan might have developed without the influence of the West:

There are those who hold that as long as a house keeps out the cold and as long as food keeps off starvation, it matters little what they look like. And indeed for even the sternest ascetic the fact remains that a snowy day is cold, and there is no denying the impulse to accept the services of a heater if it happens to be there in front of one, no matter how cruelly its inelegance may shatter the spell of the day. But it is on occasions like this that I always think how different everything would be if we in the Orient had developed our own science. Suppose for instance we had developed our own physics and chemistry: would not the techniques and industries based on them have taken a different form, would not our myriads of everyday gadgets, our medicines, the products of our industrial art—would they not have suited our national temper better than they do?

The Westerners have been able to move forward in ordered steps, while we have met a superior civilization and have had to surrender to it, and we have had to leave a road we have followed for

thousands of years. The missteps and inconveniences this has caused have, I think, been many. If we had been left alone we might not be much farther now in a material way than we were five hundred years ago. Even now in the Indian and Chinese countryside [this was published in 1934] life no doubt goes on much as it did when Buddha and Confucius were alive. But we would have gone in a direction that suited us. We would have gone ahead very slowly, and yet it is not impossible that we would one day have discovered our own substitute for the trolley, the radio, the airplane of today. They would have been no borrowed gadgets, they would have been the tools of our culture, suited to us.

Something of what Tanizaki means is revealed by his remarks on Japanese paper:

Western paper is to us no more than something to be used but the texture of Chinese paper and Japanese paper gives us a certain feeling of warmth, of calm and repose. Even the same white could as well be one color for Western paper and another for our own. Western paper turns away the light while our paper seems to take it in, to envelop it gently, like the soft surface of a first snowfall. It gives off no sound when it is crumpled or folded, it is quiet and pliant to the touch as the leaf of a tree.

It is the craft of the writer to intimate the wholes which are either affirmed or denied in parts—to show how parts are not even parts, but simply nothing, a kind of "dirt," until they are seen in relation to their wholes. There is a sense in which this is true of *all* craftsmen, but the writer makes us aware of the fact. George Sturt in 1923 wrote in *The Wheelright's Shop*:

I only know that in these and a hundred details every well-built farm-wagon (of whatever variety) was like an organism reflecting in every curve and dimension some special need of its own countryside. . . . They were so exact. Just as a biologist may see, in any limpet, signs of the rocky shore, the smashing breakers, so the provincial wheelright could hardly help reading, *from* the wagon-lines, tales of haymaking and upland fields, of hilly roads and lonely woods. . . .

And so with books. They help us to see that the deduction of wholes comes close to being the entirety of the human undertaking.

COMMENTARY "PEACE-CREATING"

IN the *Saturday Review* for August 12, Arthur Waskow explores the possibilities of an idea proposed by Mrs. Arthur Young for a peacemaking institution founded by private people and groups of all nations. We don't know whether this idea, as developed by Mr. Waskow, would work or not, but the principle he declares at the outset is beyond reproach:

One of the most effective ways of pursuing social change is for men to imagine some future they would like to live within, and then to act in the present to *create* some part of that future, not merely to plead for its creation.

This, at root, is the Gandhian idea of Constructive Work. It is voluntaristic and non-political, and it can have as many applications as there are people who think them up.

The importance of action in behalf of an ideal reaches far beyond the immediate effects of what is done. Every well-considered action creates a field, and new opportunities—things to do which once seemed quite impossible—can emerge in such a field. So, even if there are reasons for looking at Mr. Waskow's proposal with skepticism, there is still the question: What sort of field would it create?

The plan includes an academy to train people in peacekeeping and "peace-creating." The agency is to be founded by private people and organizations of many nations, but would work under the auspices of the United Nations. It will have a police function, and while "weaponry" is to be "most carefully limited," Mr. Waskow thinks that "unless the academy were prepared to go all the way with a nonviolent discipline, the men should be trained in the use of limited weaponry."

The chief work of the peacemakers, however, would be in going into trouble areas with help of a practical kind, bringing knowledge of medicine, engineering, health problems, and agriculture.

High priority *is* to be given to training in the skills of community organizing and conflict resolution.

Unfortunately, however, one gets the feeling that the guns are added to make the idea sound "practical." Probably Mr. Waskow wants it to seem more impressive than a much enlarged Friends Service Committee project. A possibility worth thinking about is that if the Friends had decided to become impressive in this way, they might long ago have gone out of business.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves SCHOOL AND SOCIETY

THE problem of society is the problem of the school writ large. There are added complications in a society, of course, such as the democratic stipulation, not altogether reliable, that to reach voting age is to become competent for self-government, or that winning an election is evidence of superior ability and responsibility in public affairs, but in fundamental analysis these complications may be ignored.

The basic consideration in any human situation is the work to be done. In a school, the work is learning. The form of the learning activity is shaped by two inevitable variables—order and freedom. In a good school, these variables are so well balanced that the issue between them disappears, absorbed by the process of learning. Thus the best relation between freedom and order is invisible. Exposing these variables and arguing about them tends to prevent learning. They are means, not ends; they are made into ends only under conditions of disorder, which is a misunderstanding of both order and freedom. Disorder often brings the politicalization of education—a condition under which learning is interrupted and often stops.

Yet how many brave, experimental ventures in education have foundered on a careless permissiveness which assumes that children, being good, will automatically generate their own kind of order? And how many of these schools, threatened by the random freedom of this assumption, have suddenly switched to an aggrieved authoritarianism which tends to betray everybody involved?

The trouble lies, quite obviously, in trying to measure out the right amount of freedom, or the right amount of order, instead of looking for the mysterious balance-point where involvement in learning resolves the dilemma. It isn't that easy, of

course. Various other "invisible" factors are involved.

If you observe an ideal family in which everybody seems to be learning something all the time, it is natural to conclude that the dynamics of a good family life would make the best basis for a school. But in the family there are unspoken elements of mutual trust—delicate fibers of feeling-relations unique to that family; and there is an *esprit de corps* which is the "culture" of the family, something which grows from the individual work of each member as well as from what they do in common. To try to objectify these factors would be like extracting the nerves from a living body, or making a legal contract out of love.

Families have sometimes to make decisions and to this end they talk things over. They get a sense of the meeting. But what happens if one member of the family starts to practice adversary law within the family circle? He changes the rules; or rather, he makes some rules where none were needed before. He mechanizes a portion of the family situation. The rules he brings in upset a relationship that is not structured for the operation of such rules. We know, for example, that it took hundreds of years to replace the trusting relationships of the organic society with a body of law whose mechanisms are approximately impartial in conflict resolution. So the sudden introduction of a rule of adversary law can turn an organic society into a tyranny or a chaos, practically overnight. It can wreck a family, and it can wreck a school.

It can wreck a university. One can and perhaps should argue that a university is no family; it cannot be *in loco parentis* to students who are practically grown men and women. The university, it may be said, has no right to borrow the analogy of family authority—based on trust—and turn it into an instrument of control in behalf of the expedient, hardly educational interests of the State. . . . This argument can go on forever. An excellent reason for abandoning it is that it has

nothing to do with education, but only with the failure of education, although it may possibly teach us something about people and institutions. The saving reality about schools and universities wracked by this argument lies in the fact that whenever two people get together, a relationship of trust is at least possible, so that the teaching-learning process may still go on in spite of political din.

What, then, is the analogy with a school that we may see in a society?

The *culture* of a society, as distinguished from its political mechanisms, is the trust-creating power of the society. Culture creates—it does not legislate—order through the kind of respect it generates for individual freedom. Culture is the *discipline* of freedom. The higher the culture, the greater the freedom. The less the freedom, the more the culture declines into thinking up political guarantees of the educationally worthless mechanical order of the status quo. In this way, culture becomes mere orthodoxy.

In a time of oppressive orthodoxy, you get two kinds of disorder. One kind, the most familiar, is the angry rejection of *any* principle of order. This soon wrecks a society or a school. Even the idea of discipline, which is a fruit of learning, becomes hateful. Defenders of orthodoxy then insist that the external controls of authority make learning possible—which is total nonsense. Learning depends on the point where both order and freedom become invisible, and that point has long since been lost.

The "radicals" in education seldom ask why Summerhill works for A. S. Neil, but not for other people who try to imitate him. One does not often hear inquiries about the "invisible" elements in what he does, or that are present where he is at work. Occasionally, he tries to speak of these things, as when he said:

There is a difference between American children and English children. The Americans are accustomed more to license than to freedom, I think. . . . At Summerhill we've had difficulties with

American children coming over. They've read my book, you see. They say, "This is a free school; we'll do what we like." And when they find they're up against self-government and they can't do what they like, they object.

Involved is not a plan but an intensity of life, an infectious balance between order and freedom which can hardly be defined.

The movers and shakers in educational reform—and in religious reform, which is a kind of cultural reform—are almost invariably misunderstood. They look for the point of balance, letting the mixtures of freedom and authority result as they will. Take for example the work of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, a central figure of the Enlightenment. He was neither radical nor conservative. He sided neither with the nihilist critics of Christian faith nor with the embattled defenders of infallible revelation. Since he was concerned with what *he* found to be true, arguments about "historical evidence" for religion did not interest him. As a result he made a defense of Christian truth which frightened the believers in orthodox tradition much more than the historical criticisms of aggressive unbelievers. His purpose, however, was to free religious truth of unworthy and irrelevant defenses. As Henry E. Allison says in *Lessing and the Enlightenment* (University of Michigan Press, 1966):

A given religion must now be considered simply as a cultural phenomenon, representing a particular stage in the development of the religious consciousness and, as such, may be evaluated and appreciated in its own terms. . . . Lessing begins by maintaining the orthodox position against rationalistic objections, and ends by so transforming the orthodox doctrine that the result is more radical than the objections themselves. Lessing defends the revealed character of the Old Testament but in so doing undermines and relativizes the very concept of revelation upon which its authoritative character is based.

Plato, often condemned as a traditionalist, was a similar sort of reformer. As Alvin Gouldner says in *Enter Plato* (Basic Books, 1965):

Plato is certainly not at all a "traditionalist" in the sense of one who uncritically accepts the old, received patterns of belief and behavior; indeed, by his time the authentically traditional ways are all too manifestly decaying. . . . Further, it also seems clear that Socrates is in the process of re-evaluating the traditional virtues and of infusing them with new meaning, in particular making them rest on more intellectual or cognitive qualities. Wisdom, he says, is the "one true coin for which all things ought to be exchanged."

The educational or cultural reformer, then, sets out to retune the awareness of his time to essential values, while the apparent "radicalism" of his effort results from his insistence that the values rest on cognitive instead of "traditional" sanctions. Both his insight and his skills are cognitive in character, so that the idiom in which they are expressed remains opaque except to those who participate in the reform.

FRONTIERS The End of Dialogue

IN a recent *New Yorker*, Noel Perrin discloses the dominance of the sign language in our advancing civilization. What is sign language? It is the language of one-way communication. A sign speaks to you, but you can't speak to the sign; if you do, the sign simply repeats itself. That's all it's been programmed for. A sign is not supposed to answer your questions; if it did, it might try to *reason* with you, which is suicide for a sign. It would also defeat the sign's purpose, which is to condition your reflexes, not to awaken your mind.

In his *New Yorker* article, Mr. Perrin tells about his imaginary conversations with signs. He even extended his remarks by writing letters to some people who put up signs or use sign language. These plaintive missives were directed to a vending-machine company, a broadcasting company, and the Government. He asked the vending-machine company why its machines charged more for cigarettes than a store across the street. He asked his congressman some moderately searching questions about the nation's Far Eastern policy. He pointed out in a letter to the broadcasting company that its announcers were not obliged to pronounce "neither" the same as the Electors of Hanover, who might be able to set styles of speech in England, but not in a free country like the United States. The answers he got were all carefully devised echoes of what he had heard before in sign language:

All three replies had a kind of customized form-letter quality that I assume is designed to give people like me the illusion that we have got through when we haven't. The congressman said he valued my opinion and would keep it in mind. The network said it was delighted to hear from me and its dictionary approved both the pronunciations I mentioned. The vending-machine company said vending machines were very expensive and tobacco taxes very high. It also said that as I was obviously a very thoughtful person, it was sending me a questionnaire to fill out on what kind of products I would like to see available in vending machines, and a quarter for my trouble.

The only message Mr. Perrin could deduce from the letters was that "public relations is a growing field." The sign language had triumphed again. Public relations, as anyone can see, is teaching people to talk like signs. After all, with the volume of business we're doing these days, who has time for dialogue?

But there are other people who have been trying to "get through" for a long time—people who can't work off their frustrations by contributing to the *New Yorker*. Take Martin Luther King; or, if you are ready for it, take Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael. All three know more than most of us about how it feels to experience only one-way communication. They and their ancestors have been getting form letters for more than a hundred years.

Mr. Perrin can amuse us with his exposure of the sign language, but, as Martin Luther King has explained, the only useful thing the civil rights workers can do with it is make demonstrations. This is the only form of the sign language, he says, that "gets through." Riots, of course, are in sign language, too, but in this case the medium remains the message.

Mr. Perrin's article has another little chapter of conversation with the sign on a package of "garden-fresh" vegetables. By some plainly anti-American questioning he extracts an admission that garden-fresh means only a well-frozen, commercially qualified approximation thereof. And, somewhat more shocking, he finds that the "creme" dispensed by a coffee-vending machine is a soy-bean concoction put up by a Dairy Company with progressive ideas. Embarrassed by Perrin's Gestapo approach, the machine finally suggests that Mr. Perrin get in touch with the Food and Drug Administration, which knows all about the entire affair. You get the idea that sensible people easily understand why mass marketing *requires* these amiable distortions. As the machine said, "To some extent you have to compromise to succeed in business, and that's a fact."

The trouble is, if you'll believe that, you'll believe anything. You might even believe that the war in Vietnam is a necessity of human freedom. If someone complains about the incapacity of signs to answer questions on a rational basis, it can be pointed out that a Government as large as ours, which services nearly two hundred million people, couldn't possibly send out anything but form-letters. We have to think about the general good, and only a handful of prickly individualists want to be *reasoned* with. And this, alas, explains why Karen Homey had to write *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, and why, again, at the end of his study of sociology, *Man and People*, Ortega was obliged to say:

So-called "society" is never what the name promises. It is always at the same time, to one or another degree, *dis-society*, repulsion between individuals. Since on the other hand it claims to be the opposite, we must radically open ourselves to the conviction that society is a reality that is *constitutively* sick, defective—strictly, it is a never-ending struggle between its genuinely social elements and behaviors and its dissociative or anti-social elements and behaviors. For a minimum of sociability to predominate and *eo ipso* for any society to endure as such, it must frequently summon its internal "public power" to intervene in violent form and even—when the society develops and ceases to be primitive—to create a special body charged with making that power function in irresistible form. This is what is commonly called the State.

The worst thing about the State is the carefully propagated myth that it will eventually *cure* this sickness of society, when all any State can do is package and label social ills as political problems. This makes people support the State with emotional loyalty, in the hope of solving the problems—some day.