

FROM THE BEGINNING

THE experience of "identity crisis" is usually associated with adolescence, and there is plenty of reason for this, but no reason to assume that the longing for self-identification stops there, or that it ought to. There is a sense in which self-imposed barriers to understanding are erected whenever some crucial phase of human life is partially "objectivized"—when, that is, our awareness of it becomes cognitive. For then we may either look for or accept labels for the experience, mistaking the title for knowledge of what it stands for. This certainly applies to the idea of "identity-crisis." A crisis, we think, is something to get out of, to be settled, to be resolved. But what if the matter of "who one is" ought never to have final definition? Perhaps this is the aspect of youth—or adolescence—which ought to go on forever! Some years ago, Kenneth Keniston defined "youth" as the period in a person's life when he had not yet decided upon his relationship to society, the time during which he did not make up his mind how he would fit in, what part he would play, what duties and obligations he would assume. The youth still wonders what his role should be—but whatever he decides, there still remains the question of identity. Role does not exhaust identity. Role is only a transient expression, depending on time and place, of identity.

Poets, unable to accept the psychological impositions of time and place, often reveal the frailty of ideas of identity having this source. In 1959 MANAS reviewed a work on modern Peruvian poetry by a Latin American scholar, Luis Monguio, which showed that after World War I the young poets of Peru struggled to free themselves of their European origins. First they celebrated the idea of being born in America, but of European parentage. Finding this artificial, they sought roots in the Indians. But the Indians

were indifferent to the poets. There remained the *mestizo*—the new man of mixed blood, Indian and Spanish. "The Mestizo," they declared, "is the soul that gives life to America." Later the theme changed again, becoming "social." Still other conceptions of self came later.

Surely, in these changes, there was a continuation of the identity crisis. Yet one can hardly imagine a permanent solution to the mystery of identity, save in a rare intuitive acceptance of any and all circumstances as but the outer garb of true beinghood.

In his *Preface to Plato*, Eric Havelock makes it clear that the limitation of the idea of identity to local cultural conceptions and ideals accounted in large part for Plato's antagonism toward the mimetic poets. Havelock shows that Homer's *Iliad* was not only a poetic invention but also the metrical textbook of an oral civilization, embodying full instructions as to the proper behavior and responses of Greeks. Thus the poets of that age were the tribal encyclopedia, the musical definers of Greek *identity*. Socrates maintained that a man ought not to take his identity ready-made from anyone, but should discover it for himself.

We, who only read books, and seldom hear epics recited, are largely ignorant of the gripping influence of culture-shaping oral literature of the sort Plato regarded as a bondage of the mind. The modern student's ancient Greek counterpart—

[Havelock says] had to mobilize the psychic resources necessary to memorise Homer and the poets, or enough of them to achieve the necessary educational effect. To identify with the performance as an actor does with his lines was the only way it could be done. You threw yourself into the situation of Achilles, you identified with his grief or his anger. You yourself became Achilles and so did the reciter to

whom you listened. Thirty years later you could automatically quote what Achilles had said or what the poet had said about him. Such enormous powers of poetic memorisation could be purchased only at the cost of total loss of objectivity. Plato's target was indeed an educational procedure and a whole way of life.

This then is the master clue to Plato's choice of the word *mimesis* to describe the poetic experience. It focuses initially not on the artist's creative act but on his power to make his audience identify almost pathologically and certainly sympathetically with the content of what he is saying.

Over against the indoctrination of *mimesis* Plato set the evocative process he demonstrated in the *Meno*, arousing in the servant boy the latent soul memories of truth which had belonged to the boy in another embodiment. The objective of Socrates was self-education, and by calling himself a midwife of ideas he emphasized his conception of the potentialities of each one for teaching himself. Socrates was but *provocateur*.

Thus the self becomes a primordial, independent identity with Socrates, in the history of Western thought. And since his time the self not only feels and acts independently, but is also capable of self-knowledge. Self-study becomes a philosophical end, with self-knowledge as the goal.

But whatever becomes open to cognition is also made the subject of misconception, simplification, and thought-arresting definition. This is the almost unbearable burden of intellectuality, since it is the source of endless delusion, making men long for the primitive simplicity of purely instinctive action. The dual potentialities of the mind, almost certainly, are the origin of the myth of Pandora's box.

Even so, in our more human, aspiring moments, we would not be without our minds, our boxes of conceptions and misconceptions, for just as in Pandora's box there was at the bottom the spirit of hope, so, there is the undoubted capacity of the mind to correct its misconceptions, the wonderful power to think about thinking itself.

This seems a promise that beyond the bounds of conceptuality there is a kind of knowledge or realization that comprehends all relativities and finite limitations and, paradoxically, knows without definition.

The final paradox has analogies which can be explored. We have this power of definition, which depends upon becoming conscious of the elements in our experience that we have not previously understood—did not even know were there. And we are able to note that in every element of importance, there is an incommensurable aspect, something that cannot be "taped" or measured. For example, "mind" itself has for us an incommensurable factor. We can make meaningful statements about the mind, but we cannot deal with it in the same way that we deal with quantities of matter or its movements. The solution of ignoring its presence—as do, say, the Behaviorists who follow John B. Watson, by refusing to use the term "consciousness"—is plainly an extreme mutilation of the subjective facts of life. What then can we do, as "empirical" scientists? Well, the least we can do is to acknowledge our ignorance, so that the *possibilities* represented by the presence of mind are not shut out.

A good illustration of this is found in the observation of a biochemist, Albert P. Mathews, on the unknown processes of the chemistry of cells. In his contribution to *General Cytology* (E. V. Cowdry, University of Chicago Press, 1924), after detailing the effects of the discovery of the electronic constitution of matter on biological science, he added:

But even when we have a reasonably clear picture of these physical things, we cannot make a complete explanation of the chemistry of the cell until we know another and equally important factor which is at present wholly neglected by the chemist and the physicist, namely, the psychic element which is the most characteristic, indeed, one might say, the characteristic thing in living organisms. . . . We cannot understand chemistry, therefore, and certainly not biochemistry, the chemistry of cells, until the

relation between material and psychic things is worked out. . . .

Today in the description of the universe in time and space, a description which enables us to express all physical things in terms, or dimensions, of space and time, the very dimensions of psychism are omitted, because we do not know them. . . . We must leave out, because of our ignorance, the psychic side of chemical reactions. Our equations, therefore, will be as incomplete as if energy were omitted. The transformation of matter and energy alone can be considered, . . . which becomes hence like Hamlet with Hamlet left out. Let us not blind ourselves to this fact.

Need we add, here, that if all men of science had been as perceptive in their contributions to education, there might have been no occasion for Lewis Mumford to write his *Myth of the Machine* or Roszak the critical portion of *Where the Wasteland Ends*.

Even so, the cognitive side of our nature remains unsatisfied by admissions of ignorance. We still want to know, and while we are waiting for some grand breakthrough in—what shall we call it?—"psychic science," we might look around for evidence of another kind of knowing, one that is perhaps less susceptible to error or delusion. Doubtless we have been somewhat spoiled by the beautiful exactitudes of finite measurement which the physical sciences use to work their wonderful manipulations, and suppose that *all* knowledge must qualify in the same way. At the same time, we are appalled by the strange fruits of these manipulations, in death and pollution, and this may account in part for the great switch in the interest of the young to the other sciences—particularly to the psychological and social sciences—and also for the changes of approach now quite visible in some of the branches of psychology. For introspection is another way of knowing, discounted as it may have been by psychologists of fifty years ago. Further, there is the possibility that after the development of the human sciences along these lines for a generation or two, there might be a return to physics and chemistry by young men and women who would

be able to look at these areas of research with new eyes.

Meanwhile, it is pertinent to consider what A. H. Maslow had to say about the cognitive aspect of the peak experience. In the discussion reported in the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (No. 2, 1972), he speaks of the fact that the peak experience is sometimes purely a matter of feeling—hardly cognitive at all. However, the "better" the people or subjects, the more cognitive the experience becomes. He went on to say that as he grew older his peak experiences tended to flatten out into what could be called a steady state—he named it the "plateau experience." As he described it:

A sort of precipitation occurred of what might be called the sedimentation or the fallout from illuminations, insights, and other life experiences that were very important—tragic experiences included. The result has been a kind of unitive consciousness which has certain advantages and certain disadvantages over the peak experiences. I can define this unitive consciousness very simply for me as the simultaneous perception of the sacred and the ordinary, or the miraculous and the ordinary, or the miraculous and rather constant or easy-without-effort sort of thing.

I now perceive under the aspect of eternity and become mythic, poetic, and symbolic about ordinary things. . . .

The important point that emerges from these plateau experiences is that they're essentially cognitive. As a matter of fact, almost by definition, they represent a witnessing of the world. The plateau experience is a witnessing of reality. It involves seeing the symbolic, or the mythic, the poetic the transcendent, the miraculous, the unbelievable, all of which I think are part of the real world instead of existing only in the eyes of the beholder.

There is a sense of certainty about the plateau experience. It feels very, very good to be able to see the world as miraculous and not merely in the concrete, not limited only to the here and now. You know, if you get stuck in the here and now, that's a reduction.

Asked what he meant by "witnessing the world," Maslow replied:

You just see things, but you can see them well. I had a vision once at Brandeis University. It was Commencement. I had ducked Commencement for years, but this one I couldn't duck. I was corralled and I felt there was something sort of stupid about these processions and these idiotic and medieval caps and gowns. I really felt ridiculous. Well, this time as the faculty stood waiting for the procession to begin, for some reason, and I don't know why—there was suddenly this vision. It wasn't an hallucination. It was as if I could imagine very vividly a long academic procession. It went way the hell into the future, into some kind of a misty, cloudy thing. The procession contained all my colleagues, all the people I like, you know—Erasmus, Socrates, etc. In fact, Socrates was at the head of the procession. Then, behind me the procession extended into a dim cloud in which were all sorts of people, not yet born—and these were also my colleagues. I felt very brotherly towards them, these future ones. Well, you can do that all the time when you attain the plateau experience. It's the transcending of time and space which becomes quite normal, so to speak.

Maslow said that he was able to enter this condition whenever he wished, and when someone asked him about people who have never "had" peak experiences, he said: "My impression is that whenever I talk with anybody about them, they see what I'm talking about."

It seems evident that such movements of the mind are very much concerned with "identity," for surely the sense of taking part in a majestic, even eternal, "academic procession" brought Maslow an identity-deepening awareness. And he implied that we all have these experiences, even though we may not give them a chance to claim our reflective attention. And their mature form, in the plateau experience, may be quite rare.

Maslow used every sort of definition, since he was a great communicator, but he made far more use of metaphor, analogy, allegory and paradox than he did of the limiting kind of definitions. Limiting definitions are only for limited things, not for the elements of experience which involve an incommensurable dimension that should not be shut out or lost!

Culturally speaking, with thoughts of this sort, we seem to be starting all over again to consider matters like subjective or transcendental realities. We may now be *willing* to avoid precise definition of things that we don't understand well enough to be precise about. More than a hundred and fifty years ago, in an appendix to the first volume of *The World as Will and Idea*, Schopenhauer reproved both Plato and the authors of the *Vedas* and the *Puranas* for distinguishing between the phenomenal world of appearance and the subjective or transcendent world of reality only by means of mythic illustration. They left the matter vague, he thought, compared to Kant's disciplined and logical "proofs." But this sort of abstract clarity may also have been deceptive, and it seems at least possible that "later philosophy" covered its ignorance with disciplined language, when it should have been content with the richly suggestive implications of myth. In any event, the balance between the two—mythic analogy and precise abstraction—can hardly be an achievement of technical philosophy, but results only from *wisdom*. The precocious making of supposedly unambiguous definitions may be exactly the way in which philosophy becomes sterilely academic. It cannot be unimportant that Plato and the *Upanishads* are still studied by serious thinkers all over the world, whereas Kant and Schopenhauer and their less illustrious successors are hardly read at all, except by a few specialists.

But on this question of the yearning for identity, and the possibility of continual growth in self-knowledge, we have, it is true, devoted much space to the testimony of rather exceptional individuals. What of the "ordinary" person? The only "ordinary" thing that needs to be avoided is the tendency to discount the testimony one has of identity in himself. Perhaps the following from Maxwell Anderson's modest classic, *Off Broadway*, will ring some kind of bell for us all:

From the beginning of our story men have insisted, despite the darkness and silence about them, that they had a destiny to fulfill—that they were part

of a gigantic scheme which was understood somewhere, though they themselves might never understand it. There are no proofs of this. There are only indications—in the idealism of children and young men in the saying of such teachers as Christ and Buddha, in the vision of the world we glimpse in the hieroglyphics of the masters of the great arts, and in the discoveries of pure science, itself an art, as it pushes away the veils of fact to reveal new powers, new laws, new mysteries, new goals for the eternal dream. The dream of the race is that it may make itself better and wiser than it is, and every great philosopher or artist who has ever appeared among us has turned his face away from what man is toward whatever seems to him most godlike that man may become.

Whether the steps proposed are immediate or distant, whether he speaks in the simple parables of the New Testament or the complex musical symbols of Bach and Beethoven, the message is always to the effect that men are not essentially as they are but as they imagine and as they wish to be.

This says, very simply, that whatever a man may have settled upon as his "identity" for the time, there is further "becoming" for him to pursue. This is the grand fact of human nature, which has been variously expressed. The human being, then, belongs to that order of life which creates its own identity, and which changes by increments of knowledge and experience. We have intuitive means of sensing this, even though we may agree with Mr. Anderson that there are "no proofs." Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what sort of "proof" could be entertained or accepted in relation to so inward and transcendent a thing as the self which is ever in pursuit of this high destiny.

Yet we know that no man can be satisfied by being "bought off" instead of gaining access to an area of growth. There is undoubtedly a Promethean unrest pervading the human spirit. No finite realization is ever enough, and every measurable achievement becomes a launching pad. So there seems to be a cross-over point, marked by the time when a man no longer drives himself to any finite achievement, but is content to rest in his growing sense of unity with the world. This

amounts to a radical redefinition of mission, after which the object of life is no longer one's own growth and learning so much as the growth and learning of all. Prometheus is surely the mythic type of this crossing over, and Christ and Buddha are examples of men in whom this redefinition was brought to a wonderful flowering. Here we might see wonderful flowering. Here we might see the distilled perfection of that "brotherliness" that Maslow said he felt toward all those "future ones."

REVIEW

REFLECTIONS ON DRUGS

WHAT sort of problem is drug abuse? There are bound to be dozens of answers to this question, by reason of the natural tendency to define a problem in terms of how you encounter it and are obliged to deal with it. A parent is not likely to regard it in the same way as a police official responsible to existing statutes and public opinion and fears. A physician will have another view, and a moralist concerned with human attitudes still another. The addict who is beginning to feel doomed by his habit will make a very personal definition.

Then there is the contrast between the abstract or objective truth of this or any matter, and the discovered or personally realized truth, the latter being all that most people are willing to act upon, if they are able. The second-hand or hearsay truths are notoriously ineffectual, which is why preaching and moralizing and "the facts" commonly have so little effect in modifying human behavior.

There are also truths which are vitally important, which on reflection tend to become self-evident, yet which seem almost impossible to put into practice except in some slow, very basic, and almost "token" way. Take for example Aldo Leopold's declaration that in order to have a harmonious relationship with the earth it is necessary to love the land. After you read the section on the "Land Ethic" in *Sand County Almanac*, you are likely to agree wholeheartedly with Mr. Leopold. He is right. But *how* are you going to get "people" to love the land? Maybe the best you can do is to get yourself some land somewhere and love it yourself—the way Louis Bromfield did, and the way Wendell Berry does now—and then tell about it as well as you can.

Well, most people join the Sierra Club or Friends of the Earth or try to get an act of Congress passed for some good cause—and then, as you work in some particular direction, the "problem" gets redefined, even though it hasn't

really changed at all, in itself. Only man's relations to it have changed.

These thoughts were inspired by a reading of *Preventing Drug Abuse* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), a collection of extracts from current technical literature edited by Donald E. Barnes and Louisa Messolonghites. The book is meant to provide "Ideas, information, and lines of action for parents, young people, schools and communities." For this purpose it seems to be a good book. But its main value, so far as we can tell, is that the reader will find in it, here and there, some core truths about the evil of drugs which point to the need for changes so far-reaching that the individual may feel powerless to do much of anything. On the other hand, if those truths are lost sight of in the bustle of working at other levels, then the efforts are not going to count for much, since at least the germ of those basic truths needs to be a part of whatever you do. Take for example a statement in the introductory chapter by the editors:

Some experts fear that people may continue to turn from each other and toward drugs, *en masse*. Stanley Einstein, a prominent psychologist, in his article, "Drug Use and Misuse in the 1970's" warns, "Taking drugs is the danger sign of the fact that most of the population turns to things rather than to people for their everyday legitimate needs. . . . The 1970's should be a decade not of 'drug' research, but of investigating ways for people to live with themselves and each other, given the combination of the old and new pressures that we will experience. Research must be tied into preventive measures which not only focus on upon stopping something but give us alternatives for starting—for building something; and that something should be not only for a person but for his community as well."

There is a sense in which, vague as it is, this statement sets the objective of this book. A little later the editors say that they do not attempt to deal with "pharmacology, toxicology, and the pseudochemistry of the drug culture," but present rather "people-oriented" material, since taking drugs is something that people do to themselves. There aren't really any classifiable "experts" on

how to prevent drug abuse. One might think that medical men know a lot about it, but "compared with other occupational groups, physicians have shown a high susceptibility to narcotics addiction and drug abuse." Understanding life seems more important than knowing about drugs. The editors say:

We have observed, along with others, that student drug addiction groups soon leave the pharmacological aspects of the subject and move into questions which seem to them more vital. With deep and persistent interest they ask each other: What is fair? What is the best kind of life? How can I decide what is right and whether something is true? Whom should I trust? They seem to associate such questions with their decisions about using drugs.

This recalls the fact that at Synanon in the early days, and doubtless today, there was practically no conversation about heroin among the members of the club. Drugs had been left behind. Getting well did not involve thinking about them. Not using them doesn't really involve thinking about them. It is as Frank Waters suggested in speaking of the use of peyote by the American Indians: "Actually, peyote is an escape mechanism and as long as people have their own valid religion, a peyote man doesn't have much of a chance." This view is repeated in other terms in a selection in *Preventing Drug Abuse* by Kenneth Keniston:

My own experience with student drug-users convinces me that there are many different motives for drug use and abuse, and there are many different factors—psychological, sociological, cultural and situational—that determine whether one student will use drugs while another will not. But despite the diversity of student types who may become involved in drug use, there is, I believe, one type that is particularly prone to drug abuse. I will call such students "disaffiliates," and will summarize some of the factors that predispose these students toward drug abuse. The defining characteristic of the disaffiliate is his generalized rejection of prevalent American values which he rejects largely on esthetic, cultural and humanistic grounds. Such students are rarely political activists, and they are rarely concerned with the issues of economic, social and political justice that agitate many of their classmates. For these students,

the problem is not political or social, but esthetic: American society is ugly, trashy, cheap and commercial; it is dehumanizing; its middle-class values are seen as arbitrary, materialistic, narrow and hypocritical. Thus, those conventional values which deem experimentation with drugs—or experimentation of all kinds—illicit, are strongly rejected by disaffiliates; for them, what matters is somehow to seek a way out of the "air-conditioned nightmare" of American society.

Obviously, there is no use in suggesting to such young people that they identify with what they have rejected as a source of "strength"; they *can't*; and if ours was a society which had had the foresight and perception to provide alternatives for such individuals, they might be finding the needed strength and roots in new activities, and a few of them have already done so on their own. What Keniston says is far from explaining all the tendencies to drug abuse, but he goes a long way to showing the roots of the impassioned intellectual defense of the drug culture, and therefore the reasons for the high incidence of drug use among the educated young. From this point of view, drug use or abuse is a phenomenon of extreme social transition, for which a new social vision may be the essential preventive as well as remedy. This is a large order, perhaps being filled, on a small scale, in terms of small cadres instead of "movements."

Turning to another level—that of the high schools—the following from a section by the editors is of interest:

The young are gifted at backhand compliments. The so-called Drug Information Director in a New York City high school, after recruiting students to help him start their program, set about getting the "right kind" of teachers to join them in creating a counter culture, in that overcrowded school. The students ticked off the names of teachers they hoped would make their way down to the cubbyhole next to the boiler room that serves as "Head Office," or Drug Information Office. The students sent out an invitation for all interested teachers to come down and join in, and some twenty teachers appeared within the next few days. One volunteer teacher of mature years not known for her levity arrived and apologetically stated that she wanted to "do

something" but she did not feel she would be very good at "rapping." When she was informed that her name was high on the students' list of teachers they would like to work with, she almost cried.

Until then she had not realized that she had achieved a lifelong ambition to be a "real" person. "One of the oldies with the goodies" was the phrase a student used in suggesting her as one of the most wanted volunteers.

We return to Kenneth Keniston for some final quotation, since what he says clearly involves the basic truths that are of primary importance in this and many other socio-personal problems of the age. He regards drug use as more a philosophical or existential issue than a medical problem, and he has said to other professionals who work in counselling that "it will not do to repudiate students who misuse drugs as moral lepers and addicts without trying to understand their motives for drug use, and the values and goals they pursue." A drug user, he says, is "making a statement about how he wants to live his life." Some students know more about the physiological effects of drugs than the counselors. Dr. Keniston continues:

They will argue—with considerable validity—that society does not prohibit the use of other psychoactive compounds (e.g., alcohol, tobacco) which in some ways are far more dangerous than any of the hallucinogens or amphetamines. In the last analysis, then, whether one chooses or not to use drugs in full consciousness of their possible bad effects and legal implications of drug use, becomes an existential rather than a medical decision. It is a matter of how one chooses to live one's life, how one hopes to seek experience, where and how one searches for meaning. To be sure, I doubt that we can hope to persuade students that drugs are ethically, humanly or existentially undesirable if they are not already persuaded. But I think we can at least help the student confront the fact that in using drugs he is making a statement about how he wants to live his life. And we can, perhaps, in our own lives and by our own examples, suggest that moral courage, a critical awareness of the defects in our society, a capacity for intense experience and the ability to relate genuinely to other people are not the exclusive possessions of drug-users.

In the long run, those of us who are critical of student drug abuse must demonstrate to our students that there are better and more lasting ways to experience the fullness, the depth, the variety and the richness of life than that of ingesting psychoactive chemicals. Consciousness-expansion seems to me not the sole prerogative of psychoactive compounds, but of education in its fullest sense.

Thus, insofar as we can truly and honestly help our students to become educated in the fullest sense, we will be able to provide alternative routes to the pursuit of meaning, the quest for experience, and the expansion of consciousness. Obviously, much of what passes for education in America fails to accomplish any of these high objectives. As long as it continues to fail, I suspect that drugs will continue to be a problem on our campuses and in our society.

It may be of interest to some readers that Henry Anderson's contribution to MANAS, "The Case Against the Drug Culture," is reprinted in this book.

COMMENTARY

THE PHILOSOPHIC SPECTACLE

SINCE we often refer to Havelock's book (see page 1) as a means of explaining Plato's objection to the poets, we ought to take note of certain difficulties which Havelock found in Plato's later educational proposals. The scholar shows that it was not poetry per se, but poetry as the embodiment of the popular mind-set of the age and its unexamined *molding* influence, its "conditioning" power, that Plato condemned:

It is not poetry as it might be read from a book that he is attacking. It is the act of memorisation through identification in the poetic performance which to him is inseparable from the poem itself, and which constitutes a total act and condition of *mimesis*.

His phraseology in Book Five [of the *Republic*] supplies more than one hint that this is indeed his target. The "devoted sight-seers" are equated with the "devoted hearers of sounds," and the question stresses the acoustic relationship which is fundamental to the performance.

One could say that visual and auditory "imagery" make the field of popular opinion, in contrast to "the field of vision of the philosopher."

Plato's remedy is the training of the mind to enable the student to think abstractly—or, as we might say, "scientifically"—and in this way to become aware of general truths or laws which, while imperfectly illustrated in external circumstances, do not depend upon them. This, Havelock seems to think, is the approach to the world of Forms, which includes moral as well as other categories of being. But now Plato proposes what Havelock regards as a higher sort of "sight-seeing"—the "contemplation" of these higher Forms:

The mental condition is one of passivity, of a new sort perhaps. The poetic type of receptivity gained through imitation was an excited condition emotionally active. The new contemplation is to be serene, calm, and detached. It is to be like the "inspection" of a religious rite as opposed to participation in a human drama. Plato has changed the character of the performance and has reduced us

to silent spectators. But we remain sight-seers. Are we not simply being invited to avoid hard thinking and relapse into a new form of dream which shall be religious rather than poetic?

A scholar must no doubt ask this question, but it seems evident that the Taoist mood of this contemplation is very different from the "capture" of the mind by imagery in the case of the sensory sight-seer. Nor is the cognitive aspect rendered inactive by "serenity." Maslow's remarks on the quality of the "plateau experience" may have application here.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

ALONE IN THE CATSKILLS

ON the theory that there are a lot of people like ourselves who have not (until now) read or heard of Jean George's somewhat unbelievable but thoroughly enjoyable story, *My Side of the Mountain*, of a city boy who lives through a winter all alone in the woods of the Catskill Mountains, we are going to tell about it here. The book was first published by Dutton in 1959 and has been through eighteen printings since, picking up various honorable mentions and awards. The language and thought processes of the boy seem somewhat "adult," although he is supposed to be a pre-adolescent, and he has incredible good luck, astonishing courage, and more capacity to be alone than practically anyone we know—yet the book is still a delight to read. You get the impression that Mrs. George must have done post-graduate work with Euell Gibbons, since she knows so much about edible wild plants, but it is equally possible that she found out about all those things on trips with her husband.

Sam Gribley, whose father had gone to sea when a young man, lived in New York City with his parents and his eight brothers and sisters. Sam didn't want to go to sea, but he thought about the farm his great grandfather Gribley had had in the Catskills before *he* went to sea. It was still there—still in the family name, his father said—and although the buildings were gone you could find it in the woods by locating an old beech tree with *Gribley* carved on it. But his father also said, "the land is no place for a Gribley." Sam had the idea he could prove that wasn't so.

So, one day in May, he left New York with a ball of cord, an ax, a penknife, \$40 he had saved, and some flint and steel he bought in a little store, where an old Chinese showed him how to strike sparks and start a flame with frayed and charred threads for tinder. He took a train to the Catskills, then hitch-hiked into the mountains.

Although he had told his parents what he was going to do, they just didn't believe him. But Sam was determined. He had read up on woodcraft lore and when he finally reached his grandfather's old place he put all he knew to work and learned a lot more. A friendly librarian went through old records, helping him to locate the general area of the Gribley farm.

Well, he found the site, the stone foundations of the house, and then came across an enormous hemlock, completely rotted inside, that he decided to make into his home. He hacked out the decaying wood with his ax and then burned out more of the inside of the tree until the opening was big enough to hold a bed arrangement. He made wooden fishhooks and caught trout in the streams, using grubs for bait, devised rabbit snares, and tried to invent a deadfall to trap a deer, but never got one of these larger animals. It wasn't until hunting season came around that he had venison, for then deer which hunters couldn't find after wounding them fatally became available. Sam even grew expert in hiding dead deer from the men who killed them. He smoked the meat until the weather was cold enough to keep it fresh, and treated the hide in a hollowed-out oak stump filled with water, which had enough tannic acid in it. Then he made himself buckskin clothes with plenty of pockets. He captured a baby duck hawk from a nest and raised it, teaching it to hunt for him, and after that he wasn't dependent on his unreliable snares for rabbit meat and furs. He made warm winter underclothes out of the rabbit skins.

Sam learned all sorts of things about natural wild foods and flavors. He kept a record of what he did on birch bark. Here is one of his notes:

"This night I am making salt. I know that people in the early days got along without it, but I think some of these wild foods would taste better with some flavoring. I understand that hickory sticks, boiled dry, leave a salty residue. I am trying it.

In the morning I added:

"It is quite true. The can is dry, and thick with a black substance. It is very salty, and I tried it on frogs' legs for breakfast. It is just what I have needed."

And so I went into salt production for several days, and chipped out a niche inside the tree in which to store it.

A recipe:

Frogs were one of my favorite meals, and I found I could fix them many ways; however, I got to like frog soup fixed in *this* way: "Clean, skin, and boil until tender. Add wild onions, also water lily bulbs and wild carrots. Thicken with acorn flour. Serve in turtle shell."

He made friends with a raccoon who turned out to be an expert at digging fresh water mussels. As everyone knows, raccoons are accomplished camp robbers, so Sam named his friend Jessie (a female) C. James:

Jessie could find mussels where three men could not. He would start to eat them, and if he ate them, he got full and wouldn't dig any more, so I took them away from him until he found me all I wanted. Then I let him have some.

A mussel recipe:

"Scrub mussels in spring water. Dump them into boiling water with salt. Boil five minutes. Remove and cool in the juice. Take out meat. Eat by dipping in corn paste flavored with a smudge of garlic and green apples."

The duck hawk or falcon was named Frightful:

Frightful took care of the small game supply, and now that she was an expert hunter, we had rabbit stew, pheasant potpie, and an occasional sparrow, which I generously gave to Frightful. As fast as we removed the rabbits and pheasants new ones replaced them.

Sam became a gourmet of the woods:

Beverages during the hot summer became my choice, largely because no one else wanted them. I found some sassafras trees at the edge of the road one day, dug up a good supply of roots, peeled and dried them. Sassafras tea is about as good as anything you want to drink. Pennyroyal makes another good drink. I dried great bunches of this, and hung them from the roof of the tree room together with the leaves of winterberry. All these fragrant plants I also used in cooking to give a new taste to some not-so-good foods.

Meanwhile, didn't Sam's parents go frantic and demand energetic police search for the boy? Apparently not. They had extraordinary confidence in him and decided to leave him alone. His father did come up to see him, as he had laughingly promised to do, but before that Sam made a few friends on his own. One day a siren

blasted all around him and he decided a manhunt was going on. Then a tired man appeared and went to sleep on the ground near Sam's tree home. Sam thought he was an outlaw and approached him warily. Instead, he turned out to be a friendly English teacher from a local college. But Sam named him Bando anyhow. Sam fed him a choice forest-supplied meal and Bando showed him how to do some new things in the woods, like making willow whistles. They both made them and played a great concert. Bando also made him some blueberry jam with sugar from the store.

Sam got through the winter all right. He had smoked a lot of meat and collected a vast supply of nuts and other food that would keep. He built a clay chimney inside his tree so he had a warm fire, and the woods were full of dry dead wood that he collected, with plenty of extra piles.

Around Christmas, when Bando was visiting him during his vacation, Sam's father showed up, trudging through the snow. He came to where he thought Sam was and shouted so that the boy heard him. Bando and Sam's father got along well and the three had a Christmas party! The dinner began with wild onion soup. Then:

Bando rinsed Dad's soup bowl in the snow, and with great ceremony and elegance—he could really be elegant when the occasion arose—poured him a turtle shell of sassafras tea. Quoting a passage from one of Dickens's food-eating scenes he carved the blackened (venison) steak. It was pink and juicy inside. Cooked to perfection. We were all proud of it. Dad had to finish his tea before he could eat. I was short on bowls. Then I filled his shell. A mound of sort of fluffy mashed cattail tubers, mushrooms, and dogtooth violet bulbs, smothered in gravy thickened with acorn powder. Each plate had a pile of soaked and stewed honey locust beans—mixed with hickory nuts. The beans are so hard it took three days to soak them.

It was a glorious feast. Everyone was impressed, including me. When we were done, Bando went down to the stream and cut some old dried and hollow reeds. He came back and carefully made us each a flute with the tip of his penknife. He said the willow whistles were too old for such an occasion. We all played Christmas carols until dark.

Well, there's a lot more to this story.

FRONTIERS

A Historical Note

A READER in New Orleans writes about an aspect of today's youth which she finds not only puzzling but disturbing: their mindless pursuit of pleasure. She says:

Hedonism is not revolutionary—in fact an overdose of it impairs the mind, which is the only source of change. It is the mind where change originates. At least here in the French Quarter one cannot help but notice the appalling negation of even language, with, one supposes, a corresponding negation of the simplest ideas. . . . I am not so sure that society has failed the young, who are born with many advantages. It is just possible that they are failing society. To me, it is a period of polarization which seems to occur at times of historical crisis.

It would be pointless to deny the evidence which supports this view of the young, since it can be found in every city in the country, although "bohemian" quarters may get a bit more than their share. But the idea that hedonism is not "revolutionary" needs amplification. After all, the claim that life is fulfilled by the "pursuit of happiness" was a conception made popular by the great revolutionaries of the eighteenth century. The philosophers of that period, especially in France, maintained that if men's minds could be freed of the oppression of religion, and people returned to wholly natural ways of life, their spontaneous impulses would be naturally good, and the satisfaction of their desires would assure universal virtue. The men of the Enlightenment seem to have agreed on this view of the nature of man, since it pointed to a kind of morality for which there would be no need of either guiding Revelation or priests to interpret it. "Nature" would be the authority. Men were thought of as creatures of desires and appetites, their conscious life being made up of sensations coming from without. In this view, as a historian of thought has said, "The sole motive of our acts is egoism and self-interest, and the most exalted virtues reduce themselves to self-love, and a desire for pleasure."

No great discrimination is required to see that modern secularist thought, insofar as it is dominated by economic considerations, holds such motives to supply the ruling dynamics of human behavior. Ideas of this sort are certainly at the root of the Utilitarian philosophy of the greatest good for the greatest number, which is founded on a somewhat elevated kind of hedonistic thinking. This is the outlook which still prevails today as the basic justification for the major political systems of the time. And it must be admitted that the driving force of the growth economics which has created our present economic system and its technological superstructure comes from the calculated attempt to increase the desires of all people for more and more goods and services. This has until now been regarded as the basis of "progress." The supporting theory can hardly have any name but Hedonism.

This being the case, it may not be so remarkable that the young, having throughout childhood and adolescence been exposed to constant propaganda urging them to satisfy their desires, should be responsive in whatever ways seem attractive to them.

Even those who are contemptuous of the "commercialism" of the industrial system, who reject the nationalism of the war-makers, and who turn away from all conventional attitudes, often develop somewhat rigid patterns of their own, involving the purchase of chemicals of various sorts which produce psychic pleasures instead of the joys of material possessions and property. Thus the hedonism remains, even though the sources of satisfaction may change. So the question of "responsibility" for tendencies and behavior of this sort is at least arguable.

What might have been a good preparation for the great changes which the immediate future seems to hold in store? Perhaps no one knows or can know the answer to this question, but it seems certain that the past generation of parents made little effort to find out. Even the prospect of change was ignored. So the young were born into

a world in extreme flux, with very little preparation for change except their own disenchantment—which, since they *are* young, is largely emotional.

On the other hand, there are a great many exceptions to the discouraging symptoms which this reader has observed—and we ought to note that these exceptions do not have as good a press as the exhibitionistic hedonists, nor is their behavior so easily observed. The young man quoted in last week's editorial (Ray Mungo) said it very well: "This New Age defies our attempts to put it down in print; no sound ever comes from the gates of Eden."

A few years ago a professor in one of the large universities in California submitted an article to MANAS in which he staged a kind of debate between a Hippie and an Academic—each one criticizing the other. The dialogue was intended to bring out some synthesizing truths and show the wisdom each one had, the final laurels, however, going to the Academic. We did not use this article, explaining to the writer that "hippies," so far as we were concerned, were like "embryos," and the chief characteristic of an embryo is its unpredictability—you can't tell how it will turn out when it grows up. The hippies were not, in other words, a fit subject for elaborate criticism. There might be delighting and promising signs, and vastly discouraging ones, too, but the wild oscillations of adolescence were also present, and any sort of serious judgment seemed silly at the time.

One of the main characteristics of adolescents is susceptibility to suggestion—that is, from sources to which they are open. So it was natural that the second "wave" of hippies seemed to model themselves on the journalistic portrait of the first wave, many of the members of which had by this time left the scene to join communes or to find some better solution for their very real dilemmas. So the image suffered a series of degradations, and the almost totally destructive end of the Haight-Ashbury focus of youthful

freedom and self-expression in San Francisco is now well known. The trip to Haight-Ashbury was as fatal to the young as the medieval Children's Crusade was to its victims—and as high spirited and heartening at its beginning as it was sad and agonizing at its end. In both cases, it is fair to ask: Who was to blame, the children or the adult generation? Or, in the case of the Pied Piper, who should be called to account: The townsfolk, the children, or the Piper?

Well, as our correspondent has suggested, we are witnesses of and participants in a historical crisis, and the "polarizations" of which she speaks are likely to go on and on. So it is not really a time for judgments, but for strenuous efforts to learn from our immediate experience. Possibly the young will prove better able to do this than anyone else, since a youth is by Keniston's definition one who has not yet made up his mind about how he will live his life.