

THE HUMAN CONDITION

LYING on a table in the MANAS office, awaiting review or editorial attention, are a dozen or more of books, one or two of them very large, which deal with the human condition. These books all have in common a sense of pain at what man has made of man, and what he has made of the world. There is also urgency in the expression of this sense of pain. Whether it be in connection with the devastating analysis of our psychological activities presented by Daniel J. Boorstin in *The Image* (Atheneum, 1962), or in the asides of Joseph Wood Krutch in *The Forgotten Peninsula* (Sloane), his new book on Baja California, the pain has the inescapably intrusive presence of an uninvited guest.

There are dozens of ways of speaking of the uneasiness of the serious writers of our time, obliging the reader to ask himself what is the most useful frame that can be put around an inquiry into the nature of the human condition. Simple "objectivity" is hardly possible. The man who supposes he can be objective toward the human condition is one who is content to describe it in a context of unexamined assumptions, and to call this practice "objectivity." He has to stand *somewhere*.

Actually, the most familiar setting for this anxiety is a general sense of interrupted "progress." Since the Enlightenment and the revolutions of the eighteenth century, representative man of Western civilization has said to himself that science, education, and political self-determination are the keys to the good society. He has argued that if we can only get *enough* science, education, and political freedom, the basic problems of mankind will have been solved in principle, and that time will take care of the rest. It is neither possible nor desirable to challenge this assumption in abstract terms. It can and has been challenged on an emotional basis by the nihilist revolution of the Nazis, by the authoritarian revolution of the Communists, and the consequences of these rejections of the doctrines of the Enlightenment are a major source of the uneasiness

of Western man, although by no means its only source.

Another approach to the problem is to ask whether the ominous failures of Western society to realize its expected progress may be due to an inadequate understanding of science, education, and political freedom. If we are to continue to work on the assumption that these are the processes which have the capacity to create the good society, then we must attempt to see where we fail in using them, if our faith in the assumption is to be restored.

An increasingly common diagnosis is that modern Western man has left out of consideration the need for religion. It is argued that the broad humanitarianism of the Enlightenment and the political ideals of the eighteenth century are insufficient to sustain human beings during the crises which technological progress has brought in its wake. This is an assertion which needs attention, although not, very likely, in the forms in which it is usually made. Precisely because the institutional religions of the West have so often stood as barriers to the expression of the humanitarian spirit, a naïve acceptance of this claim would be only a way of evading basic issues in the problems and dilemmas of the present. Since critical examination of religion is such an enormous project, first, by reason of the ultimate nature of the questions raised, and second, because of the endless extent of historical phenomena of human behavior under the influence of religion, this sort of inquiry cannot be pursued here. But it is possible, even probable, that some conclusions about religion will emerge as by-products of another kind of investigation.

We come back to the question of our use of science, education, and the political process. What have we done wrong?

The usual way of attacking this question is to take a closer look at science, education, and politics. Big arguments about these areas of endeavor have

been going for at least a generation. (Of course, such arguments are *always* going on; we mean that now the arguments are "hot" and directly related to the intense anxiety felt in the present.) Judging from the titles of books published in recent years, it would take a volume of encyclopedic dimensions simply to list the literature of the "closer looks" at science, education, and politics. Have these great debates been without fruit?

We take the view that they have not been without fruit, but that the fruit has been indecisive. No clear direction has emerged from all this work, except, perhaps, a repetition of the original assumption, that we need more science, more education, and more understanding of the political process. This is another way of saying that research, analysis, and generalization by intelligent investigators may and do produce formulations which attain the status of truisms, but that the kind of generalizations we reach do not include any instruction in how to make them work for the betterment of the human situation. The formulations, in other words, are diagnostic, not prescriptive, although they often attempt to be prescriptive.

This is the question left unanswered: How do you get people to motivate their lives with more scientific, educational, and political intelligence?

This is an old question; for modern man it is almost always an embarrassing question. There is no substantial difference between this question and the one asked twenty-four hundred years ago by Socrates: "How do you teach virtue?"

The man with a knowledge of the intellectual history of Western civilization is likely to react to this question with feelings very like those evoked by someone who asks soulfully, "How do you find God?"

It is permitted, in our society, to hold opinions on how to go about answering the question, so long as you do not express them in forthright terms. You can hint and be oblique, or even poetic, but you must not come right out and say how it is done.

What is the reason for this extreme reticence? The reason, rather the reasons, are complicated.

What is asked is a proposition about the nature of man in the terms of cause and effect.

You are asking for a definition of man, the subject, which converts him into man, the object—an object you can do something to, to move it in a certain direction believed to be good.

You are requesting to take the chair the people who claim to know that man is an object that can be made to move in specific ways for specific reasons.

This is a naked break with the tradition of human freedom, both intuitive and political. It implies a contempt for man as a moral agent. It is consistent with the dogmas of the authoritarian religions which require irrational belief and blind obedience, or with the Stimulus-and-Response theory of man's nature of the Behaviorist psychologists.

But there is also an ambivalence in the reaction to the request for this sort of definition of man's nature. After all, everyone knows that people are able to get other people to behave in certain ways. Human beings *do* behave as objects responding to stimuli of one sort or another. The social sciences have accumulated vast stores of evidence concerning the more or less predictable aspects of human behavior. If, in other words, we *want* to believe that man is free, any insistence on this view of man's nature becomes ridiculous if it is left without the admission that he is also unfree—that is, also determined in his behavior by outside forces.

Most of us feel that a definition worth making is a definition that is in some sense precise. But if you start with the intuition of man's freedom, then add the fact of his determination, you have an account of man which says he is both subject and object, and which says further that there is no precise way of separating these variables which go to make up his nature.

This is a most unattractive definition—one regarded as not worth bothering with at all by many of those whose habits of thought have been shaped by the disciplines and values of science. To render this dilemma in its mature form is to cry havoc in relation to a great deal of what is said about our

troubles with the use of science, education, and politics, so, for the most part, the dilemma remains unstated. It is as though there were a pious hope that if the dilemma is left ignored, it will go away.

Of course, all sorts of intelligent people cope with this dilemma every day of their lives without putting it into conceptual terms. We encounter this kind of coping most frequently in the modern psychotherapists, mainly because they write papers, and are becoming more and more convinced that it is silly to pretend that there is nobody "real" in there, in the patient, whom they are trying to help to achieve some kind of self-reliant existence. Bit by bit, the vocabulary of intuitive freedom is creeping into these papers, mainly because it is stupid to leave it out. The communication of therapist with therapist requires it. The vocabulary of the conditioning or manipulative processes is already well established and hardly needs much supplementing, although it is under constant revision through the return of autonomy to the individual.

There is also, however, a technical reason for scientific reluctance to use a vocabulary involving the idea of subjective reality in human beings—subjective, in this case, carrying the feeling-tone of "free," since objects have identity only through manipulative techniques. The technical reason arises from the fact that there is no place in the classical scientific tradition for subjective reality. Galileo's separation of "nature" into primary and secondary phases, and his identification of the primary qualities as "real," defined the character of the tools of exploration to be used by science, and the method proposed by Descartes reinforced the development of science according to these ground rules of investigation. If a man has a shovel, but no airplane, it is natural for him to decide that digging is a significant form of research. And as he begins to find things by digging, his enthusiasm is likely to frame whatever he does with emotional self-justification. If you say his shovel is not much good for some kinds of discovery, he is likely to regard you with disfavor. And if, as a counter-proposal, you suggest that he ought to try to catch some odors flying around in the air with a butterfly-net—for this is how he may regard your request that he live with

the dilemma of man's dual nature—he may walk out of the room, slamming the door behind him, as a well-trained logical positivist should.

This is the methodological reason why we have practically no serious attempts at an account of the nature of man in our culture. It is a reason which is also an interesting item of evidence in behalf of the Stimulus-Response psychologists, since it relies on their claims about the nature of man for the rationale of its explanation.

Our practically studied vagueness concerning the nature of man is probably responsible for a large part of the ineffectuality of the books we produce concerning how to make science, education, and politics work better for us. The object of the benefits proposed is man, but we avoid even the clarity that may be possible concerning how man may be helped. Instead, we take a partisan view of man's nature, harness the engines of progress to it, and turn on the power. It is good to be healthy, we say. Good food makes good health, we say. So we eat more than we need and make ourselves sick. It is good to have things, we say. Man needs things. So we start out to make as many things as we can. More things, we say, will make us better. We find out that we can make a whole lot of things if we make them in a certain way—by mass production techniques—and we get a big system of production going. Sometimes we degrade the product in order to make more of it "efficiently." Then we find, for example, that the good food isn't good any more, but we go on making it that way, anyway, because of the requirements of the distribution system that takes all those good things to everybody.

Religion is a good thing, we say. How do you get religion to spread? How did we spread crunchies around? By sales promotion. So we sales-promote religion. We always use the method that *works*. Whom does it work for? Man, God, General Motors? Don't fuss, we all know what is good and how to get it. It's our Way of Life to know these things. And *don't* rock the boat. You'll get people confused or upset, and then the whole thing will fall apart.

Well, nobody did rock the boat, but the whole thing, if not falling apart, is getting kind of rotten in the middle and ragged around the edges, and if it wasn't for the atheist Russians we might have to take a closer look at ourselves. Fortunately, we can weld our society into self-satisfied unity by throwing our energies into the great project of being stronger than any other nation in the world. This seems to be working; not well, but it is working; and there is only one thing we'll have to look out for: Maybe—just *maybe*—there won't be any war, nobody will drop any thermonuclear bombs, and we'll have to learn how to work out our anxieties and neuroses without any emotionally unifying influences from the World Situation. It's a frightening thought.

Are things really that bad? They seem to be. For a starter on finding out how bad some people think they are, you might read Erich Kahler's *The Tower and the Abyss*, then Lewis Herber's new volume (Knopf), *Our Synthetic Environment*, then *Identity and Anxiety*, on "Survival of the Person in the Mass Society," edited by Stein, Vidich, and White (Glencoe Free Press), and Boorstin's *The Image*. We could spend ten issues of MANAS just quoting from these books, and we probably will, but it would be better if people read the originals. It is of some importance to find out how bad things are. Usually, only the very sick are willing to think long thoughts on how to get well, and the cure for whatever is wrong with modern man is going to take some very long thoughts.

Can something further be said about the nature of man? Possibly, but knowledge of the nature of man is like a muscle in the body: You don't talk about it, you develop it. Talking about it would require a critical history of philosophy and religion, and for the result to be more than talk, what is found out would have to be acted upon in order for knowledge to develop. Knowledge of the nature of man is in some sense a cultural possession or possibility. The significant portion of knowledge of the nature of man is subjective, and subjective understanding is communicated by clues to intuitive recognition, not by precise definitions. If the culture lacks in a kind of revolving fund of commonly

understood intuitive symbols for this kind of knowledge, the talk is bankrupt from the start.

How is cultural wealth of this sort accumulated? By the action and intellectual and moral intercourse of individuals committed to the values which it represents. What is wanted is an accumulation of insights into the nature of man. Men can begin to look for this sort of insight from a feeling of being famished as human beings; or they can be driven to look for it by the intolerable pressure of an extreme historical situation. The emergence of Existential thought in Europe, apparently as a consequence of the desperation of humane European individuals, is an illustration of the latter process. We do not say that Existentialist thought has said anything "conclusive" about the nature of man, but that it has said something initial, or *initiatory*, concerning what men must do in order to remain human. The initial truth of Existentialism is that a man is a man only so long as he is determined to decide for himself what he will do or be, *next*. He makes the terms of this decision out of himself.

This is not political philosophy, but it will have consequences for political philosophy if and when there are enough individuals to create a cultural temper embodying this attitude toward self and man. It also has consequences for science and education.

The development of these consequences will take time. The possibility that they will not develop must be allowed. But this is only another way of saying that being human is an act of faith. Finding out all we can about the nature of man has no more important justification than to provide what rational support is possible for this act of faith.

REVIEW

"THE SHARK AND THE SARDINES"

YOU are not apt to find the book of this title at your friendly neighborhood bookstore—especially, we would guess, if you live in a solid Americanism community. Written by a former president of Guatemala, Juan José Arévalo, it is published in English translation by the irrepressible Lyle Stuart (1961). These 250 pages are a documented diatribe against United States imperialism in Latin American countries. Arévalo's irony is constant and some bitterness may also be detected, but the revelations of the volume make adequate excuse. On behalf of the author, it must be said that he does not dwell upon his own removal from the Guatemalan government; his task is to expose the chauvinism practiced by the United States State Department; his hope, that a humane U.S. policy in Latin America will be based upon the realization that the growing countries to the South all need freedom from the web of dollar bondage.

This book is being read in Latin America—by millions. Caricatures of "Uncle Sam" often adopt the fad of making him look like a shark, and some school books, it is reported, give similar vent to cartoon spleen.

What Mr. Arévalo endeavors to prove is that every loan and every treaty concluded with the United States leaves the South American nations at the mercy of American contrivance. The treaty that assumes to protect, he shows, often enslaves, and the loan that comes in the guise of succor is apt to impoverish instead of enrich. Arévalo is also convinced that United States foreign policy is guided by the almost incalculable influence of huge corporations. To support this argument the author has dug up a good deal of pithy material, a striking example of which is a "confession" from the pen of Brigadier General Smedley F. Butler:

I spent thirty-three years [in the Marines] . . . most of my time being a high-class muscle man for

Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism. . . .

I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912, I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914, I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City (Bank) boys to collect revenue in. I helped in the rape of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. . . .

Arévalo's historical account begins on December 2, 1902, when President Theodore Roosevelt commented that "the Congress has wisely provided that we shall build at once an Isthmian Canal, if possible, through Panama." And so the "manifest destiny" of the United States in Latin America began to unfold. Senor Arévalo lets himself go in the passages concerning the Panama Canal:

The Congress of the United States has provided . . . Has resolved matters that affect territories and waters beyond what is the Republic of the United States! Has resolved, has taken resolutions about, what is not theirs and cannot be theirs by any right except the right that great beasts attribute to themselves! The Congress of the United States resolves to construct "if it is possible" through the territory of Colombia. Panama is not at that time a free country. Panama is not even a zoologic entity called a sardine. Panama is an integral part of the Colombian nation. Why does the United States resolve something about Colombian territory despite Colombia's refusal?

Roosevelt's words in 1902 are spoken with the vigor and the volume of a frightful voice: the bray of a bull, terrible announcement to the Central and South American cows. With those words, the United States proclaims itself to be Master of the Continent, with authority to build a canal over here over there, a little higher up, a little lower down, without even bothering about the universal procedure of asking permission from the governments of the little Republics.

Those words of that spokesman for the Empire were electric in their effect: the province of Panama, aspiring to become a sardine, became a sardine. In bringing this about, advantage was taken of the truly patriotic Panamanian movements that were striving

for independence. Striving for independence, not for a business deal.

Panama was made independent from Colombia. She was immediately divided into two parts and was sentenced to carry in her breast that imperial dagger that is the Yankee zone, with its own laws, its own ever-present military personnel, its hidden cannons, its deafening aviation and its state of nerves at the imaginary dangers of foreign attacks. As a result of all this, the young little Republic was converted into a psychologic morass. . . .

These developments were simply the outward manifestation of an imperialist attitude, as Arévalo sees it. In 1881 President Rutherford Hayes had already taken for granted the eventual dredging of a canal through foreign soil in United States interests, remarking that "the Canal will be an ocean route between our Atlantic and Pacific coasts and will, in effect, constitute a part of the shoreline of the United States." Arévalo brings us up to date:

Since 1914 that shoreline has surrounded, in Yankee territory and waters, the five Republics of Central America, plus Mexico, Cuba, Haiti and Santo Domingo. The fate of the ten nations was resolved according to the standards of businessmen and with the resources of piracy. Years later, this shoreline of the United States, which drops down to Panama, will no longer be enough to accommodate the monstrous Shark and make him comfortable. Years later, they will feel the urgency of extending the belt of gold, copper, tin and petroleum (or whatever the interest of gold, copper, tin and petroleum); then, this shoreline from one coast to the other of the United States will have to pass around the Straits of Magellan. And why not around the very South Pole?

Arévalo makes little appeal to the Giant of the North, beyond a concluding sentence which reads: "Don't you, Statue of Liberty, give me the story that you, too, need the blood of foreign children or that you demand all the wealth on earth to be able to continue hypocritically 'representing' the ideals dearest to the hearts of men!" His appeal is rather to a new generation of South Americans who seem increasingly determined to break the shackles, to free themselves from fear of the shark, to alleviate the conditions of illiteracy, graft and continual

"revolution"—conditions which Arévalo blames in part upon past and present policies of the United States. Because the book will make the Communists everywhere jump with glee and no doubt win allegiance for their own varieties of imperialist penetration, it will be as roundly denounced as C. Wright Mill's *Listen, Yankee*. While MANAS writers have little interest in dwelling on the worst aspects of any country's national history, there is a great lesson to be learned from the discovery that what we have done, and what the Soviet empire is currently doing with slightly altered techniques, makes our world a world of dangerously partisan motivations.

COMMENTARY THE NATURE OF MAN

THE familiar alternatives in any conventional discussion of war and peace are War and the Conference Table. Men are rational, we say, and ought to be able to resolve their differences by reasonable discussion.

The Conference Table method of avoiding war may work in some measure, but most people are agreed that it doesn't work well enough. The trouble, we say, is that *we* are willing to be rational, but *they* are not. So we prepare for war.

The question seldom considered is *why* "they" are not rational, or not rational enough to make peace with us. (Someone determined to be impartial may propose that we, too, are lacking in rationality, and this may be so, but that question we set aside for subsequent discussion.) The problem of making peace, then, becomes the problem of why the peoples of some nations are so persistently unresponsive to reason as to drive us into war.

When a situation of this sort arises between individuals, we call it a problem of therapy and of education. A persistently irrational individual is held to be a sick and immature individual. We used to put such people in prison and in asylums, but now we are beginning to put them in therapy; and, if they are young, in schools which are staffed by patient human beings. The teachers and the therapists study the case histories of their subjects and try to find out *why* they behave as they do; why they are unresponsive to "normal," or rational appeals.

Can this method be used to contribute to the conditions of a peaceful world?

Of course, you can't isolate a belligerent nation in an educational or a therapeutic situation. You can't *control* the patient. But does the therapist really "control" the patient? By what means does he sometimes succeed in opening doors to the hidden wellness in the one who is

sick? How does he invite participation in rational activity?

By moralizing? By condemnation? By force? By aggressive criticism, hostility, and threats of punishment?

None of these means works for the therapist or the educator. Such activities are completely alien to the processes of healing and teaching.

It would be foolish to try to explain the alchemy of healing and teaching in a few words, but one thing is certain: both therapist and teacher make an honest attempt to illustrate in themselves the behavior of people who are trying to get well and to learn. Example is not the only means of teaching and healing, but it is certainly important, often decisive, and probably indispensable.

If this is a rule for therapists and educators, it is a rule that has been made out of functional insights into the nature of man. It is a rule which declares that we know something about how men are helped to be well, rational, and—peaceful. But it is not a rule that is much observed by the individuals who play the major roles in official peace-making, these days.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

MUSIC THERAPY PROJECT

A BOOKLET of this title, published by the Foundation for Advancement of Arts and Letters, 1962, describes an experiment concerned with how music may be used as therapy for retarded children. Paul Nordoff, the composer who initiated the project, began work at Sunfield Children's Home in Worcestershire, England, in September, 1959. This home cares for some seventy-five severely retarded children, many of them mongoloids, providing a variety of pathological conditions for the experiment. His collaborator was Mr. Clive Robbins, a teacher at Sunfield. Their first project was in the area of group therapy. Through "working games" composed for the children (the first one based on Grimm's *Pif-Paf-Poltrie*), they discovered that "the children's activities were best supported by music in which the harmonic element was as active and stimulating as the tempo and rhythm." They also found that dissonant harmonies had a liberating effect on the children, enabling them to march with more vigor and helping them to learn and remember words and melodies.

Next came a play, given in four episodes by the staff on the four Sundays in Advent. In this play, based on *The Elves and the Cobbler* from Grimm, Dr. Nordoff endeavored "to keep the action, the songs and the dialogue within the range of the children's understanding . . . and to do this without losing any of the charm of the story." He continues:

The play contained eight songs, all related to some definite mood or action. The singing of six of these, completely or in part by the children in the audience drew them into the play.

Week by week, as the children followed the developing plot with more comprehension and sang the songs with ever more feeling for their content, I augmented both these experiences by adding other instruments to the piano. First a violin and cello were added, then a drum, and finally a flute and

glockenspiel. Thus the growing dramatic experiences were intensified by an ever richer musical experience. These methods of production enabled the children to enter into a vivid experiencing of the story. The songs and all that they were associated with became part of their lives; for months afterward the children were acting and singing them.

While continuing to compose "play songs" for group therapy, Dr. Nordoff began to work individually with some of the more disturbed children. One child was a rigid, epileptic for whom the doctor "had prescribed a specific movement." Music was composed to go with the movement, and, "at the end of seven months, having worked thrice weekly, the boy was able to perform this exercise successfully." As a result, all the child's movements became freer and his tensions relaxed so that he was able to mingle with other children. It was found that another child, seriously psychotic, responded to certain musical scales. Dr. Nordoff composed music of various styles and rhythms in the keys to which the boy "responded so positively that the improvement in his condition over the working period was definite." Still another boy was helped by using a pair of sticks or brushes on a drum while Dr. Nordoff improvised on the piano. He says of this work:

It was very interesting to me that through the medium of a drum, this boy expressed inner qualities that would otherwise have remained undetected, and that what would appear meaningless and arbitrary to an untrained ear, a professionally trained musician could perceive to be a subtle compound of rhythms.

Because the experiment was instituted as *therapy* for retarded children, it was necessary to evaluate the results obtained. Dr. Nordoff observes:

I did not have to explore very far to discover that each one reacted differently to music. Many showed their individuality in the relationship they had to a particular element of music. One child would be engaged in assimilating the element of structure in music, another lived in the melodic element, while yet another found security in the basic beat. . . .

The children were making musical "self-portraits" in the way they were reacting to music thus

improvised. Each was different and it was becoming clear to me that there must be some connection between the individual's pathology and/or personality and the musical self-portrait he or she revealed; that their reaction to music could be descriptive of their psychological condition.

From June, 1960, to December, 1961, Dr. Nordoff and Mr. Robbins toured throughout Great Britain and Europe, working for short demonstration periods at twenty-six schools and institutes. During their work at the Camphill schools in Scotland they discovered:

Dynamic, dissonant music does not necessarily excite or disturb psychotic children. Children who were normally distractable, hyperactive and difficult to manage, sat quietly in the sessions listening to each others' work on the drum. I expressed the turbulence of the child's inner life in the music I improvised, and it was often wild and dissonant. This appeared to be a more significant experience for the children than quiet, soothing music which might be considered more suitable. I had the feeling that music therapy in this situation would not consist in using music as a tranquilizer. The music therapist would have to take hold of the child's disordered life of impulse as it expressed itself rhythmically and work with this musically. . . . Only by working with the disorder that lies behind behavior can one hope to achieve any fundamental therapy.

An account of individual work with a severely psychotic nine-year-old mongol boy is enlightening:

I sat the boy at the treble end of the keyboard to see how he would react to what I played. The result was very surprising. As he tapped the keyboard, this severely retarded boy with very limited intellectual possibilities and very little speech revealed that he was living in a world of complex rhythmic impulse. In response to what I played, he would play rhythmic patterns and intricate syncopations. His "music" was very free, playful and completely unpredictable, yet running through it was a fragmented rhythmic structure that was related to my improvisation.

I began to work with the boy rhythmically, using a professional side drum with an attached cymbal. The boy used a pair of sticks or brushes to beat rhythmic reaction to what I played. Sometimes, he would follow me, at other times, I would follow him, adapting my improvisation to his beating. This was

exuberant and creative. He would change tempi and dynamics, using the cymbal in a way one could not foresee and yet that was often "right" and musical in effect, and sometimes very beautiful.

Stated philosophically, he seemed to be at that stage of inner chaos where creative freedom merges into incomprehensibility and incoherence. The drum beating was not a consciously self-directed activity for this boy. His whole being was utterly absorbed in the beating as he found rhythmic expression for the impulses that lived within him. . . . Gradually his beating became more ordered and he began to try to beat the melodic rhythms of songs he knew. This was hard work for him. (It takes control to beat the rhythm of a melody that you have always sung by imitation.)

Towards the end of the work, one of the teachers noticed a change in the boy. In his daily life he seemed generally more awake and purposeful. This happened over a period of six weeks, during which the boy had had fifteen music sessions.

The possibilities of music therapy are suggested by a remark made by the directors of one of the schools visited: "In most of our activity we surround the child and work from the periphery. In your music you are able to take hold of the ego and bring it directly into activity within the impaired or disturbed emotional life."

This brochure may be had upon request from the Foundation for Advancement of Arts and Letters, 65 South Greenbush Road, West Nyack, N.Y.

FRONTIERS

Gandhi's View of Man and History

II—ORIGINAL GOODNESS AND HUMAN PERFECTIBILITY

GANDHI'S greater concern for the rejection of a pessimistic view than the dogmatic assertion of an optimistic view of human nature can be better understood in the light of Kant's essay "On the Radical Evil in Human Nature." Kant distinguishes between frailty, the impurity, and the depravity of human nature. To Gandhi as to Kant, frailty is an inevitable result of the weakness of the will, which could in principle be remedied; impurity is the unfortunate consequence of the fact that even our purest motives are not wholly untainted by considerations other than the highest; while depravity points to the corruption rather than the inherent evil of the human heart.

Kant contended that every bad action, when we inquire into its rational origin, must be viewed as if the man had fallen into it directly from a state of innocence through a free exercise of his elective will. Man may fall into evil by seduction, yet the original constitution is adapted to good and it could not be corrupted by any other than man himself, if he is to be held to be accountable for his corruption. We must presuppose that a germ of good has remained in its complete purity, indestructible and incorruptible, and in this way the propensity to evil is compatible with a high view of human nature and a belief in the original capacity for good.

The moral culture of man must begin not with improvement of morals, but with a transformation of the mind and the training of the will. This is why Gandhi insisted:

Man and his deed are two distinct things. Whereas a good deed should call forth approbation and a wicked deed disapprobation, the doer of the deed, whether good or wicked, always deserves respect or pity as the case may be.⁴⁶

When Mencius said that human nature is good he was in some degree speaking

tautologically, because in the last analysis he seems to have meant by the "good" that which is in harmony with human nature. Gandhi gets round this difficulty by bringing God into the picture, God taken as equivalent to the oneness of all life. Man is good because he is divine, *i.e.*, capable of realizing his kinship with the whole of creation and especially the rest of humanity. For Gandhi, as for the Confucians, an evil man is one who does not change, not one who cannot be changed. To Mencius a man's nature is naturally good just as water flows naturally downward; this is attested by the fact that man is teachable. The consequence of this doctrine of original goodness is that humanity cannot be divided into good and bad; there are only evil acts, no wholly evil men. Gandhi, however, felt that it was more important at times to combat the doctrine of original sin than to argue for the doctrine of original goodness.

At times Gandhi confined himself to pleading for an open rather than a closed and fixed view of human nature and of human possibilities. Human life is a series of compromises, but although it is not always easy to achieve in practice what one holds to be true in theory,⁴⁷ it is both unwise and unjustifiable to lower the theoretical ideal of human development.

Let us be sure of our ideal. We shall ever fail to realize it, but shall never cease to strive for it.⁴⁸

The ideal will cease to be one if it becomes possible to realize it. The pleasure lies in making the effort, not in its fulfilment.⁴⁹ Yet, "ideals must work in practice, otherwise they are not potent."⁵⁰

When a man works for an ideal, he becomes irresistible.⁵¹ We must believe, if we are to be truly human, that it is more natural to be good than evil, "though apparently descent is easier than ascent."⁵² "Who can predict the future?", he asked.⁵³

The virtue of an ideal lies in its boundlessness. But although religious ideals must thus from their very nature remain unattainable by imperfect human beings, although by virtue of

their boundlessness they may seem ever to recede further away from us, the nearer we go to them, still they are closer to us than our very hands and feet because we are more certain of their reality and truth than even our own physical being.

This faith in one's ideals alone constitutes true life, in fact it *is* man's all in all.⁵⁴

Man does not become divine when he personifies the innocence of faith in himself. *Only then does he become truly man.* In our present state, no doubt we are partly men and partly beasts, but in our ignorance and even arrogance we say that we truly fulfill the purpose of our species when we behave like beasts.⁵⁵ It is not easy to efface the old *samskaras* or acquired tendencies of thought and character,⁵⁶ but we must reject "the theory of permanent inelasticity of human nature."⁵⁷ In the last analysis, Gandhi supported his view by his belief, so essential to the Buddha, that "nothing in this world is static, everything is kinetic. If there is no progression, there is inevitable retrogression."⁵⁸ Man has the supreme knack of deceiving himself,⁵⁹ and of failing to see that human nature is such that man must either soar or sink.⁶⁰ We are the makers of our own destiny. We can mend or mar the present and on that will depend the future.⁶¹

Thus Gandhi challenged all lukewarm theories of human nature that stress the possibility and the necessity of achieving an equilibrium or a balance between good and evil tendencies, just as he challenged all lukewarm theories of social equilibrium based upon a balance between the fears and the dreams, the bestial instincts and the moral aspirations of men. To stress the good or the evil is to become inevitably involved in a cumulative process of increasing good or of increasing evil; there can be no stability or certainty or reliability in any intermediate position. If no man is irretrievably evil, it is because it is in principle never too late to reverse gear or to alter one's course.

In support of Gandhi's view of human nature, it could be argued, as the philosophers of the

Enlightenment were apt to do, that man's naturally good (or rational) urges are vitiated not so much by irrational urges, instincts and passions as by the false and even dangerous teaching about man's inherently evil nature: vested interests and tyrannical ambitions find in that theory a justification for their policies of oppression, exploitation and enslavement.

To insist on the inherent evil of human nature only serves the evil purpose of cunning and greedy power-seekers. It might be argued that it is odd to contend that anyone should want to teach what is false and corrupting in a world where men are naturally good. The doctrine of human goodness does not, however, imply that all men are good or that there are no selfish and evil tendencies in human nature. The very notion of original goodness would have no meaning if it wholly excluded the existence of any evil. In a sense, the advocates of the doctrine of original goodness are suggesting that in existing societies human nature has been prevented from retaining its natural virtue or from coming into its own. This could, however, be pushed too far, as Marx did in holding that we could only know what human nature is really like in the classless society of the future. In this case the doctrine of human goodness is emptied of any immediate significance, and it is not surprising that Marx neither held to such a doctrine nor explicitly to its opposite. The thinkers of the Enlightenment believed in the inherent goodness of man and at the same time thought that ignorance and error give birth to passions which restrict the free flow of the finer tendencies in human nature.

Alternatively, it is possible to take a less dramatic view and to argue that a river cannot rise above its source, that it is better to believe in the original goodness than in the original evil of human nature, if we wish to transform men and to change society, and to say that an excessive emphasis on the weakness of the flesh could render inert and inoperative the inherent willingness of the spirit. A man's image of himself

can, and in fact does, affect him, and therefore even if it is not based on a provable theory, it can, within limits hard to define, produce its own verification. However, in the end it must be admitted that it could be unsatisfying though not self-contradictory to believe in human reason or human goodness without also believing in the rationality and progressive tendency of the universe or of human society if not of the entire course of human history. This is why, although Gandhi appeared at times to be pleading for an open view of human nature, he was really unable to support his doctrine of original goodness or his castigation of original sin without advancing also a theory of human perfectibility, divine grace, and the upward tendency of human evolution. *Dharma* or morality cannot be ultimately divorced from cosmic order. It is not surprising that de Maistre, for instance, who at times refused to admit of there being a human nature as such (although he was prepared to believe in the dubious category of national character), also repudiated the basic assumption of the Enlightenment, the rationality of the universe.

Man, according to Gandhi, will ever remain imperfect but "it will always be his part to try to be perfect."⁶² There is nothing at a standstill in nature; only God or the ultimate, transcendental Reality, could be motionless, perfect and beyond evolution. Man is characteristically a progressive being, and yet through mental inertia is unable to see that the universally valid rules of conduct are fundamentally simple and easy to carry out.⁶³ Man believes and lives⁶⁴ and no one dare be dogmatic about the capacity of human nature, in any particular instance, for degradation or exaltation.⁶⁵ No human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption, no human being is so perfect as to warrant his destroying him whom he wrongly considers to be wholly evil.⁶⁶ "We must believe that every man can think for himself."⁶⁷ The rationality of human nature is the pre-condition of its theoretical perfectibility. Every individual must be regarded as an end and none as a means. We must assume that every man can

understand his own powers by the head and has the heart to realize his faith in himself in practice. Being necessarily limited by the bonds of the flesh, we can attain perfection only after the dissolution of the body.⁶⁸ Besides, where would be room for that constant striving, that ceaseless quest after the ideal that is the basis of all spiritual progress, if mortals could reach the perfect state while still in the body.⁶⁹

By perfectibility on earth therefore is meant the possibility of growing towards total awareness of our nature, which is fundamentally identical with that of everything that lives.

Gandhi's belief in perfectibility is, in the final analysis, dependent upon his belief in rebirth. There is, of course, no necessary logical connection between the two doctrines. The species could be perfectible even if there were no rebirth, as it is easier to hold to a notion of collective perfectibility than to believe that a man is perfectible in a single lifetime. Gandhi was concerned with individual, not collective, perfectibility. For him time was no consideration. If it takes time then it is but a speck in "the complete time cycle."⁷⁰ "I believe in rebirth as much as I believe in the existence of my present body. I therefore know that even a little effort is not wasted."⁷¹ Further,

if for mastering the physical sciences you have to devote a whole lifetime, how many lifetimes may be needed for mastering the greatest spiritual force (non-violence) that mankind has known? For if this is the only permanent thing in life, if this is the only thing that counts, then whatever effort you bestow on mastering it is well spent.⁷²

Thus Gandhi's faith in human perfectibility is not merely a moral conviction but is ultimately based upon metaphysical beliefs that all men are not ready to accept. But he was not so naïve as to think that men could be transformed overnight.

All men are imperfect, and when imperfection is observed in someone in a larger measure than in others, people are apt to blame him. But that is not fair. Man can change his temperament, can control it, but cannot eradicate it. God has not given him so

much liberty. If the leopard can change his spots, then only can man modify the peculiarities of his spiritual constitution.⁷³

In fact, we must not only recognize that man is born to make mistakes but we should magnify our own errors so as to be deterred from falling into them again.⁷⁴ We must be conscious of the fallibility of human nature and this must make us humble, without destroying our confident conviction in the truth as we see it.⁷⁵

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(To Be Continued)

NOTES

⁴⁶ *Autobiography*, p. 276

⁴⁷ D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, volume 4, p. 110-11 (August 1936).

⁴⁸ *Speeches and Writings*, p. 363, 4th edition (September, 1917).

⁴⁹ *Harijan*, July, 1937.

⁵⁰ *Young India*, January, 1921.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, July, 1920.

⁵² *Harijan*, March, 1939.

⁵³ D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, volume 7, p. 475.

⁵⁴ *Harijan*, December, 1927.

⁵⁵ *Young India*, March, 1922.

⁵⁶ *Harijan*, October, 1934.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, June, 1942.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, August, 1940.

⁵⁹ Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi - the Last Phase*, volume 2, p. 303.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, volume 4, p. 13.

⁶³ *Diary of Mahadev Desai*, p. 124 (October, 1924).

⁶⁴ D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, volume 4, p. 296 (April, 1938).

⁶⁵ *Harijan*, April, 1940.

⁶⁶ *Young India*, March, 1933.

⁶⁷ *Harijan*, April, 1937.

⁶⁸ D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, volume 5, p. 392-3 (August, 1940).

⁶⁹ *Young India*, volume 3, p. 940.

⁷⁰ *Harijan*, June, 1935.

⁷¹ *Young India*.

⁷² *Harijan*, March, 1936.

⁷³ *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. 212.

⁷⁴ D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, volume 7, p. 103 (April, 1946).

⁷⁵ *Young India*, September, 1925.