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THE SERVICES OF JOHN LOCKE

WHY would a man of the twentieth century be interested in reading John Locke? That *some* people are interested in reading Locke, or about him, is clear enough, since Dover this year brought out a new edition of D. J. O'Connor's *John Locke* (paper covers, $1.75). But one gets the impression, after spending an hour or two with Locke's ideas, that the people who buy this book and study it will be those who *have* to, for some professional reason, such as qualifying to teach philosophy in an institution of the higher learning—in a modern college or university.

Locke, in short, is a man you are expected to know about if you are going to instruct the young in the intellectual past. He is, Mr. O'Connor makes plain, an important ancestor of our civilization. He popularized the idea of the Social Contract. He wrote effectively on religious toleration, making the two-pronged argument that no faith worth having can be coerced and that no one knows enough about religious truth to entitle him to force a particular version of it on other people. But the main reason for studying Locke, according to Mr. O'Connor, is the fact that he "was the first to insist that the nature and capacities of the human mind should be the starting point for philosophy." This book is mainly an examination of what Locke had to say about the nature and capacities of the human mind, leading him to judgments about what we can fairly say we "know" and fairly hope to know.

Now you would think that such a book, concerned with such vital matters, would be fairly interesting. Yet we found it hard to read. In fact, the mastery of the content of this book became a task put off to another day, probably a very distant day.

There is no doubt about Mr. O'Connor's great respect for Locke. The author tells you in considerable detail about the originality and daring of this seventeenth-century thinker, showing where he was right and where he was wrong, and the skill and assurance of these persuasions make you realize that you stand with Mr. O'Connor on a high eminence of contemporary certainty, able to criticize Locke as well as to appreciate him. All this is doubtless very much to the point for a reader about to enter the learned profession of philosophy. Reading the book also alerts you in respect to an oddity of this learned profession of our time—its practitioners converse easily only with one another. If you don't share their learning, you hardly know what they are talking about, or rather, you find it difficult to understand why they attach so much importance to what they are saying. They have their reasons, but to grasp them you have to have read a lot of books you probably wouldn't be interested in unless you were preparing yourself for the learned profession of philosophy. This may be natural and right, but it makes a learned specialty out of philosophy, which is a great misfortune. Was John Locke a learned specialist?

In an age of endless argument about the "true" religion and how a man can tell what is dependable and what is false in religious claims, there was considerable pertinence in writing, as Locke did, about the processes of "knowing." If such matters could be settled, once and for all, there might be an end to religious arguments and religious persecutions; or, at least, these would be much reduced. Mr. O'Connor honors Locke for this intention and speaks with high praise of its practical effect:

> . . . there can be no doubt that had Locke not redirected philosophers' interests in this way, our ideas about human knowledge and its varieties and limits would be far more confused and vague even than they are today. In so far as Locke has had a bad influence on philosophy it is due more to the peculiar defects of his theory of knowledge than to the fact that he made the problems of epistemology the basic questions for philosophy. Moreover, this original outlook of the Essay [Concerning Human Understanding] together with its empirical basis, is the cause of its deep and lasting influence on European thought. It was, for example, this combination of interest in the problems of the human mind with the insistence on experience as the only basis for knowledge which prepared the way for the development of psychology as an independent

> science. Locke has sometimes been spoken of, for this reason as the father of psychology.

Now this is obviously an important contribution. If, as many people believe, philosophy gets its assumptions or first principles from psychology, and if, because of Locke's pioneering efforts, psychology at last became an "independent science," then Locke was a man who set the human race on a course which might some day bring a few "certainties" to an area notably barren of them until his time. It is very much in order, then, to congratulate the psychologists on their good fortune in having so sturdy an ancestor and to cheer them along on their crucial task.

But we shall also have to wait and see what is the fruit of this work. Mr. O'Connor issues a kind of progress report in terms of present opinion in philosophy. That is, he tells you when Locke really had hold of something valuable and when he trapped himself naively in some thumping fallacy or logical contradiction. And you feel pretty unsophisticated when you realize that, without the help of all the trained and sharpened minds who have worked over Locke and other thinkers since, you too might be trapping yourself in fallacies and issuing judgments that other people more learned could make great fun of with almost no trouble at all.

You discover full well, alas, that you are not a learned man. You may be reluctant, of course, to conclude from this that without training as a professional philosopher you would be unable to avoid all those dreadful pitfalls which even a man as energetic and courageous as John Locke fell into. For one thing, you might go in another direction. Philosophy permits this. And if you read current books by professional philosophers about the present thoughts of other professional philosophers, you get the gloomy impression that even these experts make serious mistakes. You may not understand why the mistakes are so serious, but it is plain that men with a great deal of instruction in their specialty think so. And tomorrow or ten years from now, the situation will almost certainly be much the same, although the "mistakes" will doubtless have a somewhat different description. The reason for regarding these changes as "progress" in philosophy remains more or less a professional secret.

Yet Locke must be honored for his influence and intentions. One reason we went to this book with some anticipation was the recollection of reading, many years ago, Elizabeth Madox Roberts' novel, *The Great Meadow.* In this book, which is an exciting story of the settling of Kentucky in colonial times, Mrs. Roberts told about a farmer on Long Island who had some dreams about the future society of the North American continent. There were no schools in those days, and the farmer shared his dreams with his children by teaching them, each evening, what he read in the few books he was able to obtain. The scene we remember best is of a day when the farmer was out ploughing. He was thinking about what he would say to his sons and daughters that night, starting with the supper hour when they would all be together. In preparation for the lesson he had Locke's *Treatise on Civil Government* balanced on one of the handles of his plough. He'd read a sentence or two as the plough jerked along, then think about what Locke said. He felt that what he read gave principles a man could act upon, sooner or later, in the new and open world of America.

But few men, farmers or not, read Locke for vision, now. Perhaps we ought to, but we don't. Something that Mr. O'Connor says about the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* seems to have equal application here, since it looks back upon the work of an innovating man who flourished three hundred years ago:

> What is valuable in it has been developed and improved by his successors and has become, to a large extent, part of an intellectual background which we accept uncritically. When our attention is drawn to those presuppositions of our ways of thinking which are derived from Locke's work, we find them obvious and even trivial. We fail to realize either that they are still important or that when they were propounded in the seventeenth century they were startling and revolutionary proposals. On the other hand, many of his mistakes seem crude and elementary and are so easy to criticize that we are tempted to wonder why he is reckoned to be a great philosopher at all. That

all this is so, is a measure of his success and influence.

Well, what shall we say about John Locke, who is pretty hard reading for an unspecialized man of today? We can say that he was a public-spirited individual who wrote in the new-born scientific tradition. He wanted to clear up certain confusions, not realizing that in doing so he might be creating others. He wanted to argue for autonomy in religion and politics, and he did this pretty well. But, having a strong sense of role in establishing science as the means of knowing, he wrote a this-is-the-truth-to-date sort of book. And to safeguard future thought from unscientific errors, he established the empirical outlook in philosophy. He said, in effect: What is the good of pretending we know a lot of things that we don't know at all? A passage by Mr. O'Connor on empiricism will be helpful here:

> In the work of Locke and his immediate successors, it (empiricism] took the form of showing that there can be no genuine objects of knowledge other than those which occur in experience or can be constructed out of what occurs in experience. Contemporary empiricists tend to concentrate rather on the problem of verification of statements. They try to show how no statement can be significant unless its components refer to objects, properties or relations occurring in experience or to constructions from such empirical material. And the word "experience" is taken to mean at least "sense experience" and is sometimes extended, as it was by Locke, to include material provided by introspection. The value of the empirical outlook can best be demonstrated, as biochemists demons rate the value of vitamins, by showing what happens in its absence. It is the only antidote of permanent value to the outbreaks of mysticism, irrationalism, confused verbalizing and pretentious profundity by which philosophers are infected from time to time. (Existentialism is an outstanding contemporary example.) And Locke can claim to be, if not the originator of the empirical outlook, at least its first important exponent.

Mr. O'Connor seems quite sure about the virtues of empiricism. He would probably have a very great quarre1 with Josiah Royce, who said that the mystic is the only pure empiricist, and he probably thanks his stars (or Locke's stars) that John Locke never had any Swedenborgian visions.

An empiricist is a man who, for the sake of clarity and the hope of limited certainty instead of none, declares experimental ground-rules concerning how to be sure we know what we know. His motives, you could say, are above reproach. He wants to sweep out delusion and seal off the sources of delusion. He is a tough-minded lover of truth and often of his fellow men. He thinks it will be easy enough to control claims concerning "what" we know if he can set up proper definitions concerning "how" we know. He doesn't ignore subjects, but he wants to limit what subjects can know about subjects and what subjects can know about objects. The test is "public truth." If you offer a truth, you have to be able to prove it by basing it on facts that other men see as you see them, and by reasoning about the facts in a way that other men accept.

One wonders how Locke explained to himself his own devotion to his fellow men, or if he ever thought about such questions. It seems clear enough that he saw so many things wrong with the world that his time and energy were taken up with redressing balances. He wanted to devise practical guarantees against the kind of "error" he saw all about. He devised them, but at a price.

Not every philosopher, fortunately, has thought that the world can be made into a happy place by establishing some kind of control over the inventory of "known facts." The purpose of the control was to disarm tyrants and to make possible a wider practice of autonomy, but the "facts" of autonomy are very hard to get at, so that the man who devises standards for admitting facts is generally wary in relation to subjective facts. Rules are supposed to be exact and we know almost nothing about human freedom except that we *need* it, or need to *feel* free. What can you do with facts like that, empirically speaking? Well, one thing you can do is wait until the need to feel free defines itself in particular, objective terms. And that is what we have been doing—waiting—until revolutions have broken out all over the world and men who have tasted freedom but little are showing how difficult it is for them to define it to themselves. They are saying that if freedom for self-expressive activity is not available then freedom for destroying what seem the barriers to this activity will

have to substitute. And if they can't get at these barriers, they attack their social symbols—what we call law and order.

It seems fair to say that Locke was inspired by the demands of his own subjectivity—a man who champions political freedom and autonomy of thought in religion and philosophy is surely responding to his own subjectivity. And in behalf of these demands he sought to adjudicate the claims of objectivity. He thought he could protect all subjects in this way—a wholly admirable intention. Yet we must find out why it has not worked in the way or rather to the extent that he hoped.

Now Locke, we may say, gave a great deal of attention to the interests of subjects, much more than he gave to subjects themselves. How do you give attention to subjects themselves?

First, you have to admit and show that it is necessary. Whether you do it on the basis that Socrates chose—by insisting that knowledge which is not also virtue is not really knowledge; or on the basis the Buddha chose, that human suffering must be explained in terms of its causes in motivation before it can be eliminated; or on the basis of the Existentialists, that being human is more important than being anything else, *no matter what*—however you explain the importance of self-knowledge, you have to stipulate it as a reality and as a necessity of the fully human life.

It is also important to take note of the fact that other peoples' knowledge about themselves is not your knowledge about yourself. And that other peoples' ignorance of themselves need not be yours. Finally, it must be recognized that the truth-to-date sort of books are of small value in respect to a subject's knowledge of himself. Truth-to-date books concern this moment's inventory of the world out there, according to the rules of the objectivists. Tomorrow the inventory will be different—a big change could even alter the definitions men make of one another as objects—or the proprietors of scientific knowledge may decide to revise the criterion of what is real and worth putting into the inventory. When the proprietors change the rules governing the identification of knowledge, they often don't bother to tell you what they have done. They think you wouldn't understand. You haven't had enough training. They let the journalists explain it to you in small, digestible doses, more or less the way they explain our foreign policy.

These explanations are not very serviceable. What you want is some rules for subjects, and these aren't in the inventory, because they can't be. They're in the Sermon on the Mount, and are found in some other places, but these timeless rules are being held in suspension, we are told, until the world is better arranged. Timeless rules don't seem to have a rational relation to the truth-to-date. There's no use talking about rules that won't work.

So, again, we have to wait. But what are we waiting for? Well, from Locke's point of view, we are waiting until the inventory of facts—objective, proved facts—is more complete. The assumption here is that the facts which apply to objects will eventually solve the problems of subjects. But, so far, the most useful facts that we have in relation to subjects speak of the feelings we have about subjects. These "feeling" facts about subjects don't seem to change much, and it is difficult to repeat them without seeming to compile a collection of platitudes and clichés. Sometimes a man will rediscover these feeling-facts in the context of fresh experience, and then they sound bright, new, and even wonderful. The books of A. H. Maslow and of some of the other humanistic psychologists have this quality. But these feeling-facts don't add up in the same way that the truth-to-date facts add up. The facts about subjectivity are felt-as-known and known-as-felt facts, and the communication of such facts, to spread them around, is accomplished under conditions not well understood. As George Sarton said in *The Life of Science:*

> Once, long ago, when Fan Ch'ih asked the meaning of virtue, the Master (Confucius) replied "Love your fellow men. Upon his asking the meaning of knowledge, the Master said: "Know your fellow men. Our modern definition of knowledge or of science—which is simply organized knowledge—is much broader, but it is possible that in the process of broadening it, the essential has been lost. For that essential: is it not the same as it was in Confucius' days, two and a half millennia ago? However abstract

> our knowledge may be, and however hard we may try to eliminate subjective elements, it is still in the last analysis intensely human. Everything which we think or do is relative to man. Science is nothing but the reflection of nature in a human mirror. We may improve the mirror indefinitely; and though we may rid it, or ourselves, of one cause of error after another, it is and will always be, for good or evil, irremediably human.

This sounds, for all its conscientiousness, a little like a scientific confession of Original Sin. What Sarton says elsewhere in this volume throws further light on his meaning—the meaning of a man who devoted his whole life to studying the drama disclosed by the "truth-to-date" works of man. In a chapter on the history of science, he wrote:

> The truths of today will perhaps be considered tomorrow, if not as complete mistakes, at least as very incomplete truths; and who knows whether the errors of yesterday will not be the approximate truths of tomorrow? Similar rehabilitations frequently occur, and the results of historical research often oblige us to admire and honor people who have been misunderstood and despised in their own time.

A melancholy fact concerned with the behavior of human beings as subjects—one which haunted Sarton all his life—is that men have a tendency to regard the scientific truth-to-date as the last word—as though they lived at the very high noon of all history. This is not a tendency which empirical science has been able to do very much about, since the thrill of scientific discovery does not easily join in holy matrimony with the caution of historical relativism.

There is, however, one encouraging development in current expressions of scientific truth-to-date. Very nearly all the eminent men of science, from physicists to sociologists, are beginning to speak of the crucial factor of the subjectivity of the scientist. And men of brilliance such as J. Bronowski are pointing out that the closed-system truths of mathematics and science are always subject to reinterpretation whenever some new discovery requires that the system be opened up and defined in a new way.

So you could say, paraphrasing Mr. O'Connor, that the importance of the truth about subjects turns out to have the same sort of "proof" as the claim made for the empirical outlook—which is demonstrated, as he says, "by showing what happens in its absence." What happens in the absence of conscious subjective awareness is that men lock themselves in a closed system which shuts out the prime reality of man. The "essential," as Sarton says, "has been lost."

It is no wonder, then, that the truth-to-date books of the present are undergoing a kind of sea-change. They are beginning to show concern for timeless matters. They flirt with paradox, pay tribute to ambiguity, and argue for the blessedness of uncertainty. What would Mr. Locke say to all this? Well, he would, we think, respond to the demands of his own subjectivity in a like manner. He would revolt against the psychology of John Locke, whether primitive or refined, and devote his not inconsiderable powers to the human needs of the present. He would redress balances once again, but he would, we think, also have a care for past mistakes, and turn away from the blandishments of closed-system certainties. Closed-system certainties have some practical uses for human bodies, but they tend to close human minds. Locke had no interest in doing this.

REVIEW
MANSIONS OF LIFE

THERE are moments when realistic, critical intelligence is humbled by the wonder of life. It packs up its scalpels, puts away its capacity for a just and terrible fidelity to man's inhumanity to man, and goes into hiding for a while. It is as though, by some small change in perspective, even the light has changed, and one begins to look out on a universe endlessly flowing toward some unknown but certainly high destination.

This can happen in various ways, but for many of us it happens most decisively when we borrow the field of vision of the naturalist. The naturalist cannot heal our woes, but he can help us to see beyond them. Scholars tell us that Plato, with his understanding of the unheroic side of human nature, felt that there were times when it was all right to tell Noble Lies to people. Doctors recognize the need of some sort of "bedside" encouragement to the sick man who thinks he has no hope of getting well. The doctor knows that such "miracles" on occasion occur. The will to live can accomplish them. So the doctor tells a little lie. Mothers and fathers also participate in such benign deceptions. They do not tell their children about the statistical expectations in life of the "average man." Their children, they hope and believe, are not "average." They will carve out a life worth living—but they need to believe it is possible. A tough and challenging doctrine, this—that the good life is a function of believing in it, and of imagination sustained by will. Even statisticians sometimes secretly cherish this doctrine.

But for the naturalist, whose mind is filled with the spectacle of the works of a cosmic imagination, there is no need for either noble lies or a bedside manner. He hardly has time for psychology. He is simply an awed recorder of what he sees.

John H. Storer's *The Web of Life* (Signet paperback) is a book which may have this sort of polarizing effect on its reader. No "illusion" is involved, only seeing what is so much neglected by us all. Even though a study of ecology is bound to tell a great deal of the harm done by man to his natural environment, the resilience of life, its extraordinary adaptability, and its persistent triumph in the face of many enemies put everything else into shadow. Again and again, you have the naïve notion that if *everybody* would read this book, people would soon learn to get along. They wouldn't, of course. But what is infectious about such books is the absorbing sense of meaning which the author generates while writing about the natural world. The point is that if more people could have this kind of full-hearted absorption in what they set out to do and understand, the conflicts which now claim their attention would diminish in importance or even become irrelevant. *Presto!* you think. It would really happen.

But wouldn't this be making something out of nothing? Well, yes and no. People make tragedies out of hallucinations and obsessions. They might also make a wonderful habitation out of the Web of Life. It's being done all the time. All that is needed is a whole-making idea:

> A root system is a really incredible thing. Many studies have been made of its extent. In one study, a plant of winter rye grass was grown for four months in a box with less than two cubic feet of earth. In that time the plant grew twenty inches high, with about 51 square feet of surface above the ground. But underground the root system had developed 378 miles of roots and an additional 6,000 miles of root hairs! This meant an average growth of three miles of roots and 50 miles of root hairs for each day of the four-month growing season.

And on this matter of making something out of nothing:

> A Flemish physician who lived in the 17th century gave an interesting picture of [the transformation of the soil] when he tried growing a willow sprout in a tub of earth. For five years nothing was added except rainwater, and the willow grew into a small tree. At the end of the five years the tree was weighed. It had gained more than 164 pounds in

> weight, while the soil in the tub had lost only two ounces. Actually the soil weight must by now have included millions of microscopic root hairs from the tree, but the figures are accurate enough to show that those 164 pounds of tree must have come from somewhere outside the soil.

Mr. Storer tells how, in the progress of time, soil becomes a self-regulating system that supports the life of both plants and animals. Viewed in the abstract, the delicate balances involved sound as difficult to achieve as some crazy utopian peace plan, yet it happens everywhere in the world. Ecologists like Mr. Storer explain how the balances work, and how they are sometimes disturbed. He also tells how what seems a vastly stable forest can succumb to rapid destruction if a few beetles in a small area get access to dead trees where no woodpecker can get at them. Soon, with all this prosperity, the beetles multiply until there are too many beetles for any number of woodpeckers to eat:

> In a few years the entire forest, covering many thousands of acres, was dead or dying. Four thousand million board feet of timber stood rotting where it died, most of it wasted; for in this rough mountain country it was not worth building roads to bring it out. There was no young, productive forest to justify the cost of these roads. . . .
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> A forest killed by beetles will usually be replaced by another forest of the same kind, for the humus under the dead trees still offers a seedbed for new growth. But as the dead trees dry out they become as inflammable as tinder, and a bolt of lightning or a carelessly dropped cigarette may change the whole future of the area. Scattered through the dead forest in Colorado there are great masses of grassland that suggest what has sometimes happened, for these grassy areas were once covered by forests. Forest fires of the past burned the trees and destroyed the humus that had protected the land and stored moisture from rain and snow.

So, various things could now happen. A slope could erode into a desert. A level area might be host to a new forest. Or, because of the loss of humus, grasses might take over. Delicate balances of nature are involved.

Mr. Storer tells how squirrels learn to stay out of traps. They take risks, but they avoid the traps. And they seem able to spread the information about the threat of the traps to other squirrels. The writer adds:

> But one more ability has been developed, apparently possessed by man alone, the newest, most powerful of all the forces of life. That is the power to deal with abstract ideas, to analyze causes and effects, to recognize the principles that underlie them, to use these concepts as building blocks for new ideas in a process of creative imagination. From this imagination there has grown that restless urge which leads man to constant fresh activity—to heights of achievement when guided by wisdom, and to depths of stupidity when wisdom is lacking.
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> This is not just one more simple forward step in the process of evolution. It is a revolutionary change in direction. For the first time in the world's history it has given to a living creature the power to escape partially from the natural laws that control all other forms of life, and it has conferred the power to modify the environments on which all life depends.

This "power to modify the environments on which all life depends"—we have much to learn about its use. The ecologists lead us to nature for instruction, but when the splendors of the natural world grow commonplace from too much familiarity, we begin to see the frustrating neutrality of natural law. Whose side is Nature on—the voracious beetle's or the side of the canopy of trees? Nature is forever busy with the construction of mansions of life, but unless you let the illusion of time take possession of you, it all seems to come to nothing in the end. Yet this "nothing," which is only the collapse of form, becomes the nourishment of new organic processes. Not an atom is lost or mourned.

The salmon leap their way up northwestern rivers, consumed by a single ambition to generate more salmon. Then, finding a place of placid water and a little sand, they lay their eggs in such a concentrated mood that they seem not to know that the very flesh is wearing from their bodies, until all that is left is a rack of bone. The egg-

bearing salmon never return to the sea. What is it all *for?*

It is a puzzle beyond all the puzzles of life and death that the intelligence able to ask this question is also the intelligence which makes an incredible mess of both living and dying. This option we have about the purpose of existence—was there ever a freedom more wastefully and cruelly used? Nature is of little assistance to us here. She teaches only by analogues, and we are tired of the equivocations of a world that knows nothing of our problems.

Yet we cannot help but be impressed by the endless symmetries of life. Some capture of the timeless has been accomplished by these mortal forms, and even while they die we see the promise of their repetition; to try to think of them as gone leaves the mind contentless and demanding of other sights. So the profusion of being comes into us again, like a rainbow tide. Time weaves its magic, and the grub, the oak, the stallion—and the dams, waterways, and skyscrapers—once more avow the worth of strenuous effort. There is a reverence for life and striving that will not pass away.

COMMENTARY
THE USES OF TRUTH

THE obligation to always speak the "truth," which seems shadowed by Plato's explanation that the Guardians of his Republic will practice "medicinal" deceptions, is not so much an issue of integrity as it is a question of motive in relation to human potentiality. What is "the truth," for example, in respect to a self-fulfilling prophecy which has not yet come true—which is only *becoming* true—but during all the moments along the way is not yet fulfilled?

Insisting on a flat, yes-or-no judgment may destroy the momentum of the fulfillment. And, quite conceivably, instead of some premature reading of discouraging facts, fulfillment is what really counts for the people involved. Another sort of example is given by Gouldner in *Enter Plato* (Basic Books):

> . . . the physicist's search for knowledge may, precisely insofar as it is successful, result in the development of weapons that threaten to destroy his own society and, with this, his science. If, however, he accepts other values as transcending the truth, such as human survival or social cohesion, then is he not under pressure, as Plato is, to conceal truths that are at variance with these other values, and perhaps even to assert things untrue because they foster such values?

The difficulty with this claim is that it can be used to suppress truths that were better known. It was the religiously *unsettling* effect of the heliocentric doctrine of Copernicus and Galileo that caused the Church to place it on the *Index Expurgatorius,* where it remained until far into the nineteenth century. It seems clear that a vital part of the truth which concerns the nature and progress of human beings is the way believing it affects them. There is a sense, therefore, in which a truth which stultifies learning and growth is not a truth, even though it may contain factual verity.

So there is enormous responsibility in deciding which truths deserve to be spread and which ought to be held back for a while. Adrenalin makes the heart beat more vigorously, but adrenalin is useful only in the hands of a physician who knows how to schedule its doses so that the heart can benefit by stimulation. Knowledge about adrenalin, then, is not real knowledge until the doctor's experience in how to give it to the sick is added to this simple fact. And so, we may think, with truth. Too much technical truth, like too much adrenalin, can kill. But not enough can also be very bad. If we had more truth about Vietnam, we would probably make peace immediately. So the value of truth depends upon when and how it is told.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE HOPES AND FEARS OF PARENTS

ONE thing that parents long for, almost without exception, is a stable environment representing unambiguous values in which their children will be able to grow to maturity—maturity being the capacity to cope with life more or less on their own. But a stable environment is precisely what present-day parents are not able to provide for their children; and when they think they have done so, many of the children do not accept it.

Even parents with strong lives of their own find themselves unable to create a "safe" matrix for the young. The young frequently do not want "safety," but an adventurous, nonconforming life, and they don't believe they can live it in terms of parental expectations and hopes. They may love and admire their parents, but they want to do their own "thing." One way or another, they will.

The inescapable truth is that vast forces of change are loose in the world. It is possible to have stability in the midst of change, but this kind of stability is sometimes hard to recognize, especially if stability is habitually thought of as lying in fixed circumstances and predictable events. The stability that is not reduced by change, but thrives upon it, involves some kind of gyroscopic principle inside people which creates an equilibrium that is independent of the outside field—a balance which enables a person, as we say, "to land on his feet." For human beings, the gyroscopic principle is often developed by a moving, dynamic purpose. People seem to get purpose from their environment, but they don't, really; they get it from themselves. So there is a limit to what people can do for each other. But there is almost no limit to what people can do to prevent others from developing an independent sense of purpose. We have only to read books by John Holt (*How Children Fail*), R. D. Laing (*The Divided Self*) and Jules Henry (*Culture Against Man*) to find this out.

Parents *love* their children. That goes without saying. But do they *trust* them? This is a terrible and frightening question. For if you don't trust them, they may rebel, and if you do trust them, they may make mistakes. So parents wonder about when to extend trust, and how much. What is easy for the parent to overlook is that the children are wondering about exactly the same thing. Trust is a two-way relationship between people. It is not a commodity you measure out. It is made of feeling that the purposes other people have are purposes that need to be respected. If a person—a child—has to "fight" for his purpose, he may lose track of whether or not it is really a *good* purpose. He begins to think it is good only because it is his. Critical examination of one another's purposes is possible only in a trusting atmosphere. Without trust, finding out what is "right" turns into an argument about "authority." Sometimes this can't be helped.

At the end of *Room to Grow* (University of Toronto Press, 1966), a perceptive book on bringing up children,

Caroll Davis has a comment that may be helpful in understanding how trust is developed:

> Finally we come back to the conviction that the child belongs to himself. His parents only have him "on trust," with the privilege of caring for him and of discharging their trust by freeing him. Parent and child participate together in this freeing process which I have called emancipation, and which I take to be one necessary foundation for mental health. By mental health I mean continuing growth, a life with zest and enthusiasm, and inner serenity. To promote this ideal requires a deeper understanding than we now have of the lively, intense maze of a child's relationship with his parents. The purpose of the behavioural definition of reciprocal trust is to make a start at untangling this ongoing process as it involves two people. The long-range goal is to discover and learn to recognize dynamic general principles which will never merely label or classify.
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> Our concern must be with the growth of individuality. My contention has been that individuality and emancipation are inseparable, and

> that one source from which they spring is a trusting parent-child relationship.

This is a good book, in the sense that any book which is closely attentive to what goes on in the minds and feelings of both parents and young, while the latter are growing up, is bound to be a good book. It is a good book in the same way that Edgar Friedenberg's *The Vanishing Adolescent,* his *Coming of Age in America,* and his *The Dignity of Youth and Other Atavisms* are good books. All such books are really on the side of the young, because they have in some measure *understood* the young. And it is simply impossible to help the young without understanding them. They don't want the kind of "help" that people try to give them without understanding them. They much prefer simply to be understood.

Early in *Room to Grow,* Mrs. Davis speaks of the child's need to "move away," yet at the same time to rely on his parents. She writes:

> The significant feature of moving away is becoming an individual, and we talk thus of self-reliance, self-effort, self-worth, self-determination. Selfhood is achieved through making choices, so making choices becomes a main method of "moving away. Yet because of a child's inexperience, many choices are beyond him and have to be made for him by his parents. They are responsible for his well-being: this is the care part of trust. Looking at decision-making in terms of trust changes the question from "How much freedom?" to "Who makes which choices?" This may seem like an artificial decision, but in actual practice it can make a big difference to the relationship between parent and child. Each one's area of operation can be clarified.

Many parents have been doing something like this with all their children. They know that it works. But in a period of social and moral change, it doesn't work as well as we'd like it to. There are times, you could say, when History takes family matters out of our hands.

The only thing to be done, in such circumstances, is to make history a family matter. This may involve trusting other peoples' children, in addition to one's own. It may involve wondering about how much trust can be put in the Family of Man. For when children "move away" before they are ready, and we *know* that they are not ready, all we can say to ourselves is that, ready or not, they are joining the Family of Man. And if the Family of Man is in pretty poor shape, this condition may confront us with a new kind of responsibility—of which, when we get the feel of it, we are likely to say that it has been too long neglected.

This may be what the children are saying, often in very immature ways, to themselves and to one another. But if they have some selfhood of their own—the selfhood that comes through making choices—they may be readier than we think for this new responsibility.

FRONTIERS

Problems Behind Problems

TOO much worldly wisdom leads to world weariness and even to a kind of despair. This is a conclusion reached from reading Hans Toch's *The Social Psychology of Social Movements* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1965; cloth, $6.50, paper, $2.25), which is nonetheless a book worth reflective study. What is social psychology? So far as we can see, it is the discipline which reports on the predictable psychological reactions of human groups to definable situations involving pressure and crisis, and their responses to other less eventful but still identifiable conditions. The enormous lesson of social psychology is concerned with the need to grasp the characteristic self-perceptions of the members of groups, if their behavior is to be understood.

Mr. Toch seems a patient and dispassionate man. He was drawn to the study of social movements for a very good reason: he found himself personally attracted by some movements, while others alarmed him. As a student, he wanted to understand the activities and energies which involved him by either attraction or repulsion.

Now a scholarly book is not a manual for action. It may serve a man who wants to act, but it is not overtly intended for this purpose. That is to say, the scholar tries to assume a technically Olympian position in order to comprehend the behavior of men in action in a wide variety of patterns. So the scholar cannot himself be in action in a particular way, although he tries to be in action in a *humanist* way, which means that he sees and judges by the light of certain broad canons concerning human good. The stance of this writer is described at the end of his book:

> Social movements, in their capacity as gadflies, are indirect agents of change. They do their part by coming into being, and by pinpointing problems through their efforts to cope with them. Sympathetic observers (such as social scientists) must decipher these efforts and must deduce their implications for action. Society has to do the rest.

To a man of action, therefore, the social scientist affords the perspective which the questionings of a Socrates might bring. The similarities of human response in social situations make possible the generalizations of social science, and a man who seeks to stir others to social action cannot conscientiously ignore those generalizations, if he comes upon them. The question is: should he seek them? Can he risk being oppressed by them? Knowledge of the predictable patterns of human behavior, we suggested at the outset, when set forth as completely as they are in this book, can lead to world weariness, which may be paralyzing in effect. But can a man really have "too much" knowledge of any sort? "Too much" is a variable quantity. It varies with the, capacity of individuals to use knowledge fruitfully. Too much for one man may be not enough for another.

Social psychology establishes rules by taking exception to them. For example, in his discussion of the Black Muslim movement, Mr. Toch cites a mass news magazine's report of a Muslim rally of 1959. The story was headed "The Black Supremacists" and spoke of the "cold black hatred" and "virulent anti-Americanism" expressed by the speakers. In this way, Mr. Toch points out, stereotypes of the Black Muslim movement are created by the "partisan white observer." But quite another view of this movement is obtained when the Muslims are seen as they see themselves. This view takes into consideration Muhammad's declaration:

> We are they who want to be treated like human beings; we are they who want freedom, justice and equality; we are they who want a moral reformation of our people as well as a spiritual reformulation; we are they who love unity among the so-called Negroes; we are they who want to do for ourselves; we are they who want a home on this earth that we can call our own, we are they who want deliverance out from the midst of our 400-year enemies, who keep us subjected to the status of servants, and subjected to every brutality and murder known to civilized man. . . .

These self-characterizations, as Mr. Toch says, "make evaluation of the movement an extremely complex task." The evaluations need to be verified, of course, but this is not so difficult as one might think. The reader of *The Negro Revolt* by Louis Lomax knows from the reports of police officials and social agency spokesmen that virtual miracles of human regeneration are performed within the matrix of the Black Muslims—transformations of character and behavior which white-managed attempts at "rehabilitation" have utterly failed to provide over more than half a century. "The social scientist's role as an observer," says Mr. Toch, "makes him sensitive to the *internal* merits of every position, irrespective of his view of its significance to others." There are endless instances of this sort of comparison. One was given a few weeks ago on this page in a quotation from a socialist writer:

> The civil rights worker, intent upon driving off the white mob, is naturally enough blind to the pathos and courage that might be present in a member of that mob. And if he is to be effective, he is, or should be, oblivious to the divided feelings that may be present in his friends and even within himself. The man of action must concentrate on what is relevant for his purpose.

This is a way of arguing that the man of action cannot really *afford* the dispassion of the social scientist. If he considers the implications of such dispassion—if he reflects on its disarming tendency and consciously chooses the militance of his partisan cause—he may some day address to Posterity a poem like Bertolt Brecht's, in which the German revolutionary said:

> I came to the cities in a time of disorder
> I came among men in a time of uprising
> And I revolted with them.
>
> So the time passed away
> Which on earth was given me.
>
> . . .
>
> You, who shall emerge from the flood
> In which we are sinking,
> Think—
> When you speak of our weaknesses
> Also of the dark time that brought them forth.
>
> . . . Alas, we
> Who wished to lay the foundation for kindness
> Could not ourselves be kind.
>
> But you, when at last it comes to pass
> That man can help his fellow man
> Do not judge us
> Too harshly.

So might speak a man of action who feels that there is blood on his hands, but believes himself constrained to shed it by an ineluctable Destiny.

We owe to the historian and to the scholar our knowledge of the fact that such hard decisions always confront the self-aware man who allies himself with social movements. These choices come again and again and in many guises. Tough-minded atheists of the eighteenth century laid the foundation for the French Revolution, but in the ranks of that great revolt were persons of sensibility who were smitten by doubt. Did the cold and barren rationalism which promised intellectual emancipation lead to other prisons? "The atheist," said Madame Roland, "is seeking for a syllogism, while I am offering up my thanksgiving."

Solidarity in the ranks exacts a price. The dogmatism of the man who is getting things done is often as formidable as the outrage of men threatened by loss of power. The scholar of social movements shows that the dogma and the anger are not the real problems, but only the *result* of problems that most of us are disinclined to face. So, while he may not be a man of action, the scholar provides insight which may in time change the direction of organized human effort from futile attacks on symptoms to a focus on the causal realities of self-perception. Social science brings a systems approach to the way we listen to the cries of the human heart.