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A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS

AMONG the essentials of self-education in making decisions about what to do, as listed by Frederick Turner in his August *Harper's* article, are "the traditions of the performing arts." How, it may be wondered, will these help us? What can we learn from the choric styles of the Greeks, from Hamlet's advice to the players, or, indeed from the Method of modern times? But if we go to the dramatists instead of reviewing the modes of the actors, there is much to be found out. In his introduction to the collected works of Shakespeare, St. John Ervine compares the Greek playwrights with Shakespeare, showing a radical difference in the motivation of the characters.

He says:

> The Greek tragedy is an arranged one, ordained by irresponsible gods who use human beings with indifference. Agamemnon propitiates Artemis by sacrificing his daughter Iphigenia. Clytemnestra, his wife, murders him to avenge her death. Her son, Orestes, murders her because she murdered his father. And so the cycle of the Æschylean drama runs round: the tragedy is created through the caprice of the gods, who are incapable of love or care for their creatures and are themselves destitute of dignity. Here there is no room for the wayward, incalculable stuff of human kind, for these tragedies are not caused by the nature of man himself. Orestes is compelled to slay his mother by Apollo. A son of Jove advises and urges him to commit matricide, and when the crime is committed, the Furies persecute Orestes, but Apollo is not punished. Æschylus leaves the gods unrebuked; Euripides asks vain questions about their conduct; but neither of them presents a man in any other form than that of a governed creature, destined by insensitive deities to the commission of unnatural crimes. . . .

This may be one reason why we, in our time, must make a particular effort to read the old Greek plays with any spontaneous interest. The people involved are able only to do what they are told to do by the gods. They are caught in the windings of an inexorable destiny, yet are nonetheless *blamed* for what they do! How can you make sense out of that?

But Shakespeare—Shakespeare plays by other rules. As Ervine says:

> And here we come on the great difference between the Greek and the Elizabethan drama: the tragedy in the Greek plays is an arranged one in which the characters have no decisive part. Theirs but to do and die. But the tragedy in the Elizabethan plays comes straight from the heart of the people themselves. Hamlet is Hamlet, not because a capricious god has compelled him to move to a tragic end, but because there is a unique essence in him which makes him incapable of behaving in any other way than he does. He still has the human right to waver and to be wrong. He still can be doubtful about his purpose and slay Polonius in mistake for Claudius. He can hesitate and go forward, love and repulse Ophelia, twist and turn and offer to put his destiny, if it be his destiny, away from him. And because he can do these things, because he has the only sort of liberty that is of any service to a man, the right to make a choice, he establishes contact with us and makes us feel as Œdipus and Orestes do not make us feel, that we share life with him. . . . Shakespeare broke all the laws. He cared so little for action, in comparison with character, that he made very slight effort to keep his plots in plausible condition. Any old plot would serve his purpose, even one so puerile as *The Merchant of Venice.* He was not interested in machinery, but in people, and he could listen to the works of his plays creaking and groaning without a shudder running down his spine. He did not begin to write a play by thinking of a formulary nor did he attempt to prove an argument: He neither made his people do this nor that because religion or doctrine said they must do it, nor did he make them do this or that because he was anxious to prove a point of his own. He created his people and then let them go their way. There are no cages in the Shakespearean plays; nor are there any fetters. Macbeth seems to be a doomed man, but he has the right to choose. Even while he is deliberating on the murder of Duncan he asserts that "we still have judgment here."

What we are trying to get at, in this contrast between Greek and Elizabethan drama, is the moral psychology of human beings. The play, in these terms, is a form of popular moral instruction, not

didactic, but rather through the formation of judgments which are intuitive rather than overt. We learn that reflective judgment is *expected* of us, and that we should expect it of ourselves. We might remember, in the case of Macbeth, that his wife, who was intensely ambitious and also ruthless, knew the repressed strength of his moral character and, regarding it as a weakness, deliberately set about diminishing his feeling of compunction concerning the murder they contemplated, and which Macbeth finally committed; and we may remember, too, that Lady Macbeth later took her own life, possibly from remorse at her part in the crime. Both, as Ervine says, had "the right to choose."

It is of particular interest that a later writer, a teacher of psychology at Princeton, Julian Jaynes, in his book published nine years ago (*The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Houghton Mifflin), focuses on Homer's *Iliad* to illustrate his theory of the psyche of the Greeks, which is similar to what St. John Ervine has suggested. (The term "bicameral" here means a kind of split in the psyche, not unlike the affliction of the schizophrenic suffering dictation by "voices"—there are two "houses" in the mind, the decision-making gods and the obedient men.) Early in his book Prof. Jaynes says:

> The characters of the *Iliad* do not sit down and think out what to do. They have no conscious minds such as we say we have, and certainly no introspections. It is impossible for us with our subjectivity to appreciate what it was like. When Agamemnon, king of men, robs Achilles of his mistress, it is a god that grasps Achilles by his yellow hair and warns him not to strike Agamemnon. It is a god who then rises out of the gray sea and consoles him in his tears of wrath on the beach by his black ships, a god who whispers low to Helen to sweep her heart with homesick longing, a god who hides Paris in a mist in front of the attacking Menelaus, a god who tells Glaucus to take bronze for gold, a god who leads armies into battle, who speaks to each soldier at the turning points, who debates and teaches Hector what he must do, who urges the soldiers on or defeats them by casting spells or drawing mists over their visual fields. It is the gods who start quarrels among men that really cause the war, and then plan its strategy. It is one god who makes Achilles promise not to go into battle, another who urges him to go, and another who then clothes him in a golden fire reaching up to heaven and screams through his throat across the bloodied trench at the Trojans, rousing in them ungovernable panic. In fact, the gods take the place of consciousness.
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> The beginnings of actions are not in conscious plans, reason, and motives, they are in the actions and speeches of gods. To another, a man seems to be the cause of his own behavior. But not to the man himself. When, toward the end of the war, Achilles reminds Agamemnon of how he robbed him of his mistress, the king of men declares, "Not I was the cause of this act, but Zeus, and my portion, and the Erinyes who walk in darkness: they it was in the assembly put wild ate upon me on that day when I arbitrarily took Achilles' prize from him, so what could I do? Gods always have their way." And that this was no particular fiction of Agamemnon's behavior to evade responsibility is clear in that this explanation is fully accepted by Achilles, for Achilles also is obedient to his gods. Scholars who in commenting on this passage say that Agamemnon's behavior has become "alien to his ego," do not go nearly far enough. For the question is indeed, what is the psychology of the Iliadic hero? And I am saying that he did not have any ego whatever.

It is natural for us to ask: But what sort of beings were these Greek Gods who played so wantonly with human destiny? How, indeed, could the Greeks believe in them? One might, if pressed, say the same thing about Jehovah, for he on occasion inspired behavior that we are unable to admire. Prof. Jaynes, however, has an interesting answer to this question.

> Who then were these gods that pushed men about like robots and sang epics through their lips? They were voices whose speech and directions could be as distinctly heard by the Iliadic heroes as voices are heard by certain epileptic and schizophrenic patients, or just as Joan of Arc heard her voices. The gods were organizations of the central nervous system and can be regarded as personae in the sense of poignant consistencies through time, amalgams of parental or admonitory images. The god is a part of the man, and quite consistent with this conception is the fact that the gods never step outside of natural laws. Greek gods cannot create anything out of nothing, unlike the Hebrew god of Genesis. In the relationship between the god and the hero in their dialectic, there are the same courtesies, emotions, persuasions as might occur between two people. The

> Greek god never steps forth in thunder, never begets awe or fear in the hero, and is as far from the outrageously pompous god of Job as it is possible to be. He simply leads, advises, and orders. Nor does the god occasion humility or even love, and little gratitude. Indeed, I suggest that the god-hero relationship was—by being its progenitor—similar to the referent of the ego-superego relationship of Freud or the self-generalized other relationship of Mead. The strongest emotion which the hero feels toward a god is amazement or wonder, the kind of emotion that we feel when the solution of a particularly difficult problem suddenly pops into our heads, or in the cry of eureka! from Archimedes in his bath.
>
> The gods are what we now call hallucinations. Usually they are only seen and heard by the particular heroes they are speaking to. Sometimes they come in mists or out of the gray sea or a river, or from the sky, suggesting visual auras preceding them. But at other times they simply occur. Usually they come as themselves, commonly as mere voices, but sometimes as other people closely related to the hero.

If hallucinations and obsessions were better understood, we might be more comfortable with this explanation, yet it certainly helps us to understand Greek poetry and drama, and enables us to think of the Shakespearean play as a kind of Socratic transformation of the dramatic art.

Shakespeare, however, while fixing responsibility in the individual, was well aware of the human tendency to attribute the cause of weaknesses or offensive actions to external influence. In *Ialias Caesar*, at the end of a quarrel between the plotters, Brutus and Cassius, there is this interchange:

> *Brutus.* O Cassius, you are yoked with a lamb,
> That carries anger as the flint bears fire;
> Who, much enforced, shows as hasty spark,
> And straight is cold again.
>
> *Cassius.* Hath Cassius lived
> To be but mirth and laughter to his Brutus,
> When grief and blood ill-tempered vexeth him?
>
> *Brutus.* When I spoke that I was ill-tempered too.
>
> *Cassius.* Do you confess so much? Give me your hand.
>
> *Brutus.* And my heart too.
>
> *Cassius.* O Brutus,—
>
> *Brutus..* What's the matter?
>
> *Cassius.* Have you not love enough to bear with me
> When that rash humour which my mother gave makes Me forgetful?
>
> *Brutus.* Yes, Cassius; and from henceforth,
> When you are over-earnest with your Brutus,
> He'll think your mother chides, and leave you.

Or, as the car thief explained to the Judge: "I come from a broken home."

Our study of the performing arts has now conducted us to a consideration of the great transition accomplished by Socrates and Plato beginning in the fourth century B.C. The human being, Socrates had maintained, is more, much more, than a complex of responses to stimuli from without. He is a soul, capable of reflective decision, able to choose among the responses to be made to the events of his life and his circumstances. The young Greek, Plato held, ought to regard himself as a responsible soul, not a would-be copy of some Homeric hero. This understanding of the Platonic reform and psychology is clearly presented by Eric Havelock in his *Preface to Plato* (Harvard University Press, 1963), an influential book which deserves far more attention than it has received from the general reader. It gives what may be regarded as a complete explanation of Plato's opposition to the mimetic poets, including Homer. They were, as Havelock puts it, the tribal encyclopedia, the sources and enforcers of convention rather than the rebels and innovators that we think of poets as being. Havelock says in one place:

> When confronted with an Achilles, we can say, here is a man of strong character, definite personality, great energy and forceful decision, but it would be equally true to say, here is a man to whom it has not occurred, and to whom it cannot occur, that he has a personality apart from the pattern of his acts. His acts are responses to his situation, and are governed by remembered examples of previous acts by previous strong men. The Greek tongue therefore, as long as it is the speech of men who have remained in the Greek sense "musical" and have surrendered themselves to the spell of tradition, cannot frame words to express the conviction that "I" am one thing and the tradition is another; that "I" can stand apart from tradition and examine it; that "I" can and should break the spell of its hypnotic force; and that "I" should divert some at least of my mental powers away from memorization and direct them instead into channels of critical inquiry and analysis. The Greek ego in order to achieve that kind of cultural experience which after

> Plato became possible and then normal must stop identifying itself successively with a whole series of polymorphic vivid narrative situations; must stop re-enacting the whole scale of the emotions, of challenge, and of love, and hate and fear and despair and joy, in which the characters of epic become involved. It must stop splitting itself up into an endless series of moods. It must separate itself out and by an effort of sheer will must rally itself to the point where it can say "I am I, an autonomous little universe of my own, able to speak, think and act in independence of what I happen to remember." This amounts to accepting the premise that there is a "me," a "self," a "soul," a consciousness which is self-governing, and which discovers the reason for action in itself rather than in imitation of the poetic experience. The doctrine of the autonomous psyche is the counterpart of the rejection of the oral culture.
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> Such a discovery of self could be only of the thinking self.

It is this discovery on which Shakespeare played, delicately, as on a harp. Shakespeare was a dramatist, but he was also a poet who played a role very unlike the "authorities" of Greek culture with whom Plato found such fault. In *The Meaning of Shakespeare,* Harold Goddard speaks of this at some length. In his chapter, "The Poet-Playwright," he says:

> Drama is the most democratic of the arts in the sense that a play must have a wide and almost immediate appeal to a large number of people of ordinary intelligence if it is to have success enough in the theater to permit the author to go on writing plays. The playwright must be nothing if not lucid. As we have seen, he must keep no secrets if he is to feed them specifically that theatrical emotion which resides in the sense of omniscience. If a play's action is not plain and its characters are not easily grasped, it will obviously soon close its run. There is no going back and rereading in the theater.
>
> Poetry, on the contrary, is an aristocratic art. The poet is bound to please himself and the gods rather than the public—to tell the truth regardless of its popularity, to seek the buried treasure of life itself. In that sense he cannot help having a secret, and, even if he would, he cannot share it with the populace. When the moment of inspiration passes, he may not even comprehend it fully himself.
>
> What wonder, if this is so, that among innumerable playwrights and many poets, there have been so few poet-playwrights. The poet-playwright is a contradiction in terms. Yet a poet-playwright is exactly what the young Shakespeare was.
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> Plainly, if this paradoxical being is to survive, he must practice a little deception himself. And it's not just his audience that he must fool. If he must please the public, he must also placate the powers-that-be. If the crowd does not want the truth lest it disturb their animal contentment, those in authority do not want it lest it undermine their power. Between the upper millstone of the powerful and the nether millstone of the crowd the lot of the poet-playwright is not an easy one. . . .
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> Drama, as we have said, must make a wide and immediate appeal to a large number of people of ordinary intelligence. . . . The public does not want the truth. It wants confirmation of its prejudices. That is why the plays of mere playwrights have immediate success but seldom survive.
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> What the poet is seeking, on the other hand, is the secret of life, and, even if he would, he cannot share with a crowd in a theater, through the distorting medium of actors who are far from sharing his genius, such gleams of it as may have been revealed to him. He can share it only with the few, and with them mostly in solitude.

Shakespeare, we can all agree, was a poet, and one who found ways to confide his secrets, at least to those who take seriously Prof. Turner's advice. And it seems fitting to add that Plato, too, was a poet, one who lent his art to the discovery of the self. Ironic it may be, but a fact.

REVIEW
TIBET—THEN AND NOW

SOME time in 1944 Heinrich Harrer and Peter Aufschnaiter, German mountain climbers taken into custody in India in 1939 by the British, escaped from the prisoner-of-war camp in Dehra Dun and made their way into Tibet, finding a haven in Lhasa, where they were graciously received and given useful work to do. Then, late in 1950, they began preparations for departure, since Mao's troops had begun marching into the interior of the country. Finally, in 1959, when Lhasa and eventually the whole of Tibet had been occupied by the Chinese, the Dalai Lama took refuge in India, although Harrer had left years before. His book, *Seven Years in Tibet*, came out in 1952 and an English edition was published in 1953.

Now Harrer has written another book, *Return to Tibet*, brought out in America by Schocken in 1985, telling the story of his return visit to Tibet in 1983, after the relaxation of Chinese rule. He ends his preface by saying that he wrote this second book "to show how many valuable treasures have been lost and how important it is now to find a way to safeguard the individual character and homeland of a people who are fascinating in so many respects, a people whose destiny is very close to my heart." Needless to say, the new book is filled with comparisons of the Tibet of today with what he had experienced thirty years before. While the writer does his best to be "fair" to the Chinese—pointing out that the Red Guard mentality, characteristic of the time of the invasion of Tibet, did much harm and destroyed many treasures in China, too—his sympathies are all with the heroic Tibetans, whom he had come to love. Others who love Tibet will find reading this book a virtual necessity. It is filled with memories, anecdotes, and meetings with old friends—an intensely personal volume, yet giving what seems an impartial account of the struggle of the Tibetan people against the most difficult odds.

An experience on his return to Lhasa will convey what may be expected in this book:

> On my very first day, in the late afternoon, a handsome Tibetan approached me and said: "Don't you recognize me Henrig?" I stammered a little and remarked that, after all, thirty years had passed and he would have to help me a little. "But you saved my life, don't you remember that?" he replied. Of course, now I remembered. He was Jigme, the son of Surkhang, Tibet's secular Foreign Minister, the first person that Aufschnaiter and I had called on. One day I had been guest of Foreign Minister Surkhang and his family, who had pitched a tent on the riverbank. The only son of his second marriage, Jigme—which means "fear naught"—was home on vacation. He was attending school in India and had learnt to swim a little. I was in the water, floating on my back, and had drifted some way downstream when I suddenly heard screaming and saw a wildly gesticulating crowd on the bank, pointing to the river. Something must have happened. I quickly swam to the bank and ran back to the campingground. Just then Jigme's body bobbed up in a vortex, was dragged down again, emerged once more. . . . Without reflecting I dived into the water. I too was caught by the undercurrent but I was stronger than young Jigme and managed to bring his lifeless body to the bank. My experience as a sports teacher stood me in good stead and after a short while the boy was breathing again—to the joy of his father and the amazed spectators. With tears in his eyes, the Foreign Minister assured me time and time again that he was well aware that but for me his son would have drowned.
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> And now this son stood before me, a few decades later, as large as life. He had spent twenty years in prison and concentration camps, but the political thaw had recently enabled him to make a livelihood for himself as a trekking official. This may sound rather grand but was in fact a job without any responsibility of independence. One of the Chinese supervised everything he did.

In the late 1940s Harrer became a good friend and tutor of the Dalai Lama—then but fourteen or fifteen years old—and came to know well many other Tibetans. One pleasant experience of his second time in Tibet was a visit to the flood-control dam he and Aufschnaiter had constructed for the Tibetans in 1948. The dam was still in good condition and doing its job of restraining the waters of the Kyichu river, which after the monsoon often threatened a summer palace. Telling about building the dam, Harrer says:

> Each of the many workers we employed was paid his wages every day. This produced continual good humor and the work prospered. There was great confusion each time they dug up a worm. They would carefully place it on a shovel and carry it away a good distance to save its life. Respect for all creatures is very

marked among Buddhists and no one would ever harm an animal.

The presence of the Chinese in Tibet dislocated the Tibetan economy and famine began to occur, the first in Tibetan history. The Chinese built roads for troop transport which were of no use to the Tibetans. Tibetan labor was forced to build the roads and an airport to support China's expansionist aspirations.

> The Tibetans could not accept these conditions and therefore composed a six-point note of protest, in which they described their living conditions and demanded improvements. The response of the Red rulers was a ban on all criticism of communism. The Chinese, on the other hand, interfered in everything, from the administration of the monasteries to the directives of the aristocratic ruling class, though surprisingly they treated the nobility far better than the people. The Dalai Lama and progressive nobles had, of course, long realized that reforms were indispensable, for instance for correcting the unjust distribution of cultivable land, one-third of which belonged to the monasteries, nobles or government officials. I know from numerous conversations that the Dalai Lama fully realized his country's backwardness; there exists a plan of reforms produced by him in 1954, a sensible plan that would have been beneficial to the people. It may seem to run counter to common sense—but the Chinese prevented the Tibetans from introducing their own reforms. They looted the monasteries, and drove out the lames or put them under arrest. This vandalism was too much for the Tibetans. Once again it was the brave and intelligent Khampas who, from their province of Kham, vigorously resisted oppression by a foreign power. . . .
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> The revolt in the eastern Tibetan province of Kham was to go on for fifteen years; for two years it also spread to Amdo in the north. Then began a period of unimaginable atrocities by the Chinese. I do not wish to write about all those murders and barbaric tortures; that has been done often enough and the evidence is readily available. . . .
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> The "road to socialism" prescribed by the Chinese called for a complete transformation of the Tibetan way of life. However, throughout thirty years of occupation, efforts to shake their religious beliefs have proved a total failure—and it was this which seems to have been a major objective of the Chinese. Once they had exterminated their faith, total annexation would be an easy step. However, the Tibetans are clinging to their religion more than ever, since that alone provides support and consolation to them in these difficult times. The pillage and destruction of ancient monasteries and of irreplaceable cultural treasures has been a tragedy for the Tibetans and for the entire world—but they have merely strengthened the defiant resistance of an oppressed people.
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> By now the whole world knows how, under the rule of the "Gang of Four," the people were deprived of the economic basis of their existence and monks were pressed into forced labor and into abandoning their celibacy. Many of the best spiritual leaders were executed. And, while thousands of Tibetans were forcibly resettled in China, thousands of Chinese settlers arrived in Tibet. It was hoped to make the Tibetans a minority in their own country. The process of transformation was to be accomplished by a re-education of the young. The result was covert and overt resistance by the population.

Mao died in 1976 and at last the Chinese began to realize that the methods they had adopted would not, could not, work with the Tibetans. Efforts were made to persuade the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet, but he had every reason to distrust their intentions. He sent delegations headed by his brother and his sister, and, as Harrer says—

> Then something happened that no one would have thought possible: the Tibetans gathered in huge numbers to convey to the sixteen emissaries of their Lama-king their tokens of love and their expressions of despair—heedless of the bewildered Chinese. Thirty years of hard and brutal Chinese oppression had failed to shake their profound faith. Secretly they produced their prayer-wheels from their hiding places brought out *khatas,* wept and touched the visitors. It was a demonstration of allegiance such as no one had dreamed of. So great was the crush that they broke down the barriers erected by the Chinese in order to be blessed by the Dalai Lama's representatives. . . .
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> Every visitor to Tibet can see the trouble the Chinese are having with this unusual people. They have had a lot of surprises during their thirty years' occupation of Tibet, and they are ultimately affected by the age-old lure of the name of Tibet. The world public, if not its governments, will take note of the guarantees the Chinese give the Dalai Lama. There is no such thing as a bamboo curtain around Tibet; that was clear even during the cultural revolution. . . .

Return to Tibet is a book written by the heart, but with the intelligence of a resourceful and observant man of wide experience. It is difficult to imagine anyone not enjoying every page.

COMMENTARY
THE HUMAN ENTERPRISE

THIS week's lead article gives ample evidence of the actual dependence of civilization upon literature, not upon science, for what self-understanding it possesses and what genuine progress it makes. While it may be claimed that Dr. Jaynes is a psychologist and therefore a scientist, the material he uses is from Homer, not Freud, and his insight is more poetic than mechanistic. Maslow, whom we often quote, was also a psychologist, but he demanded a massive change in the application of scientific method, opening it to the entire realm of subjective experience.

The poetic dramatist and the essayist (Joseph Wood Krutch is an example) give us models of our inner life in ways that open the doors to inspiration as well as reflection: they increase the mysteries of existence, but also illuminate them. There are questions that should not be answered, problems that should not be solved, but lived out in life, and we learn this best, if we learn it at all, from literature.

Plato was a philosopher, but in youth was a poet. As John Keats suggested, the poet, when he matures, becomes a philosopher, and so it was with Plato, who then made his literary capacity the servant of high meanings. Where, indeed, would we be without the Platonic reform of the poets, resulting, as Havelock shows, in the recognition that we have, each one of us, soul and self apart from desire, from the spell of tradition, apart from all else save our governing consciousness which can say, "I am I, an autonomous little universe of my own, able to speak, think and act in independence of what I happen to remember." This is the "self" or "soul" which each one of us is, a spiritual rather than a material center, our very identity.

We have need to accept this definition of ourselves as adequate as at least a beginning point for our reflections. This is not the way we give definition to the things of this world. The self is made of the stuff of consciousness, and we have selves which seem at least capable of knowing themselves, however much we seem to forget it. Why is that not enough at the start? We can hardly expect of the soul that it exhibit the garb of materiality, since as Erich Fromm pointed out years ago, Man is not a Thing! If there is any immediate perception to be relied upon, it is the fact that we are, that we are thinkers, that we are able to distinguish between right and wrong, and that we are really self-dependent upon our thinking because we are continually making mistakes, and then, after a time, finding out and correcting them.

We are not our bodies, since we are able to make decisions about our bodies, take proper care of them and also abuse them. We are not objects of any sort, but subjects, identities of consciousness who, wherever we go, leave a track of objects behind us, identifying the character of our behavior for the moment, an hour, or a lifetime. Only the sage, as the ancient philosophers tell us, leaves no track because he is in complete harmony with nature and the world, and we cannot distinguish the track of what he does from the natural harmony that exists around us.

We are not even our minds, since our minds are as we have made them up, and we are quite able to change them, although this may take some doing. Most of the time, we change them only after a long bumping against the granite walls of necessity, because there is nothing else to do. That is why philosophers have said that freedom is knowledge of necessity. The wise human, one who has learned from both reflection and experience, both the natural and the transcendental "do's" and "don'ts" of existence, does not wait for all those bumps, but shapes his mind according to inner and outer realities. Which is why, so often, the practice of wisdom seems "easy," since the arduous lesson of becoming wise has somehow already been learned. This is a lesson, we find out from experience, in which we can have no didactic instruction; we learn it only from the fires of life. Literary men and women intuit this, and tend to observe the rules of life.

It may be that the appropriate science for help in this work of learning is metaphysics—which is the use of disciplined reasoning in areas which are not a part of physical existence, although often mixed up with them. Poetic insight distinguishes between the two and uses a scale for which an ear must be developed. The ear comes into full play by growing sensitive to the pain of the world. It is responsive to laws as demanding as the laws of motion, but only by working with them do we become convinced of their existence. This, we may some day be privileged to discover, is the enterprise of the human species.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
GANDHI ON EDUCATION

EDUCATION, we commonly suppose, is intended to enable us to get along in the world. That is, it is meant to adapt us to the world as it is. But what if the world is so confused, mixed up, and loaded with bad habits that getting along in such a world is the last thing we should get the young ready for?

The question is embarrassing, yet should be asked. Well, then, should education get us ready to deal as well as we can with a bad world, in order to change it? But have we the right to load so heavy a responsibility on our children, who are hardly in a position to decide whether or not they want to "change the world"? At what point, then, in bringing up the young, should we introduce the idea that change might be a good thing? And should we attempt to explain to them which changes are most desirable and how they are to be undertaken?

These are all great and largely unanswerable questions, yet they are before us and—by hit or miss or painful reflection—we are going to have to produce what answers we can.

The idea of raising such questions emerged as a result of reading, in *Sarvodaya,* a monthly journal published in India, devoted to Gandhian thinking, several pages by Gandhi on education, taken from *All Men Are Brothers.* He began these passages by saying:

> I admit my limitations. I have no university education worth the name. My high school career was never above the average. I was thankful if I could pass my examinations. Distinction in the school was beyond my aspiration. Nevertheless, I do hold very strong views on education in general, including what is called higher education.

He went on to say that while he approved the highest type of education possible, he opposed it being paid for out of the general revenue. The State, he said, should pay for the education that it has a use for. Then he said:

> It is my firm conviction that the vast amount of the so-called education in the arts, given in our colleges, is sheer waste and has resulted in unemployment among the educated classes. What is more, it has destroyed the health, both mental and physical, of the boys and girls who have the misfortune to go through the grind in our colleges.
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> The medium of a foreign language through which higher education has been imparted to India has caused incalculable intellectual and moral injury to the nation. We are too near our own times to judge the enormity of the damage done. And we who have received such education have to be both victims and judges—an almost impossible feat.

The "foreign language" he speaks of is of course English. Naturally, our hackles rise. When we go traveling, we like it if people can speak English to us. Moreover, English has become an international tongue—the *lingua franca* of very nearly all the world. Why shouldn't people learn English—people everywhere—especially if they want to get on?

But we must hear Gandhi out:

> I must give my reasons for the conclusions set forth above. This I can best do, perhaps, by giving a chapter from my own experience.
>
> Up to the age of twelve all the knowledge I gained was through Gujarati, my mother tongue. I knew then something of arithmetic, history, and geography. Then I entered a high school. For the first three years the mother tongue was still the medium. But the school-master's business was to drive English into the pupil's head. Therefore more than half our time was given to learning English and mastering its arbitrary spelling and pronunciation. It was a painful discovery to have to learn a language that was not pronounced as it was written. It was a strange experience to have to learn the spelling by heart. . . .
>
> The pillory began with the fourth year. Everything had to be learnt through English—geometry, algebra, chemistry, astronomy, history, geography. The tyranny of English was so great that even Sanscrit or Persian had to be learnt through English, not through the mother tongue. If any boy spoke in Gujarati which he understood, he was

> punished. It did not matter to the teacher if a boy spoke bad English which he could neither pronounce correctly nor understand fully. Why should the teacher worry? His own English was by no means without blemish. It could not be otherwise. English was as much a foreign language to him as to his pupils. The result was chaos. We the boys had to learn many things by heart, though we could not understand them fully and often not at all.

He had to learn everything through English. Had he learned through Gujarati, he would have enriched his native tongue and obtained a better grasp of all the subjects. But by learning everything through English he became alienated from all non-English speakers. "This English medium created an impassable barrier between me and the members of my family, who had not gone through the English schools."

> I was fast becoming a stranger in my own home. I certainly became a superior person. Even my dress began to undergo imperceptible changes. What happened to me was not an uncommon experience. It was common to the majority. . . .
>
> High schools were schools for cultural conquest by the English. The knowledge gained by the three hundred boys of my high school became a circumscribed possession. It was not for transmission to the masses. . . .
>
> I am unable to say that if I had not learnt what I did of English prose and poetry, I should have missed a rare treasure. If I had, instead, passed those precious seven years in mastering Gujarati and had learnt mathematics, sciences, and Sanscrit and other subjects through Gujarati, I could easily have shared the knowledge so gained with my neighbors. I would have enriched Gujarati, and who can say that I would not have with my habit of application and my inordinate love for the country and mother tongue, made a richer and greater contribution to the service of the masses? . . . .
>
> We and our children must build on our own heritage. If we borrow another, we impoverish our own. We can never grow on foreign victuals. I want the nation to have the treasure contained in that language, for that matter in other languages of the world, through its own vernaculars. . . . Gujarati boys and girls do not need to learn Russian to appreciate Tolstoy's short stories. They learn them through good translations. It is the boast of Englishmen that the best of the world's literary output is in the hands of that nation in simple English inside of a week of its publication. Why need I learn English to get at the best of what Shakespeare and Milton thought and wrote?

Gandhi would have young scholars learn languages and translate literature for the Indian people. He would have self-supporting universities and other branches of learning pursued through private effort. "I would prefer temporary chaos in higher education to the criminal waste that is daily accumulating." Can we, one wonders, make some sort of "translation" of what Gandhi has been saying here, in order to find its lessons for us?

He concludes:

> Thus I claim that I am not an enemy of higher education. But I am an enemy of higher education as it is given in this country. Under my scheme there will be more and better libraries, more and better laboratories, more and better research institutes. Under it we should have an army of chemists, engineers, and other experts who will be real servants of the nation, and answer the varied and growing requirements of a people who are becoming increasingly conscious of their rights and wants. And all these experts will speak, not a foreign tongue, but the language of the people. The knowledge gained by them will be the common property of the people. There will be truly original work instead of mere imitation. And the cost will be evenly and justly distributed.

This was a part of Gandhi's "India of My Dreams." Seeing his point would be one way to begin developing dreams of our own.

If we are able to understand Gandhi's argument, we may be ready to begin thinking of ourselves as belonging to the civilization, not of any nation, but of the world. This would be a great transition for the people of our time. The nation, as we can now see, has outlived its usefulness as a social form. More and more it has become an instrument of destruction, and self-destruction most of all. What, we may ask, is the next form of human association that will bring benefit to all?

FRONTIERS

Humanistic Science

CONSIDERING the date of this issue, it seems appropriate to tell about a book which would be a perfect gift for certain of one's friends—a book which opens up a wide frontier with respect to the world we live in and is also revealing concerning the science we practice for learning about living things. It is one of those books we regularly go back to for the simple pleasure of good reading. The author is Edgar Anderson, the title *Plants, Man and Life*, issued in 1952 by the University of California Press. (Finding a copy of this book is bound to be a problem, but used book dealers could probably turn up a few, and comparative inaccessibility is not a good enough reason for failing to recommend so excellent a work.)

The author, who is a botanist, writes about his specialty in ways that give his subject universal interest. Instead of long dissertations about strange exotic species, he writes about cultivated plants, mostly the food plants that are eaten all around the world. He finds that these plants have been largely neglected by botanists (with splendid exceptions) who become fascinated by their own research techniques. He turns the commonplace into romance, illustrates the anarchy of scientific method with scores of illustrations, gently reproaches his colleagues and holds up for admiration and emulation a wonderful handful of real investigators.

We give the first two paragraphs of his preface in evidence of how he writes:

> When I started to write this book in the 1940s, I was given the good advice: "Don't write for an imaginary public. Think of some actual person as your reader, write the book for him." I knew the kind of man I wanted to interest. Ever since my late teens I had been explaining botany to visitors at various botanical gardens. Those I most enjoyed had deep-seated curiosity; good, disciplined minds, broad interests; but little technical understanding of plants.
>
> Whom to choose as the perfect example? Pandit Nehru of India came to mind, so I kept him in my thoughts throughout the writing. It was years after the book appeared [this preface is to the 1969 edition] before I knew it really appealed to such readers. In stacks of fan mail the long intelligent letters were from a dean of research in a medical school; engineer of a transcontinental train; the quiet astute wife or a leading scientist; the research department head of an international food-grain business; a telephone company executive; and so on.

He explains that the publishers wanted him to do a conventional book—"an interesting digest of what botany knows about the subject should have a ready sale." But he did not write that sort of book; instead, he presented them "with a detailed exposition of what even the authorities did not know." His editors at first objected, but then became preoccupied with a "violent crisis" in their business—nothing to do with him—and let him do as he pleased. This splendid book was the result.

MANAS first took notice of Mr. Anderson by reason of his articles in *Landscape* (back in 1963), in one of which he said: "Naturalists who will not face resolutely the fact that man is a part of nature cannot become integrated human beings. A nature-study movement which focusses its attention on remote mountains and desolate sea marshes is making a sick society even sicker." Our reviews of the book began in 1970, in the first of which we called attention to Anderson's appreciation and defense of the famous Soviet biologist, N. I. Vavilov, whose theories brought him into disfavor with the Stalinist regime, leading to his disgrace and death, probably in a Siberian labor camp. In the chapter on Vavilov, Anderson says that "at the height of his power he had more people working on the history of cultivated plants than anyone before or since." Vavilov's important contributions to plant breeding are described in detail.

But why do we go back to Anderson's book, reading in it again and again?

Things that you just can't forget take you back to a book. In this case one of them is a passage he quotes from one of his heroes, Oakes Ames, who taught a course Anderson took at

Harvard. The passage is from Ames's *Economic Annuals and Human Cultures* (1939), in which he said:

> Far be it from the botanist to dispute the 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 Straits, to travel more than five thousand miles to tropical South America, and 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 a state of perfection they had attained as proved by the prehistoric remains of 1000 B.C. When observed by the first European explorers in r492, 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.

Anderson comments:

> In the decade since Ames's book appeared, new facts, and new techniques making available still other classes of facts, have pushed the estimated dates farther and farther backward. It is now almost universally admitted that man has been in the New World since Pleistocene times. It is too bad Professor Ames might not have lived a little longer to see the tide of scientific opinion turning in his favor.

Another part of *Plants, Man and Life* which calls for rereading is the chapter on the Mexican garden he studied while living in San Pedro Tlaquepaque in western Mexico. It looked like utter chaos—for the neat American gardener nothing but a bunch of weeds. But he found that actually everything was just right for efficiency and good production, and Anderson came home and tried out a similar arrangement in his own garden with, as he says, "considerable success." The gardens of "primitive" peoples, he remarks, are often mistaken for natural woodland by European and American plant collectors. He did not make that mistake. Neither did Carl Sauer, whom he quotes. Edgar Anderson writes as both scientist and human being, which makes his book nothing short of a delight.