

THE ESSAYIST'S POWER

NO one likes to be pushed. A great many people, however, engage in pushing. They do it in various ways, some with guns, others with words. Those who push with guns don't care much about what the people they are pushing think; they just want submission and obedience and using guns seems the best way to get it. Sooner or later, of course, people who are coerced by physical threat manage to get guns of their own, and then there are wars, or a series of wars, until the pushers are defeated and driven away, leaving the pushed free to develop, if they so choose, their own methods of pushing.

This is more or less the pattern made by national history as it has developed in our experience, and the skills of military pushing have now reached a point where they have almost gone out of control, making what men suppose to be the most effective kind of pushing into a form of self-destruction. People of imagination already see this clearly, but the most enthusiastic of pushers seldom have much imagination and press upon their countrymen the elaboration of methods of pushing which can no longer work. This makes an agonizing dilemma for the people in organized societies, the only apparent solution being for them to become much less organized, either from extreme disaster or by the deliberate choice of decentralization.

Those who push with words constitute another sort of problem. This is a tendency which is present in nearly all of us, difficult to control because of the natural human desire to have other people think as we do. One very obtrusive form of this tendency is advertising and sales promotion, in which the motive is entirely commercial and the method largely manipulative of human wants and feelings. Political persuasion, once made up of argument from principle, now relies mainly on the appeal of pleasing imagery,

with only the vague appearance of persuasion on logical grounds. Ideological argument for a particular social and economic system is seldom heard today except in the fragmentary form of old clichés reiterated by superficially clever advocates. In these troubled years a great deal of persuasion is given to diagnostic theories as to what is wrong with the world, the country, the city, with both particular and general focuses for criticism, and corresponding measures of remedy or solution proposed. Finally, there are thoughtful essayists who engage in the examination of life, drawing tentative conclusions which may sometimes have great value.

The question that we should like to consider here is why these essayists often have great persuasive power. One reason is almost certainly that they have no ardent wish to persuade. A seasoned writer is a man or woman of experience who has learned a great deal of human nature. He is usually aware, as Thoreau was, that human beings learn in their own time and at their own pace. If people are bombarded with arguments, they are likely to turn away or seek ways of refuting what is said. So, instead of driving toward some predetermined conclusion, the essayist will examine a question from all sides, demonstrating his impartiality, and then, perhaps, indicating and explaining a preference for one or another view. He is interested in helping readers to gain maturity of mind, not in winning arguments. There is, then, this prime virtue in the essayist—he has little or no self-righteousness, but rather a basic respect for other human beings, feeling that people must find their own way. The essayist makes discoveries of his own, and then, being a writer, he writes about them. It is a sharing, not an effort at persuasion.

Who are the good essayists? We have had a number of them, starting with Emerson and

Thoreau. Then, early in this century, there was Ortega y Gasset, born in Spain but for the world. And Albert Camus in France. More recently there was Joseph Wood Krutch, teacher and critic, and amateur naturalist. No one of these writers was anxious to persuade, yet they were vastly persuasive. They teach by, in a sense, securing their education in public. They have positions, strong ones, but they never bludgeon their readers. They write with a quiet confidence that the truth will out, and of things that are quite certain they may write with a delicate tentativeness that the reader, feeling respected, comes to appreciate. They are writers to whom one goes back again and again.

Today we have Wendell Berry, teacher, poet, litterateur, and farmer. We have been reading lately in his first book of essays, *The Long-Legged House*, which came out in 1969, Berry is a man who has, practices, and believes in simplicity without talking much about it. His readers are likely to be drawn to this attitude without knowing it, which may be the best mode of persuasion. Berry's forebears have lived in his area of Kentucky, close to the Kentucky River, near Port Royal, for several generations. He feels that he belongs there, and that he belongs on a farm as well. Near where he lived as a boy was a two-room cabin—a bedroom and a kitchen—close to the river, built by a brother of his grandmother in the 1920s. Years after—Berry was born in 1934—the cabin became the growing boy's home in the woods. The family called it the Camp, and so did he. When he was not yet three the river flooded and moved the Camp a few feet downriver, then lodged it higher on the bank against some trees, where it was given new underpinnings and physical security. He had to this place "a relation so rich and profound as to seem almost mystical," lying "beyond the claims and disciplines and obligations that motivated my grownups." He stayed there whenever he could. While growing up he read *Walden* there, and Gray's "Elegy." In 1957, having finished college and found the girl he was to marry, he cleaned up

and repaired the Camp, which suffered from long neglect. He patched the roof, restored windowpanes, put on new screens, and built an elegant privy, since he and his future wife decided to spend the summer there.

We were starting a long way from the all-electric marriage that the average modern American girl supposedly takes for granted. If Tanya had been the average modern American girl, she would probably have returned me to bachelorhood within a week—but then, of course, she would have had no interest in such a life, or in such a marriage, in the first place. As it was, she came as a stranger into the country where I had spent my life, and made me feel more free and comfortable in it than I had ever felt before. That seems to me the most graceful generosity that I know. . . .

In the life we lived that summer we represented to ourselves what we wanted—and it was *not* the headlong pilgrimage after money and comfort and prestige. We were spared that stress from the beginning. And there at the Camp we had around us the elemental world of water and light and earth and air. We felt the presences of the wild creatures, the river, the trees, the stars. Though we had our troubles, we had them in a true perspective. The universe as we could see any night, is unimaginably large, and mostly empty, and mostly dark. We knew we needed to be together more than we needed to be apart.

There were physical hardships, or what pass these days for physical hardships, that scandalized certain interested onlookers. How, they wondered, could I think of bringing a girl like Tanya into a place like that? How could a girl like Tanya think of it? They will never know. We had no electricity, no plumbing, no new furniture. Our house would, no doubt, have been completely invisible to the average American bride and groom of that year, and when it rained hard enough the roof leaked. I think our marriage is the better for it. By these so-called "hardships"—millions of people put up with much worse as a matter of course and endlessly—we freed our marriage of things. Like Thoreau at Walden, we found out what the essentials are. Our life will never be distorted by the feeling that there are luxuries we cannot do without. We will not have the abject dependence on gadgets and corporations. We are, we taught ourselves by our beginning, the dependents of each other, not of the local electric company.

Berry does not speak directly of simplicity, but of a good kind of life, of which simplicity was a natural part. This is probably the best and most persuasive way to speak of it.

Yet there are times when Berry speaks quite directly, although still as an essayist. In another part of this book he says:

There appears to be a law that when creatures have reached the level of consciousness, as men have, they must become conscious of the creation; they must learn how they fit into it and what its needs are and what it requires of them, or else pay a terrible penalty: the spirit of the creation will go out of them, and they will become destructive; the very earth will depart from them and go where they cannot follow. . .

We have lived by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. And this has been based on the even flimsier assumption that we could know with any certainty what was good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world—to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. . . . We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never entirely understand it. We must abandon arrogance and stand in awe.

Berry puts us in the condition of needing to think, and helps us to know it. It is difficult to think of a higher service to his fellows.

Ortega did the same. Ortega was a champion of culture and education. He had a way of making his readers realize that what he says is luminously true. He begins his book, *Toward a Philosophy of History* (Norton, 1941), with these words:

Scientific truth is characterized by its exactness and the certainty of its predictions. But those admirable qualities are contrived by science at the cost of remaining on a plane of secondary problems, leaving intact the ultimate and decisive questions. Of this renunciation it makes its essential virtue, and for it, if for nought else, it deserves praise. Yet science is

but a small part of the human mind and organism. Where it stops, man does not stop. If the physicist detains, at the point where his method ends, the hand with which he delineates the facts, the human being behind each physicist prolongs the line thus begun and carries it on to its termination, as an eye beholding an arch in ruins will of itself complete the missing airy curve. . . .

The physicist refrains from searching for first principles, and he does well. But, as I said, the man lodged in each physicist does not resign himself. Whether he likes it or not, his mind is drawn towards the last enigmatic cause of the universe. And it is natural that it should be thus. For living means dealing with the world, turning to it, acting in it, being occupied with it. That is why man is practically unable, for psychological reasons, to do without an integral idea of the universe. Crude or refined, with our consent or without it, such a trans-scientific picture of the world will settle in the mind of each of us, ruling our lives more effectively than scientific truth. . . .

How can we live turning a deaf ear to the last dramatic questions? Where does the world come from, and whither is it going? Which is the supreme power of the cosmos, what the essential meaning of life? We cannot breathe confined to a realm of secondary and intermediate themes. We need a comprehensive perspective, foreground and background, not a maimed scenery, a horizon stripped of infinite distances. Without the aid of the cardinal points we are liable to lose our bearings. The assurance that we have found no means of answering them is no valid excuse for callousness toward them. The more deeply should we feel, down to the roots of our being, their pressure and their sting.

Certain other passages in Ortega deserve presentation here. Besides being a remarkable scholar, he was an attentive introspective observer who made himself capable of clear generalizations about the nature of the human being. In *Man and People* he made a fundamental distinction between men and animals by pointing out that animals live entirely in response to their outer circumstances: they have no "inner lives." But the human has the power to withdraw from preoccupation with the outside world:

Observe that this marvelous faculty that man possesses of temporarily freeing himself from his

slavery to things implies two very different powers: one is his ability to ignore the world for a greater or lesser time without fatal risk, the other is his having somewhere to take his stand, to be, when he has virtually left the world. . . . the inwardness of man, his *self*, which is principally made up of ideas. . . . of course these two things, man's power of withdrawing himself from the world and his power of taking his stand within himself are not gifts conferred upon man. I must emphasize this for those of you who are concerned with philosophy: they are not gifts conferred upon man. *Nothing that is substantive has been conferred upon man.* He has to do everything for himself. . . . we must set ourselves in radical opposition to the entire philosophical tradition and make up our minds to deny that *thought*, in any sufficing sense of the word, was given to man once and for all, so that without further ado he finds it at his disposal as a perfect faculty or power, ready to be employed or exercised, as flight was given to the bird and swimming to the fish.

If this pertinacious doctrine were valid, it would follow that as the fish can—from the outset—swim, man could—from the outset and without further ado—think. Such a notion deplorably blinds us to perceiving the peculiar drama, the unique drama, which constitutes the very condition of man. . . . Man is never sure that he will be able to exercise thought—that is, in an adequate manner and only if it is adequate is it thought. Or, in more popular terms: man is never sure that he will be right, that he will hit the mark. Which means nothing less than the tremendous fact that, unlike all other entities in the universe, man is not and can never be sure that he is, in fact, man, as the tiger is sure of being a tiger and the fish of being a fish. . . . With him, not only is it problematic and contingent whether this or that will happen to him, as it is with the other animals, but at times what happens to man is nothing less than *ceasing to be man*... Each one of us is always in danger of not being the unique and untransferable *self* which he is. The majority of men perpetually betray this *self* which is waiting to be and to tell the whole truth, our personal individuality is a personage which is never completely realized, a stimulating Utopia, a secret legend, which each of us guards in the depths of his heart. It is thoroughly comprehensible that Pindar summarized his heroic ethics in the well-known imperative: "Become what you are."

The life of Albert Camus was a cry of desperation, to which he, as an artist, gave the symmetry of wholeness and balance. He made a

strange kind of beauty of the horror of his age, and ours. Born in a working-class French family in Algeria in 1913, he spent his early years in North Africa, later coming to mainland France as a journalist. He wrote plays, novels of a sort, and essays, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957, and died in 1960 in an automobile accident. His memorable work includes a brief essay, "The Myth of Sisyphus," a longer and often quoted piece, "Neither Victims Nor Executioners," his 50-page essay, "Reflections on the Guillotine," and the essays he selected for publication in America in the year before his death, and issued by the Modern Library in 1960 with the title, *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*. Writing on "The Artist and his Time," which appears in this volume, he recorded his convictions. No serious writer who reads Camus can fail to be both inspired and persuaded by his words:

The aim of art, the aim of a life can only be to increase the sum of freedom and responsibility to be found in every man in the world. It cannot, under any circumstances, be to reduce or suppress that freedom, even temporarily. There are works of art that tend to make man conform and to convert him to whatever is worst in him, to terror or hatred. Such works are valueless to me. No great work has ever been based on hatred or contempt. On the contrary, there is not a single true work of art that has not in the end added to the inner freedom of each person who has known and loved it. Yes, that is the freedom I am extolling, and it is what helps me through life. An artist may make a success or a failure of his work. He may make a success or a failure of his life. But if he can tell himself that, finally, as a result of his long effort, he has eased or decreased the various forms of bondage weighing upon men, then in a sense he is justified and, to some extent, he can forgive himself.

What, then, is the test of authentic art?

If it adapts itself to what the majority of our society wants art will be a meaningless recreation. If it blindly rejects that society, if the artist makes up his mind to take refuge in his dream, art will express nothing but negation. In this way we shall have the production of entertainers or of formal grammarians, and in both cases this leads to an art cut off from living reality. For about a century we have been

living in a society that is not even the society of money (gold can arouse carnal passions) but that of the abstract symbols of money. The society of merchants can be defined as a society in which things disappear in favor of signs. . . .

Finally art takes shape outside society and cuts itself off from its living roots. Gradually the artist, even if he is celebrated, is alone or at least is known to his nation only through the intermediary of the popular press or the radio, which will provide a convenient and simplified idea of him. The more art specializes, in fact, the more necessary popularization becomes. In this way millions of people will have the feeling of knowing this or that great artist of our time because they have learned from the newspapers that he raises canaries or that he never stays married more than six months. The greatest renown today consists in being admired or hated without having been read. Any artist who goes in for being famous in our society must know that it is not he who will become famous, but someone else under his name, someone who will eventually escape him and perhaps someday will kill the true artist in him. . . .

"Every wall is a door," Emerson correctly said. Let us not look for the door, and the way out, anywhere but in the wall against which we are living. . . it *is* there. Some will say that this hope lies in a nation, others, in a man. I believe rather that it is awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and works every day negate frontiers and the crudest implications of history. As a result, there shines forth fleetingly the ever threatened truth that each and every man, on the foundation of his own sufferings and joys, builds for all.

This is persuasion that presents vision instead of "truth," or the truth of tomorrow instead of today.

REVIEW

ADVENTURE IN BOTANY

IF YOU want to know how, not an ordinary scientist, but an extraordinary one, works, then get from the library *Plants, Man and Life* (University of California Press, 1969) by Edgar Anderson, a human being and teacher whose mind was enriched by the lifelong study of botany. As a "subject" one may chance to study in a university, botany may turn out rather dull, but Mr. Anderson's way of telling about his work makes it fascinating. Wanting to give attention this week to a book one really enjoys, we took it from a nearby shelf (placed there to be handy for frequent rereading) and was soon embarrassed by its riches—one is moved to tell about everything he says, and we don't have the space. In his preface he relates that his original publishers (1952) were preoccupied with large problems when he was preparing the book for the printer, so he ignored their editorial requests for revision and wrote just as he wanted—to show, for one thing, what botany has commonly neglected, namely, certain cultivated food plants which are widely eaten and not really studied by anyone—the chapter on corn (maize) is an example. He also writes with a ranging imagination. He notes that the weeds of the West were most of them brought by accident from the Mediterranean area by the Spaniard settlers. While the lovely California flowers are mostly native, not so the weeds.

The plants which are growing unasked and unwanted on the edge of Santa Barbara are the same kind of plants the Greeks walked through when they laid siege to Troy. Many of the weeds which spring up untended in the wastelands where movie sets are stored are the weeds which cover the ruins of Carthage and which American soldiers camped in and fought in during the North African campaign.

How did they get here from so far away?

As soon as livestock were brought in, the weeds traveled in the hay and in the seeds of fields crops. Probably the introduction began with the very earliest Spanish visitors. When the sailing ships were loaded in the Old World their supplies would have been

stacked up on the quay. Every time this was done a few little pieces of mud could have become caked on kegs and boxes or caught in the cracks. Most weed seeds are small. Hundreds of them could have traveled in every shipload. Of these hundreds a few lodged in the proper sort of spot when the ship was unloaded. California's climate is very similar to that of Spain, and in those days there would have been few native plants fitted to survive in the strange scars man makes on the face of the earth. The weeds brought in by the Spaniards already had much experience of man. Some of them had evolved through a whole series of civilizations, spreading along with man from the valley of the Indus to Mesopotamia and on to Egypt and Greece and Rome. Some had long histories behind them before they ever reached Spain, and for hundreds of generations had been selected to fit in with man's idiosyncrasies.

Edgar Anderson celebrates the lowliest of plants—for example the humble spiderwort, not liked by American gardeners because its three-petaled blue flowers close by midday, making the plant look an untidy mess. Yet it is a plant popular in England, brought there from America in colonial times by John Tradescant, head gardener to Charles the First, who had found it in Virginia. But the Spiderwort (known to botanists as *Tradescantia virginiana*) has special qualities which attracted Prof. Anderson's interest. As he says:

In England spiderworts became favorite plants in cottage gardens but certain curious properties gave them a truly scientific career. Since the development of the microscope no other kind of plant has been so closely associated with botanical work over so long a time. Scientific interest began because of the delicate blue hairs which veil the stamens in a sort of ostrich-plume mist and which distinguish *Tradescantia* from most other plants. Under a microscope each of these tiny hairs becomes a chain of elegant blue beads, each bead a single cell, all of them so transparent that even in the living condition without any technical hocus-pocus, other than getting them in place under the microscope, one can see all the parts of the cell. Later studies showed that other cells in the plant, most particularly the germ cells, were also large and clear and particularly suitable for study under the microscope. Scientific reliance on *Tradescantia* as research and demonstration material has continued unabated by reason of these remarkable qualities.

Halfway through the twentieth century, we still find them being generally used as demonstration material for the education of premedical students and as subjects for determining the effects of various radiations upon living matter in such laboratories as those at Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

The next ten pages are devoted to Anderson's special study of all the spiderworts, leading, finally, to his discovery of how one species had "evolved" during the three hundred years of its cultivation as a garden plant—so much that it no longer looked like its primitive original, even to botanists, who knew nothing of this development.

A pet if gentle peeve of Anderson's is the neglect by botanists of cultivated plants. He found some difficulty in studying them because the literature is bare on the subject, or is limited to the interests of narrow specialists. Taxonomists, he says, "drifted gradually away from a real interest in what had originally been their main job." He then makes a comment on science:

Such a neglect of a socially and economically important field is not unusual in science. Science for all its integration of fact and theory is a strange kind of anarchy. There is little over-all planning. Discoveries are made not because there is a crying need for knowledge in that area but because someone has a fascinating new technique and young men become intoxicated with the new field of exploration which has been opened up and dash off into it. There are fads in science. A problem which looks humdrum gets passed up for one in which more scientists are currently interested. Eventually someone goes back to the neglected subject with a new set of ideas. That is just now beginning to happen with the study of cultivated plants.

Anderson has a way of turning the bewildering complexity of his science into a lesson for the common reader. After a long passage filled with Latin plant names and other technical designations, he gives a friendly justification for botanical verbosity.

By this time, the ordinary reader, showered with hexaploids and tetraploids, may begin to feel that the introduction of such Latin names as *Aegilops* for simple weed grasses is more than he should have to put up with. "Away with your *Aegilops*," he says, "let

us have the plain common name. Well, I might, if he so insists, but before I replace *Aegilops* with something closer to ordinary life, let me remind you that these are not English or American grasses; they come from the Near East. They have common names, plenty of them, in Arabic, Turkish, Georgian, Hebrew, and Russian. For most of these languages the average reader does not even know the alphabet. *Aegilops*, with its initial *ae* diphthong, may look a little strange at first, but it is far easier for the average reader than its everyday equivalents in Turkish, or Arabic, or Russian.

Agriculture, we learn, may be far older than is commonly supposed. On this subject Anderson speaks highly of the work of Oakes Ames, who once taught a course in Economic Botany at Harvard and in his later years published a small book, *Economic Annuals and Human Cultures*. Anderson says:

To Professor Ames the indefinite boundary between weeds and cultivated plants, the discovery of our major drug plants by primitive man, the fact that the origin of every major crop is lost in the shadows of prehistory were all clear evidence for a very ancient origin for agriculture. In the five thousand years of recorded history man has not added a single crop to his list of domesticates.

Next Anderson gives a quotation from Prof. Ames which shows the light that botany is able to throw on cultural history and even prehistory:

Far be it from the botanist to dispute theories based on sound anthropological evidence of man's origin or arrival in America. No doubt the migrations and discoveries surmised by anthropologists all took place, as did the recorded discoveries of Magellan, De Soto, Hudson, and others. Nevertheless, the hypothesis based on the evidence presented by the enumeration of economic annuals shows that it would have been impossible for wandering tribes, starting from Bering Strait, to travel more than five thousand miles to tropical South America, and to discover there the ancestors of a number of useful American plants, and within a period of two or even ten thousand years develop them to the state of perfection they had attained as proved by the prehistoric remains of 1000 B.C. When observed by the first European explorers in 1492, all of these economic species had been diversified and greatly ameliorated, and some of them had been rendered adaptable to every climate from

south of the equator to Canada. They had been spread over vast areas of North and South America; they had been rendered dependent on man; they had been so deeply rooted in tribal history that their origin was attributed to the gods. This is too great a task to assign a primitive people in the time allotted. . . .

Biological evidence indicated that man, evolving with his food plants, developed horticulture and agriculture in both hemispheres at a time which may well have reached far back into the pleistocene.

Perhaps the most interesting thing in this book is Prof. Anderson's account of a garden in the small village of Santa Lucia in Guatemala. To the unpracticed eye it looked like utter confusion, but Anderson found it so "efficient" that he carefully mapped it and planted one like it when he came home. It represented what we now call companion plantings. As he says:

At one point there was a depression the size of a small bathtub . . . this served as a dump heap and compost for the waste from the house. In terms of our American and European equivalents the garden was a vegetable garden, and orchard, a medicinal garden, a dump heap, a compost heap, and a beeyard. There was no problem of erosion though it was at the top of a steep slope; the soil surface was practically all covered and apparently would be during most of the year. Humidity would be kept up during the dry seasons and plants of the same sort were so isolated from one another by intervening vegetation that pests and diseases could not readily spread from plant to plant. The fertility was being conserved; in addition to the waste from the house, mature plants were being buried in between the rows when their usefulness was over.

COMMENTARY **THE ROLE OF HUMANS**

THIS week we use our space to enter a mild complaint against some of the present-day ecologists, the ones who insist that the role of human beings on earth has no more importance than the angleworm or the grasshopper. No doubt the worm and the grasshopper have divine potentialities, as the Buddhists maintain, but the life in them will almost certainly have to work at the human level, first, since in order to become a Buddha the whatever-it-is that we are has first to be a man, in order to earn the right to be called a Buddha. For a Buddha is a man who has raised himself to divinity.

It was reading again (in proof) on page 7 the long quotation from *Man and People* by Ortega that provoked this reflection—or speculation. In this passage the Spanish philosopher repeats in his own words the thesis of Pico della Mirandola in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*: that human beings create themselves. This fifteenth-century thinker (1463-1494) exerted great influence on Johann Reuchlin, sometimes called the father of the Reformation, introducing him to the Kabbalah and maintaining that through this mystical Hebrew work one could obtain the best evidence of the divinity of Christ. Pico not only knew both Latin and Greek, but Hebrew, Chaldee and Arabic, and he was a leading Platonist in his time. He died young, at the age of thirty-one, on the seventeenth of November, 1494.

The echo of Pico in Ortega is clear from the latter's sentences: "*Nothing that is substantive has been conferred on man. He has to do everything for himself.*"

Thus humans are able to fail as well as succeed in being human: this also both Pico and Ortega make clear. We may note that in their task of becoming, those who are most successful acquire along the way a fundamental understanding of the world. These, we might say, are the Prometheans, the men and women who

have genuine foresight and are able to think constructively about the needs of the world and of all who live in it. These are the natural sages who, when permitted by the rest of us, give insight into the part we are able to play for the good of the world. This seems in some sense the contract we have with Nature and one another—to be instructors in the world's needs. A recognition of this possibility—and obligation—may some day define the role of man and the deepest meaning of ecology.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

DIFFICULT BUT IMPORTANT

BRUNO BETTELHEIM, whose article on punishment or discipline of children was featured by the November *Atlantic*, was born in Austria and obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Vienna in 1938. He came to the U.S. in 1939, taught for a while at a college (his field was psychology) and then joined the faculty of the University of Chicago, becoming director of the Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School for emotionally disturbed children. He has written many books, a recent one being *The Uses of Enchantment* on the value of fairy tales. He is a man with extraordinary practical wisdom on the bringing up of children.

What the *Atlantic* summary of his career omits is the fact that he spent a year in the biggest concentration camps in Germany, Dachau and Buchenwald, and wrote on the experience for the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (October, 1943) an epoch-making paper, "Individual and Mass Behavior in Extreme Situations," which was reprinted by Dwight Macdonald in *Politics* for August, 1944. The purpose of the camps, Bettelheim said, was "to break the prisoners as individuals and to change them into docile masses. . . by demonstrating what happens to those who oppose the Nazi rulers" and "to provide the Gestapo with an experimental laboratory in which to study the effective means for breaking civilian resistance, the minimum food, hygienic, and medical requirements needed to keep prisoners alive and able to perform hard labor when the threat of punishment takes the place of all other normal incentives." Bettelheim manifestly learned a great deal about human nature in the camps, himself becoming a compassionate doctor of the mind.

The quality of his thinking becomes evident in the *Atlantic* article. He says in one place:

It is by no means easy for a child to become disciplined. Often part of the reason is that his parents are not very well disciplined themselves and thus do not provide clear models for the child to follow. Another difficulty is that parents try to teach

self-discipline to their child in ways that arouse his resistance rather than his interest. And still another difficulty is that a child responds to his parents more readily—both positively and negatively—when he sees that their emotional involvement is strong. When parents act with little self-discipline, they show their emotions. When they get their emotions under control, they are nearly always again able to act in line with their normal standards of discipline. Rare as it may be for a parent to lose control, those are the times that impress a child most. Disciplined behavior, while pleasing and reassuring to the child and likely to make life good for him in the long run, does not make such a strong impression on him.

For these and many other reasons teaching discipline requires great patience on the part of the teacher. The acquisition of true inner discipline, which will be an important characteristic of one's personality and behavior, requires many years of apprenticeship. The process is so slow that in retrospect it seems unremarkable—as if it were natural and easy. And yet if parents could only remember how undisciplined they themselves once were and how hard a time they had as children in disciplining themselves—if they could remember how put upon, if not abused, they felt when their parents forced them to behave well against their will—then they and their children would be much better off.

Children respond mainly to example. Bettelheim gives the result of a study in Sweden which shows that undisciplined behavior among teen-agers was almost without exception in homes with a bad emotional atmosphere, while teenagers who behaved well did so, regardless of either material assets or social class, because they had parents "who were themselves responsible, upright, and self-disciplined—who lived in accord with the values they professed and encouraged their children to follow suit."

To be disciplined requires self-control. To be controlled by others and to accept living by their rules or orders makes it superfluous to control oneself. When the more important aspects of a child's actions and behavior are controlled by, say, his parents or teachers, he will see no need to learn to control himself; others do it for him.

There is a great contrast between punishment and self-control.

Unfortunately, punishment teaches a child that those who have power can force others to do their

will. And when the child is old enough and able, he will try to use such force himself—for instance, punishing his parents by acting in ways most distressing to them. Thus parents would be well-advised to keep in mind Shakespeare's words: "They that have the power to hurt and will do none. . . . They rightly do inherit heaven's graces." Among those graces is being loved and emulated by one's children. . . .

When we tell a child that we disapprove of what he has done but are convinced that his intentions were good our positive approach will make it relatively easy for him to listen to us and not close his mind in defense against what we have to say. And while he still might not like our objecting, he will covet our good opinion of him enough to want to retain it, even if that entails a sacrifice.

The fundamental idea is not to curtail the child's power to make decisions for himself. If there are areas where this is obviously hazardous to both the child and others, then the prohibitions ought to be presented as though they were laws of nature, not just parental opinions or fears. Punishment, in short, should not be punitive, but impersonal. As a child grows up, the more he should be on his own, as he becomes equal to responsibility. Bettelheim's counsels are filled with common sense.

Even the kindest and most well-intentioned parents will sometimes become exasperated. The difference between the good and the not-so-good parent in such situations is that the good parent will realize that his exasperation probably has more to do with himself than with what the child did, and that showing his exasperation will not be to anyone's advantage. The good parent makes an effort to let his passions cool. . . .

The fundamental issue is not punishment at all but the development of morality—that is, the creation of conditions that not only allow but strongly induce a child to wish to be a moral, disciplined person.

Happily, we also have for notice a very good book on this general subject—*The Difficult Child* (Bantam, \$15.95) by Stanley Turecki, a child psychiatrist with a practice in New York City. Dr. Turecki writes without jargon and is easy to understand. He has very much the same kind of common sense as Dr. Bettelheim. As a young man starting out in his profession, he and his wife had a "difficult" child. He solved the problem—the child

blossomed into a delightful young person—but it took years and much self-control by the doctor and his wife. His book has more than 200 pages so here we give a sample from one of the later chapters.

How do you respond in a consistent, effective way to the various and complex situations that arise every day in a family with a difficult child? . . . Don't be discouraged by the apparent complexity. Don't expect yourself to "get it" immediately. With repeated practice and increasing confidence in your parental authority, the whole sequence will eventually take you only a few seconds. It will become second nature to you. Without thinking, you will automatically slip into the right response. But it takes time! If you can gradually change your reactions over several weeks, you are doing just fine.

The sequence of steps in the expert response to any difficult, negative, or "obnoxious" behavior goes like this:

1. *Can I deal with it?* You want a quick take on yourself on your state of mind. If you can't deal with it, disengage as quickly as possible. If you can deal with it, move on to Step 2.

2. *Become the leader.* Stand back, get your feelings out of it, become neutral, and start to think.

3. "Frame" the behavior. Recognize the type of behavior from your behavioral profile.

4. Is it temperament? Try to link the behavior to the difficult child's temperament as defined by his temperament profile. If it's temperament, the response in such a case is management rather than punishment.

5. *Is it relevant?* If the trying behavior is *not* based on temperament, is the issue important enough to take a stand on? If not, let it go, or respond minimally and disengage.

6. Effective punishment. If it's not temperament but it is relevant, respond firmly and effectively.

The rest of this chapter is a detailed consideration of each one of these steps, with numerous illustrations. One goal of this book is to help parents to stop blaming themselves for the eccentric behavior of their children. The children bring their character and temperament with them, however it is put together. Parents, if they don't feel "guilty," can be of greater help. But of course, sometimes they *are* responsible for what is going wrong.

FRONTIERS Articulate Protest

THE scientists who have spoken out against nuclear weapons—and in most cases against nuclear power as well—may be few in number, but their eminence speaks for itself. Lately we have given attention to the forceful statements of Hannes Alfvén, Nobel Laureate, concerning the obligation of physicists to tell the public the truth and to refuse to use the euphemisms which conceal the dread horror and inhumanity of nuclear weapons. We now have from England, published by the Menard Press, a pamphlet containing a letter written by Martin Ryle, distinguished radio-astronomer, a few months before his death in 1984. In it he said:

Present nuclear arsenals are so large that even if a few per cent were launched, much of Northern Hemisphere civilization would be destroyed. In these circumstances "Balance of Power" and "Negotiating from Strength" are meaningless. Either East or West could dismantle 10, 20 or 50 per cent of its weapons with no military disadvantage. Any further escalation of weapons numerically or by "modernization" brings no additional security; on the contrary it increases mutual distrust and makes the chance of accidental war greater; the consideration by both East and West of "launch-on-warning" systems is very worrying, given the proven unreliability of the U.S. NORAD computing system. There is no reason to believe Russian computers are any better. . . .

At the end of World War II I decided that never again would I use my scientific knowledge for military purposes. . . . The benefits of medical research are real—but so are the potential horrors of genetic engineering and embryo manipulation. We devise heart transplants, but do little for the 15 million who die annually of malnutrition and related diseases.

Our cleverness has grown prodigiously—but not our wisdom.

Martin Ryle was the Astronomer Royal of England. His letter may be obtained by writing the Menard Press, 8 The Oaks, Woodside Avenue, London N12 8AR. The pamphlet is one pound.

Meanwhile, the grassroots opposition to war is slowly growing. Here, again, the numbers are comparatively few but their impact is increasing. In the *Washington Spectator* for last Oct. 15, the editor, Tristram Coffin, describes this awakening, remarking at the beginning:

It was the American conscience, an outrage against unfair taxes and colonial rule, that led to the American Revolution; an outrage that ended slavery; an awareness of injustice that led to women's vote and civil rights for minorities, and a sense of the folly that ended the Vietnam intervention. Today, the American conscience has been reawakened by the excesses of an armed society and "Manifest Destiny."

Tristram Coffin finds a variety of peace missionaries active today—among them—

Vietnam veterans in San Francisco protest the film "Rambo" as glorifying war. A dozen Minnesota women are arrested for trespassing in a Senator's office in a demonstration against U.S. policy in Nicaragua. McDonald hamburger heiress Joan B. Kroc spent \$400,000 for full-page newspaper advertisements in 23 major newspapers last spring to condemn the arms race. She said, "I have been blessed with the means to put my convictions to work, and no conviction I have is greater than that nothing makes sense in our lives unless we create the basis for a decent and workable peace." Farm wives are organizing women involved in Farm Economics, to protect family farms.

The *Washington Post* reports that college students are once again active in projects outside the ivy walls. In Middle America, the Peace Resource Center of Western Wayne County, Michigan, has a busy program "to educate members and others in an ongoing effort to wage peace."

And there are individuals like Dr. Ed Myer, who gave up a good practice in the northwest to treat the sick and wounded in Nicaragua. A recent letter describes incidents of a kind that are arousing the American conscience against Administration policy there. He tells of meeting two former Contras:

"In Rio Blanca, 33-year-old Teofilo Espinosa Gutierrez, with a very obvious scar on his neck and others on his chest, tells how he defected from the Contras. He was subsequently captured by them as he was driving a privately-owned pickup truck, marched off for two days and then 'killed' by them. The commander of the Contra force got a new recruit

from his same neighborhood to 'kill' his friend. Teofilo was left for dead and covered with leaves. This is a tactic that the defectors from the Contras have repeatedly indicated as a standard practice, thus saying: 'If you return to your town, the Sandinistas will now sentence you to jail for the rest of your life for killing.' Teofilo feels lucky to have been 'killed' by a novice.

"José Esteban Morales Aguilar, 12 years old, defected from the Contras this month. He tells how he and a handful of other kids were moved into taking off with a 'recruiter' to work on a farm up north. He tells how one of them was killed in front of others when he tried to escape."

Many church people around the country are aroused, opposing apartheid, nuclear armament, and the economics of destruction. An Episcopalian group declared: "Missiles, planes, munitions and tanks put money into the economy in the form of wages but provide no products that absorb that money. . . . Massive military expenditures divert from the national economy many of the irreplaceable and limited resources needed to provide for other basic needs."

There is this summary on the Sanctuary movement:

More than two hundred individual churches, religious homes and private dwellings are giving sanctuary to aliens from Central America who have fled from political terror at home. Some 50,000 Americans are involved in the sanctuary movement, with its underground railway and safe places. The movement began in 1981 in Arizona and the San Francisco Bay area when church people began to assist, feed and shelter refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala. Today, shelters are located all the way from Texas to a monastery in Vermont.

Sixteen sanctuary workers were indicted by the federal government for illegal transport and harboring of refugees. After quoting a labor leader's protest against military production instead of needed products, Coffin says these portents of an awakening conscience "can be multiplied hundreds of times."