

HOW TO BE SENSIBLE

HOW shall America regain its health? This is a question not asked with sufficient frequency for the reason that we have no idea of how sick we are. In past years doctors have pointed out that when a population suffers from the onset of what finally becomes a wasting illness, since everyone is affected, people simply live at a lower level without realizing that a deep-seated affliction is taking hold of their lives. They may go on this way for years, voicing complaints from time to time, yet remaining ignorant of the fact that their health is slowly diminishing.

Usually, scapegoats are identified to account for what appear to be growing systemic ills. An extreme case of scapegoating was made evident in October of last year, in reports in both *Harper's* and the *Atlantic* for that month, concerned with the rapid spread of "acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome, or AIDS," which has reached epidemic proportions in San Francisco, although Los Angeles people have been similarly affected, and three times as many cases have been reported in New York. While homosexuals have been blamed for the development of this cureless breakdown of bodily defenses against infection, the mode of the spread of this disease, or parent of many diseases, is not well understood, and more and more heterosexuals are reporting symptoms of the ill. "Straight people don't want to hear about it but will soon have to," the *Atlantic* writer said. The *Harper's* symposium on the subject begins with a statement by an editor of the *New York Review of Books*:

As everyone is aware of by now, AIDS continues to run its appalling course. At the beginning of 1981, the year AIDS was first recognized, there were fewer than sixty cases in the United States; since then, there have been more than 12,000. Every day more and more people are diagnosed as having a lethal condition for which, as yet, there seems to be no effective treatment.

In view of the gravity of this situation, our task today is to review the facts about the epidemic and to discuss what factors influence society's response to it. What precisely is known about AIDS? Have its cause and the means by which it is transmitted been definitely established? Is there reason to expect that it will increasingly affect people in groups that have been remained largely unaffected?

One needs to read these reports to understand how little we know about this ill, and to see the level of candor concerning sexual behavior that results from open discussion of the problem. So far, there are few if any certainties—except death for the victims. Drug use is a contributing factor to vulnerability. Recommendations seem largely limited to ways in which we may be "safely" able to do more or less what we please for sensual enjoyment.

Pain and fear of death are not provocatives to virtue, although they may lead to a measure of restraint. Health, if we ever recover enough balance to recognize it, may be seen as a many-leveled thing. Our large cities all have sinks of moral and physical degradation called slums, the influence of which is reflected in the statistics of mental illness and crime, while the country is mottled with decaying rural areas where countless small farmers have gone bankrupt. Environmental economists and ecologists report the extensive loss of topsoil due to the follies of farmers driven to bad practices in order to keep going, and we know from books such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* what pesticides have done to the birds and creatures of the field. Our schools are overwhelmed with the cultural illness amply described by critical educators and their inadequacy has made one third of America's population functional illiterates, as Jonathan Kozol has shown.

Meanwhile our exports of chemicals often make sick or kill the poor of other lands, as in

Bhopal or Iraq, while our mechanistic "efficiencies" drive peasants from the land so that big farmers are able to make greater profits. Our wars and preparations for war have brought the country to the verge of bankruptcy while our foreign policy is a source of anxiety to nearly all the world.

It seems a mild and euphemistic statement to say that our country is lacking in health. How, then, shall we restore our well-being?

This is a way of asking: How do people learn? We learn both the good and the bad things we do from one another. In the beginnings of a cycle of history, in the formation of the organism of common life, we seem to learn from the best exemplars. To make a new beginning, then, we shall need to find the right exemplars, to learn and try to understand and stick to what they say. This is one of the great values in books and journals of opinion; writers and editors select what seems worth repeating and keep putting it into print. In our time, there is hardly a better defense of literacy. One other thing seems of importance to recognize: the best exemplars are always few in number, although in some rare moments of history they seem to have appeared in waves. It is the task of good historians to draw our attention to these waves and to stress their importance for human welfare. In his classic work, *The Ruling Class* (McGraw-Hill, 1939), devoted to discovery of the tendencies that determine the behavior of the human masses, Gaetano Mosca said at the end of his book:

Every generation produces a certain number of generous spirits who are capable of loving all that is, or seems to be, noble and beautiful, and of devoting large parts of their activity to improving the society in which they live, or at least to saving it from getting worse. Such individuals make up a small moral and intellectual aristocracy, which keeps humanity from rotting in the slough of selfishness and material appetites. To such aristocracies the world primarily owes the fact that many nations have been able to rise from barbarism and have never relapsed into it. Rarely do members of such aristocracies attain the outstanding positions in political life, but they render

a perhaps more effective service to the world by molding the minds and guiding the sentiments of their contemporaries, so that in the end they succeed in forcing their programs on those who rule the state.

We cannot suppose that there will be any lack or deficiency of such generous souls in the generations that are now rising. But it has happened more than once in the long course of human history that the effects and sacrifices of such people have not availed to save a nation or a civilization from decline and ruin. That has occurred, we believe, largely because the "best" people have had no clear and definite perception of the needs of their times, and therefore of the means best calculated to achieve social salvation.

Mosca's account seems sound and right, and he is confirmed by the example and precept of such men as Ortega y Gasset and Arthur Morgan, who practiced throughout their lives the principles Mosca had declared. One other American writer had much the same views, and since, as a historian, he wrote about the formation of the character of the people of the United States, we turn to him—Lewis Mumford. In *The Golden Day*, which was published in 1926 Mumford wrote about the writers of the formative period of American thought and literature—1830 to 1860. They, one might say, were great exemplars for us, despite the fact that they worked a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago. Fortunately, they are with us yet, and their influence is growing. Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, Hawthorne, and Bronson Alcott are seeds of culture, not altogether neglected. While they represent a road not taken by the culture as a whole, they may well stand for its lost health, and present-day readers are developing this feeling about them. Mumford writes of the health that existed during the time of these men:

There were no Carlyles or Ruskins in America during this period; they were almost unthinkable. One might live in this atmosphere, or one might grapple with the White Whale and die; but if one lived, one lived without distrust, without inner complaint, and even if one scorned the ways of one's fellows, as Thoreau did, one remained among them and sought to remedy in oneself the abuses that existed in society. Transcendentalism might criticize

a fossilized past; but no one imagined that the future could be equally fossilized. The testimony is unqualified. One breathed home, as one might breathe the heady air of early autumn, pungent with the smell of hickory fires and baking bread, as one walked through the village street.

"One cannot look on the freedom of this country, in connection with its youth," wrote Emerson in "The Young American," "without a presentment that here shall laws and institutions exist in some proportion to the majesty of Nature. . . . It is a country of beginnings, of projects, of vast designs and expectations. It has no past: all has an onward and prospective look." The voice of Whitman echoed Emerson through a trumpet: but that of Melville, writing in 1850, was no less sanguine and full-pulsed: "God has predestinated, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls". . . .

An imaginative New World came to birth during this period, a new hemisphere in the geography of the mind. That world was the climax of American experience. What preceded led up to it: what followed dwindled away from it and we who think and write today are either continuing the first exploration, or we are disheartened, and relapse into some stale formula, or console ourselves with empty gestures of frivolity.

The American scene was a challenge; and men rose to it. The writers of this period were not alone; if they were outcasts in the company of the usual run of merchants manufacturers, and politicians, they were at all events attended by a company of people who had shared their experience and moved on eagerly with it. When all is reckoned however, there is nothing in the minor writers that is not pretty fully recorded by Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, and Hawthorne. These men, as D. H. Lawrence has well said, reached a verge. They stood between two worlds. Part of their experience enabled them to bring the protestant movement to its conclusion: the critical examination of men creeds, and institutions, which is the vital core of protestantism, could not go much further.

They had a new world to conceive and build. While Nietzsche went back to pre-Socratic Greece, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky to primitive Christianity, and Wagner to early Germanic fables, the Americans, Mumford says, went on.

. . . Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman went forward leaning on the experiences about them, using the past as the logger uses a corduroy road, to push further into the wilderness and still have a sound bottom under him. They fathomed possibilities, these Americans, of a modern basis for culture, nearer to the formative thinkers and poets of the past. What is vital in the American writers of the Golden Day grew out of a life which opened up to them every part of their social heritage. And a thousand more experiences and fifty million more people have made us no wiser. The spiritual fact remains unalterable, as Emerson said, by many or few particulars.

What is Mumford saying? He is saying that we can learn from the exemplars of the Golden Day, from our spiritual ancestors.

He is saying that we do not learn from machines and systems. That the realities of life are unchanged. He is saying that these men lived in the world of their imagination—the world which must become real for us before it can transform itself into a world of actual becoming. Actually, there are those out on the land who know both the world of the imagination and this world, and are showing how changes are made. They are probably the only actually happy people in the country. We shall speak of them later.

Here we are concerned with Mr. Mumford's choice of a writer for his beginning of a sketch of the Golden Day. He picks Thoreau.

Thoreau seized the opportunity to consider what in its essentials a truly human life was; he sought, in Walden, to find out what degree of food, clothing, shelter, labor was necessary to sustain it. It was not animal hardihood or a merely tough physical regimen he was after; nor did he fancy, for all that he wrote in contempt of current civilization, that the condition of the woodcutter, the hunter, or the American Indian was in itself to be preferred. What he discovered was that people are so eager to get the ostentatious "necessaries" of a civil life that they lose the opportunity to profit by civilization itself: while their physical wants are complicated, their lives, culturally, are not enriched in proportion, but are rather pauperized and bleached.

Thoreau was completely oblivious to the dominant myths that had been bequeathed by the seventeenth century. Indifferent to the illusion of

magnitude, he felt that Walden Pond, rightly viewed, was as vast as the ocean, and the woods and fields and swamps of Concord were as inexhaustible as the Dark continent. . . .

As for his country, he loved the land too well to confuse it with the shifting territorial boundaries of the National State. In this, he had that vital regional consciousness which every New Englander shared: Hawthorne himself had said that New England was as large a piece of territory as could claim his allegiance. Thoreau was not deceived by the rascality of politicians, who were ready to wage war for a coveted patch of Mexico's land, nor did he side with those who, for the sake of the Union, were ready to give up the principles that alone made the Union valuable. What he loved was the landscape, his friends, and his companions in the spirit: when the Political State presumed to exercise a brass counter-claim on these loyalties, it might go to the devil.

Today, in the world as it is, we have little difficulty in seeing that Thoreau was simply a sensible man, although, which is considerably more, he insisted upon living as a sensible man should. We wonder about the meaning of freedom; well, he had it, he used it, he cherished it by the way he lived his life. We could all do something like that whether or not we can discover a proper Walden. We live in the same world he lived in, although considerably mused up in the more than a century since his time; but we have the same basic options, and while we may not recognize them easily we may be sure he would find them, even in our world. Others have done so. John Muir did it. Arthur Morgan did it. And, as we said, there are people out on the land today who are doing it right now. Thoreau's life was a wonderful illustration of how to be sensible. How an extraordinarily *capable* man could be sensible. It included making friends with the world.

How can we—any of us—do that today? The first thing to do is to recognize that we have no enemies. People may think they are our enemies, but that is because of the way our nation behaves. Other nations, of course, don't behave well either, but our responsibility is for the place in which and the government under which we live.

Thoreau disowned his government when it seriously violated the principles by which he had decided to live. We can do that too. A young man named Andy Mager did it recently because he couldn't stand our behavior toward Nicaragua. He served some time in jail but retained his integrity, his manhood, which was certainly sensible.

Other men and women are insisting on being sensible in various ways—in relation to the land and the sea. They are demonstrating natural ways of growing food, of fishing, of eating, of educating their children. What they are doing is sensible. We are speaking of people like Wendell Berry, Wes Jackson, John Jeavons, John Todd, and some others, all of whom, fortunately, write books. It is a good combination for a sensible person—tending the land and writing books.

There are of course various objections to being sensible, such as the claim that it takes a lot of money. But it happens that there are at least a few sensible ways of making money—not a lot of money, but enough. One must be sensible about what is "enough." Then, it takes time for people who live in our world to learn the practical side of being sensible. It may take the rest of our lives. Have we anything better to do?

In a book we have been reading lately, a very long essay, *The Mahabharata,—a Literary Study*, by Krishna Chaitanya, in an early chapter the author quotes from the work under discussion—the longest epic ever written—some riddles. (Since Thoreau and Emerson were both familiar with the sacred books of the East, this is not a radical change of subject.) The author says:

Riddles are a common feature of the folklore tradition all over the world. They are used in the *Mahabharata* too, but in subtly escalated role. Once, while staying in the forests during their exile, the Pandava brothers go to a lake to fetch water and there meet a Yaksha or demon who poses riddles to them. When they cannot answer, they fall into a dead faint. When all the four brothers, one after the other, fail to return, Yudhisthira goes to the lake and he is able to answer all the riddles. The episode is a welcome

break in the monotony of the long stay in the forest and introduces variety in the episodes that have to be used to fill up the narration of that long time-span. The riddles . . .

What makes the sun rise and set? Eternal Law.

On what depends the status of the Brahmin? Not on birth or knowledge of the Vedas, but on conduct alone.

What is that, the surrender of which makes one rich? Cupidity.

What is real knowledge? Comprehension of the ultimate reality.

What is compassion? The desire to do good to all.

Here is the wisdom of the ages, compressed in riddles or, as so often, in casual anecdote. Such sagacious utterances are easy to set down, may be repeated without effort, and form the racial memories of many ancient peoples. Why are they dropped out of the modern consciousness? Why do "old wives' tales" no longer come naturally to the mothers of our time?

We do not know. The commonplaces of the age no longer have even a remembered depth. We do not exchange verbal profundities with one another. That is not the natural style of the modern age. If we still have hearts, we do not wear them on our sleeves.

Yet there must be ways of finding our path to health, of reaching a ground of conviction that, regardless of pain and struggle, will support our dreams. Is this the secret hidden in all the private dramas of our age?

REVIEW

A GREAT TRANSFORMATION

WHILE reading a story by Jean Giono about the denuded Durance Valley in Provence, in the south of France, in the foothills of the French Alps, we turned to an old book, *The Earth as Modified by Human Action* (1874), for an account of how this region had been stripped of vegetation. There the author, George Perkins Marsh, a pioneer ecologist, quotes from Jerome Blanqui, a French economist, concerning the scene of Giono's story. Writing in 1843, Blanqui said:

The abuse of the right of pasturage and the felling of trees have stripped the soil of all its grass and all its trees, and the scorching sun bakes it to the consistency of porphyry. When moistened by the rain, as it has neither support nor cohesion, it rolls down to the valleys, sometimes in floods resembling black, yellow, or reddish lava, sometimes in streams of pebbles, and even huge blocks of stone, which pour down with a frightful roar, and in their swift course exhibit the most convulsive movements. If you overlook from an eminence one of these landscapes furrowed with so many ravines, it presents only images of desolation and of death. Vast deposits of flinty pebbles, many feet in thickness, which have rolled down and spread far over the plain, surround large trees, bury even their tops, and rise above them, leaving to the husbandman no longer a ray of hope. . .

The Alps of Provence present a terrible aspect. In the more equable climate of Northern France, one can form no conception of those parched mountain gorges where not even a bush can be found to shelter a bird, where, at most the wanderer sees in summer here and there a withered lavender, where all the springs are dried up, and where a dead silence, hardly broken by even the hum of an insect, prevails.

At the time of the French Revolution, this region was already covered with gravel and pebbles—a countryside which, except for the floods, "would have been the finest land in the province," another traveler declared. Indeed, in the days of the Roman Empire, the Durance was a navigable river with boatmen pursuing important commerce. But in the last half of the nineteenth century the land was a moonscape, desolate and bare.

This was the scene which Jean Giono chose for his story, "The Man Who Planted Hope and Grew Happiness," which *Vogue* published in 1954. It was widely copied in pamphlets and magazine reprints, and is now restored to print in a slender, beautifully illustrated book issued last year by Chelsea Green Publishing Co., with an afterword on Giono by Norma Goodrich. The price is \$13.50. (Chelsea's address is P.O. Box 283, Chelsea, Vermont 05038.)

The story is a work of the imagination, but many readers have taken it for biographical truth by reason of its impact. But no one really knows the origin of the tale save that it came as an overflowing of Giono's heart. It is partly a tale about himself. He begins by telling about a time when he was not yet twenty, in 1913:

About forty years ago I was taking a long trip on foot over mountain heights quite unknown to tourists, in that ancient region where the Alps thrust down into Provence. All this, at the time I embarked upon my long walk through these deserted regions, was barren and colorless land. Nothing grew there but wild lavender.

He camped at night, encountering nothing human save abandoned villages and empty, ruined homes, with all springs dry. He had run out of water the day before and needed a drink. In the distance he saw a dark column which he thought was a tree, but it turned out to be a man, apparently a shepherd, since he had sheep, and he gave Giono a drink. He took Giono to his home, built of stone, and fed him soup for supper. By questioning Giono learned that this peasant, a man in his fifties, had lost his wife and son and had chosen to live in this man-made desert. Why? Because he had found work to do there. After supper, the peasant—his name was Elzéard Bouffier—poured some acorns on the table and carefully selected the best—just one hundred of them—and then they went to bed. The next day Giono accompanied him. Bouffier put his hundred acorns into a pail of water, took his iron rod (as thick as a thumb), and they went along a ridge, with the dog taking care of the sheep left in

a valley. Bouffier thrust the rod into the ground, planted an acorn in the hole, then filled it, and went on to another place for planting. He didn't know who owned the land and didn't care. It needed trees, and he would provide them. He had been planting acorns for three years—a hundred thousand in all, and twenty thousand had sprouted, of which he thought half would survive. So, ten thousand oaks were growing, and Bouffier had started a nursery for beech trees and was considering where birches would grow.

They parted; then came the war, in which Giono served. After the war he used his demobilization bonus to visit Provence once more, and the tree-planter, who proved to be alive and well.

The oaks of 1910 were then ten years old and taller than either of us. It was an impressive spectacle. I was literally speechless and, as he did not talk, we spent the whole day walking in silence through his forest. . . . He had pursued his plan, and beech trees as high as my shoulder, spreading out as far as the eye could reach, confirmed it. He showed me handsome clumps of birch planted five years before—that is, in 1915, when I had been fighting in Verdun. He had set them out in all the valleys where he had guessed—and rightly—that there was moisture almost at the surface of the ground. They were as delicate as young girls, and very well established.

At fairly long intervals, Giono relates in his story, he kept in touch, visiting Provence. He found that the French Forest Service had learned of this forest in Provence and delegated rangers to protect it from any sort of harm. His last visit was in 1945 when Bouffier was eighty-seven. He came to the village of Vergons, which in 1913 had had three inhabitants, but was now thriving.

Everything was changed. Even the air. Instead of the harsh dry winds that used to attack me, a gentle breeze was blowing, laden with scents. A sound like water came from the mountains: it was the wind in the forest. Most amazing of all, I heard the actual sound of water falling to a pool. I saw that a fountain had been built, that it flowed freely and—what touched me most—that someone had planted a linden beside it, a linden that must have been four years old,

already in full leaf, the incontestable symbol of resurrection.

People had settled there, young people with children, living in freshly plastered homes, with gardens of vegetables and flowers. The forest had made an Eden of the place. Giono ends his story:

When I reflect that one man, armed only with his own physical and moral resources, was able to cause this land of Canaan to spring from the wasteland, I am convinced that in spite of everything, humanity is admirable. But when I compute the unfailing greatness of spirit and the tenacity of benevolence that it must have taken to achieve this result, I am taken with immense respect for that old and unlearned peasant who was able to complete a work worthy of God.

Jean Giono, only son of a cobbler and a laundress, became one of France's distinguished writers. He was a twice imprisoned pacifist who won high awards as a writer. He died in 1970 at the age of seventy-five. This book is illustrated by the wood engravings of Michael McCurdy, which add greatly to its appeal. The story is published under the title, *The Man Who Planted Trees*.

"But it wasn't a *true* story!" someone may say. Yet it was truth for Giono, who was born in Provence and died there. It has moved thousands to plant trees. Why did he set down this tale? In her thoughtful comments, Norma Goodrich says:

Hopefulness must spring, he decided, from literature and the profession of poetry. Authors only write. So, to be fair about it, they have an obligation to profess hopefulness, in return for their right to live and write. The poet must know the magical effect of certain words: hay, grass, meadows, willows, rivers, firs, mountains, hills. People have suffered so long inside walls that they have forgotten to be free, Giono thought. Human beings were not created to live forever in subways and tenements, for their feet long to stride through long grass, or slide through running water. The poet's mission is to remind us of beauty, of trees swaying in the breeze, or pines groaning under snow in the mountain passes, of wild white horses galloping across the surf.

You know, Giono said to me, there are also times in life when a person has to rush off in pursuit of hopefulness.

The scientist writes of what is, but the artist, and the poet, are concerned with what might be, with what is coming to be. Humans, we know, are virtually nothing unless they are in the process of becoming, so who is the realist, the scientist or the poet? While there are conditions which must be faced and understood for becoming to take place—birches require moisture near the soil's surface, and other growing things have other needs—and science will help us to learn what is both possible and wise—yet without the fire of vision, becoming can hardly begin. And it is the poet, the mystic, the philosopher who has, or may have, this vision. These are the ones who make possible the balance of a civilization. Giono's intentions in writing his story about Bouffier are given in its first paragraph:

For a human character to reveal truly exceptional qualities, one must have the good fortune to be able to observe its performance over many years. If this performance is devoid of all egoism, if its guiding motive is unparalleled generosity, if it is absolutely certain that there is no thought of recompense and that, in addition, it has left its visible mark upon the earth, then there can be no mistake.

COMMENTARY MATTERS OF WORDS

A READER suggests that it would be useful to have some comment about the use of our language, since the meanings of words vary so much, depending upon the mind and background of both the writer and the reader.

Fortunately, there is already available a great deal of such material. One illustration would be the writings of the General Semanticists—as for example may be found in the book, *Bridging Worlds Through General Semantics* reviewed in MANAS for Jan. 8. This book is made up of contributions to *Et cetera*, the journal published by the General Semanticists. Then, in this week's issue, in Review, there is a passage on the "magical effect of certain words" (see page 8), with emphasis on their power to generate feeling. "The poet's mission is to remind us of beauty, of trees swaying in the breeze, or pines groaning under snow in the mountain passes, of wild white horses galloping across the surf."

Another facet of this question is touched upon by Jean Paulhan, who speaks of the need of science for new terms, for which poetic insight is required. Paulhan said (quoted by Herbert Kohl in *The Age of Complexity*):

It comes to this, that philosophers (particularly the philosophers of science) make, not discoveries but hypotheses that may be called poetic. Thus Louis de Broglie admits that progress in physics is, at the moment, in suspense because we do not have the words or the images that are essential to us. But to create illuminations, images, words that is the very reason for the being of poets.

Then, in our Nov. 6 issue of last year, the Swedish physicist, Hannes Alfvén, was quoted as saying:

An important euphemism is "nuclear arms." It gives the impression that these are similar to old-fashioned arms. At the back of their minds, people may associate them with brave knights who fight in shining armor. But the criminal pressing of a button which will kill millions, if not billions of civilians

including women and children, or rather torture them to death, has nothing to do with heroism. I think that "annihilation" is a more precise definition. . . . Similarly money for developing and manufacturing annihilators should not come from defense funds, but from funds for "mass murder of civilians."

This is the correction of usage that Confucius called "The Rectification of Names."

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves A LIFE OF GANDHI

A PAPERBACK book, *The Story of Mahatma Gandhi*, by K. S. Acharlu, came out last year in India, and may prove the best account of the life of the great man of India and of the world—one who, in the twentieth century, understood what needed to be done for the good of mankind. Much has been written about Gandhi, valuable studies of his life and work, but this book, by one who has devoted himself to lifelong study and practice of Gandhian ideals, succeeds in showing how Gandhi was a true hero in everyday life. While the author says he wrote the book in behalf of students of college age, its appeal is to all readers. It may be purchased from the publishing firm of Foresight, 24/26 Bomanjee Lane, Off Gunbow Street Fort, Bombay 400 001, India. The price is 20 rupees, or about \$2.00 (plus something for postage).

In his Preface Mr. Acharlu says:

This book is not meant to be a textbook history of Gandhi's life and events. This is a "story, a "novel." But the incidents and utterances presented herein are not fiction: everything has a basis in fact. Some of the utterances quoted in the story are from his own mouth; some of them have been abridged and simplified. The story throws light on many of the basic social, political, economic, and educational problems that beset us today.

The tale begins with Mohan's school days—Mohan is short for Mohandas, Gandhi's first name—in the 1870s in a town in Gujarat, where his father was an adviser and administrator for the ruling prince. Even in childhood the boy practiced non-violence, refusing to strike back when hit by a school-mate, and he held no grudge. He became a peace-maker and was chosen for umpire in games because the players knew he was always fair. Like many Hindus, Gandhi married quite young. When he was close to twenty, his family sent him to England to study law. There he had trouble getting enough food—he was pledged to eat no meat—but this problem was solved when he found a vegetarian restaurant in London. He joined a vegetarian society

and made friends, two of whom were Theosophists who introduced him to the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which he had never read, and also Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*, the life of the Buddha, in verse. He came to admire Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

Gandhi's legal education in London took three years, after which he returned home to India, only to discover that he could not really practice because he knew no Hindu or Muslim law, and he found that he was so shy that he was unable to cross-examine a witness in court. To make a living he taught English and worked for other lawyers drafting petitions. Then, an Indian firm with interests in South Africa asked for some help there on a complicated case and Gandhi decided to go, taking ship for Durban. In South Africa he discovered that Indians were mistreated and discriminated against. Refusing to conform to a railroad regulation, he was ejected from a train carrying him to Pretoria and left for a night on a cold platform. By morning he had made up his mind to stay in South Africa and try to root out color prejudice. As Acharlu says, "The decision changed his whole life." He began organizing the Indians to resist oppression and worked against injustice in whatever way he could. In 1896, after being in South Africa for three years, he decided to go home and get his wife and young sons, since he realized that conditions could not be improved there unless he stayed and worked much longer. In India, he wrote a pamphlet to inform his countrymen about Indian life in South Africa, causing his work to become known. He and his family were living in Rajkot, and while he was there a plague broke out in Bombay, not far away. "What matters," he said, "is cleanliness." He organized a committee to conduct inspections and to clean things up, especially the latrines. "In later years he would say that education begins with cleaning up." Those who came to him for training first had to learn how to clean a latrine properly. This, one could say, was the second basic principle of everyday life. The first was to treat everyone alike. As a small child he could not understand why his mother had warned him not to touch the "untouchable" who swept their house and did other cleaning. "If," he asked, "Lord Krishna is everywhere, then He must be in this cleaning man,

too, so why should he be called unclean?" Gandhi opposed untouchability to the end of his life.

Gandhi and his family returned to Durban in 1897, where he was greeted by an angry mob who feared his influence. He was saved from violence by friends and went to work as a lawyer, gradually earning the respect of both the English and the Boers. To his own people he taught cleanliness and the importance of not submitting to injustice. During the Boer War (1899-1902) he helped the British by organizing a corps of Indian stretcher-bearers, winning appreciation from the medical officers. He was back in India in 1902, now having many friends who had learned of his work in South Africa. His political mentor, G. K. Gokhale, advised him to travel about India to understand the problems of the people. Gandhi did this, going third class. Finally at home, he practiced law and did well. Eventually, he moved to Bombay, but soon received a cable from South Africa, "Please come back immediately." He had promised, so he went, leaving his family at home. Neither the Boers nor the English really believed in racial equality, with the result that Indians and Africans suffered continual injustice. Gandhi sought justice in the courts, winning most of his cases, but unjust laws remained. Now Gandhi broadened the base of his thinking by reading Ruskin and Tolstoy. He founded a paper called *Indian Opinion* and then moved the paper to a farm he established with the help of others. It was called the Phoenix Settlement. They raised their food, ground their flour, baked their bread, and founded their lives on simplicity and self-reliance. The community grew and Gandhi planned education for the children to grow out of the common work. He adopted nature cure as the remedy for sickness and treated his wife's illness himself.

Meanwhile the Transvaal Government enacted a "pass law" which required every Indian to have a pass. Without a pass, the Indian would be expelled. Gandhi organized resistance to the law, calling this effort *Satyagraha* instead of passive resistance. Many Indians were arrested, but their exemplary behavior led General Smuts, head of the government, to ask the Indians to register without compulsion. Gandhi agreed, and the Indians did so. But the law

was not repealed and at Gandhi's suggestion the Indians burned their registration certificates. Gandhi was arrested along with hundreds of Indians. But the law was not repealed. Gandhi and Smuts went to London to work things out, but they failed. On the return trip in 1908 Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Self-Rule) on shipboard, setting down his basic ideas about the welfare of India, to which he adhered for the rest of his life.

What did he say? Acharlu summarizes:

The real enemy, said Gandhi in this book, is not the British people. The real enemy is the idea that an increase in our material possessions and comforts will bring us happiness. This idea is encouraged by those who want to sell us unnecessary things in order to make a profit, and who buy our valuable village products at a cheap rate and take them away to make more profit. Railways and industries have all helped in this process which has ruined our villages and led to the growth of huge, overcrowded cities. Our modern education too has taught us to value money more than moral character. It may be true that the British introduced these things, and that many British people have made profit out of them. But the greater truth is that they cannot bring freedom or happiness, either to Britain or to India or to anyone else. So we should not hate the British; we should hate the selfish greed in the so-called "civilization which they brought to India. And we cannot fight this greed with violence, we can only fight it by love.

When Gandhi and his wife returned to India to stay in 1915 he was a formed man, in both philosophy and action. He was forty-five, a second life before him. The people of India respected him, knowing of his work in South Africa, and he had many friends. Before him lay thirty years of struggle with the British Raj, the task of educating many millions of people in the ways of *ahimsa*, or non-violence, the breaking of unjust laws, with many years in prison, and a number of fasts. Mr. Acharlu's book tells this story in all its drama and inspiration. Those who have seen and thrilled to the film on Gandhi recently shown around the world will want this book for a permanent record of his achievement. We might, here at the end, add one thing. Gandhi did not like to be called "a Mahatma." He said so in so many words, "I am no Mahatma." Yet he gave substance to that ancient expression, which means "great Soul."

FRONTIERS On Changing Habits

A FOLDER issued by Beyond War, an effective peace organization, 222 High Street, Palo Alto, Calif. 94301, offers a persuasive argument:

Until recently, we had not experienced the earth as one integrated system. We had limited experience of other peoples and other cultures. Therefore, our primary loyalty has been limited to our family, tribe, race, religion, ideology, or nation. Our identification has been restricted, and we have often seen those beyond that identification as enemies.

In the nuclear age this limited identification threatens all humanity. We can no longer be preoccupied by enemies. We can no longer see ourselves as separate. Modern transportation, communication systems and the discoveries of science have increased tremendously our direct and indirect experience of the world. We now see that all of life is interdependent, that we share a common destiny, that our individual well-being depends on the well-being of the whole system. We must now identify with all humanity, all life, the whole earth.

This way of seeing and understanding is proposed as the new mode of thinking we must adopt. Yet there are stubborn obstacles to be overcome—obstacles made by habits of thinking based upon the natural isolations of the past. Habits—and these habits are joined with strong self-interest—are the most tenacious of our ways. They represent attitudes adopted long ago and made into secondary instincts that automatically dictate behavior. We have, in short, to retrain our reflexes in order to do the kind of thinking that will carry us beyond war. Only the reformed alcoholic or an ex-drug addict is likely to recognize what sort of effort will be required to make peace. Meanwhile we do what we can by putting together "arguments" which are sometimes listened to and acted upon by people freer from isolating habits than most others.

One such set of arguments appeared in *Resurgence*, the English journal, for September/October of last year. They are in the form of a letter by Sir Martin Ryle, distinguished

British radio-astronomer who died in 1984. Lady Rowena Ryle gave the letter to Satish Kumar, editor of *Resurgence*, who published it as "a last testament by one of the most vigorous scientists campaigning against nuclear weapons." (The letter was written in February, 1983.) The scientist begins by stating his view of our circumstances:

The USSR exists, the USA exists; they must either learn to live together, or die together.

The political system of the USSR is appalling, but those who suffer under it—and have little freedom to influence it—are those who will die. (In World War I some 5 per cent of the casualties were innocent civilians, in World War II about 50 per cent; in a nuclear war it would be perhaps 95 per cent.)

One cannot change the Russian system from outside—only annihilate it and the innocent with it. Change must come from within and will be slow. (Our Western systems are not perfect—the ever-increasing gap between rich and poor, the increasing power of the multinational companies inadequate contribution to the Third World; Vietnam and the destabilizing of Chile, Central America, and so on.)

There are great asymmetries; for European Russia, strategic and theatre weapons are the same. The effects on the two super-powers of World War II were very different. In the USSR, seven million combatants and 12 million civilians were killed; in the United States, 400,000 combatants were killed (in all theatres of war put together), and no civilians. Two million square kilometers of the Soviet Union were occupied and severely damaged, but not even a square metre of the United States.

The effects of these historical facts cannot be ignored.

We, in Europe, whose experience (by being fought over, occupied or bombed) falls between (these extremes), have the responsibility of appreciating both attitudes.

Without using any high-powered words, the writer has a way of making one think. Next comes a section on nuclear weapons and the vast over-armament of both sides. To the question of what science or scientists might do, the astronomer said:

Sadly, some 40 per cent of professional engineers and probably a higher proportion of

physicists in the UK are engaged in devising new ways of killing people; the U.S. figures are I think much the same. Although there are plenty of jobs available in these areas, it is practically impossible for a young graduate or Ph.D. to find a socially useful job. What do I say when young men and women come and ask my advice? . . .

The young seem able to work on, say, an anti-aircraft missile without regard for the consequences. They have never seen an aircraft shot down, nor felt the identity with its crew—whether hostile or friendly—which came from having flown in military aircraft. To so many it is simply an intriguing scientific problem; the morality and responsibility are pushed aside—the politicians make the decisions.

What about places of higher education?

While most of these supremely unnecessary developments [weapons] are made in the defense establishments and in the industries working for them, the reduction in state support for the universities has meant that science and engineering departments rely more and more on contracts—and this today means "defense" contracts.

It raises the whole question: should the universities try and retain the original status of an "association of independent scholars"—or should they become cheap research establishments for the state? . . .

At the end of World War II I decided that never again would I use my scientific knowledge for military purposes astronomy seemed about as far removed as possible. But in succeeding years we developed new techniques for making very powerful radio telescopes; these techniques have been perverted for improving radar and sonar systems. A sadly large proportion of the Ph.D. students we have trained have taken the skills they have learnt in these and other areas into the field of defense. I am left at the end of my scientific life with the feeling that it would have been better to have become a farmer in 1946. . . . Our cleverness has grown prodigiously—but not our wisdom.

How do human beings increase their wisdom? It is difficult, one assumes, but not impossible. But *wanting* to increase our wisdom is surely the first step. Only the experience of pain seems a provocative in this direction.