VOLUME XX, NO. 34
AUGUST 23, 1967

THE OBSCURITY OF PHILOSOPHY

ONE who argues for the philosophical point of view—which is love of and the search for wisdom—can usually gain verbal assent to the idea that knowledge about man as well as knowledge about the world is needed for a useful and constructive life. The proposition has formal symmetry and makes theoretical sense. But then, when "self-knowledge" is spoken of, a certain lack of vocabulary becomes manifest. A man habitually thinks of himself in terms of his interests. He defines himself by what he pursues. He feels that these are the "givers" of human life—what, at any rate, have been given to *him*—and trying to get behind them is always difficult. It may also be embarrassing, and by many is held to be futile. After all, the practical knowledge accumulated during the pursuit of interests, if not exactly "philosophical," has an admirable certainty about it. And why, we ask, should we be content with a lesser certainty in the study of man? If direct inquiry addressed by a man to himself concerning who or what he is brings mainly a blur of vague, contradictory images, spaced out with apparently meaningless silences, why not conduct research in directions where the information obtained is more precise?

The obscurity of self-knowledge seems compounded in our relations with others. Each man has a view of the "facts" of life, but when he converses with another man he discovers that between them there are wide differences concerning not only the facts but also as to which facts are important. However, being endowed with reason, they are likely to agree that in theory it is desirable for both of them to know more facts. There are areas of experience in which the facts are quite well known, concerning which there is little argument. If this sort of knowledge were universally extended, men could stop all fruitless contention and work together in harmony. So, instead of seeking knowledge of themselves, they seek knowledge of the world. Here, at least, their efforts are rewarded by measurable progress.

This is the progressive, rational, scientific analysis of the human situation. It is too simple. One more or less cogent criticism of it is that science, for all its "miracles," is only the servant, not the critic, of our interests, and therefore requires extra-curricular assistance. Since man, with only expanding interests to guide him, will remain a mystery to himself, he needs supernatural instruction to relieve his ignorance; order his life, and regulate his "interests" (along with the science which serves them) . The criticism has some force, but the value of the supernatural instruction lacks historical justification. Further, it ignores (more or less) the other side of the human being—the part of him which, for all his ignorance, declares his need and obligation to think independently, to choose and remain free to *cope*, however poorly, with the problems of life.

Another criticism, often made in the form of a take-over of science itself, is the claim that the anarchic conflict of interests is so productive of evil that these must be reconciled by a system of political control based upon and enforced by such science as we already know. The argument here is that what is done in the name of justice *cannot* be tyrannical, however ruthless it may appear at times. And only a larger good will be served by destruction of the enemies of this system—people whose ignorance prevents them from seeing its moral necessity.

In behalf of our small store of self-knowledge, it may now be said that freedom and justice are ends that men have not acquired in any scientific manner from experience. These values are *given* in the nature of man; and, since they are

beyond rationality—being dictators, that is, of the use of rationality—men find it difficult to use rationality effectively in criticism of cherished ideas about freedom and justice. That is, while they find it easy to rationalize one doctrine of freedom and justice as opposed to another doctrine, it seems almost impossible for a system of freedom and justice to turn reason against itself. As Galbraith remarks in relation to the arms race between the Communist and "Free World" powers:

> Even a calculation that the competition may, at some point, lead to total destruction of all life is not a definitive objection. Liberty, not material well-being, is involved. This is an ultimate value that cannot be compromised in the face of any threat. Thus the competition is protected from even the most adverse estimates of its outcome.

This is a truth about man, and it makes you wonder about the importance of rational demonstrations. Some version of this truth is doubtless at the root of the conflict between Israel and the Arabs, and it is certainly behind the stubborn performance of the North Vietnamese. What sort of "facts" would change these peoples' minds? What "reasons" could influence them?

If, to this truth about "man," you add what is known—and so exhaustively described by horrified physical and other scientists—of the threat of nuclear war, it may seem practical from any point of view to give attention to the question asked by John Somerville (quoted in MANAS for June 7):

> Has not the world reached the point where the responsible philosopher must unambiguously teach that armed warfare between sovereign states has become unjust and immoral, something which can never again be regarded as the lesser of two evils, which henceforth must always be regarded as the greatest of all evils? To take this view demands courage and may invite reprisals; but is there any other view that is humanly defensible in the year 1967?

Now how, let us ask, did Mr. Somerville come to ask a question like this? How did he reach the position adopted by Socrates, that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong, in the instance of modern war? Well, we can propose, after Socrates, that this view of the evil of war came to him in consequence of another of Socrates' principles—that the unexamined life is not worth living. It must be admitted that, while knowledge of some "facts" played a part in Mr. Somerville's decision, it was examination of his life, after the fashion of Socrates, that brought the judgment. In short, he made the judgment as a philosopher. After all, the same facts are available and even known to many other men who have not yet taken this position.

Let us add one other diagnostic opinion, that of Karl Popper, who maintains as a first principle of rational politics "that *we cannot make heaven on earth."* And then, out of sympathy for those who think they can, he reminds us that the terrible things done by the Communists during their rise to power "happened because the founders of communism believed in a theory which promised freedom—freedom for all mankind."

Is this judgment by Karl Popper a philosophical judgment about man? Or is it a scientific judgment based on historical evidence? In any event, the answer to the question, "Why *can't* we?", would probably be a philosophical judgment.

Well, we have been collecting a few views—some would call them truths—about the nature of man. One is that moral values such as freedom and justice can be shown to exert a greater control over human behavior than reason. Another is that conflicts in behalf of these ideals—or what men believe to be these ideals—could easily escalate to a point where mankind itself would be very largely destroyed. (This latter is not a truth about man's nature; it relates to a possible consequence of human behavior, although it suggests a truth about the human capacity for self-delusion in relation to the service of high ideals.) And then there is Karl Popper's judgment from history—that political manipulation will not erase evil from the world.

This is a mixed bag of conclusions, all bearing, directly or indirectly, on the nature of man. If we regard them as "truths," we probably ought to classify them as truths of "low priority." Or they are truths with low impact for most human beings. Which is to say that they do not seem to have much connection with what people conceive to be their *interests* at the present time. But isn't the total destruction of the human race a matter of "interest"? It is, of course, but the ability to recognize this interest seems to belong only to an at least partly examined life. This idea is not really assimilable by most people, today. They are not able to *feel* its meaning. As Lester Greenspoon, a psychiatrist who teaches at Harvard, explained some years ago:

> The truth about the nature and risk of thermonuclear war is available, the reason why it is not embraced is because it is not acceptable. People cannot risk being overwhelmed by the anxiety which might accompany a fully cognitive and affective grasp of the world situation and its implications for the future. It serves a man no useful purpose to accept this truth if to do so leads only to the development of very disquieting feelings, feelings which would interfere with his capacity to be productive, to enjoy life, and to maintain his mental equilibrium.

What shall we say to this? That it's just psychiatric double-talk, and the time has come to *make* all these people see how dangerously we are living, today?

But Dr. Greenspoon's point is that making them see will unfit them for doing anything helpful. What if he is right? As a psychotherapist he adds:

> . . . he who would have others know "the truth" must take into account what "the truth" would mean to them and how they would respond to it. The truth is a relativity in interpersonal affairs; it has meaning only in relation to people, and this meaning is often difficult to anticipate. The messenger of "truth" bears part of the responsibility for the result of his effort.

Well, this returns us to the initial dilemma—that self-knowledge and interpersonal truth are a mushy morass of "relativity." It returns us to this situation by asking: What good are "facts" if people won't look at them? What good is science that is used by men to destroy one another? What good is an "objective truth" that—for reasons as obscure as self-knowledge and which are doubtless a part of self-knowledge—men can't use to help either themselves or the world?

These are the provocations to philosophy.

What is the content of philosophy? It is first of all the admission of ignorance an honest account of the human situation. The chief persuasion to philosophy, historically speaking, is pain. This is a way of saying that men don't think with genuine seriousness until they are forced to.

Why, then, do some men concern themselves with philosophic truth when they could easily do something else, something more pleasurable, perhaps? If we knew the answer to this question we could make a mechanistic explanation of Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ. Without having such an explanation, we can say only that such men were of a sort who could not avoid feeling the pain of others. In any event the philosopher—a man who by definition does not know, but *wants* to know—admits his ignorance. He must also declare his will to know—although, unlike the scientist, who says he is going to accumulate the facts about the world, the philosopher asks himself what he is now going to do with what he already knows, and why. His truth, in short, is to be *decisional.* It may be colored with facts and framed by facts, but his "truth" will be what he does and why he does it. Philosophy is reasoning about these decisions. It puts a man in the position of accepting as truth only the truth he plans to use. It will lead to an act or light up his decision about an act. And since decision is personal, different with each man, it involves the inspection of personal interests. There are conflicts of interest among men and conflicts of interest *within* men. These conflicts

require reconciliation. Philosophy is the means of reconciliation for individuals, and politics for societies. The question is, which do you do first? Plato seemed to think that you must do both, but philosophy comes first, since the qualities of men make the qualities of the society. If the people who act politically leave their interests unexamined, terrible confusion must result. This is the point of the *Republic*. And if politics becomes hopeless, men must pursue truth even more strenuously, in the hope, some day, of philosophizing their society.

Ortega deals with this question in *Man and People*, which is his philosophical study of sociology. When reflection is regarded with contempt; when men are discouraged from thinking about who they are and what they ought to do, as individual human beings; and when all the energies of the people are whipped into "action" by their leaders—when these things happen, a time of passionate self-destruction has come. As Ortega says:

> Such is the spectacle—always the same—of every period in which pure action is deified. The interval is filled with crimes. Human life loses value, is no longer regarded, and all forms of violence and spoliation are practiced—especially of spoliation. Hence whenever the figure of the pure man of action rises above the horizon and becomes dominant, the first thing for us to do is to lock everything up. Anyone who would really like to learn what effects spoliation produces in a great civilization can see them set forth in the first book of major importance to be written on the Roman Empire. I refer to the book by the great Russian savant Rostovtzeff, who for many years has been teaching in the United States—*Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire.*
>
> Torn in this way from its normal connection with contemplation, with being within one's self, *pure action* permits and produces only a chain of stupidities which we might better call "stupidity unchained." . . . This being the situation, it would seem sensible that, whenever circumstances give us even the slightest respite, we should attempt to break this enchanted circle of *alteración*, which hurries us from one folly to another; it would seem sensible that we should say to ourselves—as after all, we often say to ourselves in our more ordinary life whenever our problems overwhelm us, when we feel lost in a whirlpool of problems—that we say to ourselves: "Quietly now!" What is the meaning of this adjuration? Simply that of inviting us to suspend for a moment the action which threatens to preoccupy us and make us lose our heads; to suspend action for a moment so that we may withdraw within ourselves, review our ideas of the circumstances in which we are placed, and work out a plan of strategy.

Ortega may use the language of practical sagacity, but his meaning is philosophical. He means that a man should withdraw into himself and consider the quality, direction, and intent of his life. And—

> Whenever and wherever I speak of "human life," unless I make a special exception, you must avoid thinking of somebody else's life; each one of you should refer it to your own life and try to make that present to you. Human life as radical reality is only the life of each person, is only *my life*. . . . The life of another, even of one nearest and dearest, is for me mere spectacle, like the tree or the cliff or the wandering cloud. I see it, but I *am* not it, that is, I do not live it.

For one who seeks philosophy in the Socratic tradition, there can be no escape into abstraction, no hearsay ethical obligation, no duty public that has not first been recognized as duty private. These exclusions make the long catalog of negatives with which philosophy seems at first concerned. Philosophy challenges all the popular dogmas, one by one. It may return to them, or to some among them, but it will not take them for granted. It refuses to inherit anything. It will not travel on any uninspected momentum. And it looks at each driving "interest" with a critical eye.

Since we are speaking somewhat in historical terms, we might consider the Platonic aiticism of what are today conventional notions of the good life, presented by Alvin Gouldner in *Enter Plato* (Basic Books, 1965):

> . . . one may note a fundamental difference between the Platonic—and indeed the classically Apollonian view of the good life—on the one hand, and that of the modern, on the other, for the modern world is permeated by the assumption that human troubles derive from an inhibition of impulses or from

> a shortage of gratifications. On this basis the modern world's distinctive (not necessarily its most frequent) remedial strategies are oriented to facilitating the expression of impulses and to gratifying wants and desires.
>
> In their largest cultural import, as distinct from their diverse intellectual complexities, both the Freudian and the Marxist movements are in this respect alike. Although oriented to different needs, both endorse the legitimacy of men's tissue-linked wants and desires; both tend to view the frustration of these desires as a source of human problems rather than seeing their gratification as the source of individual or social pathology. Rather than fearing it, both seek more gratification. In this regard, however, Freudianism and Marxism are expressive of a still larger cultural transformation, they are both in some part outgrowths of nineteenth-century Romanticism, as well as of certain aspects of the French Revolution, which underwrote the desirability of expressivity and sanctioned the possibility of worldly happiness. . . .
>
> Plato wants men to be good, not happy. It is this that he stresses and makes problematic, however much he alleges that a good life will also make men happy. In contrast, modern men typically stress the importance of happiness, although they may claim that this is not at variance with the demands of morality, and they may seek to accommodate the two by conceiving of the pursuit of happiness as among their rights.

What might a philosopher say to all this? Well, he might speak of the pointlessness of reforms which *only* condemn excesses and redress balances. He would look for a normative good, not a down-with-the-tyrants and goodies-for-everybody criterion of what to do next. He would not try to make an entire social philosophy out of polemics against injustice, although he would oppose injustice. He would do more than "react." He would not declare for equity in "interests" as the highest good, but examine the interests themselves, for what they may do for and against human beings.

He would most of all try to avoid waiting to learn from the pitiless lessons of history, for out of these come mainly excesses in some other direction. An interest-oriented culture is capable of no better kind of reform.

Leonard Nelson says in *Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy* that philosophy must take its basic assumptions from psychology. This seems quite correct. Plato's psychological assumptions have to do with the play of *psyche* between *Nous* and *Anoia;* with the kinds of love, both base and noble; with the susceptibility of men to imitation; with their innate love of justice; with man's fall from an earlier sublime condition; with the reminiscences of the human soul; with the lot provided by the rule of *Ananke,* or moral law; with the necessity of each man to choose for himself, by his own light, assisted—if he be so fortunate—by one who understands from personal experience the ins and outs of the pursuit of the kind of knowledge which is interchangeable with virtue.

There are enough psychological reference-points, here, for the construction of a fairly complete metaphysics.

But when a modern man goes to Plato for inspiration, he feels obliged to pick and choose. He has a heritage of tough-minded skepticism in psychology. The poets may have kept alive the doctrines of pre-existence and reminiscence, but a modern man feels that he would have to turn "mystic" to accept them. He might do worse. The distinction between higher and lower loves is very recent in psychology—as, for example, in the writings of Trigant Burrow and Rollo May—but it exists. The moral law, as a transcendental form of rationalism, has mainly Emerson to support it in the West, although the influx of Buddhist thinking may eventually bring a growing acceptance of Karma. However, the ultimate basis of Plato's hope for the philosophical awakening of human beings lies in their lost but still potential divinity—*once* they were at one with the Good, and this conception has a psychological parallel in the idea of the Peak Experience, in modern Humanistic psychology. You don't have to adopt the language of either Buddhist or Platonic metaphysics to see the *functional* correspondence between the Peak Experience and Nirvana or the

highest Intelligible Realm. The parallel results in a symmetry of the nature of man. At its root, or in its highest aspect, the *subject* is all-potential, psychologically speaking. This may be enough for the rebirth of Platonic philosophy in modern times. It is at least a beginning. It enables a man to honor himself as a subject, and to look with wonder and delight at the thoughts of which such a subject may be capable. It happens that we live at a time in history when there is every reason for a man to say to himself, "What *else* is worth looking at, these days?"

The obscurity of philosophy arises from the uniqueness of man—each individual man. The truth he sees is a function of his own becoming—of his own private rhythms and break-throughs, which are unpredictable. His truth is an act of his being, and will, accordingly, have only a family resemblance, never a precise identity, with the truths discerned by other men. Yet this family resemblance, if generalized, can be made into what men call the Eternal Verities, and at a certain elevation of human life these verities operate with the same certitude that the laws of physics have for an engineer. At the same time, one sees the total uselessness of attempting any sort of coercion in respect to philosophic truth. Even logical demonstration seldom hits the mark. Philosophic truth is always chosen—not borrowed, not accepted from tradition, never "proved" by someone else's irresistible persuasion. If it is not *chosen,* it cannot be true. And since, with the little self-knowledge most of us have at our disposal, we remain uncertain as to what we have really chosen, the act of choosing must be performed over and over again. And so our philosophical knowledge, being virtually interchangeable with our psychological knowledge—which is fundamentally *self*-knowledge—is best described as knowledge which has only low reliability. A. H. Maslow puts the situation well in *The Psychology of Science:*

> Knowledge has an embryology, too; it cannot confine itself to its final and adult forms alone. Knowledge of low reliability is also a part of knowledge.

This is a way of saying that, in philosophy, a man cannot use his finite certainties to any philosophic purpose. The philosophic purpose is not finite. As with Socrates, his most important tools are his doubts. The certainties possible in philosophy are never "arrived at," but are grown. For this reason, it may be, when a man wants to "teach" the philosophic truth, he learns not to speak of it in propositions—except incidentally, to engage or set the stage for the intellect—and he finds himself trying to give his *being* to those whom he would teach. It is the noblest act of love.

REVIEW
"CREATIVE DISORDER" IN EDUCATION

IF, as Socrates maintained, the first step in any serious educational inquiry ought to produce "perplexity," then *Dialogue on Education* (Bobbs-Merill, paperback, 1967, $1.25) is an eminently successful book. The general editor of the series, Robert Theobald, gave the task of selecting the contributions to Richard Kean, a graduate student at the University of Michigan, and Mr. Kean adds a fertile brand of perplexity to the collection. That is, at the end of the book he explores his own wonderings and hesitations about what went into it. This mood, it may be, and what it suggests to the reader, will turn out to be the unforgettable part of the book. Speaking in a postscript about a meeting with one of the contributors, he says:

> As I left his office the next day, I encountered the same feeling I'd had on leaving every campus or office during my trek east—an ambiguous sense of terror, fear lest the ground we were embarking on would not only be uncharted, but largely unchartable as well.

Then, of another of the contributors:

> Stuart Miller spent a day at my home on Long Island working on the final draft of his article. Two evenings before, in New York City, he had told me of the particular circumstances surrounding its publication. As he put it, "This whole thing has a fictional quality about it. At one and the same time, I am publishing my Ph.D. thesis, a scholarly work in the grand tradition; a study of grades which, in the liberal sense, 'proves' their ineffectuality in the university environment; and this piece, in which I take a radical stand and commit myself to a new way of life. Each piece represents a part of my life which is real to me, but the change has come so fast!"
>
> We talked often, during that day, about that malaise, that sense of terror, which we both felt in the air around us.

Our effort, here, will be to understand this desperation, to sympathize with it, and then to wonder if it is altogether necessary. For the understanding, we go to Mr. Miller's contribution to *Dialogue on Education,* which he finds in such striking contrast to his doctoral thesis. He calls his article "Confessions of a New Academic Man, *or* the Need for Serious Educational Reform and Why There Won't Be Any." The setting for what he says was his job teaching English at the University of California in Berkeley during the Free Speech Movement:

> My trouble at Berkeley was not strikes, or demonstrations or smart-aleck hippies. I discovered, after what had passed for a first rate undergraduate education (Oberlin) and the very best graduate education (English and Comparative Literature at Yale), that I didn't know what a humanist should. Of course, I did know something about literature and I could teach that. In graduate school my focus had been narrowed and my mind sharpened: ground to so fine a point, I could operate on criticism, novels and poems. I could talk about the history of literary criticism and I had some knowledge of several foreign literatures. I still had ideals, even—I wanted to tell my students the truth, to show them why literature was important, why beauty was important, why thinking was important.
>
> It was with those ideals, left over from my liberal education, that the trouble began. I could tell my students about Truth, Beauty, and Thought, but I couldn't prove what I told them. I don't mean "prove" in any logical or conclusive sense—it becomes increasingly difficult to prove in those ways. I mean "prove" in the sense of backing up with my whole existence the pieties I was prepared to utter. I had no proof. I had a technology (literary criticism) but I had no proof that it was important. I could assert that the unexamined life was not worth living, but I knew that if I examined mine I would find too many empty corners.
>
> The curious thing was that I could fool the students. If I screwed up my lies enough, I could come into class and pretend to be a humanist, a man like two of the men who taught me in college, a man with a substantial and coherent view of life. And the students believed my masquerade—they saw me as no hypocrite. They were shrewd enough, however, to sense the narrowness of the bonds within which I was working—no squeezing of my technology, to change the metaphor, could produce a truly human sweetness. I could generate enthusiasm for the analysis of poetry, but I could only talk about loving it. Any love I had for literature had wilted in the pressure cooker of graduate school. . . . My colleagues, the young professors, were no help. They

> seemed more integrated with the system; they showed less strain; though they were not humanists, they seemed relatively unperturbed. Of course, one knew that they were miserable. There was a greyness about them: their beings had been rubbed grey by their fierce attempts to give importance to what was not important—the next article or book on the next non-subject. . . . They assimilated themselves to the middle-classes in a variety of ways because the class of humanists had seemingly perished. To one degree or another, I was like them.

At the end of his paper, Mr. Miller wonders about the possibility of such teachers accomplishing a reform "from within." He is not hopeful: "Can they risk taking a chance on losing their disciplinarian prestige, their salaries, their bourgeois comfort? I doubt it." But if reforms in education cannot come from the top, nor from within, where will they come from? There is this possibility:

> George Leonard thinks that reform in education will not come from the established colleges and universities. He thinks that students will bring it about by themselves. I think he is probably right. But I hope he isn't. The sundering of education from the universities, from the formal structure of intellectual activity, can only be a disaster.

One may ask at this point: How much of Mr. Miller's depression is due to his identification of "education" with the forms and structures of academic learning? And ask, further, is this identification really necessary?

For example, John R. Platt points out in his contribution to this volume that the most important advances in both research and philosophy in modern times have been-distinguished by their *non*-academic flavor:

> As one wit has said, "We learn exactly what we are taught. Send a man to jail for four years and he becomes a trained criminal. Send him to medical school for four years and he becomes self-important and incurious." It is an overstatement, but it has a core of truth.
>
> Outside the sciences, philosophy is another field which is too ingrown. It suffers from being taught by philosophers. Many of the major new philosophical ideas of the last hundred years—creative evolution, pragmatism, empiricism, logical positivism, personalism—have not come from philosophy but from the sciences, biology, psychology, mathematics, and physics. Diversity, diversity! There are probably many other areas which I have not mentioned where the narrowness of training by the professionals is evidently an actual handicap to progress in the field.

Now what does this mean, for education? It means that "professionalism," as it evolves in the prevailing *system* of education, is an anti-educational influence. It shuts out the cross-fertilizing use of the imagination. What is the origin of "professionalism"? It comes, basically, from the Baconian conception of science and learning, which conceives knowledge as instrumental to power. Through mastery of nature, Bacon said, we can get what we *want.* And since wants are many and particular, education becomes a collection of particular, instrumental "disciplines." As Richard Kean says in his essay:

> The functional purpose of university education is manipulative; its purpose is to increase man's power over men and machines; there is every possibility in the present system that the increase will not be balanced by appropriate controls.

It seems clear, from what Mr. Miller says, that this "functional purpose" has infected and emasculated the Humanities.

But why should anyone *expect* controls of an essentially manipulative system? Its separatism in practice is lacking in the very concept of measure; it has no norms except those which are improvised by desperation in the face of past, present, and future disaster. It knows only the Epimethean psychology of the Grand Inquisitor.

It is really ridiculous to allow such a system to frame the issues of education. One ought to take the position of an autodidact—of one, that is, who gained his education without or in spite of the influence of the university. You do not set the norms for the highest social function in human society in accordance with the dull statistics of mediocrity, conformity, and failure, but by the potentialities of man, uninhibited by these negative

forces. If you are concerned with psychology, you do not discourse on conditioned reflexes, but consider the implications of the peak experience. That is, you do this *first,* and then go back and look, in the light of high possibilities, at the mechanisms of conditioning.

Mr. Miller is apprehensive about the example of Socrates, who, as William Arrowsmith has said, "took to the streets." His fear is based on the fact that not only Socrates but "every demagogue or fraud" also takes to the streets. However, if the university is no longer a protection against demagogues and frauds—if, indeed, it has become a respectable front for sophisticated versions of demagogy and fraud—the streets may be a better place to teach and to learn. A man ought, it seems, to accept this possibility without fear and without regret. And *then,* quite possibly, he will know exactly what to do.

There is the clear alternative, for example, of making an *inner* emigration. That is, a man may see his way to greater usefulness within the framework of an existing institution. A lighthearted attitude toward big institutions on the part of teachers may be one way of making them channels of constructive influence. A desert may be a poor place to try to start a civilization, but wonderful things happen in oases when there is no other place to go. If one's thinking about education does not take the university too seriously, or mourn its misdirected energies too lugubriously, the students will no longer be fooled. And universities do provide facilities. You have to have libraries *somewhere.*

The system is often poor enough, and inefficient enough, in its own terms, to allow ingenious exploitation of its accumulated conveniences for genuine education. You don't *have* to fool the students. And no one needs to be paralyzed by the doleful fact that a lot of people will go on fooling the students and fooling themselves. This was the problem of Socrates, and he sought no immediate institutional remedy.

There *is* no institutional remedy, per se. This is the first principle of the educational enterprise. The immediate institutional remedies such as they are, can be safely left to the multitude of people who believe in them. Whatever is possible, along these lines, they will do well enough, if those who know better do well enough at the essential tasks.

COMMENTARY
THE METHOD OR THE MAN?

IN arguments about educational method, it is often easy to forget the quality of the framing attitudes. A teacher, regardless of his method, needs to be the kind of person a child should want to be like. A parent who puts his child in a school which has teachers he does not admire as human beings is opposing the reality of the learning process.

For the very young, the essence of the learning situation is identification with the teacher. For youth it is pursuit with the teacher of a common ideal. In both cases, it is the character and motives of the teacher on which the success of the project rests. Of all the professors he was exposed to, Stuart Miller (see Review) remembered with gratitude the two who were men "with a substantial and coherent view of life."

Education which is delegated not to the admired, but to the hired, cannot help but reflect many of the defects of the system adopted by wealthy Athenians, which was to put their children in the charge of slaves. Alvin Gouldner describes the essentials of the situation:

> . . . when a child is reared by a slave—as many Greek children were—he soon learns that the slave's instructions are "Do, feel, and be as I say, not as I do, feel, or am." In short, the free Greek child can learn his future role neither by spontaneously imitating nor identifying with the slave who helps rear him; for the child's task is not to become a slave but a freeman and master. . . . The slave's response to this situation is to punish the child for visible deviant behavior which may come to parental attention. . . . the slave is more likely to punish the child for public misbehavior than for private expressions of belief that depart from social conventions, all the more so as the slave himself does not accept the convention. In this setting, the child learns that it is not his own private convictions that matter, he learns that punishments or rewards depend less upon what he believes privately than on how he acts publicly. It may be in some part through such early experiences that a child first comes to develop a special sensitivity to the opinions of others and is first socialized to be a member of a shame culture.

This is the sort of fatality which, in many and diverse forms, overtakes every culture which dares to separate the school and society. After generations of this sort of separation, the corruptions of the society become so great that it takes a desperate and wonderful synthesis of the two, such as the Spartan regime embodied in Synanon, to give high relief to the virtues of reunion.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

MUSIC-MAKING FOR CHILDREN

A DELIBERATE return to the spontaneous in the arts for children—in music, a field where this might be thought impossible—is being pioneered in the Bellflower Unified School District, California, near Los Angeles. This work with school children is under the direction of Martha Maybury Smith, and is "pioneering" in that it is the first introduction in the United States of a work begun seventeen years ago, in Germany, by Carl Orff. Orff is a composer who long ago became personally involved with music for children, and he has devoted his life to evolving a method of music education which would not present works "to be performed by children, but rather models to stimulate their own creativity."

Since literature on this movement is available from Mrs. Smith (University of California Extension, 1100 South Grand Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90015), we shall leave out details and get to a central question: What about "technique"? This problem is met by the choice of instruments:

> A body of instruments corresponding to the rudimentary nature of this kind of music-making does duty in the reproduction of it. By now it has become so familiar and so taken for granted throughout the world under the name "Orff Instrumentarium" that it is easy to overlook how much intuitive and profound thinking was required of its creator before it became available in this form and composition. The instruments are by and large those of medieval Europe and the Renaissance, though of necessity approximating also to the tonal equipment of non-European cultures which have not moved beyond the realm of elementary music. . . .
>
> . . . word is realized as song, but also at the same time as a gesture of the entire body. However, swinging of hands and dancing of feet logically call for the playing of an instrument. The swinging hands clap, they then reach for a drumstick and beat upon sounding wood or metal or stretched animal skins. The dancing feet stamp and trace figures or render service to the percussion. The mouth, however, satisfied neither with "sustained words" nor with the "exclamations and sighs," channels its breath into a resonating pipe. Thus hand and foot are assigned to the rhythm, the breath to melody. As instruments adaptable to such "projection" of the bodily organs, Li Gi [Chinese book of ethical wisdom] gives: drums, rattles, clappers, bells, clinking clinkstones, zithers, harps, pipes, transverse flutes, pan-pipes, oboes. . . . Instruments of such nature—small and large percussion, wind and plucked strings—are met with in . . . elementary music in all cultures. . . .
>
> The instrumental nucleus of Orff's Schulwerk is constructed on just these lines. This state of affairs stems from the conviction that a secret affinity may be observed between the childhood of the race and that of the individual. Distinct ancestral stages in the development of mankind seem to be reflected in the flowering of a child's consciousness and in his graded steps toward coming to terms with the world around.

So, the instrumental nucleus of Orff-Schulwerk includes xylophone, metalophone, glockenspiels, musical glasses and stones, bells, timpani and drums of all kinds, The nucleus has a varied percussion department, flutes of various sizes, gamba, and the guitar. Then, among supplementary instruments are lutes, dulcimer, psaltery, violino, double-base, spinettino, portative organ, and such wind-instruments as sorduns, krummhorns, clarinets, horns, trumpets, and trombones.

The following notes are for the prospective teacher:

> The method of playing appears simple. At all events there exists from the outset an immediate affinity between instrument and player. Moreover, this enables the child at his initial attempts and without lengthy practice in technique to make a valuable and integral contribution to the piece.
>
> Naturally these instruments, like any others, when demands grow keener and more involved, require a more detailed study. The percussionist knows for example what infinite modifications of tone-quality and gradation the members of the drum family are capable of, and how much practice is required to play them properly. On the other side of the scale these instruments just as readily respond to the challenge of the elementary: they do not keep their secrets under lock and key; by their very nature they encourage the player to improvise, whimsically egging him on to experiment with rhythm and metre.

An article in the *Instructor* (May, 1967) has this comment on the work in the Bellflower School District:

> Martha Maybury Smith, director of the Bellflower program feels that traditional music teaching in the United States is so tied to performance that only 10 per cent of the children get full benefit. Orff-Schulwerk, says Mrs. Smith, gives young children confidence in their rhythmic and tonal abilities so that as they progress to more formal music, they need not fear singing a wrong note or playing on a wrong beat. Mrs. Smith points out that youngsters who have such fears often "drop out" of musical experiences.

The instruments also relate naturally to other activities of children:

> It is significant that percussion and wind instruments are the tonal materials of open-air music-making: of the march, the procession, the outdoor dance. They are foreordained as befits their character and history even within Schulwerk composition to portray the multifarious patterns of action music ranging from the children's game to the steps and turns in dancing.

Last May the Bellflower School District was host to the first international symposium on Orff-Schulwerk in the United States. At that time speakers from Germany and Austria told of the use of Orff-Schulwerk in other countries and of teacher-training in Germany and at the Orff Institut in Salzburg. Dr. Walter Kaun, of Munich, described the spread of interest in Orff's work in Germany, so that today, in school districts all over Bavaria, thirty and forty teachers participate in courses for teacher-training in this kind of music. An important application of the method is in relation to handicapped children. Dr. Kaun said that in the last few years more than half of all German schools for deaf and dumb children have begun to use Orff-Schulwerk instruments for teaching, with similar work going on in schools for blind children. There are 260 folk schools for adult education in Bavaria, and some 180 teachers in folk schools have acquired basic knowledge of the Orff method. These, in turn, pass their knowledge along to kindergartners and primary school teachers. At present, Orff-Schulwerk is being used in Germany, Austria, Canada, England, Japan, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Netherlands, France, Spain, and in many other countries. The program at the Bellflower School District is supported by teacher-training in UCLA Extension classes in the Department of Arts and Humanities.

FRONTIERS

The "Selfishness" of Synanon

> The Synanon philosophy is based on the belief that there comes a time in everyone s life when he arrives at the conviction . . . that he must accept himself for better or for worse as is his portion . . . The power which resides in him is new in nature and none but he knows what it is that he can do, nor does he know until he has tried . . . As long as he willingly accepts himself, he will continue to grow and develop his potentialities. As long as he does not accept himself, much of his energy will be used to defend rather than to explore and actualize himself.

SYNANON has been criticized as a Jacobin revolution by vested interests, but its position is closer to that of 1776 in that it intensifies many already existing values. As a side-effect of establishing self-discovery, the Synanon Game is a guillotine of self-delusion, but Synanon questions the individual's attitudes only to reinforce his being.

In short, Synanon demands only that the individual seek his own identity and the position best suited to it. Emerson, a bulwark of the Synanon philosophy, describes this in his essay on spiritual laws.

> Each man has *his own* vocation . . . There is one direction in which all space is open to him. . . . He is like a ship in a river; he runs against obstructions on every side but one, on that side, all obstruction is taken away and he sweeps serenely over a deepening channel into an infinite sea.

An example of Synanon's "revolution" is its belief that the individual projects his self-image into his attitude toward life, an idea which upholds the Golden Rule. Upholding this tradition, Synanon attacks the idea of opposing self-love to love of others.

The strongest indictment aimed at most moral traditions is that they take humility out of context in relation to the more basic value of self-acceptance, and this indictment was formed long before Synanon's advent. Yet Synanon, itself highly moral, agrees that humility can be exaggerated if it becomes a bush behind which the individual hides his light or a retreat from his responsibility to let it shine.

Many drug addicts, at some point, realize the truth about addiction only to give in to it. Standard psychiatry, Synanon maintains, often feeds their sickness by giving them a rationalization for it. As a Synanon resident said, "Once the 'shrink' told me why I shot dope, it didn't seem so unnatural." Synanon concentrates on revealing the individual's strengths and demanding his responsible use of them.

The Synanon perspective on humility is shown in a discussion reported in *The Tunnel Back* by Lewis Yablonsky. The author is discussing a tape-recorded "haircut" (Synanon argot for bawling out) with Dr. George Bach and Synanon's founder, Chuck Dederich.

> GEORGE: You don't smash the ego; what you do is pare the ego down to the reality condition it's in.
>
> L.Y.: You smash the *irrelevant* ego.
>
> GEORGE: In other words, you are banging it down to the reality of the individual involved. You inform him of things he can't see for himself. You are not really smashing anyone personally.
>
> CHUCK: We let the gas out of the excess negative ego. We squeeze it down.
>
> L.Y.: In one sense, you are not attacking the person himself or the ego. You are attacking the person's bad behavior. It's a subtle point, but you don't attack the person; you are dealing with a behavior that leads him in a destructive direction.

The emphasis is on the positive. Instead of being told that he is no good, the individual is told to live up to his potential. As is remarked elsewhere in Yablonsky's book, it would be pointless to attack a cripple for limping.

A standard question aimed at Synanon people—"Where are you at?"—challenges the position of the individual rather than his being. This was the case with John, the subject of the haircut under discussion. In the five years he has been in Synanon, he has held a number of positions, including his present one as a co-manager of the San Francisco Synanon Game

Club. Yet when he entered Synanon at the age of 20, he had a "rap sheet" covering seventeen years of his life. The past five years have changed his position. The pattern of John's change is illustrated, in part, by an anecdote contained in *The Tunnel Back:*

> In his third month in Synanon, it was revealed that John had a court hold on him from a prior offense. He had to appear in court in New York City. John was given a suspended sentence and directed to return to Synanon.
>
> Right after we left the courtroom, I knew I had a tiger by the tail. Synanon's hold was light and the lure of the streets was powerful. I could almost feel John salivating for a fix.
>
> I tried to hang onto him any way I could manage it until his scheduled midnight flight to Los Angeles . . . but he slipped away from me in the early evening. Somehow, John made the plane on his own and got back to Synanon. Of course, before taking the plane, he "slipped."
>
> I asked him how he managed to make the plane. "The only thing that got me back to Synanon were the promises I made," he said. "I told the Greek and Jack Hurst I would be back." The same criminal loyalties and beliefs that originally almost destroyed John had, in this situation, helped him to return to his Synanon lifeline!

Whether you label it *"omerta"* or *"esprit de corps,"* group loyalty is not an exclusive ethic. Far from losing its value in Synanon, John aimed it in a direction of greater scope.

A favorite Synanon aphorism is Lao Tse's, "Enabling a man to go right, disabling him to go wrong." A person seeking his own well-being can grow to assimilate all values he encounters and throw off all threats, to act on the world around him instead of merely reacting to it.

In slang terms, Synanon puts no one down. It pulls people up.

ROBERT E. DAVIS

Santa Rosa, California